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NEARBY



SP national executive to meet today

LUCKNOW
The Samajwadi Party's national executive committee will meet here on Saturday to deliberate on various political issues, including the Assembly elections to be held in 2022. This will be the first national executive of the party after a dismal show in the 2019 Lok Sabha polls. SP founder Mulayam Singh Yadav is likely to attend the meeting presided over by party chief Akhilesh Yadav.

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'Shaheen Bagh stir will go on till CAA is revoked'

SHINJINI GHOSH
NEW DELHI

Nearly three months since they began their protest against the amended citizenship law, the National Register of Citizens (NRC) and the National Population Register (NPR), some of the women protesters at Shaheen Bagh said on Friday

that the movement will continue till the law is revoked.

During a late night press briefing, the protesters said that the CAA was unconstitutional. They also said that the recent riots in Delhi were a "targeted attack on a single community".

CITY ▶ PAGE 2

Delhi govt. bans sports events till further orders

DMs, SDMs told to enforce COVID-19 directives

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The Delhi government on Friday banned all sports events and activities in the city that are likely to register an attendance of over 200 people in the wake of the global COVID-19 pandemic.

Addressing a press conference, Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia said that the government has decided that all sports activities in Delhi such as seminars, conferences and events which are in the nature of public gatherings would not be allowed.

Asked if the popular Indian Premier League cricket tournament would be allowed with just players and empty stands, Mr. Sisodia said, "We

have banned all sports-related gatherings, but if the BCCI (Board of Control for Cricket in India) wants to conduct it in a new format, it is up to them."

"All sports gatherings (including IPL)/conferences/seminars beyond 200 people are prohibited in NCT of Delhi for the purpose of prevention and control of the outbreak of epidemic disease namely COVID-19," an order issued by the Delhi government read.

Mr. Sisodia said that the ban would remain in force until further orders.

"We have told all DMs (District Magistrates) and SDMs (Sub Divisional Magistrates) to follow all orders from the Health Department on coronavirus strictly and take action if anyone is violating it," he said.

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PEOPLE OVER PROFIT ▶ EDITORIAL



Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal arrives at the Delhi Assembly in New Delhi on Friday. ■ SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

in accordance with the 2010 format.

During the debate on the resolution, Mr. Kejriwal asked for a show of hands to ascertain how many legislators present in the House had birth certificates issued by government agencies; out of the 70-

member Assembly, 61 did not have one.

"Me, my wife, and my parents, we do not possess the birth certificate issued by the municipality... will the Central government send the four family members, including the Delhi Chief Minister, to a de-

tention centre? None of the Delhi Cabinet Ministers have the birth certificate, will the whole Cabinet be sent to detention centres?" said Mr. Kejriwal.

"I want to know how many of the [Union] Cabinet Ministers and MPs have the birth certificate. Most of the CMs do not have it," he said further.

The real issues'

"The real issues right now should be unemployment and economy... the Centre might bring forth the claim that all these three things are different, but the Union Home Minister has linked them himself by telling the people to understand the chronology," he said. "The Home Minister said that first is CAA, then NPR, and then NRC."

In this process, Mr. Kejriwal alleged, Indian Hindus had the most to lose: if one was a Muslim and did not have pap-

ers, an individual would "directly land into the detention centre"; if one was a Hindu from Pakistan then the government would "make your papers"; but if one was a Hindu from India and did not have papers, the individual concerned would still "be sent to the detention camps".

As many as 11 Indian States, he said, had passed a resolution against the NRC and the NPR and many of these such as Bihar and Tamil Nadu were ruled by parties that are in alliance with the BJP.

"I will request the Central government to not bring the NRC and the NPR because it will be of no good to our country," the Chief Minister said.

The eight-member Opposition sought to condemn what it alleged was a "deliberate attempt" to spread "doubts and misgivings" about a "well-intentioned move" of the Central government.

In a letter submitted to Mr. Tandon at the Raj Bhavan here, Mr. Nath said, "We expect that the enquiry on the resignations submitted by the BJP, allegedly of the captive Congress MLAs, is completed early."

Resignations of 19 of the 22 rebel MLAs were conveyed by former BJP Minister Bhupendra Singh from a Bengaluru resort to the Speaker on Tuesday. So far,



Kamal Nath addressing journalists after meeting Governor Lalji Tandon in Bhopal on Friday. ■ A.M. FARUQUI

the Speaker has served notice on 13 of them, asking them to appear before him and attest to having resigned of their own accord.

In these disturbing circumstances, wrote Mr. Nath, the very edifice of democracy was in danger.

"Trust of a transparent democratic process seems lost. It merits full investigation and enquiry, so that persons responsible for derailing the democratic insti-

tutional process are exposed and punished," he said.

They would not leave any stone unturned to "ensure the triumph of democracy and the legislative process, to uphold the Constitution and the values enshrined therein," Mr. Nath assured the people.

In the letter with the subject, 'Horse trading of MLAs by the Bharatiya Janata Party', Mr. Nath detailed instances of "unethical and illegal acts of the BJP".

Pointing to the first attempt on the intervening night of March 3 and 4, he said the "midnight leading to whisking away of MLAs to Bengaluru is in public domain."

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'NO PARTY CAN KEEP MLAS UNDER LOCK AND KEY' ▶ PAGE 13

U.P. clears Ordinance for recovery of damages

Decision comes a day after SC did not stay HC order to remove hoardings

OMAR RASHID
LUCKNOW

The Yogi Adityanath-led Uttar Pradesh government on Friday gave its approval to an Ordinance for the recovery of damage to public and private property during protests.

U.P. Finance Minister Suresh Khanna announced the decision of the State Cabinet, which gave its consent to the U.P. Recovery of Damage to Public and Private Property Ordinance, 2020.

The government decision came a day after the Supreme Court did not stay the Allahabad High Court order to the Lucknow administration to "forthwith" remove roadside hoardings displaying the personal details of persons accused of vandalism and arson during the protest against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act last December.

Mr. Khanna said the Ordinance was based on the 2007 order by the apex court in criminal writ petitions 73 and 77 that a "strong law" was needed to deal with the damage to public and private property during political protests and demonstrations.



Lucknow hoardings show those who have to pay compensation. ■ FILE PHOTO

Vacation Bench, one of the judges had orally remarked that the U.P. government's action was not "covered in law".

The U.P. government had issued recovery notices to at least 500 persons in the State for damage to property during the protests in December.

Mr. Khanna said the Ordinance would arrange for the recovery of damage to public and private property during any protest, movement or demonstration.

Without giving any further details, Mr. Khanna said the

specifics would be known when the "niyamawali" or manual of rules for it is released.

'Honouring the court'

Sidharth Nath Singh, U.P. government spokesperson, said the State had brought the Ordinance in compliance with the Supreme Court's observations. "We are honouring the court. The court said there must be an Act on this," he said, adding that earlier recovery of damages was covered under a government order but now it would be under a law.

Terming it an "unwarranted interference in privacy" of people and a violation of Article 21 of the Constitution, the Allahabad High Court had on Monday directed the Lucknow administration to remove the 'name and shame' roadside hoardings. However, the State approached the apex court through a special leave petition against the decision, following which the court referred the appeal to a larger Bench.

The total damage listed in the hoardings amounts to ₹1.55 crore. As many as 57 persons have been identified in the hoardings.

Pehlu Khan case: minor convicts sent to special home

Another juvenile aged over 16 at the time is facing trial in a court in Alwar

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
JAIPUR

Two minors convicted of participating in the murder of dairy farmer Pehlu Khan as members of a mob of cow vigilantes in 2017 were on Friday sent by Alwar's Juvenile Justice Board (JJB) to a special home for three years. Six persons accused of having led the attack were acquitted by a sessions court in August last year.

The convicts, who were minors when they committed the crime, are in the age group of 18-21 now. They are likely to be shifted to a special home on the Central Jail premises in Jaipur.

Video footage

The JJB, headed by Principal Magistrate Sarita Dhadak, had last week held the two minors guilty under Sections 302 (murder), 147 (riot), 323 (voluntarily caus-



Pehlu Khan
category of heinous crimes.

Khan, 55, a dairy farmer from Haryana's Nuh district, his two sons and a few others were waylaid by self-styled cow vigilantes near Behror on the Jaipur-Delhi National Highway on April 1, 2017, and thrashed on suspicion that they were smuggling cows for slaughter. Khan succumbed to his injuries two days later in a hospital.

The sentence was handed down under Section 18(1)(g) of the Juvenile Justice Act, 2015, providing that a child found to be in conflict with law may be sent to a special home for a maximum period of three years for getting reformatory services, including education, skill development, counselling, behaviour modification therapy and psychiatric support.

The Alwar sessions court

had acquitted six accused in the case on August 14, 2019, giving them the benefit of the doubt on the basis of the police probe. Those let off by the court were Vipin Yadav, Kalu Ram, Dayanand, Ravindra Kumar, Yogesh Kumar and Bheem Rathi.

Appeal in High Court
The State government filed an appeal in the Rajasthan High Court against the sessions court verdict after a Special Investigation Team pointed out loopholes in the probe conducted earlier by four investigating officers.

The High Court had earlier quashed the case of illegal transport of cattle for slaughter against Khan, his sons and the owner of the pick-up truck in which they were travelling. The court had ruled that Khan had purchased the animals for dairy and not slaughter.

A.N.D.O.



Remains of a man-made disaster: (From left) A damaged wall of DRP Convent School in riot-hit Shiv Vihar; restoration work in progress at the school on Friday. ■ SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA



3 PFI members held for alleged involvement in riots get bail

Judge seeks IO's explanation noting that offences invoked in FIR are bailable in nature

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

A Delhi court on Friday granted bail to three alleged members of Popular Front of India (PFI), who were arrested for their alleged "involvement" in anti-CAA protests and the communal riots in north-east Delhi.

Metropolitan Magistrate Prabh Deep Kaur granted bail to Parvez Alam, PFI Delhi unit president, Mohammad Ilyas, its state secretary and 'active' member Mohammad Danish noting that the offences invoked in the FIR are bailable in nature.

The court has directed the three persons to cooperate with the police in its investigation and not to leave the country without permission of the court.

"IO [investigating officer]



has nowhere mentioned that any non-bailable offences have been disclosed or has come out during investigation till now," the judge said.

The judge reminded that it is a settled principle that in bailable offences, it is the duty of the IO to offer bail to the accused persons at the first instance. The court directed the IO to give a written explanation with respect to his failure to offer bail to the ac-

cused persons.

The court order came while hearing State's plea for grant of police remand for the accused.

'Pre-planned conspiracy'

In its application, the police said that on March 6, "specific information was received by the Crime Branch that the communal riots of February 23-24 were pre-planned and the same were hatched by one Umar Khalid, a student of JNU and his aides, all linked with different groups".

"As per the pre-planned conspiracy, Umar Khalid gave provocative speeches at various places and appealed to the minority gathering to block roads and other public places during the visit of Donald Trump," the prosecu-

tion stated.

"To achieve this objective, firearms, acid bottles and other dangerous articles were used. As a pre-planned conspiracy, women and children were sent to block Jaffrabad Metro Station to create riot," it said.

Based on the technical and manual evidence collected during the investigation, accused Danish was arrested for his alleged role in the riots. Alam and Ilyas were arrested by Delhi Police on Thursday.

The prosecution had sought police remand to unearth the complete conspiracy and to identify the other persons who were involved in the funding used by PFI to carry out the riots and for verification and confrontation of bank details.

'Six women who were part of a mob that attacked DCP identified'

Taking help of technical team to get more clarity: police

SAURABH TRIVEDI
NEW DELHI

A team of Delhi Police on Friday claimed that they have identified women protesters who were part of a mob that attacked DCP Amit Sharma and four other constables during the violence in north-east Delhi.

A senior police officer confirmed that after scanning mobile and CCTV footage of Chand Bagh area where violence broke out on February 24, they have identified six women who were part of the anti-CAA protests in the area.

"We are in the process of identifying more women and most of them were wearing burqa and their faces were covered

■ We are in the process of identifying more women and most of them were wearing burqa and their faces were covered

■ A SENIOR POLICE OFFICER

mob surrounded his team and attacked them while Head Constable Ratan Lal was shot dead.

Mr. Sharma's wife Pooja Sharma told that he had gone to talk to the women's group that was part of the anti-CAA protests in the area, but the group attacked the police team.

Notices to be sent

"We are sending notices to the women to join the investigation and counter them with the evidence we have collected from the location," said the officer.

On Thursday, Delhi Police had arrested seven persons for their alleged role in the murder of Head Constable Ratan Lal. Police said that the persons who shot him dead have not been arrested yet.

'Centre trying to pin blame on women'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Several women's groups and individuals on Friday released a statement alleging that instead of taking action against erring police force and against those who openly instigated and perpetrated violence in north-east Delhi, the Central government was trying to pin the blame on the women for protesting peacefully against the CAA.

"What we are witnessing is a concerted misinformation campaign that criminalises the protesters, spins conspiracy theories and targets all those who supported the protests. Anyone who has been to these protests will know how morally low this is," the women said in a statement.

The women said that there was a vicious campaign against citizens of a free democratic country.

Arrests not on basis of religion: Delhi Police

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Responding to a report published in *The Hindu* on March 10 headlined 'Police picking up boys after asking their name', the Delhi police have claimed that "suspects from both the communities are brought to police stations on the basis of information received and verified properly irrespective of their religion or place of residence."

"Moreover, if any suspect is not found involved after due interrogation cum investigation, then he is let off or handed over to their relatives/acquaintances after making entry in the records," the Delhi police PRO M.S. Randhawa said in an email on Friday.

The police claimed that "about 200 persons" had been arrested "irrespective of religion or faith of any victim or the accused".

"As mentioned in the report, in fact Shadab s/o Dilshad Ali has been arrested in case FIR no. 57/20 u/s 147/148/149/427 IPC dated 24.2.2020 PS Dayalpur after proper collection of evidence and due investigation," the statement added.

Our correspondent Jatin Anand adds: The story was published on the basis of the testimonies of numerous Mustafabad residents and especially Dilshad Ali, the father of the accused, Shadab, who, the police have conceded was, in fact, picked up by the police.

SHINJINI GHOSH
NEW DELHI

Nearly three months since they began their protest against the citizenship law, the National Register of Citizens and the National Population Register, some of the women protesters at Shaheen Bagh said on Friday that the movement will continue till the law is revoked.

Ritu Kaushik, a protester and volunteer at Shaheen Bagh, said: "Women and children of Shaheen Bagh had started the movement after the Delhi Police brutally attacked the students of Jamia. The entire world knows the kind of problems we have faced during this movement, including people coming here with revolvers. Nobody even had a clue that something like

'Shaheen Bagh stir will go on till CAA is revoked'

Women demand answers from Centre on the violence in north-east Delhi



Representatives of protesters addressing the media at Shaheen Bagh on Friday. ■ SANDEEP SAXENA

this could happen in the national capital. All of this was done to divert attention and end this movement. But the *dadis* and women did not back down."

Referring to Home Minister Amit Shah's speech in Parliament on the NPR, Ms. Kaushik added: "Mr. Shah said that the 'doubtful' cate-

gory will be removed from the NPR. What we want to say is that why are the questions required at all? We demand that the law, which was amended in 2003, be revoked so that the issue gets uprooted once and for all."

At the late night briefing, several women came forth and demanded answers from the Centre provide compensation to the victims.

the Centre on the recent violence which erupted in north-east Delhi. "One single community was targeted [in the riots] and the ones who [from other communities] tried to save them were also attacked.

"It's a matter of shame that the UN had to interfere due to our current government," said another protester.

Further she added, "On what basis did the HM said that the riots ended on February 25 when police records show there were distress calls on February 26 as well?"

Demonstrators said that the riots were a "targeted attack on a single community to an extent that they are scared to return to the same place" and demanded that the Centre provide compensation to the victims.

Activists urge CM to increase compensation

Inflation, cost of living cited as reasons

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

A group of activists, including Harsh Mander and Anjali Bhardwaj, has urged Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal to increase the compensation given to survivors of communal riots in north-east Delhi, including increasing the solatium to the family of a deceased person from ₹10 lakh to ₹25 lakh.

"The compensation announced to next of kin of those who have died in the Delhi violence is ₹10 lakh. Compensation of ₹13 lakh was given seven years ago by the Uttar Pradesh government after the Muzaffarnagar riots in 2013, for survivors in a rural economy. Adjusting for inflation and cost of living in an expensive urban metropolis like Delhi, the ex-gratia amount must be enhanced to ₹25 lakh," a letter written by the group to the Chief Minister read.

The group demanded that ₹25,000 assistance must be renewed for families who are still unable to return at the end of 30 days from February 24, 2020, until their final return or resettlement in new locations.

"In case of any default in the timely disbursal of compensation, persons shall have the right to complain to the Deputy CM's office, which should have a designated officer and widely publicised phone number to monitor these complaints till final resolution of claims," according to the letter.

However, the Delhi government spokesperson did not respond to the demands made by the activists.

Expectant mother recollects her narrow escape from death

Musarrat sneaked out with 4 children and the fifth in her belly

JAGRITI CHANDRA
NEW DELHI

Forty-year-old Musarrat ran with all her five children in tow – three daughters and a son forming a chain, hands tightly clasped, and a fifth in her belly.

"Fear is the worst thing," she says when asked how she managed to run while carrying a full term baby inside her.

On the fateful night of February 25, she decided to flee her house in Shiv Vihar almost on a hunch. It had barely been five minutes since they left their house, when she saw a mob behind them pelting stones in their direction.

Her neighbourhood had been tense for nearly two days. On February 23, there was a minor fire in the street and a day later someone left petrol cans and wires at her doorstep.

She says escaping mob violence wasn't an easy decision



Damaged utensils salvaged from Musarrat's house in Shiv Vihar. ■ SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

for her. Following her husband's death in December last year, she has been on *iddat* [a mandatory waiting period when widows are confined within their house and are forbidden from mingling with people]. She says on the night of February 25, when she fled to her natal home, she was in a dilemma to either abide by an important ritual or save her life and the lives of her children.

Musarrat expects to deliver

Rumour of 4-year-old being stabbed resulted in IB staffer's murder: police

SAURABH TRIVEDI

A rumour of a four-year-old child being stabbed to death by a Hindu mob in Chand Bagh during violent clashes in Chand Bagh allegedly triggered rage in Salman to stab IB staffer Ankit Sharma to death within minutes, said a police officer on Friday.

During interrogation, Salman alias Haseen, who has been arrested for murdering Ankit, has disclosed that he was in Mustafabad on Febru-

ary 25 when he heard about the child being stabbed to death by a Hindu mob in Chand Bagh. He got angered and picked up a knife and reached near Tahir Hussain's house where people from both sides were pelting stones at each other.

"Around 5 p.m., Salman heard that a Hindu man has been caught and taken near Tahir's house. He also reached there, along with his friend Sameer, and they attacked Ankit with a knife. Sal-

man stabbed Ankit in the stomach and thigh while Sameer hit him with a rod. Many others in the group also attacked Ankit and later dumped his body into the canal," said a police officer.

Salman disposed of the murder weapon into the canal and went to his relatives' house in Mustafabad. Fearing police action, he came out after two days and, along with Sameer, left the area for their respective homes in Sundar Nagar.

Conversion to a different faith is an individual's choice: HC

High Court Bench said this while asking petitioner to withdraw his plea as it did not want to reject it

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Friday said that religion is a personal belief and whether to convert to a different faith or not is an individual's choice while declining to entertain a plea for stopping or regulating religious conversions.

A Bench of Chief Justice

D.N. Patel and Justice C. Hari Shankar asked the petitioner, BJP leader and lawyer Ashwini Kumar Upadhyay, to withdraw the petition as it did not want to reject it.

Following this, Mr. Upadhyay sought permission to withdraw the matter and the Bench allowed him to do so.

When the petition came

up for hearing, the Bench said, "Tell us how can we regulate it? What will we regulate? If someone is threatening someone or intimidating someone, it is an offence under the Indian Penal Code."

The Bench added that there was no reason for an individual to succumb to

threats, intimidation or allurements to convert to a different faith.

Mr. Upadhyay, in his plea, had contended that many individuals, NGOs and institutions are converting down-trodden persons, particularly of the Scheduled Caste/Scheduled Tribe community, by "intimidating,

threatening, luring by monetary benefits and by other acts, including miracle healing, black magic and more".

It also claimed that as per the 2011 census, Hindus constitute 79% of the population down from 86 per cent in 2001 and if no action is taken "Hindus will become minorities in India".

IN BRIEF

Virus screening centre at police training camp

NEW DELHI
A Delhi police training camp in Jaroda Kalan will be turned into a screening centre for people showing symptoms of COVID-19, officers said on Friday. A senior police officer confirmed that they received an order from the Police Headquarters to defer all training programmes at Jaroda Kalan training centre till March 31. The people under training have been asked to leave the camp and return home. "There are a total of 1,253 trainees in the camp. The trainees have been asked to leave by Saturday morning," said the police officer.

Air quality of Delhi-NCR

Delhi	173	Gurugram	119
Ghaziabad	188	Faridabad	180
Noida	152	Greater Noida	213
Good	51-100	Satisfactory	101-200
Poor	201-300	Very poor	>401
	301-400	Severe	
AIR QUALITY INDEX AT 4 P.M. YESTERDAY (AVERAGE OF PAST 24 HOURS) SOURCE: CPCB			

AIR QUALITY INDEX AT 4 P.M. YESTERDAY (AVERAGE OF PAST 24 HOURS) SOURCE: CPCB

Cinema halls turn away audience, institutes suspend classes in Capital

Managements comply with Delhi government order to stop spread of COVID-19

AISHWARYA TRIPATHI
NEW DELHI

Cinema halls, tuition centres and colleges were a deserted look on Friday following an order released by the Delhi government on Thursday to shut these till March 31 to stop the spread of COVID-19 in the Capital.



The scene outside Rivoli cinema hall on Friday. ■ V.V. KRISHNAN

While multi-screen halls withheld their bookings on online ticketing platforms, a few single-screen ones still allowed people to procure tickets online. The management of Miraj Cinemas in Subhash Nagar said it received several online bookings, but stayed shut and was processing the refunds.

Amba Cinema, another single-screen theatre on G.T. Road here, had stationed guards outside to inform people that it would remain

shut till March 31. "We have sent away almost 20 people who had come to watch a movie, since morning," one of the guards said.

Prominent tuition centres in South Extension had students visiting for "clarification of doubts" related to studies and competitive

medical exams in May, but regular classes remained suspended. Most institutes have deferred the commencement of new classes to April 1.

A student of Motilal Nehru College, Priyanka Dewara, said, "All classes have been suspended till month-end

due to COVID-19 scare. We have been asked to report in April."

Stating that the submission dates of assignments have been postponed, a management student at Fortune Institute of International Business, Shreya, said she welcomed the government's decision of shutting colleges.

Gautam, who studies in Jawaharlal Nehru University,

said: "All seminars and conferences have been postponed, but the libraries are open as of now."

Non-teaching staff from Sri Guru Tegh Bahadur Khalsa College said that only the administration department staff and the principal were available in the college and holidays had been declared for students as well as teaching staff.

In view of the current situation, it is hereby noticed that all lectures, class presentations and examinations at JNU are suspended till March 31 with immediate effect," JNU Registrar Pramod Kumar said. "Basic mess facilities will be available to the hostel residents during this period," he said.

Jamia Millia Islamia also suspended classes with im-

mediate effect till March 31 and advised students to avoid large gatherings.

"Teachers should make available to students study material online if they need any help. Face-to-face group interaction or gathering of students should be avoided

JAMIA MILLIA ISLAMIA

The central library, it said will provide customised services by way of downloading research and teaching material required for onward circulation to students.

Delhi University had on Thursday said that any internal exam for undergraduate or postgraduate programmes had been postponed and it had also suspended classes and cancelled all functions.

"To maintain continuity in the teaching-learning process in all undergraduate and postgraduate programmes, study material shall be made available on a weekly basis on the website by the respective teachers of all departments/colleges/centres," the university had said.

A spokesperson from Ashoka University said that the university had extended the spring break and as of now, on-campus classes are scheduled to resume on March 30. "Online classes will be conducted to ensure minimum disruption," a statement from Ashoka University read.

Number of people at screening centres dips'

20-25 turning up daily this week: RML

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

Several people on Friday queued up outside COVID-19 testing centres set up at Safdarjung Hospital and Ram Manohar Lohia Hospital here.

While Safdarjung Hospital has a 100-bed isolation ward in the super-specialty building, there is a provision of a 25-bed isolation ward at RML, officials said.

Authorities at both the hospitals, however, said that the number of people turning up at the screening centres and the rush at the outpatient departments had decreased as compared to last week.

Last week's number

"The number of people at screening centres has gone down significantly. Last

week, around 550-580 people had come to the screening centres. However, around 20-25 have been turning up on a daily basis this week. The screenings are taking place in a separate section," said RML spokesperson Smriti Tiwari.

Talking about the COVID-19 scare in the city, after one death was reported in the country, doctors said that "fear is important, but panic is not".

K.K. Aggarwal, former president of the Indian Medical Association (IMA), said, "A certain amount of fear will help people be aware and take precautions. But there is no need to panic. A close watch is required in this situation and necessary action has to be taken, which the government is already doing."

Officials added that mechanised cleaning of metro stations were being carried out round-the-clock.

"Special cleaning drives

Seven recover at Safdarjung Hospital, yet to be discharged

Out of 29 admitted, 15 have tested positive, 1 negative and reports of others are awaited

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

Safdarjung Hospital, which is treating a bulk of COVID-19 patients here in the Capital has reported that seven of the positive cases currently admitted in the hospital have recovered but are yet to be discharged. The hospital with 100 isolation beds for COVID-19 patients got another admission on Friday.

A man who returned from Italy this week and was lodged at the Army's quarantine facility in Manesar, Ha-

ryana, has tested positive for COVID-19. According to the medical protocol, he has been shifted to an isolation facility at Safdarjung Hospital for further medical examination and recovery," said a senior Health Ministry official.

The man was among 83 people who returned from Italy on Wednesday. The group was moved to the Army's quarantine facility at Manesar.

Safdarjung Hospital currently has 29 admitted cases, out of which 15 have tested positive, 1 negative and 11 re-

ports are awaited.

"India has brought in several measures, including travel restrictions, suspension of visas and self-quarantine. Early establishment of surveillance of entry points and universal screening of passengers at airports and vessels at seaports, evacuation of Indian citizens from COVID-19-affected countries, adequate laboratory and quarantine facilities have contributed immensely towards containment and management of COVID-19 in the coun-

try," said the official.

The Health Ministry has said that if a person shows any sign or symptom like fever, dry cough, difficulty in breathing etc., he or she should visit a doctor or dial the Ministry's 24X7 helpline number, 011-23978046. "Remember to wear a mask before stepping out to see the doctor."

According to figures released by the Union Health Ministry, a total 11,71,061 passengers have been screened from 10,876 flights at 30 design-

nated airports. Also, 3,062 passengers and 583 contacts were identified and referred to Integrated Disease Surveillance Programme or designated hospitals. A total of 42,296 passengers have been brought under community surveillance, out of which 2,559 were symptomatic and 522 hospitalised. As many as 25,504 passengers have been additionally screened at major and minor seaports, and more than 14 lakh people have been screened at land ports.

CM thanks Centre for containment of COVID-19

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The global outbreak of COVID-19, Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal said during a discussion on the issue at a one-day Special Session of the Delhi Legislative Assembly here, scared him even as he sought to express gratitude to the Bharatiya Janata Party-led (BJP) Centre for its containment in India.

"The virus is still in the stage of containment right now, and we have been able to contain the community spread. As many as 81 cases have been reported in the country so far. I want to thank the Centre for working in close coordination with the Delhi government and various other authorities to contain the spread of COVID-19," he said.

"All the officers are working day and night. It is largely because of the support of the people that Delhi has reported only six cases so far. I hope that the Centre is cooperating with all other States,"

he said further.

The majority of the 81 cases reported in India, he said, involved people who had arrived in India from foreign countries. He also pointed out that India did have cases like a mother being infected with the virus because of her child, which was the sixth case in Delhi and meant that some cases were because of close contact with infected patients. There were only two ways through which COVID-19 could spread and escalate: if a person coughs or sneezes on an individual and if the remnants of a sneeze or cough on a hard surface were touched by somebody, leading to infection.

Meanwhile, Leader of Opposition in the Delhi Legislative Assembly, Ramvir Singh Bidhuri, demanded that the Delhi government ensure that 96 private hospitals which were given land on concessional rates be roped in to provide free treatment and isolation wards to COVID-19 patients.

Rejection of plea: Nirbhaya convict moves High Court

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

One of the four death row convicts in the 2012 Nirbhaya gang rape and murder case, Vinay Sharma, moved the Delhi High Court on Friday claiming that there were "procedural lapses" and "constitutional irregularities" in the rejection of his mercy plea by President Ram Nath Kovind.

Advocate A.P. Singh, re-

presenting Sharma, said the matter had been filed in the High Court registry.

The petition claims that the recommendation sent to the President to reject the mercy plea did not contain the signature of Delhi Home Minister Satyendar Jain. The plea claims that when the mercy plea was moved, the model code of conduct was in force and Mr. Jain was only an MLA candidate then and therefore, he could not have exercised the power of Home Minister.

GOVERNMENT OF KERALA

OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER FOR ENTRANCE EXAMINATIONS
HOUSING BOARD BUILDINGS, SANTHINAGAR, THIRUVANANTHAPURAM-695001

NOTIFICATION
ALLOTMENT/ADMISSION TO POST GRADUATE MEDICAL
DEGREE COURSES - KERALA - 2020

No. CEE/4900/PGM-2020/TAS

Applications are invited from the candidates who have qualified in the NEET - PG - 2020, for admission to Post Graduate Medical Degree Courses 2020 in the State Quota Seats in Government Medical Colleges, Regional Cancer Centre(RCC), Thiruvananthapuram and to the entire seats including Minority Quota and NRI Quota Seats available in the Private Self-Financing Medical Colleges in Kerala. Detailed Prospectus & Fee details are available in the websites: www.cee.kerala.gov.in, www.prd.kerala.gov.in, www.kerala.gov.in. Last date & time for submitting online application along with uploaded documents/certificates is 20.03.2020, before 5 pm. Helpline No. 0471-2525300

Thiruvananthapuram

12.03.2020

657/F/4/2020/I&PR

(Sd/-)

For Commissioner for Entrance Examinations

Universities limit face-to-face interaction, give online tasks

IIT asks students to vacate hostels, JNU suspends exams

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

From limiting face-to-face interaction, sending online assignments to completely shutting down campuses, universities and institutes in the city have announced measures to deal with COVID-19, which has been declared an epidemic by the State government.

Gautam, who studies in Jawaharlal Nehru University,

said: "All seminars and conferences have been postponed, but the libraries are open as of now."

Stating that the submission dates of assignments have been postponed, a management student at Fortune Institute of International Business, Shreya, said she welcomed the government's decision of shutting colleges.

Gautam, who studies in Jawaharlal Nehru University,

said: "All seminars and conferences have been postponed, but the libraries are open as of now."

Non-teaching staff from Sri Guru Tegh Bahadur Khalsa College said that only the administration department staff and the principal were available in the college and holidays had been declared for students as well as teaching staff.

In view of the current situation, it is hereby noticed that all lectures, class presentations and examinations at JNU are suspended till March 31 with immediate effect," JNU Registrar Pramod Kumar said. "Basic mess facilities will be available to the hostel residents during this period," he said.

Jamia Millia Islamia also suspended classes with im-

mediate effect till March 31 and advised students to avoid large gatherings.

Teachers should make available to students study material online if they need any help. Face-to-face group interaction or gathering of students should be avoided

JAMIA MILLIA ISLAMIA

The central library, it said will provide customised services by way of downloading research and teaching material required for onward circulation to students.

Delhi University had on Thursday said that any internal exam for undergraduate or postgraduate programmes had been postponed and it had also suspended classes and cancelled all functions.

To maintain continuity in the teaching-learning process in all undergraduate and postgraduate programmes, study material shall be made available on a weekly basis on the website by the respective teachers of all departments/colleges/centres," the university had said.

"Teachers should make available to students the study material online in case they need any assistance. The respective teacher should contact the students via email for reference of study material available online. Face-to-face group interaction or gathering of students should be avoided," the university had said.

A spokesperson from Ashoka University said that the university had extended the spring break and as of now, on-campus classes are scheduled to resume on March 30. "Online classes will be conducted to ensure minimum disruption," a statement from Ashoka University read.

Virus fallout: High Court to only hear urgent matters from March 16

Decision taken at an emergency meeting of court panel

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Friday decided to hear only urgent matters from March 16 in the wake of the outbreak of COVID-19.

An advisory was subsequently issued by the court

in which it said that its functioning from March 16 shall be restricted to urgent matters and that the court master shall give dates in routine matters before the court



ATTENTION!

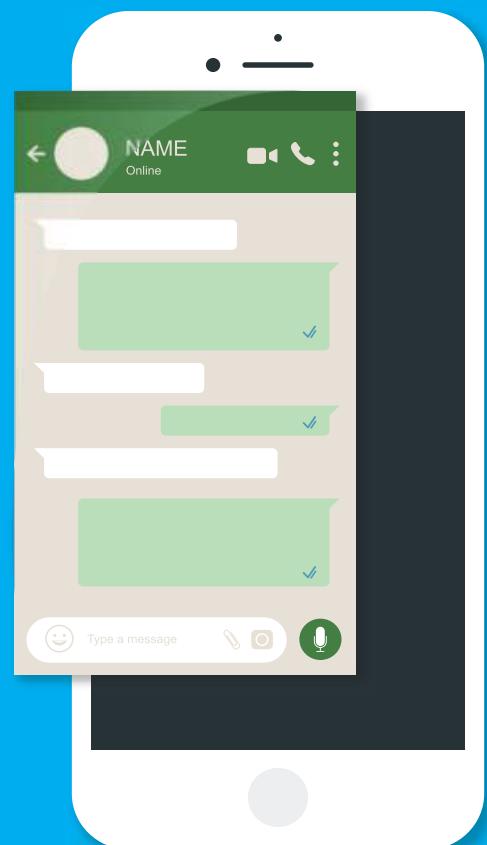
**SHARING INFLAMMATORY
MESSAGES ON WHATSAPP
CAN LAND YOU IN JAIL
FOR 3 YEARS**



If any individual shares or forwards messages or videos on WhatsApp or any Social Media Platforms (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc) which are inflammatory in nature or incites communal tensions then the guilty will have to serve jail term upto 3 years.

HOW CAN YOU HELP?

If you find anyone sharing communally inflammatory messages or video on WhatsApp or any Social Media platforms (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc) then immediately send the screenshot or the video to us on the number given below.



BECOME A PEACE - MAKER

If an F.I.R. is lodged on the basis of your complaint, then
YOU WILL ALSO GET A REWARD OF ₹10,000

WhatsApp no. 8950000946

Email: DVSCCommittee@delhi.gov.in

Timings
DELHI

SATURDAY, MAR. 14
RISE 06:32 SET 18:29
RISE 23:43 SET 09:53
SUNDAY, MAR. 15
RISE 06:31 SET 18:30
RISE 00:00 SET 10:38
MONDAY, MAR. 16
RISE 06:30 SET 18:30
RISE 00:46 SET 11:27

Delhi Weather max min
Delhi City 28 14
Safdarjung 28 14
Palam 28 14

Delhi Pilm Today
28°C Haze/mist is likely in the morning. A partly cloudy sky and a few spells of rain and thundershower is likely.

Delhi Pilm Tomorrow
28°C Mist/shallow fog is likely in the morning. A warm afternoon and a mainly clear sky is expected.

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IN BRIEF

Five arrested for Holi violence in U.P.

MUZAFFARNAGAR
Five persons were arrested after a clash during Holi left three persons with stab injuries in Ramlila Tilla area, police said. PTI

COVID-19 scare: school, colleges closed in Haryana, Punjab and U.P.

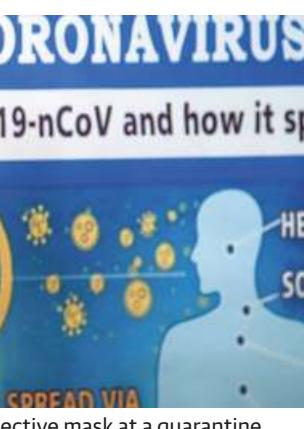
Examinations, however, will be held as per schedule in the three States

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHANDIGARH

The Haryana government has decided to close all universities and colleges, both government and private, in the State till March 31 as a precautionary measure in the wake of the outbreak of COVID-19. The Uttar Pradesh government too has decided to close all schools and educational institutes till March 22.

Similarly, the Punjab government has also announced closure of all government and private schools in the State till March 31.

Haryana's Director of Higher Education, issuing an advisory on Friday about the novel coronavirus to all State and private universities, said that the State government has decided to close all universities and colleges till March 31 as a precautionary measure.



A securityman wearing a protective mask at a quarantine facility at Chhawla in New Delhi. ■ FILE PHOT: PTI

Separately, Haryana's Department of School Education has also decided to close all government and private schools in the five districts of Sonipat, Rohtak, Jhajjar, Faridabad and Gurgaon till March 31. An order in this regard said that examinations in these schools will be held as per schedule.

The Punjab government, while announcing the closure of all government and private schools, said examinations would continue as per the set schedule.

Education Minister Vijay Inder Singh said the virus was spreading all over the world, thus it was necessary that precautionary measures

were intensified.

In U.P., all schools and educational institutes will be shut till March 22 as a precautionary measure.

11 positive cases

So far 11 positive cases have been detected in the State: seven in Agra, two in Ghaziabad and one each in Noida and Lucknow.

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath announced that as a precaution and to prevent any panic situation, all basic education board and intermediate board schools, colleges, technical and vocational training institutes would be shut till March 22.

While examinations in general have also been postponed, in institutes where they have already commenced, they will continue as per schedule, Mr. Adityanath told media persons after a review meeting.

Nitish, officials hold meet on COVID-19

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
PATNA

After a high-level meeting with Chief Minister Nitish Kumar and top officials, Bihar Chief Secretary Deepak Kumar on Friday said that all schools, colleges, cinema halls and coaching institutes in the State will be closed till March 31 as a preventive measure to contain spread of COVID-19. He said that all parks and botanical gardens in the State too will be shut during this period.

Since COVID-19 spreads fast so people have been advised to remain inside their home as long as it is possible, he added.

Bihar, though, has no positive case of COVID-19 yet.

A nine-bed isolation ward has been made in the government-owned Patna Medical College and Hospital.

Currently two suspected patients of COVID-19 are admitted there.

Chinmayanand, Sengar in SP leader's banner

'Made to alert women against criminals'

OMAR RASHID
LUCKNOW

A Samajwadi Party leader in Uttar Pradesh has put up a banner of former BJP MLA and rape convict Kuldeep Singh Sengar and former Union Minister Swami Chinmayanand, also facing sexual exploitation allegations, in Lucknow.

He justified his banner saying it was to alert women against "criminals named by court," in public interest.

Banner removed

The police have apparently taken off the banner put up by Mr. Singh, who is a former BJP leader.

He said the police removed the banner in the middle of the night. "If the police had shown the same urgency in the security of women, then U.P. would not be number one in crime. The U.P. government is with the criminals. Yogi government has been fully exposed," he said.

The police are yet to issue a statement.

Highest NAAC grade for Tonk university

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
JAIPUR

Banasthali Vidyapith, a residential university for women situated in Rajasthan's Tonk district, has become the State's first varsity to be accorded the highest grade, A++, by the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC), which is an autonomous institution of the University Grants Commission.

Banasthali Vidyapith scored 90% and above in each of the seven criteria on the basis of which the NAAC carried out its assessment. The criteria included the factors such as curricular aspects, teaching-learning and evaluation, research, innovation, infrastructure, governance, leadership, management and institutional values.

BJP springs a surprise by fielding 2 RS candidates from Rajasthan

Polls slated for March 26; tough fight likely for the seats

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
JAIPUR

The Bharatiya Janata Party sprang a surprise on Friday when it fielded two candidates from Rajasthan for the upcoming Rajya Sabha elections. The biennial polls for three seats of the Upper House from the State, scheduled for March 26, will witness a tough fight between the BJP and the ruling Congress.

The BJP, which had earlier announced its State unit vice-president and former Minister Rajendra Gehlot as its sole candidate, fielded former MP Onkar Singh Lakshawat on the last day for filing of nomination papers on Friday. As the Congress has also fielded two candidates, a tough contest is on the cards for the three seats.

Mr. Gehlot and Mr. Lakshawat, accompanied by Leader of Opposition in the Assembly Gulab Chand Kataria, filed their nomination papers at the Assembly Secretariat. Mr. Lakshawat told reporters that he had received instructions from BJP president J.P. Nadda to file his nomination as the party's official candidate.

Nominations filed

Congress candidates K.C. Venugopal and Neeraj Dangi submitted their nomination papers to the Assembly Secretary and Returning Officer Pramil Mathur in the presence of Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot, Deputy CM Sachin Pilot and government chief whip Mahesh Joshi.

AICC general secretary Mr. Venugopal, who earlier represented the Alappuzha Lok Sabha constituency in

Kerala, had opted out of contesting the 2019 general elections because of his organisational responsibilities. Mr. Dangi, a former Youth Congress State president, is considered a confidant of Mr. Gehlot. He had unsuccessfully contested three Assembly elections in the past.

With its tally of 107 MLAs in the 200-member House and the support of Rashtriya Lok Dal and Independents, the ruling Congress could have an easy win on two of the Rajya Sabha seats in the absence of a formidable opposition. The fight will be tough with the entry of two BJP nominees.

Of the 10 Rajya Sabha seats in Rajasthan, nine – including the three whose tenure is going to complete next month – are held by the BJP.

Protest for jobs



Teacher Eligibility Test-qualified candidates shave their heads during a protest to seek permanent jobs, in Patna on Friday. ■ PTI

SP national executive meeting today

Party to deliberate on various issues, including 2022 Assembly polls

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
LUCKNOW

The Samajwadi Party's (SP) national executive committee will meet here on Saturday to deliberate on various political issues, including the Assembly elections to be held in 2022.

This will be the first national executive of the party after a dismal show in the 2019 Lok Sabha elections.

SP founder Mulayam Singh Yadav is also likely to attend the meeting presided over by party president Akhilesh Yadav, national spokesman Rajendra Chaudhari said on Friday.



SP chief Akhilesh Yadav

The next Assembly elections in the State will also be discussed in the meeting, a spokesman said.

"The wrong policies being pursued by the BJP go-

ty entering into an alliance for the next elections, the spokesman said he was not aware of it.

Poll alliance

Sources said Samajwadi Party could enter into an understanding with smaller parties in some parts of the State or have seat adjustments and this may be taken up in Saturday's meeting.

The SP had formed its government with full majority in 2012 but in subsequent Assembly elections, its performance was below expectations.

Rain, hailstorm flatten wheat crop in Punjab

Opposition parties demand compensation for affected farmers in the State

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
CHANDIGARH

Untimely widespread rain accompanied by hailstorm and strong winds have flattened wheat crop over one lakh hectares in Punjab with Fazilka district being the worst hit, officials said on Friday.

Rains had lashed several parts of Punjab on March 11 and 12.

Lodging has taken place on 1,06,950 hectares at different places in the State because of rain, hailstorm and strong winds, an agriculture department official said on Friday.

Among the affected areas, maximum lodging was re-



Fazilka dist. was worst-hit with 45,000 acres of crop affected ■ FILE PHOTO

cause the average crop yield to drop by 6 to 7%.

Lodging refers to crops falling flat on the ground. This causes yield loss.

Heavy showers last week had flattened crops on 2.02 lakh hectares in the State.

Known as the food bowl of the country, Punjab is expecting more than 175 lakh tonne of wheat output. The harvesting of wheat would start in April.

Punjab Congress chief Sunil Jakhar appealed to Chief Minister Amarinder Singh to order a special 'girdwari'

port in Fazilka at 45,500 hectares, followed by Patiala with 25,000 hectares, Rupnagar with 18,000 hectares, Fatehgarh Sahib with 8,100 hectares and Hoshiarpur with 8,000 hectares.

Heavy showers last week had flattened crops on 2.02 lakh hectares in the State.

Known as the food bowl of the country, Punjab is expecting more than 175 lakh tonne of wheat output. The harvesting of wheat would start in April.

Punjab Congress chief Sunil Jakhar appealed to Chief Minister Amarinder Singh to order a special 'girdwari'

(survey) for the assessment of loss of wheat and kinnar crops.

In a statement here, the Congress leader said rain and hailstorm have damaged crops, especially in Fazilka and some other districts.

Orchards damaged

He said several kinnar orchards suffered damage because of the hailstorm in Fazilka.

Shiromani Akali Dal chief Sukhbir Singh Badal also asked the Chief Minister to order an immediate 'girdwari' to assess the damage caused to rabi crops.

Jyotiraditya Scindia's growing discontentment in Madhya Pradesh was obvious

The Congress plunged itself into crisis by downplaying differences within the State unit, snubbing detractors, or simply looking the other way

SIDDHARTH YADAV
BHOPAL

During the 14-month tenure of the Madhya Pradesh government, ominous signs of Jyotiraditya Scindia's seething revolt were read accurately, and astutely, by a political party, though on the wrong side of the spectrum – the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). The Congress, on the other hand, took him for a fuispot, downplayed differences, snubbed detractors, or simply looked the other way.

If the January 2019 meeting after the Assembly elections, between the BJP's Shivraj Singh Chouhan and the Leader of the Opposition's post, and Mr. Scindia, denied the Chief Minister's post, failed to rouse the Congress, at least his support for

Article 370's dilution; the erasure of references to the posts Mr. Scindia has held with the Congress from his Twitter handle (the "former Union Minister, MP of Guna" is now described as "public servant, cricket enthusiast"); his unhappiness with the survey of damage caused by the 2019 floods and claim that poll promises were unkept, pointed to only one direction – an imminent cutting of ties.

Still, his undue advice to Chief Minister Kamal Nath to "listen to others" was too sinister to go unnoticed.

Full circle

At the "courtesy meeting" with Mr. Chouhan at his residence, he hinted at burying the hatchet after the election by saying "raat gayi toh baat

gai". The BJP on the stump, especially in its Gwalior-Chambal stronghold, had mocked his titular title: "Maaf karao Maharaj, hamara neta toh Shivraj" ("Sorry Maharaj, our leader is Shivraj"). On Wednesday, Mr. Chouhan, coming a full circle, stated: "Today Maharaj and Shivraj have become one," this time, in the presence of Mr. Scindia's aunt Yashodhara Raje, a BJP MLA, while in New Delhi Mr. Scindia praised Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership after joining the party.

er Chief Minister who strode ahead by 10%-12% points, according to a CSDS-Lokniti survey. If during the Lok Sabha election, a BJP candidate secured the mandate to re-elect Narendra Modi as the Prime Minister, the Assembly election brought back Congress that rode on Mr. Scindia's popularity, with his ap-

pointment as Chief Minister as the logical end. Refusing to settle for the Deputy Chief Minister's post, Mr. Scindia was placed by close friend Rahul Gandhi to accept Mr. Nath instead.

The first clear sign of factional rift between Mr. Scindia and Mr. Nath came rather obliquely in the form of Ministers from both sides squabbling in a Cabinet meeting in June, days after the Congress secured the Chhindwara seat, the Nath family's base, the only one of the 29 seats in the Lok Sabha election. A Minister close to Mr. Nath interjected Pradyumna Singh Tomar while speaking, symbolising an open cornering of the Scindia faction, prompting the Chief Minister to intervene.

Then in August, Mr. Scindia's dissent amplified nationally, with his backing for diluting Article 370, opposed by the Congress in Parliament. Flirting with the idea of his changing ranks, the BJP in Bhind put up a poster congratulating him for supporting the Centre's decision, positioning Mr. Scindia, Union Home Minister Amit Shah and Mr. Modi in the same frame. Still, to the Congress, the episode seemed too trivial to take notice. Leader of the Opposition Gopal Bhargava even called upon him to quit the party.

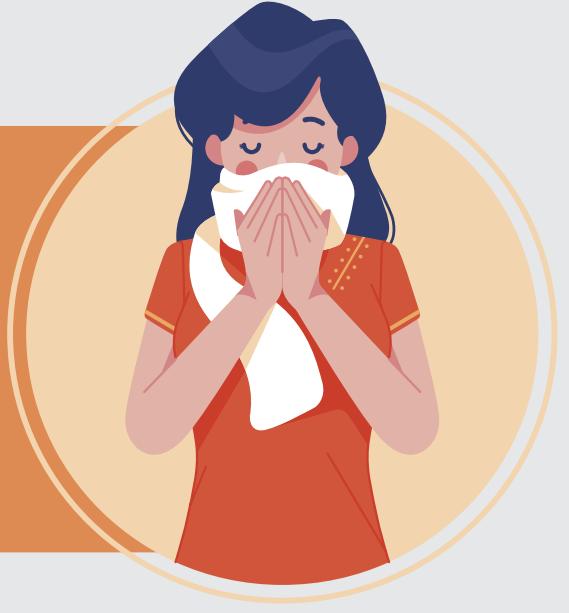
Although Mr. Scindia had publicly nursed the idea to be the Chief Minister, later he too often said he never ran after power. Yet, his supporters relentlessly and

openly vouched to make him the Pradesh Congress Committee (PCC) chief, another portfolio with Mr. Nath, to secure a Rajya Sabha ticket for him, and pledged allegiance even if he abandoned the party.

Several signs

While in August, a loyalist threatened to quit the party along with 500 workers if Mr. Scindia was kept at bay from the State's politics and not

NOVEL CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19) GENERAL ADVISORY FOR PUBLIC



The 2019 novel coronavirus (COVID-19) is a contagious virus that causes respiratory infection, can transfer from human to human.

SYMPTOMS

- FEVER
- DIFFICULTY IN BREATHING
- COUGHING
- TIGHTNESS OF CHEST
- RUNNING NOSE
- HEAD ACHE
- FEELING OF BEING UNWELL
- PNEUMONIA
- KIDNEY FAILURE

MODE OF TRANSMISSION

Human Coronavirus (COVID-19) most commonly spread from an infected person to other through:

- Coughing and sneezing
- Close personal contact, such as touching or shaking hand
- Touching an object or surface with the virus on it, then touching your mouth, nose, or eyes before washing your hands

HOW TO REDUCE RISK OF CORONAVIRUS INFECTION (COVID-19)

- Clean hand with soap and water or alcohol based hand rub
- Cover nose and mouth when coughing & sneezing with tissue or flexed elbow
- Avoid close contact & maintain 1 meter distance with anyone
- Isolation of persons travelling from affected countries for atleast 14 days.

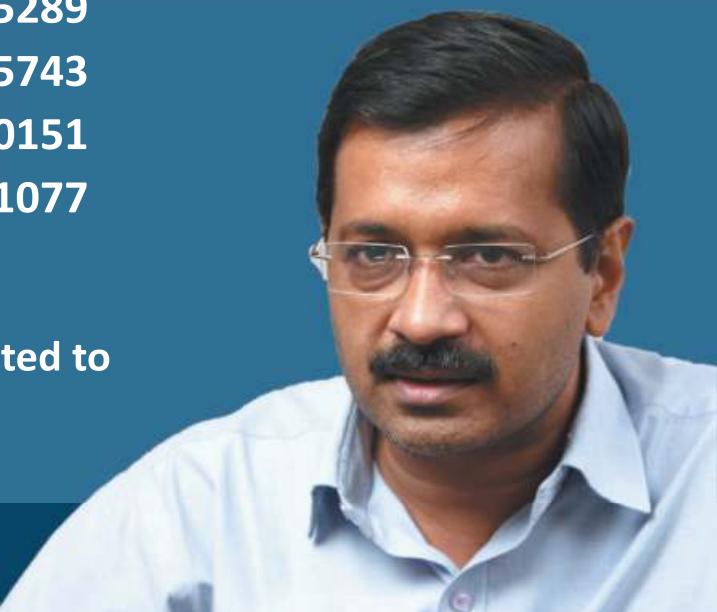
DO's	DON'Ts
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cover your nose and mouth with disposable tissue or handkerchief while coughing or sneezing• Throw used tissues into closed bins immediately after use• Frequently wash your hands with soap and water• Avoid crowded places/big gatherings• Person suffering from Influenza like illness must be confined to home• Stay more than one meter distance from persons sick with flu• Take adequate sleep and rest• Drink plenty of water/liquids and eat nutritious food• See a doctor if feel unwell (fever, difficulty breathing & cough). While visiting doctor, wear a mask/cloth to cover your mouth and nose.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Touching eyes, nose or mouth with unwashed hands• Hugging, kissing and shaking hands while greeting• Spitting in public places• Taking medicines without consulting doctor• Disposal of used napkin or tissue paper in open areas• Touching surfaces usually used by public (Railing, door gates, etc)

Control Room Numbers at State and District level

State DGHS (HQ)	011-22307145, 22300012, 22300036
North	011-27708768
South	011-29531277
East	011-22050908, 22051234
West	011-25195529
North-West	011-25951182

South-West	011-25066674
South-East	011-26476410
North-East	011-22115289
New Delhi	011-23385743
Central	011-23270151
Shahdara	011-22111077

24*7 Control Room has been established at DGHS (HQ), may be contacted for any query related to COVID-19 Ph: 011-22307145, 22300012, 22300036



IN BRIEF



Bus catches fire, 25 passengers unhurt

HYDERABAD
Twenty-five passengers and the driver of a private air-conditioned bus, escaped unhurt after the vehicle caught fire early on Friday on the Hyderabad-Mumbai highway at RC Puram here. The bus belonging to Orange Travels was proceeding from Mumbai to Hyderabad. Short circuit may have caused the fire, say officials.

TDP leader from Kurnool quits party

KURNool
In another blow to the TDP, its MLC from Andhra Pradesh's Kurnool district K.E. Prabhakar has resigned from the party. "The party, instead of preferring loyalists, has given ticket to new persons to contest the local body elections," Mr. Prabhakar told *The Hindu*. "I will announce my plans after eliciting the opinion of my supporters."

RSS conducts national survey to map skills of its members

Move to involve them in social programmes

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
BENGALURU
In a bid to harness the potential of its members, the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) has conducted a national survey of nearly 15 lakh members to know their areas of interest as well as skills.

"We have conducted the survey of members aged above 30. Depending upon their area of interest, we will take up social programmes

Karnataka seeks quota for locals

'Govt. speaking to private companies'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
BENGALURU

The Karnataka government has insisted that private companies provide 80% reservation in jobs for locals (Kannada-speaking people) in all categories, said Minister for Major and Medium Industries Jagadish Shettar on Friday.

In his reply to questions of N.A. Haris (Congress) and Harish Poonja (BJP) in the Assembly, Mr. Shettar said the government had been speaking to private firms on reservation. The government amended the Karnataka Industrial Employment (Standing Orders) Rules, 1961, to reserve 100% for group 'C' and group 'D' jobs for locals in the private sector, he said. The government last year amended the rules to allow this.

However, the notification had drawn the ire of activists since it only asked in-



Jagadish Shettar

ustrial establishments to give priority to Kannadigas, but neither made it mandatory nor stated any punitive measures if the establishments failed to do so.

A month ago, about 100 Kannada outfits had staged a day-long shutdown in the State under a common banner, seeking more jobs for Kannadigas in State-run enterprises and job reservation for locals in the private sector.

However, the notification had drawn the ire of activists since it only asked in-

Karnataka shuts down malls, cinemas

Mass gatherings must be put off, says govt. after first COVID death

STAFF REPORTER
BENGALURU

The Karnataka government has ordered a week-long shutdown of several places of mass gathering from Saturday in an effort to curb the spread of COVID-19. While malls, theatres and pubs will remain shut, exhibitions, summer camps, sports events and big weddings will have to be put off.

All colleges and universities coming under the purview of the higher education department will be closed for 15 days from Saturday. The government has already announced that schools cannot hold any classes, but exams will be held for high school students. These precautionary measures follow India's first COVID-19 death being confirmed in Karnataka on Friday.

"If people have invited 1,000 people for the wed-



No commerce: The deserted Commercial Street in Bengaluru on Friday. ■ K. MURALI KUMAR

ding, they could conduct the wedding with around 100 people," he said.

Restaurants and eateries will however, remain open but the State government has asked people not to go out. Even before these measures were announced, the Karnataka Prades Hotel & Restaurants Association recorded a 70% decline in foot-

falls since the first week of March.

Pankaj Kumar Pandey, Commissioner, Department of Health and Family Welfare said, "People can order via online platforms that deliver food to the doorstep," he said.

The Chief Minister advised all residents to stay at home and be safe.

Amusement park closed

Wonderla Holidays Ltd. has decided to temporarily close down its Bengaluru Amusement Park for a week from March 14 to prevent the spread of COVID-19, said the company. Earlier, it also announced the temporary closure of its Kochi Amusement Park from March 11 to 20.

TTD screening devotees

The Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD) on Friday set up a screening camp each at Alipiri and Srivarimettu, the two points at the foothills used by devotees to trek to the Lord Venkateswara temple at Tirumala. TTD employees are using thermal guns to check the temperature of pilgrims.

RSS conducts national survey to map skills of its members

Move to involve them in social programmes

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
BENGALURU

In a bid to harness the potential of its members, the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) has conducted a national survey of nearly 15 lakh members to know their areas of interest as well as skills.

"We have conducted the survey of members aged above 30. Depending upon their area of interest, we will take up social programmes

to involve them to bring about positive changes in society," said RSS Akhil Bharatiya Prachar Pramukh Arun Kumar.

Briefing mediapersons here on Friday about the three-day conclave of the sangh's highest decision-making body, Akhil Bharatiya Pratinidhi Sabha (ABPS) – scheduled to be held in Channenahalli on the Bengaluru city outskirts from March 15, he said the meet would also discuss the ways to utilise the services of these members.

"We will draw programmes that have a social

thrust to utilise the services of our members," he said. The idea was to use their services in their neighbourhood, he noted.

Meanwhile, sources in the RSS said the survey had obtained information from members on various aspects such as areas of their interest and specialisation; whether they wanted to involve themselves in building the organisation or take up social service. The survey had asked them to specify the quantum of time they could dedicate for social work in a day/week or month, sources said.

Sabarimala opens to sparse pilgrim flow

Postpone visit, priest urges devotees

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
PATHANAMTHITTA

The Ayyappa temple at Sabarimala opened on Friday afternoon for the five-day monthly rituals in the Malayalam month of Meenom that begins on Saturday.

The Travancore Devaswom Board (TDB) has appealed to devotees not to visit the hillock against the backdrop of the COVID-19 outbreak. However, around 200 pilgrims turned up on Friday, as against the usual turnout of 10,000 pilgrims. A majority was from Karnataka and Tamil Nadu.

A medical team at Pampa

measured the body temperature of the devotees, using infrared thermometers.

TDB executive officer Rajendraprasad said only unavoidable rituals would be performed at the temple. Devotees will not be able to offer Neyyabhishekam or other offerings. The Appam-Aravana counters and the Neyyabhishekam ticket counters remained closed.

Tantri (chief priest) Kandararu Maheswararao Mohanarao too urged the devotees to try and postpone their visit. The temple will be closed after Athazhapuwa on March 18 evening.

Three more COVID-19 cases confirmed in Kerala

State in a mass testing mode as more positive cases surface

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Kerala seems to be going into a mass testing mode for COVID-19 as more positive cases continue to surface, posing new challenges and putting the health system under strain.

The very factors that spurred Kerala's development – a huge population of non-resident Keralites spread across nations, its attraction as a major tourist destination – are now turning out to be huge challenges when it comes to tackling

the new pandemic.

Three persons in the capital district – all of them came from abroad – were confirmed as COVID-19 positive on Friday, taking the total number of patients in the second wave of coronavirus disease to 19, spread across six districts.

One of them is a person from Vellandu who came from the UAE after visiting several nations, including Italy. He had been advised home quarantine on arrival at the Thiruvananthapuram international airport but was

later brought in for testing. COVID-19 was also confirmed in an Italian tourist who had already been in quarantine at the resort where he had booked in at Varkala. The third case was that of a person who had returned from the U.K.

As on Friday, 5,468 persons are under surveillance, of whom 277 are in isolation in hospitals. Briefing media, Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan said the State would have to keep a vigil on all tourist centres, including homestays and resorts.

SEARCH FOR MISSING

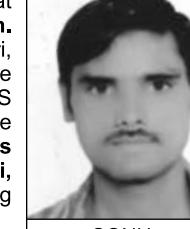


General public is hereby informed that one boy namely Hassan Ansari, S/o Lt. Shakeel Ansari, R/o Sajar Mohalla, P.S. Saram, Distt. Rohtash, Bihar, Age: 15 Years, Height: 5'5", Complexion: Fair, wearing Red colour Track Suit and Leather Shoes, has been missing from Safdarjung Club, Block B-4, Safdarjung Enclave, New Delhi. In this regard a FIR No. 52/2020, Dated 23.02.2020 has been lodged at P.S. Safdarjung Enclave, New Delhi.

Sincere efforts have been made by the local police to trace out the boy but no clue has come to light so far. If any one having any information about him please inform undersigned.

SHO
P.S. Safdarjung Enclave,
New Delhi
Ph.: 011-24106345, 24106346
DP/83/SW/2020

SEARCH FOR MISSING



General public is hereby informed that one person namely Sonu S/o Sh. Mohal Lal R/o H. No. 9A/19, Trilok Puri, Delhi, has been missing since 28.10.2019 from the area of PS Kalyanpur, Delhi. In this regard, a case DD No. 06A dated 10.12.2019 has been registered at P.S. Kalyanpur, Delhi. The description of the missing person is as under,

Age: 23 Years, Complexion: Shallow, Height: 5'2", Face: Long Built: Normal, Wearing: Pink colour Shirt & Blue Colour Jeans Pant. Sincere efforts have been made by the local police to trace out him but no clue has come to light so far. If anyone has any information about the missing person then please inform P.S. Kalyanpur, Delhi at following Tel No. / e-mail: cic@cbi.gov.in and Website: http://cbi.nic.in

Ph: 011-24368638, 24368641
Fax No. 011-24368639

Sd/- S.H.O.
P.S. Kalyanpur, Delhi
Ph: 011-22772251
DP/7216/ED/19

HIMACHAL PRADESH JAL SHAKTI VIBHAG

NOTICE INVITING E-TENDER

Online bids on item ratebasis are invited by the Executive Engineer, Jal Shakti Division, Dalhousie Distt. Chamba (HP) on behalf of Governor of Himachal Pradesh in electronic tendering system in two covers for the below mentioned work from the contractors/firms of appropriate class enlisted with Himachal Pradesh, Jal Shakti Vibhag.

Sr. No.	Name of work	Estimated Cost	Earnest money	Time Limit	Cost of form
1.	Providing Sewerage Scheme to Chowari Town in Tehsil Bhattiwal District Chamba Himachal Pradesh (Sub head:- (SH-Laying Jointing & Testing of D.I. Pipe 150 mm dia including C/O Man Hole Chambers, Flushing tanks, Inspection chambers and supporting pillars). (Zone-1st)	Rs. 33,50,478/-	Rs. 3,67,805/-	Two Year	Rs. 2500/-

1. Tender documents and other instructions can be downloaded or viewed online from the portal https://htptenders.gov.in by the contractors/firms registered on the website.

2. Since the bids are to be submitted online are required to be encrypted and digitally signed, the bidders are advised to obtain Digital Signature Certificate (DSC) from suitable vendors or from an authorized agency at the earliest.

3. Key Dates will be as under:

1. Date of online publication	12-03-2020 at 02:00 PM
2. Downloading of e-tender Documents	From 12-03-2020 at 02:00 PM upto 25-03-2020 at 5:00 PM
3. Last date of submission of e-tendering	From 12-03-2020 at 02:00 PM upto 25-03-2020 at 5:00 PM
4. Date of opening of tender.	26-03-2020 at 11:30 AM

4. Only online submission of bids is permitted, therefore, bids must be submitted online on departmental website www.htptenders.gov.in

The Tender Documents shall be uploaded online in 2 covers.

i) Cover 1:- "Technical Bid/Eligibility Criteria" which shall contain scanned copies of all Technical Documents & Eligibility information".

ii) Cover 2:- "Financial bid" which shall contain "BOQ/Financial documents" where contractor will quote his offer for each item.

5. Eligibility/Certification Criteria: The intending contractor/firm shall fulfill the following conditions for qualifying in e-tendering process

(i) The Contractor/Firm must be registered in appropriate class with the Jal Shakti Vibhag.

(ii) Average Annual financial turn over during the last 3 years ending 31st March of the previous financial year should be at least 30% of the estimated cost.

(iii) Satisfactorily completed, as prime contractor, similar nature works i.e., Laying and Jointing of D.I. Piping Network" at least as under:

* Three completed civil work of similar nature i.e. costing each not less than 40% in value each of the estimated cost of work for which the bid is invited. OR

* Two completed civil work of similar nature costing each not less than 50% in value each of the estimated cost of work for which the bid is invited. OR

* One completed civil work of similar nature costing each not less than 80% in value of the estimated cost of work for which the bid is invited.

Note:- The work completed more than 90% either financially or physically executed work shall be considered as completed work.

6. Technical Bid/ eligibility information(Cover-I) shall contain scanned copies of the following documents which shall be uploaded on the website http://www.htptenders.gov.in at the appropriate place

i) Demand Draft towards the Cost of Bid Document

ii) Bid Security in any of the forms specified in NIT

iii) Copy of PAN Card issued by Income Tax Authorities

iv) Income Tax & Sale Tax, G. S. T., EPF registration/clearance certificate; and in case bidder not possessing G. S. T. registration in Himachal Pradesh an undertaking to this effect shall be submitted that he will get himself registered in sales department in Himachal Pradesh after award of work.

v) Contractor Registration certificate in appropriate class with H.P. Jal Shakti Vibhag.

vi) An affidavit that the information furnished with the bid document is correct in all respects

vii) Annual Turnover Certificate from chartered Accountant for last seven financial years with breakup of civil works and total works in each financial year.

viii) Scanned copies of the Certificates showing details of works of similar nature, work in hand and machineries owned or possessed on hire should be uploaded after converting the same to PDF.

ix) All statutory deductions such as G.S.T./income tax or any other statutory levies as levied by Govt. of HP or Govt. of India from time to time shall be payable and deducted from the bill of contractor at prescribed rates and Govt. will not entertain any claim whatsoever on this account.

Cover-2 shall contain BOQ where contractor will quote his offer for each item.

7. The tenders of the contractors/Firm who fails to fulfill the eligibility information will be summarily rejected.

8. The negotiation/clarification if any will be taken from the successful contractor only in respect of error and omission, technical aspects and in no case of financial bid.

9. Earnest money of L1, L2 and L3 shall be retained for a period of 120 days.

10. The representatives of the firm shall inspect the site himself and make converstion with the site conditions.



On edge: (From left) Municipality workers in Srinagar carrying out a sanitisation drive at the city's Jamia Masjid on Friday; A roadside vendor selling masks, which are in great demand, in New Delhi; Evacuees at the ITBP facility in the capital after they tested negative for COVID-19; Devotees wearing face masks at the Golden Temple in Amritsar. • NISSAR AHMAD, SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA, PTI, AFP



Masks, sanitisers now essential commodities

Centre announces the decision following their shortage in the wake of COVID-19 outbreak



The order was notified under the Essential Commodities Act, 1955. • PTI

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Masks and hand sanitisers have been declared as essential commodities due to their shortage in the wake of the COVID-19 outbreak.

On Friday, the Centre notified an order under the Essential Commodities Act, 1955 to declare 2 ply and 3 ply surgical masks, N95

masks and hand sanitisers as essential commodities till June 30, 2020. It has also issued an advisory under the Legal Metrology Act, so that States can ensure these items are not sold for more than the Maximum Retail Price (MRP).

It has been noted that these products are "either not available with most of

the vendors in the market or are available with great difficulty at exorbitant prices," said a statement from the Consumer Affairs Department. The decision would empower the States and the Central government to regulate production, quality, distribution and sale of these items, and carry out operations against those involved

in speculation, overpricing and black marketing.

Consumers can register complaints with the National Consumer Helpline 1800-11-4000 or at consumerhelpline.gov.in.

An offender under the Essential Commodities Act can be punished with imprisonment up to seven years, or a fine, or both.

'Social distancing key to containing COVID-19'

Avoid functions, urge health experts

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI

With the World Health Organisation declaring COVID-19 a global pandemic,

the need for social distancing to prevent the spread of the infection is being underscored.

IMA Resource Person on COVID-19, Dr. K.K. Aggarwal, recommended a three feet distance between people.

At Sundram Fasteners offices in Chennai, hand sanitisers have been given and employees instructed not to go for lunch in groups, he said.

"If you look at the normal distance between two beds in a hospital ward it will be three feet. Similarly the distance between two seats in the first class on an airline is three feet. Ever wondered why? That's the safe distance to maintain during respiratory illness. This is the distance to be maintained for anyone who has a cold, cough or sneeze, or some form of visible respiratory distress," he said.

It is also important to follow normal Indian etiquette - the namaste- to greet others instead of handshakes.

Decontamination of surfaces frequently and maintaining hand hygiene are other measures people must keep up with, he said.

India also sent a five-member medical team to Rome on Friday for testing of the citizens for the virus.

The Centre on Thursday clarified that India would not evacuate all citizens and would carry out mandatory tests and quarantine procedure as laid down in the process.

authorities must proactively close schools, businesses, cinema halls, concerts and public functions.

"There is no use feeling sorry later," he stressed. He recalled how India faced an epidemic in 1918 of the Spanish Flu where several thousand people died because the country was totally unprepared.

SC decides to cut hearings

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Supreme Court Secretary General Sanjeev S. Kalgaonkar on Friday issued a notification stating that the functioning of the court on reopening on March 16 will be restricted. A circular late on Friday said only six Division Benches would be sitting on March 16 to hear urgent matters. All Special And Constitution Benches stand cancelled.

700 employees under watch

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GHAZIABAD

Around 700 employees of a private company in Noida have been asked to work from home after one of its executives tested positive for COVID-19. Anurag Bharatgava, Chief Medical Officer, Gautam Buddha Nagar, told *The Hindu* that the employees have been put under "surveillance".

New deadline for health checks

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The deadline for a mandatory annual health check for Central government servants above the age of 40 years has been extended from March 31 to June 30 in the wake of the COVID-19 outbreak, said Union Minister for Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions Jitendra Singh.

44 Indians brought from Iran

They were stuck in the country after flights were cancelled

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Bhargava said. The Council, on Friday, also announced that it has expanded its network of labs equipped to test COVID-19 from 51 to 65, and that the secondary tests for reconfirmation of the virus, which was earlier conducted only in National Institute of Virology, have also been expanded to 31 labs.

Labs underutilised
"These steps will enable India to expedite detection of the virus and will help in effective management. Till date, ICMR has tested more than 6,500 samples of 5,900 individuals, of which 81 cases have been tested positive for the virus," he said.

"ICMR is equipped to handle more volumes of samples if the need arises. As of now our labs are being underutilised," he added.



Back home: Indian evacuees brought from Iran at the Chhatrapati Shivaji International Airport in Mumbai. • AFP

were located in the worst-hit countries.

A few thousand citizens of both countries are stranded in Iran and India as India cancelled flights in February in view of spike in COVID-19 cases in Iran.

The first batch comprising 58 nationals were brought back in a C17 military transport aircraft on Tuesday. The Ministry of External Affairs said on Wednesday that the pilgrims and students would be tested before being airlifted, as they

from Qom sent a social media message urging the Government of India to evacuate her. In a message on Twitter, Syeeda Syed said she is alone in Qom.

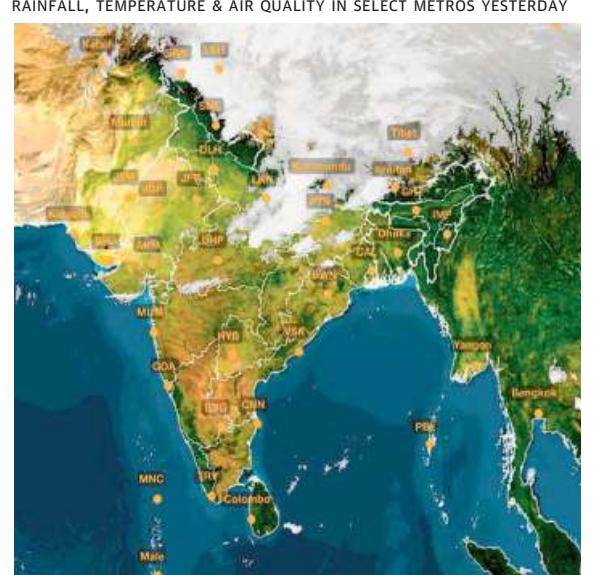
India also sent a five-member medical team to Rome on Friday for testing of the citizens for the virus.

The Centre on Thursday clarified that India would not evacuate all citizens and would carry out mandatory tests and quarantine procedure as laid down in the process.

"One should understand that several thousands of people are already affected," he said, adding that

WEATHER WATCH

RAINFALL, TEMPERATURE & AIR QUALITY IN SELECT METROS YESTERDAY



Forecast for Saturday: Thunderstorm accompanied by lightning likely at isolated places over West Bengal, Uttarakhand, Haryana, Chandigarh, Chhattisgarh, Uttar Pradesh, Jharkhand, Sikkim, Odisha, Bihar, Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram and Tripura.

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	...-35.00	20.0	...	Kozhikode	-36.00	26.0	...
Ahmedabad	...-31.00	15.0	...	Kurnool	-38.00	26.0	...
Aizawl	...-23.00	11.0	...	Lucknow	-24.00	15.0	...
Allahabad	2.2 ...-28.00	17.0	...	Madurai	-37.00	25.0	...
Bengaluru	...-34.00	21.0	...	Mangaluru	-35.00	24.0	...
Bhopal	0.4 ...-31.00	14.0	...	Mumbai	-26.00	14.0	...
Bhubaneswar	...-35.00	23.0	...	Mysuru	-34.00	22.0	...
Chandigarh	9.0 ...-26.00	11.0	...	New Delhi	-28.00	14.0	...
Chennai	...-32.00	26.0	...	Patna	0.1 ...-24.00	21.0	...
Coimbatore	...-35.00	23.0	...	Poorn Blair	-30.00	22.0	...
Dehradun	16.8 ...-28.00	13.0	...	Puducherry	-33.00	23.0	...
Gangtok	...-17.00	9.0	...	Pune	-33.00	15.0	...
Goa	...-32.00	21.0	...	Raipur	-30.00	20.0	...
Guwahati	...-31.00	15.0	...	Ranchi	0.3 ...-25.00	17.0	...
Hubballi	...-34.00	19.0	...	Shillong	-20.00	7.0	...
Hyderabad	...-34.00	21.0	...	Shimla	-24.00	20.0	...
Imphal	...-28.00	11.0	...	Srinagar	14.6 ...-12.00	1.0	...
Jaipur	...-28.00	14.0	...	Thiruvanthapuram	-33.00	26.0	...
Kochi	...-32.00	27.0	...	Tiruchi	-36.00	23.0	...
Kohima	...-23.00	11.0	...	Vijayawada	-36.00	23.0	...
Kolkata	...-34.00	23.0	...	Visakhapatnam	-33.00	26.0	...

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)

Pollutants in the air you are breathing

Yesterday

In observation made at 4.00 p.m., Jodhpur, Rajasthan recorded an overall air quality index (AQI) score of 294

indicating a severe level of pollution. In contrast,

Amaravati, Andhra Pradesh recorded a healthy AQI score of 31.

Sengar, 6 others get 10-year jail

He was held guilty in the death of rape victim's father

DEVESH KUMAR PANDEY
NEW DELHI

A special court on Friday sentenced Kuldeep Sengar and six others to 10 years imprisonment in two cases linked to the death of the Unnao rape victim's father in 2018.

Sengar and his brother, Jaideep alias Atul Singh, have also been directed to pay ₹10 lakh each as compensation to the family of the deceased. Among those convicted are the then Makhi Police Station in-charge Ashok Singh Bhaduria and then Sub-Inspector K. P. Singh.

The court asked the State government to take appropriate action against the

doctors whose medical negligence led to the death of the girl's father. On March 4, Sengar was held guilty of culpable homicide not amounting to murder. The two cases registered by the CBI on the request of the State government relate to the death of the victim's father in April 2018 and for possession of illegal arms.

The other offences invoked charges under Sections 120-B (criminal conspiracy), 166 (public servant disobeying law, with intent to cause injury to any person), 167 (public servant framing incorrect document to cause injury), 193 (punishment for false evidence), 201 (causing disappearance of evidence), 211 (false charge of offence made with intent to injure), 218 (public servant framing incorrect record to save person from punishment), 323 (voluntarily causing hurt) and 341 (punishment for wrongful restraint) of the IPC.

On December 20, 2019, the court sentenced Sengar to life imprisonment for raping the girl in 2017.

Centre announces Common Eligibility Test

Govt. aims to streamline hiring process

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Applicants for jobs in railways, banks and lower levels of Central government will now write a Common Eligibility Test (CET) from 2021, Minister for Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions Jitendra Singh told journalists on Friday.

"The exam dates for 2020 have already been announced [for the existing separate exams], so this will be implemented from 2021," he said.

He said the NRA proposal would soon go for Cabinet approval.

The CET will replace the first level tests conducted by the Staff Selection Commission, the Railway Recruitment Board and the Institute of Banking Personnel Selection.

ministrative reform, but a huge socio-economic reform as well. It aims at providing a level playing field for all candidates by removing the obstacles involved in appearing for multiple examinations," said Dr. Singh.

"The move will benefit about 48.34 lakh Central government employees and 65.26 lakh pensioners," an official statement said.

The Union Cabinet, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, on Friday approved an increase of 4% in dearness allowance to Central government employees and dearness relief to pensioners, with effect from April 1, 2020, said Union Minister Prakash Javadekar.

The combined impact on the exchequer on account of both dearness allowance and dearness relief would be ₹12,510.04 crore per annum and ₹14,595.04 crore, respectively, in the financial year 2020-21.

"The move will benefit about 48.34 lakh Central government employees and 65.26 lakh pensioners," an official statement said.

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JAWAHARLAL INSTITUTE OF POSTGRADUATE MEDICAL EDUCATION AND RESEARCH (JIPMER)

(An Institution of National Importance under the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, Government of India), Dhanvantari Nagar, Puducherry - 605 006

Phone: 0413 - 2296022 Website: www.jipmer.edu.in



People over profit

Commercial interest should not be allowed to override efforts to deal with the pandemic

Sports and celebrations are the antithesis of social distancing, far from the optimum degree of remoteness required between individuals and between social groups in the time of a pandemic. As COVID-19 takes hold, spreading first from China to other parts of Asia, and then to Europe and the Americas, crowds and spectacle pose a real threat to public health and well-being. Runners sprinting full tilt despite over-worked limbs and bowlers stretching every muscle are all part of sporting lore that feeds the 'toughness myth' of athletes. Yet, whatever the immunity innate to sportspersons, it offers no guaranteed protection against a malevolent virus. But what is at stake now goes beyond sport and festivities. Fans trooping into massive stadiums, cheering and swapping high-fives, devotees gathering at places of worship, lost to the world in their prayers, shoppers and movie-goers at malls, travellers passing through airports and railway stations, all are at risk in this situation. Ideally, sport's grand theatre and the coming together of people in public spaces should be cause for joy; but with the grim march of COVID-19, triggering cough, fever and in extreme cases putting lives in peril, social distancing and cancellation of public events are necessary. Quite rightly, sports administrators globally have called off tournaments or kept spectators away. But in India, where the Indian Premier League (IPL) is as intrinsic to its summers as mangoes, speculation lingered about its earlier schedule of a March 29 start. Thankfully, better sense prevailed within the BCCI and the Twenty20 bash was postponed.

True, the BCCI's hand was forced after the Sports Ministry's missive about staging events without an audience and the government's refusal of visas to foreigners till April 15. The IPL is a domestic tournament with an international flavour that needed both the heft of a vociferous crowd and the brand equity of overseas stars. With the twin facets ruled out for the time being, the Board had to take a stand and it made a virtue of a necessity. The IPL, if it had adhered to its original dates, would have been a strain on the overworked health sector. Fans, even if they are prevented from entering venues, would have thronged team hotels. The innumerable flights that the eight squads take to different cities could only have made the cricketers even more vulnerable. However, the situation is still fluid and it all depends on how the epidemic shapes up in the coming weeks. A Ministry of Health and Family Welfare note emphatically states that mass gatherings 'should be avoided or possibly postponed till the disease spread is contained'. Valued at ₹47,500 crore, the IPL brand is a huge money-spinner but the citizens' health and welfare must take precedence. Public interest should always trump profit mindedness.

Dominion over territory

Verdict shows both potential for conflict and its resolution lie in the constitutional scheme

The verdict by a Division Bench of the Madras High Court on the respective roles of the elected regime in Puducherry and the Administrator appointed by the President underscores both the inherent potential for conflict in the governance scheme for Union Territories and the manner in which it can be resolved. The Bench has done well to say that its role is not to lay down who has residual control – whether it is the Council of Ministers or the Administrator – but to highlight the existing legal framework under which their powers are defined. The Bench has set aside a single judge's 2019 order that the Lieutenant-Governor should not interfere in the day-to-day administration of Puducherry. To this extent, it is a shot in the arm for L-G Kiran Bedi, but it also contains a note of caution against the Centre going beyond its constitutional limitations. An interesting facet of the case is that both last year's judgment by Justice R. Mahadevan, and the one overruling it by a Bench comprising Chief Justice A.P. Sahi and Justice Subramoniam Prasad, rely on the exposition of the law by the Supreme Court in relation to the National Capital Territory of Delhi. The apex court had emphasised on the need for constitutional morality and constitutional trust among high dignitaries, implying that Lt. Governors and Chief Ministers must work in unison as far as possible. In the event of an unresolved difference of opinion, the L-G should refer it to the President for a decision.

The main ground on which the single judge's verdict has been set aside is that it was based on an inappropriate parallel sought to be drawn between a 'Union Territory' and a 'State'. If the matter goes on appeal to the Supreme Court, it may be worth examining whether the single judge relied solely on this parallel. Much of his verdict drew upon the spirit of the Supreme Court's views on the conflict between the Chief Minister and L-G of Delhi. Whether the precedent on the limits of the Delhi L-G's powers would apply to the Puducherry Administrator was a question that was raised even then. After all, it is acknowledged that the status of NCT is *sui generis*. However, the elements of conflict and discord are common to Union Territories with elected legislatures. Hence, the principle that constitutional functionaries should avoid daily clashes, with the Centre using its primacy to resolve disputes, does commend itself. In that sense, the single judge was not wrong in holding that the Administrator is bound by the "aid and advice" clause, and that the power to refer any matter to the President should not mean "every matter". The main issue remains whether the notion of representative government should get greater credence even in a territory designated as belonging to the Union.

The ambit and the limits of 'diaspora diplomacy'

It is necessary for New Delhi to look at the political choices of Indian migrants abroad through a more realistic lens



SUHASINI HAIDER

Joint rallies by U.S. President Donald Trump and Prime Minister Narendra Modi in Ahmedabad last month and at Houston last September were unique for their concept and for their crowd sizes, but also for the promise they held out to the leaders themselves: of audiences that would blend support for Mr. Trump with that for Mr. Modi politically. As a result, speaking beyond bilateral relations, both leaders paid tribute to the three million people of Indian origin who are American citizens, who will vote in elections this year.

In Ahmedabad, Mr. Trump referred to Indian Americans as "truly spectacular people". In Houston, Mr. Modi said the 2016 election of Mr. Trump, who had used the slogan "Abki Baar Trump Sarkar" during his campaign, had "lit up millions of faces with joy". Mr. Modi's recall of the slogan sent a not-so-subtle message ahead of the upcoming U.S. presidential poll, where Mr. Trump is seeking re-election. The result of both rallies and the speeches was a heady concoction for both politicians, seeing the Indian diaspora not just as a part of India's "soft power", but a fully transferable political vote bank as well.

Pitching to both audiences

Mr. Modi has also brought this dual effect into play in several diaspora rallies worldwide. At each of them, he has spoken of initiatives taken by his government for Indians, and also those for the diaspora, pitching to both audiences at one time. In Israel, for example, Mr. Modi spent much of his speech on talking about his agricultural programmes, which was meant

for domestic audiences watching his speech on television, and then announced the start of a direct Air India flight to Tel Aviv, to big cheers from his live audience. The government has also frequently blurred the line between Indian expatriates and Persons of Indian Origin (PIO) in describing India's strength abroad. In March 2017, the Ministry of External Affairs raised the issue of attacks on Indians strongly with the U.S. government, after three incidents of suspected hate crimes. Only one of the three was an Indian citizen, the rest were Americans of Indian extraction. This is an important distinction from the past.

Transferability of votes

India has the world's largest diaspora, about 17.5 million and receives the highest remittance of \$78.6 billion from Indians living abroad (Global Migration Report 2020). Members of the diaspora, often seen as more "successful" and therefore more influential, can have a big impact on their relatives back home, and this makes for a potent combination for any politician. Mr. Modi's joint rallies with former U.K. Prime Minister David Cameron, former Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu all included this promise, and saw those leaders make campaign pitches to the Indian community that Mr. Modi had gathered, even as Mr. Modi's popularity with his voters back home benefited from their presence at his rallies.

However, the promise of the diaspora's dual power is based on certain faulty premises, and it is necessary and timely that the government re-analyses the benefits accrued from the diaspora's political presence through a more realistic lens.

To start with, the transferability of votes has not yet been proven conclusively. Six months after the April 2015 rally, Mr. Harper lost

general elections in Canada. Mr. Cameron lost the referendum on Brexit and resigned seven months after the November 2015 rally, and Mr. Netanyahu has had to face re-elections after failing to secure a majority in any of the three polls that followed his July 2017 joint rally with Mr. Modi in Tel Aviv.

One obvious reason is that the Indian community isn't large enough to make a difference in the voting patterns in any of these countries. The second is that the population that comes out for the rallies doesn't represent the entire diaspora. Take the case of U.K. general elections last December, where the Boris Johnson-led Conservative party sought to wrest the support of the traditionally Labour-leaning British-Indian community, and even featured Mr. Modi in its campaign advertisements. The results, which gave the Conservatives a massive win, didn't however make the case for transfer of votes. A report on the 30 constituencies in the U.K. where 'Asians' (a majority of whom are of Indian origin) constitute more than a quarter of the voting population showed that Labour won 29 of the 30 seats, the same that it had also won in 2017 elections, and while its vote share dropped, that mirrored its average losses across the U.K.

In the upcoming U.S. election, it remains to be seen whether the Trump outreaches at Houston and Ahmedabad bring in a haul of new Indian-American voters, but the statistics are daunting. In the 2016 election, 77% of Indian Americans voted for Hillary Clinton while just 16% voted for Mr. Trump.

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The second issue is that politically active members of the Indian diaspora don't necessarily support the Indian government's actions, and often, because they are of Indian origin, hold the government in New Delhi to higher standards than they do others. The U.S. House Foreign Affairs Committee Chairperson for Asia, Ami Bera, voiced his concerns quite plainly about Kashmir and the Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA) during a visit to India last month, for example, saying that the India that he "loved" was "democratic and secular". The sponsor of the U.S. House resolution on Kashmir (HR745) Pramila Jayapal; co-chair of U.S. Presidential candidate Bernie Sanders's campaign Ro Khanna; and former presidential contender Kamala Harris, have all been openly critical of the government's actions. The conclusion for the government is that it cannot own only that part of the diaspora that supports its decisions, and must celebrate the fact that members of the Indian diaspora, from both sides of the political divide, are successful and influential.

Interest and 'interference'

Third, the government must ensure that its focus on the diaspora doesn't become a factor in its bilateral relations. While it is perfectly legitimate and laudable to ensure the safety and well-being of Indian citizens in different parts of the world, as the Modi government has done, it must tread more lightly on issues that concern foreign citizens of Indian origin.

Addressing the Lok Sabha in 1957, former Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru said about the diaspora, "We want to have no vested interests at the expense of the population of those countries...if they adopt the nationality of that country we have no concern with them. There may be sentimental concerns but politically they cease to be Indian nationals." (A reply to debate on foreign policy in Lok Sabha; September 2, 1957).

Subsequent governments have distanced themselves from this rather cold-blooded view and warmed up to the diaspora, but none have raised the concerns of the diaspora with foreign governments, on visas and other issues, like the present one has.

The introduction of India's internal politics into this equation is another new angle, one that led the British Foreign Office to remonstrate with India about interference last December. A tweet, subsequently deleted by an office bearer of the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party last month, that threatened to "play a role" in U.S. elections in response to criticism from Mr. Sanders, was also a troubling symptom of this. Politically affiliated Indian diaspora chapters are now also playing old India-Pakistan fault-lines amongst immigrants, which in the past were fuelled by Pakistani agencies. In California primaries this month, local "Hindu-American" groups protested against Democratic candidates like Ro Khanna for joining the Congressional Pakistan caucus and for criticising New Delhi's actions. (Mr. Khanna won the primary).

Finally, the government must consider the impact that policies conflating the PIOs with Indian citizens could have on the diaspora itself. Most immigrant Indian communities have been marked by their ability to assimilate into the countries they now live in. Much of that comes from a desire to be treated as equal citizens, not as immigrants, while a few also have bad memories of anti-immigrant sentiments in the 1960s and 1970s in Europe and the U.S., when they were targeted and accused of "divided loyalties". Laying claim to their kinship and culture and taking pride in their success is one thing. It would be a mistake to lay claim to their politics, however.

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Temples of critical thinking and debate

To be among the best in the world, Indian universities must be freed from excessive interference and politicisation



SREERAM CHAULIA

In the recent subject-wise ranking of world universities by Quacquarelli Symonds (QS), Indian institutions improved with 26 departments or schools placed in the top 100 of their respective disciplines. Science, technology and business studies were the fields in which our universities showed their mettle. While this is a reason to celebrate, not even a single Indian university features in the QS ranking of the world's top 150 in overall parameters. The Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs) of Bombay and Delhi are at the 152nd and 182nd places in the overall rankings, while IISc Bangalore appears at the 184th position. There is much for India to learn from those who are miles ahead of us.

QS's top 10 in overall terms include five American universities (MIT, Stanford, Harvard, Caltech and Chicago), four British universities (Oxford, Cambridge, UCL and Imperial College) and one Swiss university (ETH Zurich). All the five American names in this list are private universities, while the British and Swiss institutions are

public universities which have nonetheless enjoyed significant autonomy from governmental control over decades.

One common factor behind the success of the topmost universities is the freedom with which they operate. They have been major centres of innovation in teaching and research thanks to independence from bureaucratic or corporate meddling and political intervention by parties of the day. They could remain centres of extraordinary excellence in a sustained way by acceding primacy to matters of the mind, i.e. intellectual ideas and solutions to problems, and avoiding becoming hostage to dogmatic thought.

Pluralistic centres

All the great universities of the world are ideologically pluralistic, with a mix of right, left and centre among their faculty and students.

There is no institutional line or official position on any issue. Professors and students are free to choose whatever opinion they prefer. No one is penalised for holding a pro- or anti-view on social, economic, political, cultural or scientific matters.

The top universities are also excellent at attracting and retaining talent. They hire professors very selectively, based on outstanding scholarly abilities. They reject a large number of candidates for ad-



mission as students, and admit only the brightest and the most meritorious. This ruthless streak comes at the expense of social inclusion and access considerations, but some institutions must be allowed to generate knowledge as an end in itself so that they reach the summit of intellectual endeavour. Top universities incentivise publication and citation of research in an unforgivingly rigorous way.

Big universities also inculcate critical thinking, debating and writing abilities in their students. They encourage students to look at issues through interdisciplinary lenses and to challenge their own professors. This type of interactive pedagogy produces champion graduates who have a reputation for cutting-edge skills and knowledge in the job market.

The world's best universities are known for involving their own alumni in governance and reforms. Top global universities are also super-smart financial managers. Many of them, especially the

U.S. universities, have sophisticated alumni offices through which they raise funding, which can exceed the revenue from student tuition fees. By 2019, the total endowment of Harvard was worth \$40 billion, which is made up of over 13,000 individual funds.

Since the top Anglo-American universities go back centuries, it is arguable whether such type of elite institutions can be quickly and easily replicated outside the U.S. and the U.K. These big universities are products of historical circumstances which relied on private philanthropy, colonial plunder or governmental subsidies to reach the level they are at today.

The China example

Still, a muscular push from the government of China with massive state funding has propelled Chinese universities into the top tiers in barely two decades. In the QS world rankings on overall basis, Tsinghua University is ranked number 16, Peking University is at 22, Fudan University is at 40, and Zhejiang University is at 54. This is a miraculous leap forward.

In India, as the government is cash-strapped and lacks the kind of resources which the Chinese state deployed to pump-prime Chinese universities, our only viable path to world class universities are in the form of enlightened private philanthropy and borrowing

best practices from established iconic universities.

Avoiding politicisation, ideological rigidity and nepotism, and freeing our universities from excessive interference and over-regulation, are prerequisites for success. Most importantly, our universities must have the drive to excel and compete with Chinese or Western universities. Insularity and self-congratulatory frog-in-the-well attitudes have held us back for long.

The government's decision to identify 20 Institutes of Eminence (IOEs) which will get maximum autonomy from bureaucracy in order to climb up the world rankings is a step in the right direction. The selected IOEs must innovate with new degree programmes, expanded variety of faculty members and digital learning platforms.

India has miles to go in higher education. Unlike in authoritarian and top-down China, there is little likelihood of a meteoric breakout of multiple Indian universities into the top 100 of the world at a rapid clip. India's democratic and contested character renders change evolutionary and cumulative. Still, with long-term vision and selfless leadership, our universities can eventually make it.

Sreeram Chaulia is a professor at O.P. Jindal Global University, which was named as an 'Institute of Eminence'

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.

Science, not hyperbole

Apropos the editorial, "Not a time to panic" (March 13), it is imperative to take action against the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic but we are fearing an apocalypse and reacting accordingly in sheer madness. Conferences and public events have been cancelled, weddings postponed and schools have been closed fearing the spread of the virus. Businesses did quite well out of the disease. The sales of respiratory masks, hand sanitisers, anti-fever medicines and similar drugs have skyrocketed. If we are to avoid the so-called 'coronavirus apocalypse', we need to be

guided by evidence, science and collaboration, not hype, hyperbole and impulse.

S.S. PAUL,
Chakdaha

Preventive measures
The focus now is only on containment, not prevention, especially with a vaccine still not in sight. Shutting down schools, cinemas, travel, etc. are short-term measures. These cannot continue for ever. The government and civic agencies should now focus on prevention, as any virus spreads through unclean environments and also destruction of environments. While there

are rules and laws, implementation is extremely poor. So, we have garbage in public places, overflowing drains and sewage, polluted rivers and lakes and animals moving to human habitation. Forests and wildlife reserves are being destroyed to make way for highways, dams and resorts. Now, it is for the government to see how it can make India clean and green, rather than invite more such virus attacks.

G. PADMANABHAN,
Bengaluru

Congress and ideology
Congress leader Rahul Gandhi has said that his

former aide Jyotiraditya Scindia has kept his ideology "in his pocket" and joined hands with the RSS ("Scindia has embraced RSS ideology," March 13). It is pertinent to ask here what ideology the current Congress is having other than abject loyalty and subservience to Mr. Gandhi's own family. It is undeniable that whether Mr. Gandhi is the chief of the party or not, he calls the shots in the Congress, and party members form a beeline to meet him. When Mr. Scindia said that respect and identity hold importance, he was only hinting that in the Congress, everything

begins and ends with the Gandhis.

C.G. KURIAKOSE,
Kothamangalam, Kerala

Rights of pedestrians
Certainly, making dashboard cameras mandatory, with the video evidence accepted in the investigation, would protect rule-abiding motorists (Editorial, "Danger ahead," March 13). But what about law-abiding and eco-sensitive pedestrians and cyclists? Pedestrians and cyclists are arguably the most vulnerable species on Indian roads – who are fighting global warming with every step, every day – but unfortunately in India,

no one worries about them. It won't be a surprise if they form a significant portion of 1.5 lakh people who lost their lives on the road each year since 2015, most of the time without their fault. Hence, cameras along with Global Positioning System (GPS) need to be made mandatory for motorised two-wheelers and three-wheelers also, along with other motorised vehicles. With the ever-falling prices of electronic gadgets, this won't be costing much money, and only a political will is necessary.

A. VENKATASUBRAMANIAN,
Tiruchi, Tamil Nadu



CM YK

Back-to-school jitters in the Valley

After a seven-month break caused by the abrogation of Jammu and Kashmir's special status and the consequent shutdown of the Valley, students returned to school on February 24. **Peerzada Ashiq** reports on their struggle to catch up just before schools closed again in the face of the novel coronavirus threat

Dressed in green sweaters, grey pants and blue ties, Shahid Bashir and Abid Nabi, both in Class 9, raced down the narrow, rickety stairs of Sir Syed Islamia Mission High School on February 24. Private schools in Kashmir Valley were decked up to welcome the children after a long, forced break: candy stalls were set up and motivational quotes painted on the walls.

The thud of school shoes is a familiar sound to everyone, but in Srinagar it was music to the ears. The students were excited; they were returning to school after 202 days, or nearly seven months. Instead of disciplining them, the teachers chose to be indulgent on that day. The sight was especially heartwarming given that Sir Syed Islamia is located in the highly volatile area of Maramatta. Over seven months, two dozen youth were arrested from this area when they protested on the streets.

Shahid and Abid, and the 13 lakh students enrolled up to Class 12 in the Valley, were happy to be finally seeing their friends in school. They were full of stories of how they had spent their time at home and how much of the syllabus they had managed to complete, says Abid. Some students shared gifts and hugged. "There was so much to talk about! Seeing each other in uniform after such a long gap... it felt unreal," says Abid.

Exams during a shutdown

All the 11,308 schools (837 high schools, 410 higher secondary schools, 4,225 middle schools and 5,836 primary schools) in the Kashmir division were forced to close following the Centre's decision on August 5, 2019, to end Jammu and Kashmir's special status drawn from Articles 370 and 35A of the Constitution. The decision, and the shutdown following it, took a big toll on the functioning of schools. Most of the schools in the Valley failed to conduct the annual assessment test due to curfew-like restrictions and absence of communication lines. Most schools opted to give students home assignments instead of holding annual examinations in classrooms.

Shahid and Abid were among the few who appeared for the year-end exam held in October-November last year. However, they were directed to come discreetly, wearing casual wear and slippers. "We would sneak into school early morning and sit for the exam. There was always a threat of violence breaking out on the streets," Abid says. Both secured about 60% in the exam. "We could have done better. With the situation volatile, focusing on studies was very tough," they say.

But Shahid, the son of a baker, and Abid, the son of a Waza (a cook who prepares dishes at weddings), are still worried. They could not attend any of the tuition classes held during the shutdown because of the deteriorating economic condition of their families in that period. "Shahid and I live just two km from each other. There was so much security presence from August 5 as well as sporadic protests that our parents didn't allow us to meet. We played home cricket. If we tried to step out, we got shouted at by CRPF personnel. We could not attend any tuition," Abid says. Shahid wants to become a teacher when he grows up and Abid dreams of becoming an engineer.

Syeda Sadaf Waiz, 14, is the daughter of a copper smith. She has been in Class 8 since November, the beginning of a new school year in Kashmir, but she has kept intact her textbooks from Class 7. The textbooks tell a tale of their own. The pages in the first half of her books have folded corners. The rest are flat and untouched — syllabus waiting to be completed. "We could complete only 50-60% of the syllabus last year. I scored just 75%, unlike my previous record of over 90%," Syeda says.

In social science, Shahid and Abid have marked out six out of 13 chapters that are unread from their previous class. These include 'Education and British Rule' and 'The National Movements: 1870s-1947'. Syeda says chapters titled 'Forests: Our Lifeline' and 'Motion and Time' were not covered. "I want to sit for the National Eligibility Cum Entrance Test [NEET] and become a doctor one day. But if my basics are not cleared, how will I," she asks.

Behavioural disorders

Getting the students back to school was no easy task, however. "They had a seven-month forced 'staycation'. They spent that time without Internet and without any outing," says Ghulam Nabi Var, who heads the Kashmir Private Schools' Association (KPSA) and the Coaching Centres' Association. Var's association oversees the functioning of about 2,700 private schools.

Var says a student's motivation to return to school comes down significantly when there is such a long gap. "There are several studies which suggest that they feel less motivated to study if they



(Clockwise from top): CRPF personnel stand guard as children walk to school in Srinagar on February 24; Muhammad Najar Jameel (left) and Mir Suhail, Class 11 students of Sri Pratap Higher Secondary School, a government-run model school with 'smart classes'; students in a classroom in Sir Syed Islamia. ■ NISSAR AHMAD



stay away from school for three months or more. We are yet to assess whether all the students have returned to school [which have been closed again over fears of an outbreak of the novel coronavirus], especially government schools," Var says.

Students also exhibit many behavioural disorders when they are forced to stay out of school for so long, say experts. Razia Jan (name changed), a Class 7 student, has been regularly going to the outpatient department of the Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences (IMHANS) in Srinagar since December. Jan is a hyperactive child. Her parents say that she was often irritated at home and prone to sudden flare-ups. She also shows reluctance in going back to school.

Experts warn that children with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and other such conditions are likely to show school refusal behaviour. "Some children showed some symptoms of this. Parents had a tough time dealing with them," says Syed Karrar Hussain, a child psychiatrist at IMHANS. "The discipline and regimented work hours at school regulate the behaviour of students, especially students with ADHD. A prolonged absence from school makes life chaotic for such children. A lot of them get used to not going to school, where they learn pro-social skills. We fear school refusal by such kids."

Hussain sees around 20 cases on a daily basis. Most of the children are aged 6-12. Since August 5, the number of children with ADHD has swelled. There are 200 children being treated at the outpatient department. "No outdoor play, no Internet, and no entertainment has left children with no places to vent their feelings. Many children may require psycho-social care for healthy growth," he says.

After schools re-opened, IMHANS monitored the behaviour of the children. "I hope four to five weeks of school reduces the anxiety of children, especially those with hyperactivity complaints. Both parents and teachers need to consult IMHANS in case students are fidgety or less attentive. Unfortunately, such students are given

physical punishment. This only aggravates their problems," says Hussain.

Bridging the knowledge gap

Muhammad Najar Jameel and Mir Suhail, both 16, sit under the spring sun in the beautiful campus of the Sri Pratap Higher Secondary School located on Maulana Azad Road. This is the Valley's designated government-run model school with 'smart classes'. Jameel and Suhail, dressed in grey sweaters and pants, have just registered for Class 11. Neither of them is interested in traditional professional courses. "I want to become a theoretical physicist. On any clear day, I gaze at stars for hours together," says Jameel, who is a big fan of Stephen Hawking.

Established in 1874 by then Dogra ruler, Maharaja Pratap Singh, Sri Pratap School was closed for several days in 2017 and 2019 in the wake of violent protests. The school's main building was taken over by additional battalions of the CRPF from August 2019. Both Jameel and Suhail are wary of discussing politics. "I want to discuss the new image of the black hole, not politics," says Jameel. He then pauses for a long time. "No good is going to happen to us because of what the Centre did in J&K," he finally says.

Reyaz Siddiqui, the principal of the smart school, is aware of the requirements of the times. "All the important topics that were missed, the fundamentals of various subjects, will be taught in remedial classes. We could only teach 65% of the syllabus last year," he says.

The Director of the Education Department of Kashmir, Younis Malik, says they aim to have 220 working days for the middle school and at least 200 days for primary schools in the Valley this year. But when asked how to bridge the knowledge gap and help students acquire the fundamentals, Malik's department does not have an answer.

Life without Internet

The lack of Internet during the shutdown was a serious concern for students and school administrations across the Valley. This was the reason why the syllabus could not be completed using

apps and video lessons. During the winter vacations, the Sri Pratap School usually hosts 'Project Kashmir Super 50', an initiative rolled out by Naeem Akhtar, the former Education Minister and Peoples Democratic Party leader who is now in jail, along with J&K Peoples Movement chief, Shah Faesal, in 2013. Its aim is to prepare children from economically weaker sections for professional examinations. "We had tied up with the Avanti Gurukul app before August 5 to provide videos and study material for examinations like the NEET and the Joint Entrance Examination. However, no online classes could be held this winter. The study material could not be accessed because of the Internet shutdown. We distributed study material in pen drives later," says the principal, Siddiqui.

Sri Pratap School used to offer e-classes for each subject for students of Classes 11 and 12. It had earlier tied-up with e-learning platforms across the country. "It's unlikely we can offer the same now. All this requires high-speed Internet. There is a need for a mechanism where Internet in schools is not disrupted on the pretext of the law and order situation," Siddiqui says.

After the Supreme Court's intervention in January, only 2G Internet and limited access to around 1,500 sites, identified as whitelisted sites, was given. The rest were blocked in Kashmir. This had the students on edge. They fear that this curfew may be imposed again any time.

"There is an Instagram account I used to follow which documents and shares all the major developments happening in the cosmos. I had accessed it before August 5. Besides this, NASA is the only major platform to track new scientific achievements. It remained inaccessible for seven months. Can I compete with others tomorrow when companies look for theoretical physicists," asks Jameel.

According to KPSA data, most schools in the Valley depend on online teaching for new modules for teachers too. "In the absence of Internet, the teaching ecosystem too gets impacted," says Var.



Now limited Internet has been restored in the Valley but the threat of COVID-19 has again forced the closure of all schools for the month of March. Parents worry that children will be forced to stay at home again. There is still no access to 4G. "If the government permits this, we can have video classes for the children," one parent says.

Waiving the fee

Meanwhile, the parents and the government are putting pressure on private schools to waive the school and bus fee for the period of the shutdown (August to November). "Parents owe some 70% of the school fee. Out of some 3,000 drivers associated with private schools, 70% are managing with only 50% of the salary. Most parents are refusing to pay the bus fee," says Var. The matter is now before the J&K High Court, where the petition filed by KPSA has questioned the order of the Divisional Commissioner of Kashmir, Baseer Khan, to the schools to offer a full waiver on the bus fee for the shutdown period. Meanwhile, the school administration and parents have decided to waive the bus fee for the months of August and September.

"There are people from various sectors, such as government employees and chemists, who were not impacted during the shutdown. Their income was not affected in any way. These people should clear all their dues. The government employees even get an allowance for their children. They should help poor students," Var says.

Education sector under strain

Educational institutions in the Kashmir division saw only three-and-a-half-months of class work in 2019. "The schools opened in March last year. They closed for the summer vacations in July. Then August 5 happened. Students went to school for only 105 days, whereas the National Education Policy, 2019, calls for 220 working days in educational institutes," Var says.

Students from Kashmir who went to school at the peak of militancy in the 1990s performed poorly in the national-level competitive examinations till 1998, Var says. "The fact that no aspirant qualified for the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) from the Kashmir region in 2018-19 needs to be viewed with seriousness," he says. Official figures suggest that on an average, six to nine aspirants from the Kashmir region qualified for the UPSC exams before 2016, the year when Kashmir was engulfed in a long cycle of street protests which saw civilian deaths.

Kashmir's education sector is today under tremendous strain. According to 2011 Census data, the Kashmir region, which has a population of 69.1 lakh, has just 2,700 private schools compared to Jammu which has a population of 53.5 lakh and 4,300 schools. According to of-



ficial figures, there are 480 government-run schools without teachers, 3,122 schools (33%) without electricity. Also, 70% of the schools are without playgrounds.

Despite this dismal scenario, 65,393 students appeared for the Class 10 exam in 2019. The pass percentage was 75%. Officials say that the J&K State Board of School Education had to offer grace marks to ensure that the pass percentage was brought on par with the 2018 pass percentage of 75.44%. However, the pass percentage in the government schools of Ganderbal (50.37%), Bandipora (53.90%) and Baramulla (57%) districts was poor.

"Over the last three years, 125 private schools closed in Kashmir due to recurring agitations. The ripple effect of 2019 will be visible this year, with at least an equal number of schools likely facing closure and retrenchment of staff," warns Var. Kashmir's private schools offer jobs to 65,000 locals in the academic and non-academic sectors.

Even schools that were once managed by the Jamaat-e-Islami (Jei) face the threat of closure. With the Centre banning the socio-religious group in February last year, the fate of 385 schools run by the Jei came under question. Together these schools have enrolled one lakh students. "The government's move put both students and teachers through a lot of stress. Most of them are from disadvantaged classes. One year since, hundreds of students and teachers have already switched to other schools," says the headmaster of a Jei-run school. This has happened, he says, despite the government's decision to not seal the property of these schools following protests.

With all these issues, and with the COVID-19 threat looming large, Shahid and Abid have their fingers crossed. "In our mohalla, older boys keep saying the situation will turn worse during summer this year. So far, it has been normal. We hope the spread of the virus is contained soon and classes are reopened for studies and interactions. We hope to continue studying whatever the circumstances and make it big in life despite the odds, both man-made and natural," says Abid.

FROM PAGE ONE

COVID-19 cases hit 82, second patient dies

Health officials said the woman who died in Delhi had a history of contact with a positive case – her son who had travelled to Switzerland and Italy between February 5 and 22 this year. He initially was asymptomatic, but developed fever and cough after a day and reported to Ram Manohar Lohia Hospital on March 7.

Protocol followed

"As per protocol, the family was screened and since he and his mother had fever and cough, both were admitted," a health official said.

All precautionary measures as per protocol including screening quarantine of their contacts is already taken up by the Ministry of Health and Government of Delhi and status is being

monitored, officials said.

The Union Health Ministry has said of the 82 positive cases, three from Kerala were treated and discharged and seven more from Safdarjung have recovered. Of these confirmed cases, 64 cases are Indians, 16 Italian and one Canadian. Contact tracing of these cases is being pursued. So far, this has led to the identification of more than 4,000 persons who have been put under surveillance.

At risk

In Kalaburgi town, 46 people who were in contact with the 76-year-old man who died of COVID-19 on Tuesday night were quarantined, district officials said. Of them, 31 were categorized as "high risk" and 13 "low risk".

Farooq set free after 7 months of detention

Indicating to abide by the Gupkar Declaration signed by all regional parties – including the PDP, the NC, the Peoples Conference (PC) and the J&K Peoples Movement – on August 4, 2019, Dr. Abdullah reserved his comments on critical issues of autonomy and Articles 370 and 35A.

The joint declaration had then opposed any move to dilute Jammu and Kashmir's special status.

"I will not speak on any political matter till all leaders are released," he said.

Right direction

An NC spokesman termed the release of its leader "a step in the right direction for restoration of genuine political processes".

PDP leader Firdous Tak said, "The unconstitutional, illegal, inhuman and unjus-

tified detention has finally ended and better sense has prevailed. Hope to see early release of other detainees. Jammu and Kashmir will be looking forward for guidance of Dr. Abdullah."

CPI(M) leader M.Y. Tarigami said the release was a step to correct one wrong among many wrongs. "There is no political activity in J&K. The government must create a conducive atmosphere for the same. Curbs on assembly of people must end too," he added.

Decision welcomed

Welcoming the decision, PC leader Imran Ansari said, "I take this opportunity to demand the release of our chairman Sajad Lone, who is under strict house arrest. We also demand release of our workers."

Hold floor test, Kamal Nath tells Governor

Detailing the second attempt on March 8, he wrote that the BJP had whisked away the 19 Congress MLAs in three chartered aircraft to Bengaluru.

He also described the submission of their resignation by the BJP to the Speaker as an "utter shock" and "most unusual act and con-

Delhi govt. bans sports events till further orders

Stressing the need to contain the outbreak by adopting preventive measures, the Deputy Chief Minister sought people's cooperation. "I want to tell everyone to not wait for government orders but proactively avoid any big gatherings. The government is doing its best but to stop the spread of the disease, mutual cooperation of the people and the government is very impor-

tant," he said.

"This is an exponential threat where every day counts. I would urge the people to self-quarantine themselves. If you have symptoms of COVID-19, get your tests done, avoid public gatherings and stay at home. This is the best way to contain its spread," Health Minister Satyendar Jain said at the press conference.

Yet another case against Yes Bank's Rana Kapoor

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Central Bureau of Investigation on Friday conducted searches in another case against Rana Kapoor, the then Yes Bank promoter director, his wife Bindu and others in connection with alleged illegal gratification of ₹307 crore for concessions in loan repayments and more credit facilities to Avantha Group (AG) companies.

The amount was paid allegedly through sale of a Lutyens' Delhi bungalow on Amrita Shergill Marg, against a declared value of ₹685 crore, for only ₹378 crore to Bliss Abode Priv-

ate Limited, in which Ms. Kapoor was a director.

The CBI alleges that in January, the total outstanding against various loans from Yes Bank to the AG entities stood at ₹1,900 crore. "Searches were carried out in the National Capital Region and Mumbai, on the premises of Mr. Kapoor, his wife, office of Avantha Realty Limited (ARL), Bliss Abode and another private company," said an official. In the second FIR, Gautam Thapar, promoter of the Avantha Group of companies, has also been named as an accused, apart from ARL and Bliss Abode.

His claim that nobody will be marked as doubtful

monitored, officials said.

The Union Health Ministry has said of the 82 positive cases, three from Kerala were treated and discharged and seven more from Safdarjung have recovered. Of these confirmed cases, 64 cases are Indians, 16 Italian and one Canadian. Contact tracing of these cases is being pursued. So far, this has led to the identification of more than 4,000 persons who have been put under surveillance.

It was received with some surprise, as SAARC has had no summit-level meeting since 2014.

The meetings have been shelved since due to India-Pakistan tensions and Mr. Modi's decision not to attend the summit in Islamabad.

Though Pakistan did not offer any immediate response to the message on Friday, officials in New Delhi indicated they were ready to

organise the conference as early as Saturday.

"I would like to propose that the leadership of SAARC nations chalk out a strong strategy to fight coronavirus. We could discuss ways to keep our citizens healthy. Together, we can set an example to the world, and contribute to a healthier planet," Mr. Modi said in his message.

While SAARC member states occupy just 3% of the world's landmass, they account for 21% of its population.

South Asia accounts for only 125 of the 44,067 con-

firmed cases of COVID-19 so far, but there are fears of an escalation in the numbers given the density of population in the region.

While SAARC member states occupy just 3% of the world's landmass, they account for 21% of its population.

Bangladesh's Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Shahriar Alam tweeted on behalf of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, saying that she "welcomes the proposal and looks forward to a constructive dialogue with [SAARC leaders] who con-

sented to discuss the way forward at this testing time for the region and the world."

In Afghanistan, Sediq Seidiqqi, spokesperson of the recently re-elected President Ashraf Ghani, announced Mr. Ghani's readiness to devise a "unified strategy" to fight the virus in the region.

Meanwhile, the SAARC secretariat, based in Kathmandu with new Secretary-General Sri Lankan diplomat Essala Weerakoon now at the helm, called Mr. Modi's offer a "timely proposal" and offered its services to facilitate the conference.

Mr. Modi has in the past held similar videoconferences to inaugurate infrastructure projects in neighbouring countries and for the launch of the GSAT-09 "SAARC satellite" in May 2017.

It remains to be seen whether Mr. Modi's offer to convene the SAARC leadership meeting, albeit just for the COVID-19 crisis and only over a videoconference, will lead to a revival of the SAARC forum itself.

PM calls for SAARC videoconference on COVID

All leaders in the eight-nation regional grouping, except Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan, welcome his suggestion

SUHASINI HAIDAR
NEW DELHI

organise the conference as early as Saturday.

"I would like to propose that the leadership of SAARC nations chalk out a strong strategy to fight coronavirus. We could discuss ways to keep our citizens healthy. Together, we can set an example to the world, and contribute to a healthier planet," Mr. Modi said in his message.

Rajapaksa, Maldivian President Ibrahim Solih and Bhutan Prime Minister Lotay Tshering tweeted their responses welcoming the idea of the SARS-CoV-2 videocon-



NARENDRA MODI, Prime Minister

Set up in 1985, SAARC was the first such grouping for the South Asian region.

Shifted focus

However, in the past few years, due to the government's decision to call off all talks with Pakistan until cross-border terrorism ends, New Delhi has shifted focus to other regional groupings that do not include Pakistan, like the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC), the Bangladesh-Bhutan-India-Nepal (BBIN) grouping, and the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA).

It remains to be seen whether Mr. Modi's offer to convene the SAARC leadership meeting, albeit just for the COVID-19 crisis and only over a videoconference, will lead to a revival of the SAARC forum itself.

Opposition hails Farooq's release

Ex-CM's detention showed 'despotism, arbitrariness' in rule of law: Chidambaram

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI



P Chidambaram

Opposition parties on Friday welcomed the release of former Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister and Lok Sabha member Farooq Abdullah after seven months of detention. Former Home Minister P. Chidambaram, in a tweet, said his detention showed "despotism and arbitrariness" in the rule of law in J&K.

Opposition's appeal

Recently, Opposition leaders have appealed for Dr. Abdullah's release at the earliest. The appeal was signed by NCP president Sharad Pawar, Trinamool chief Mamata Banerjee, Janata Dal(S) supremo H.D. Deve Gowda,

CPI(M) general secretary Sitaram Yechury, CPI general secretary D. Raja, RJD Rajya Sabha member Manoj Kumar Jha and two former Ministers from the Vajpayee government, Yashwant Sinha and Arun Shourie.

"Dr. Farooq Abdullah,

welcome to freedom. What was the justification to keep him in detention without charges for 7 months? If there was justification (there was none), what is the reason for releasing him today? Despotism and arbitrariness constitute the Rule of Law in J&K. And this virus is spreading to many states in India," Mr. Chidambaram said on Twitter.

Congress MP Shashi Tharoor, calling Dr. Abdullah's detention a disgrace, welcomed his "belated" release.

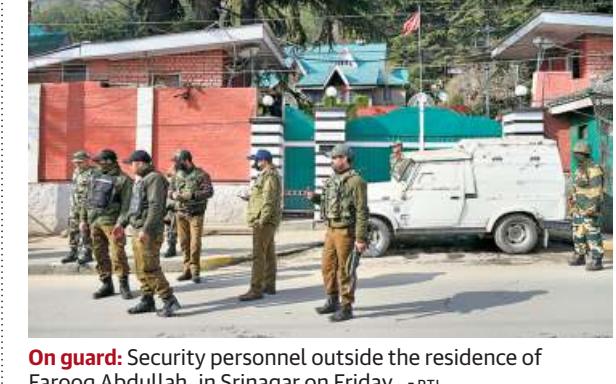
Ms. Banerjee, taking to Twitter, said the other two former Chief Ministers, Omar Abdullah and Mehbooba Mufti, should also be released without delay. "I pray for the good health and

long life of Jammu and Kashmir's former Chief Minister and veteran leader Farooq Abdullah," she said.

Long overdue

Mr. Yechury said Dr. Abdullah's detention was "illegal, undemocratic and unconstitutional." "We have all been concerned about his health and well-being. His release was long overdue. Several still remain detained or in prison. They need to be released immediately and democracy restored in J&K on priority. There is no political activity there right now, so democracy remains suspended. The curbs on assembly of people and other activities need to be lifted at once," Mr. Yechury tweeted.

Ms. Banerjee, taking to Twitter, said the other two former Chief Ministers, Omar Abdullah and Mehbooba Mufti, should also be released without delay. "I pray for the good health and



On guard: Security personnel outside the residence of Farooq Abdullah, in Srinagar on Friday. ■ PTI

Now, all eyes on NC chief's next move

His release a challenge to Apni Party

PEERZADA ASHIQ
SRINAGAR

The release of five-time J&K Chief Minister and National Conference (NC) president Dr. Farooq Abdullah on Friday will stir the stagnant political waters in J&K, with both New Delhi and the regional parties waiting for his next political move.

For the Centre, the difficult decision to release him will ease the international pressure, especially from the U.S., to release the democratically elected leadership of J&K detained after August 5. Slapping the controversial Public Safety Act (PSA) for the third time on Dr. Abdullah would not have augured well within the political opposition of the country too.

Notwithstanding senior BJP leader and Union Minister Jitendra Singh's frequent public remarks on prolonging the detention of Kashmir-based leadership, especially Dr. Abdullah, the timing of the release starkly reflects the pressure on the Centre.

The political ecosystem of J&K in fact has been in a suspended mode since Au-

gust 5, when the entire political class, from the regional leaders to separatist Hurriyat, Jamaat-e-Islami and JKLF, were rendered irrelevant by the unprecedented clampdown.

With all political groups holding their cards close to the chest, all eyes will be on Dr. Abdullah's moves.

"Remember Dr. Abdullah was the political leader who put forth the theory that to survive in politics, it is important to be on the right side of the Central government, irrespective of the fact as to who is there in power in the Centre. This Farooq doctrine was recently reiterated by Altaf Bukhari, who floated the Apni Party," said Professor Rekha Chowdhary, former Head of the Department of Political Science, Jammu University.

His release is likely to dent the prospects of the Apni Party, which has many ideology-less individuals joining hands for power politics. They needed time to have grip on the ground and float new narratives, which was possible in absence of the traditional political leadership.

Trinamool, CPI(M) call out Shah's NPR remarks

Govt. will have to amend rules: O'Brien

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI



Nirmala Sitharaman

The Parliament on Friday approved the Direct Tax Vivad Se Vishwas Bill, 2020, which will give taxpayers a chance to settle tax disputes by paying their dues without any interest or penalty till March 31.

The Bill, passed by the Lok Sabha on March 4, was approved by the Rajya Sabha on Friday by a voice vote. The Vivad Se Vishwas scheme waives off interest and penalty on pending tax if paid by March 31. For payments made after March 31 and till June 30, a 10% penalty would be charged.

In her response to the dis-

cussion on the Bill in the Upper House, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said the

scheme was not giving amnesty and that those already being prosecuted under the Income Tax Act would be excluded from it.

₹5 crore limit

Replies to questions raised by MPs during the discussion, she said the 75% tax on undisclosed cash deposited at the time of demonetisa-

tion would still apply. She said a cap of ₹5 crore in dues had been included in the scheme in order to prevent large-scale evasion or fraud-related cases trying to take advantage of the scheme.

Earlier in the day, DMK MPs P. Wilson and Tiruchi Siva raised concern about the Hindi name of the Bill, which, they both said, would be a violation of Article 348 of the Constitution.

Ms. Sitharaman said: "I do understand the importance of mother tongue and regional languages. In this case, I yield by saying, I give an assurance that we will have circulars going to all the regions to highlight each of the points in this scheme in the respective regional languages."

A case was registered at the Gomti Nagar police station in Lucknow on a complaint from social activist Nutan Thakur.

The FIR has invoked Section 66 of the IT Act and charges of defamation and criminal intimidation through anonymous communication.

Harnath Singh Yadav and Shiv Pratap Shukla from Uttar Pradesh made these recommendations while speaking during Zero Hour.

Mr. Shukla said regional languages were the keepers of Indian tradition and heritage, but they remained hidden as the larger populace had no access to it.

"Out of all languages, Hindi is spoken and understood in every corner of the country. So I suggest that all 22 official languages must be written in Devanagari script," Mr. Shukla said.

Speaking in Hindi, he argued that if the languages were available in Devanagari script, then it could be understood by not only parliamentarians but also even

His comments were met with loud protests from MDMK member Vaiko.

Speaking on the need for a population control law, Mr. Yadav said that during the 1951 census, India's popula-

tion was 36 crore, by 2011, it grew to 121 crore and by 2025, it was expected to be 150 crore.

Cases against Scindia reopened

STAFF REPORTER
BHOPAL

A day after Jyotiraditya Scindia joined the BJP, the Congress government in Madhya Pradesh on Thursday reopened two cases against him and his family relating to falsifying information and forgery of land documents.

The Economic Offences Wing (EOW) had admitted an appeal by Surendra Shrivastav, who filed two complaints in 2014, to reopen and verify the merits of the cases, said a note by the wing.

Pankaj Chaturvedi, Mr. Scindia's spokesperson, said the action by the EOW was being taken with a feeling of vengeance. "Nothing is going to happen anyway. These cases were closed earlier owing to lack of evidence. Still, all this is being done with a burning feeling of vengeance." He further said, "We have full faith in law and the Constitution, from where we will get justice..."

Rebel MLAs call off Bhopal trip

High drama at Bengaluru airport as plans change

STAFF REPORTER
BENGALURU

There was high drama on Friday as 13 rebel Congress MLAs from Madhya Pradesh reached the Kempegowda International Airport here to fly to Bhopal but cancelled the trip at the last minute and returned to the resort on the outskirts of the city where they had been staying in the past few days.

Madhya Pradesh Assembly Speaker N.P. Prajapati had served notices on the MLAs on Thursday to appear before him immediately. Two chartered flights were scheduled to take them to Bhopal. Copies of the flight manifest available with *The Hindu* showed that they were to be accompanied by Ramakant Bhargava, Vidisha MP, Arvind Singh Bhadoria, MLA and BJP State vice-president, and former Minister Umashankar Gupta.

The MLAs reached the airport and went past the se-



Troubleshooting: KPCC chief D.K. Shivakumar after meeting Karnataka police officials on Friday. ■ V. SREENIVASA MURTHY

curity check as well. However, the flights did not take off. While the MLAs claimed the aircraft were yet to get clearance from the Air Traffic Control, there was a change of plan at the last minute and BJP strategists decided not to take them to Bhopal, multiple sources said.

After waiting at the airport for over four hours, the MLAs were herded back in two buses to the resort at night.

Earlier in the day, a Congress delegation led by Karnataka Pradesh Congress Committee chief D.K. Shivakumar and two Madhya Pradesh Ministers Jitu Patwari and Laxman Singh Yadav met Additional Director-General of Police (Law and Order) Amar Kumar Pandey.

Father's claim
Narayan Chowdhary, father of Madhya Pradesh MLA Manoj Chowdhary, submitted a

letter to police officials alleging that his son was forcibly brought to Bengaluru and kept in a resort.

Recounting the drama at the resort on Thursday when he visited there, Mr. Narayan Chowdhary said, "Though my son wanted to meet us, he was not allowed by some local people, said to be BJP members, who threatened us." The letter requests the police to provide him security to meet his son.

INTERVIEW | VINAY SAHASRABUDDHE

'No party can keep MLAs under lock and key'

BJP leader says that when Jyotiraditya Scindia deserted Congress, the rest of the MLAs followed suit

NISTULA HEBBAR

Vinay Sahasrabuddhe, the BJP's Madhya Pradesh party in-charge, says the Congress must introspect on why it could not retain a leader of Jyotiraditya Scindia's stature.

Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Kamal Nath met Governor Lalji Tandon today and has accused the BJP of keeping 21 Congress MLAs under duress. How do you react to that charge?

■ It is childish to say the least. No political party can really keep MLAs, adult grown-ups, under lock and key.

It is obvious that all of them owe their allegiance to Shri Jyotiraditya Scindia, and since Mr. Scindia had deserted the Congress, the rest of the MLAs followed suit. It is as clear as that. Where is the

question of spiriting them away?

What about a floor test for the Madhya Pradesh government?



There is absolutely no question of engineering a majority, at least in this case

Either way, the government will have to face a test of strength and if they are so confident of their numbers as they are stating, if not the government should resign.

The Congress has been

making a charge on moral grounds that whenever the BJP is denied an electoral majority, it engineers one.

■ There is absolutely no question of engineering a majority, at least in this case. Everybody knows the standing of Jyotiraditya Scindia in the Congress; he is not just a leader of Madhya Pradesh but he has a national stature as well.

Unfortunately, the Congress, for its own reasons, could not keep him in good humour and he also saw that it was purposeless to remain in the Congress – all issues that the Congress had to address.

■ If the Congress-led government falls, who will be the BJP's Chief Minister?

In politics and especially when things are in such a flux, it is a gradual unfolding of scenarios.

Therefore, everything will be taken care of in due course of time. I wouldn't want to comment on this issue because it may, unnecessarily, create a misunderstanding one way or the other.

I asked this question because it's being said that instead of former Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan, the choice may fall on Union Minister Narendra Tomar.

■ Which is why I said there is a progressive unfolding, let things mature and everyone will come to know in due course.

Planned or not?

Mr. Sibal pointed to the contradiction between a February 25 statement issued by the Press Information Bureau that the riots were "spontaneous" and Mr.

Shah's speech in the Lok Sabha on March 11 that it was a pre-planned conspiracy.

Prasanna Acharya of the Biju Janta Dal also asked that if it was a conspiracy, "Is it not a failure on the part of the government that it did not get a hint of it? Why did it not take preventive measures then?"

Again the Minister did not

Govt. seeks city-level plans for clean air

Local action is important: Minister

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Union Minister for Environment Prakash Javadekar said on Friday his Ministry has asked for city-level plans for the National Clean Air Programme (NCAP) as these problems need to be dealt with at the local level. He was replying to a question in the Lok Sabha.

"Every city has different pollutants and the sources also vary," Mr. Javadekar said. Replying to another question, he said water bodies in the country are polluted because 70% of sewage goes untreated.

Sewage in Ganga

"People used to say 'Ganga maile ho gayi papiyon ke paap dhote dhote' (the Ganga has become dirty washing off the sins of sinners). But this not true," the Minister said, stating that it was untreated sewage and not the misdeeds of pilgrims that was a major source of pollution.

He added that in the past the Common Effluent Treatment Plant (CETP) was built



and operated by different entities which created problems. "Now, we have decided that those who build and operate the sewage treatment plants are the same. They will operate the plant for 10 years," he said.

Answering questions on polluting industries, he said that 342 out of 700 industries inspected by the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) have been found violating environmental norms and causing pollution in the last four years. The CPCB, he said, had carried out inspections for verification of compliance to environmental norms between April 2016 and March 2020.

IPS Association flays NYT report on riots

WSJ scribe faces another complaint

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Indian Police Service Association has hit out at a report in *The New York Times* that blamed Delhi's police force for being a part of the recent violence in the capital, and a senior representative of *The Wall Street Journal* was at the receiving end of a private complaint for "anti-India behaviour".

In a statement, the Indian Police Service Association claimed India was governed by the "rule of law" and no one had "immunity from killing anyone". The association said: "Our heart bleeds for every victim of a riot and the objective is to always minimise the loss and bring the guilty to justice."

The *NYT* report said that two-thirds of the "more than 50 people" who were killed and have been identified were Muslim. "More evidence is emerging that the Delhi police, who are under the direct command of Mr. Modi's government and have very few Muslim officers, concerted moved against Muslims and at

times actively helped the Hindu mobs," the report said. *NYT* spokesperson Danielle Rhoades Ha said, "Our story was rigorously reported by staff on the ground in New Delhi, and based on numerous witness statements, videos that are widely available and have been confirmed authentic and information provided by police officials. The facts in our story are not in dispute."

Regarding the case of Eric Bellman, South Asia Deputy Bureau Chief of *The Wall Street Journal*, the official spokesperson of the External Affairs Ministry Raveesh Kumar said the complaint against the senior journalist was filed by a "private individual" which was a "routine matter".

However, Prasar Bharati News Services, tweeted that the Ministry had asked the Indian Embassy in the U.S. "to look into the request for immediate deportation of *The Wall Street Journal's* South Asia Bureau Chief Eric Bellman for 'anti-India behaviour'". The tweet was deleted later.

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Sd/- Managing Director

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Final Date & Time

General Manager (Materials)

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Virus spreads across globe; toll crosses 5,000

Governments take emergency steps to contain the spread of COVID-19

REUTERS
SINGAPORE/WASHINGTON

Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's wife, Sophie Gregoire Trudeau, tested positive for coronavirus. She said she was "experiencing uncomfortable symptoms" adding that she would "be back on my feet soon".

Canada has reported 145 cases of the virus, a three-fold gain from a week ago. There has been one death.

In Italy, the death toll has jumped by 250 to 1,266 in the past 24 hours, the Civil Protection Agency said. The total number of cases also rose to 17,660 from a previous 15,113.

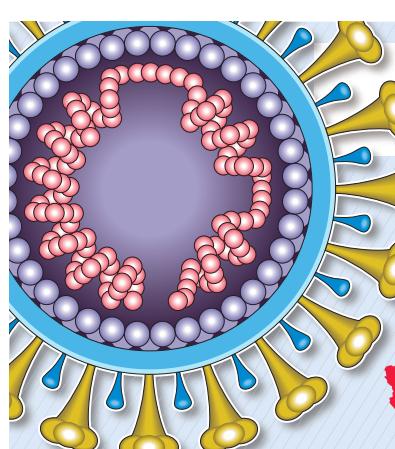
State of alert
Spain's government is to declare a state of alert over the rapid spread of the virus, Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez said on Friday after infections soared over 4,200 with 120 dead. "There will be a Cabinet meeting tomorrow to declare a state of alert across the country for a period of 15 days," he said.

Experts warn that due to a lack of testing and unreported cases, many more people may be affected by the outbreak that emerged in the Chinese city of Wuhan late last year. Health authorities around the world face the prospect of services being overwhelmed.

"We're anticipating 20% of the population in the first wave to be affected," Kerry Chant, the chief medical officer for the New South Wales (NSW) government.

Home to more than 7 million people, NSW is Australia's most populous State, and Mr. Chant said models suggested 5% of the State's population – some 3,50,000 people – would need hospital treatment as a result of the outbreak.

Australia has recorded nearly 160 infections and three deaths from the flu-like disease. Among the infected is one of its highest-profile government Ministers, Peter Dutton, who is in charge of Home Affairs. He said he was feeling fine.



Impact of COVID-19

Here are the latest developments in the coronavirus crisis

Total no. of infections No. of countries affected Deaths Recovered
1,40,720 **124** **5,347** **70,729**

MOST AFFECTED COUNTRIES



Passengers resting at the Barcelona airport, Spain, on Thursday.

Borders close

- The Czech Republic has joined the list of countries closing its borders
- Slovakia also closed its borders to all foreigners, except for Poles
- France, Belgium and Portugal joined the list of countries closing their schools
- All schools, creches and universities closed from Friday in Ireland
- New York has banned gatherings of more than 500 people, including in Broadway theatres

SOURCE: AFP

Latin America cuts off

- Venezuela and Bolivia suspend flights to and from Europe for a month
- Paraguay ends them until further notice, as does Peru
- Argentina suspends for a month flights from the most hard-hit countries

'Positive' personalities

- The wife of Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau tests positive and remains in isolation
- Australian Home Affairs Minister Peter Dutton has entered hospital quarantine. British Health Minister Nadine Dorries has also tested positive

Foreigners to blame: Orbán

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
BUDAPEST

Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán blamed foreigners and migration for the spread of COVID-19 in the country. Asked during an interview why Hungary had closed its universities but not schools in response to the outbreak, Mr. Orbán said it was because "there are lots of foreigners there".

'Ohio likely has 100,000 cases'

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
WASHINGTON

The U.S. State of Ohio likely has more than 100,000 people carrying the virus, the State Health Department Director Amy Acton said. "We know now just the fact of community spread says that at least one percent of our population is carrying this virus," she said. "We have 11.7 million people. So the math is over 100,000."

Bolsonaro tests negative

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
BRASILIA

Brazilian leader Jair Bolsonaro said he had tested negative for COVID-19, after a scare over a trip on which at least one infected member of his staff rubbed shoulders with U.S. President Donald Trump. "Don't believe in the fake news media!" the far-right President posted on his Facebook page.

3 new cases in Sri Lanka

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
COLOMBO

Sri Lanka on Friday said three more people had tested positive for COVID-19, taking the total number of cases to 5. All are undergoing treatment. Sri Lanka has suspended issuing visas for Europeans for two weeks and enforced a two-week quarantine period for Sri Lankans arriving from Europe.

Hundreds take part in pro-democracy march

Thais mourn current state of country

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
BANGKOK

Hundreds of pro-democracy protesters marched in Bangkok on Friday, wearing black T-shirts to mourn the state of Thailand under an Army-aligned government, in the first street protest for several years.

Discontent with the administration of ex-Army chief Prayut Chan-O-Cha is seething, with progressive Opposition party disbanded and the country's economy faltering as the COVID-19 crisis batters the key tourism industry.

Thailand voted Mr. Prayut's conservative government into power a year ago. It was the first election since



Protesters taking part in a march in Bangkok. ■ REUTERS

Civilian among 6 dead in U.S. strikes on Iraq

Pentagon says it has retaliated for the rocket attack that killed three soldiers

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
BAGHDAD

U.S. air strikes targeting pro-Iranian military factions in Iraq killed one civilian and five security personnel early on Friday, the Iraqi military said, warning that the raids risked a bloody escalation in the war-tattered country.

The Pentagon said the strikes were in retaliation for rocket fire against an Iraqi base on Wednesday night that killed one British and two U.S. military personnel, the deadliest such attack in years.

The U.S. strikes hit bases hosting personnel from the state-sponsored Hashid Shaabi military network, U.S. military officials said. The same bases also host Iraqi government forces.



Taking stock: Iraqi soldiers inspecting the destruction at an airport complex under construction in Karbala on Friday. ■ AP

Among those hit were areas controlled by Kataeb Hezbollah, a hardline Hashid faction that the U.S. has blamed for several attacks on foreign troops in Iraq.

The Iraqi military said its preliminary death toll from the air strikes was three Iraqi

soldiers, two policemen and one civilian working at an unfinished airport south of Baghdad.

There were no Hashid members among the dead but the toll could rise as some bodies were still stuck under the rubble, the statement said.

Hashid fighters were among 11 Iraqi fighters wounded in the bombardment. One civilian was also wounded.

The military warned the air strikes risked "escalation and deterioration of the security situation in the country, and exposes everyone to more risks and threats".

President Barham Saleh condemned them as a violation of the country's sovereignty that could "slide Iraq into anarchy and chaos".

In its statement, the Pentagon said the strikes were "defensive, proportional and in direct response to the threat posed by Iranian-backed Shia militia groups who continue to attack bases" hosting foreign troops in Iraq.

Pakistan media mogul remanded

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
LAHORE

Pakistani media mogul and the owner of Jang/Geo group, Mir Shakil Rehman, was on Friday remanded in custody of the country's anti-graft body till March 25 in a 34-year-old land allotment case.

Mr. Rehman was arrested by the National Accountability Bureau on Thursday on charges that he illegally acquired 54 plots on a prime location in Lahore at a throwaway price in 1986 during the tenure of then-chief minister of Punjab Nawaz Sharif. An accountability court in Lahore accepted the plea of the NAB and remanded him in custody for 12 days.

SUDOKU

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DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★☆

Solution to puzzle 12882

Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

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

FAITH

Adamant Dhritarashtra

Vidura's advice to Dhritarashtra takes up eight chapters in the Mahabharata. Each chapter deals with a different subject. Vidura's niti is relevant at all times, said Kidambi Narayanan in a discourse. The first chapter talks about how to spot an uneducated person and lists the qualities of an educated person. The second chapter deals with traits essential in a king. The third chapter is about the good qualities a man should possess, and how we should behave. The fourth chapter deals with the important quality of tolerance. We tend to criticise people who do not hold our opinions, or we dislike people for various reasons. But we must cultivate tolerance for others. We should speak sweet words and never hurt others through our words or deeds. The fifth chapter tells us what we should do, and what we should not do. Vidura gives a list of seventeen people who do wrong things. The sixth chapter is about treating everyone with respect.

After having listened to all this advice from Vidura, Dhritarashtra says that whatever is destined to happen will happen. In other words, he is not prepared to give the Pandavas even an inch of land, and if war breaks out because of this, then Dhritarashtra will just take it that this war was destined to happen. Vidura's advice, thus, has been wasted on him.

And yet, Vidura does not give up hope. He continues to address Dhritarashtra with wise words. And this occurs in the eighth chapter. Vidura says that if everyone starts to think like Dhritarashtra, then none will adhere to dharma. Vidura elaborates on how families and individuals are ruined. Finally, before leaving, Vidura says, "You asked for advice. Whether you follow my advice or not, whether there is a war or not, all of these will be Krishna's decisions. I have done my duty."

कोरोना वायरस का
मिल गया इलाज

Trump set to declare national emergency

He is likely to invoke the Stafford Act

ANNIE KARNI, PETER BAKER,
MAGGIE HABERMAN
WASHINGTON

U.S. President Donald Trump is expected to declare a national emergency at a news conference on Friday afternoon, a move that would give him authority to use \$40 billion of funds allocated by Congress for disaster relief to address the coronavirus crisis.

Mr. Trump, according to a senior administration official, is expected to invoke the Stafford Act, a law that empowers the Federal Emergency Management Agency to assist State and local governments during "natural catastrophes" and coordinate the nation's response.

Mr. Trump has been hinting in recent days that he had been briefed on using the law to address the pandemic, and Democratic law-

makers like Senator Chuck Schumer of New York, the minority leader, have been pressing him to invoke it. "We have very strong emergency powers under the Stafford Act," Mr. Trump told reporters in the Oval Office on Thursday.

"I have it memorized, practically, as to the powers in that act. And if I need to do something, I'll do it. I have the right to do a lot of things that people don't even know about."

"More cases are now being reported every day than were reported in China at the height of its epidemic," he said, referring to the global numbers.

The death toll passing 5,000 was "a tragic milestone", said Mr. Tedros. Maria Van Kerkhove, who heads the WHO's emerging diseases unit, meanwhile warned it was "impossible for us to say when this will peak globally". "You can't fight a virus if you don't know where it is," said Mr. Tedros, calling on countries to "find, isolate, test and treat every case, to break the chains of transmission."

Pakistan media mogul remanded

MARKET WATCH

	13-03-2020	% CHANGE
Sensex	34,103	-4.04
US Dollar	73.80	0.59
Gold	42,600	-2.51
Brent oil	34.22	-2.52

NIFTY 50

	PRICE	CHANGE
Adani Ports	292.75	+5.10
Asian Paints	1797.70	-45.65
Axist Bank	568.80	+25.55
Bajaj Auto	2357.10	+18.20
Bajaj Finserv	7742.00	+303.95
Bajaj Finance	3952.55	+218.20
Bharti Airtel	491.85	+26.90
BPCL	376.05	+31.75
Britannia Ind	2763.60	+47.05
Cipla	425.55	+30.80
Coal India	154.10	-0.45
Dr Reddy's Lab	2885.10	+34.70
Eicher Motors	17672.15	+794.40
GAIL (India)	84.55	+4.60
Grasim Ind	604.95	+45.10
HCL Tech	492.90	-0.45
HDPC	2066.80	+191.10
HDFC Bank	1069.80	+48.50
Hero MotoCorp	1883.95	-23.25
Hindalco	127.45	+7.25
Hind Unilever	2033.20	+22.75
ICICI Bank	447.20	+21.55
IndusInd Bank	803.75	+19.10
Bharti Infratech	227.25	+5.95
Infosys	642.35	+11.15
Indian Oil Corp	92.25	+4.35
ITC	162.25	+6.45
JSW Steel	214.90	+11.70
Kotak Bank	1470.05	+5.00
L&T	1051.45	+34.90
M&M	428.85	+5.50
Maruti Suzuki	5838.60	+195.45
Nestle India Ltd.	14991.80	+57.75
NTPC	98.05	+3.70
ONGC	65.90	+3.40
PowerGrid Corp	167.90	+1.80
Reliance Ind	1105.30	+42.30
State Bank	242.00	+29.40
Sun Pharma	384.20	+29.40
Tata Motors	89.75	+1.75
Tata Steel	326.70	+39.25
TCS	1806.30	+36.45
Tech Mahindra	655.95	+6.10
Titan	1084.35	+7.60
UltraTech Cement	3788.90	+125.40
UPL	410.85	+32.75
Vedanta	84.05	+4.20
Wipro	197.40	+1.70
YES Bank	25.55	+0.50
Zee Entertainment	182.80	+7.85

EXCHANGE RATES

CURRENCY	TT BUY	TT SELL
US Dollar	73.72	74.04
Euro	81.95	82.30
British Pound	91.83	92.25
Japanese Yen (100)	68.84	69.14
Chinese Yuan	10.54	10.59
Swiss Franc	77.27	77.61
Singapore Dollar	52.20	52.43
Canadian Dollar	53.19	53.42
Malaysian Ringgit	17.22	17.31

Source: Indian Bank



Exports post first rise in seven months

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

India's exports rose for the first time in seven months in February growing by 2.91% to \$27.65 billion, according to Commerce Ministry data released on Friday.

Imports, too, grew by 2.48% to \$37.5 billion, leaving a trade deficit of \$9.85 billion against \$9.72 billion in February 2019.

Oil imports jumped by 14.26% to \$10.76 billion in February compared with \$9.41 billion in the year-ago month. Exports during April–February this fiscal dipped by 1.5% to \$292.91 billion. Imports during the period declined by 7.3% to \$436 billion, leaving a trade deficit of \$143.12 billion.

The statement came at a time when the stock markets plunged over 10% in the opening session on Friday as the virus-led recession fears triggered panic selling.

"The Government of India is in touch with various departments concerned, and also State governments, and has been continuously

Auto wholesales plunge in Feb.

19% drop stems from slowdown, transition to BS-VI: SIAM

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

Wholesale vehicle sales in the country declined by a little more than 19% in February 2020, as consumer sentiment remained subdued amid economic slowdown and upcoming transition to BS-VI norms, the Society of Indian Automobile Manufacturers (SIAM) said on Friday.

"The automobile industry continues to face hardships due to a steeper decline in production and wholesale dispatches in all segments in February 2020," said Rajesh Menon, director general, SIAM.

Vehicle sales across categories stood at more than 16.46 lakh units in February 2020 versus more than 20.34 lakh units in February 2019, according to SIAM data. Rajan Wadhera, president, SIAM, added, "The decline in wholesale

Bulls quarantine bears

LIC-led domestic buying stems carnage, foreign investors on binge sale

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

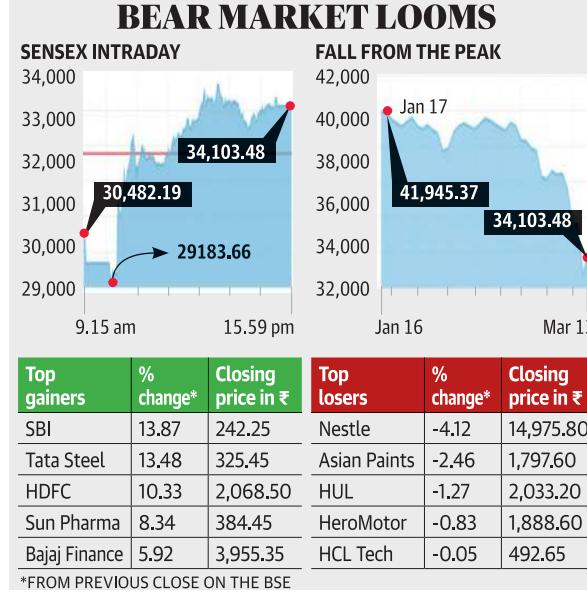
MUMBAI

Investors thought it would be a Black Friday as the barometer Sensex yo-yoed 5,400 points and the Nifty hit the lower circuit breaker of 10% as trading ground to a halt, albeit temporarily. But the markets sprang a surprise, ending in the green.

The Sensex, which had touched a low of 29,388.97 during the morning session, rebounded to a high of 34,769.48 before closing at 34,103.48, up 1,325.34 points or 4.04%. The broader Nifty settled at 9,955.20, gaining 365.05 points, or 3.81%.

In fact, minutes after start of the trading session, the Nifty's plunge to a low of 8,555.15 led to suspension of trading in both exchanges for 45 minutes.

Sector heavyweights and bluechips such as TCS and State Bank of India were all trading more than 10% lower as the markets hit their lower circuit for the first time in 12



*FROM PREVIOUS CLOSE ON THE BSE



SUSANNA MYRTLE LAZARUS

Sumukhi Suresh greets me like an old friend on the phone. "We always speak during the highlight moments of my life," she says. And there have been quite a few, including a stand-up special, judging a reality show for comics and now, the second season of her Amazon Prime Video show, *Pushpavalli*.

Released in December 2017, the titular character is an introverted girl from Bhopal who moves all the way to Bengaluru to pursue a man she thinks is romantically interested in her.

Written and played by 32-year-old Suresh, the show's eight binge-worthy episodes had us rooting for Pushpavalli, even when the things she said or did were clearly not acceptable.

"I wrote her as someone who is reserved, so viewers felt more sympathetic. At the end of season one, she is left embarrassed and treated badly by everyone around her. So she is in an irrational, vengeful place," says Suresh.

Quirks to the fore

The core cast remains the same, with Manish Anand (Nikhil Rao), Naveen Richard (Pankaj) and Ashok Pathak (T-Boi) reprising their roles. Actor Vidyuth Gargi is a new addition – a social media teaser shows him seated next to Pushpavalli in what looks like an engagement. "We wrote the script and character around [Gargi's] quirks, so it felt more natural," says Suresh. While she helms the writers' room, Ayesha Nair (*Adulting, What the Folks*) and Sumaira Shaik (*Son of Abish*) are also part of the team, with Richard and director Debbie Rao giving inputs.

Ask what the show has done for her career at large, and she says, "Immediately, it didn't do a lot for me. But over the past one year, I have noticed that a lot of people have discovered it and come for my live events because of it."

She adds that people also now see her as someone who is able to play a lead, who can hold a scene by herself. "I don't play the best friend role any more."

Sumukhi Suresh's much-loved character, Pushpavalli, is back on Amazon Prime Video for a second season

More fangirls for women, please

No to the gender card

On several instances, Suresh has mentioned that she doesn't like being pigeonholed into the "woman comic" slot. Her aim is to be great at whatever she does, irrespective of gender. Being part of a reality show for stand-ups like *Comicstaan*, she is glad to see more women making their presence felt. "We should learn from men. Even when they fail, they move on. We tend to obsess. And on shows like this, a woman failing can seem like they have let down the entire gen-

der. We need to move away from that mindset and focus on individual achievements," she says.

Suresh calls on women to fan-girl more about other women, the way men do about practically anyone they admire, be it film stars or influencers. "Support them vocally, and even if you don't like their work, make sure you give them feedback. That way, we know there is an audience that wants to listen to a female perspective." All the feedback for her comedy (good or bad) started com-

ing in only after she was in *Pushpavalli*.

Working with a largely female team for her début web series on a major platform such as Prime Video, Suresh admits that her intention was to tell a story for women.

"I don't mean to sound repetitive, but it is a fact that we don't give big girls such roles. There are no non-stereotypical traits on screen [in recent years]. No Nandita Das, Shabana Azmi or Smita Patil. When I got the chance to put out a face that is not typical, I took it, and it worked," she explains.

So when asked what happens if the second season doesn't do as well as the first, she is prepared for it. "If it fails, it fails. I cannot do anything about it. I'll just have to move on to the next project with lessons learnt."

With experience in different

Back to streaming Scenes from season two of *Pushpavalli* and (below) Sumukhi Suresh



Pushpavalli season two is now on Amazon Prime Video



A legal eye for art

Lawyer Teesta Bhandare's first art curatorial venture, reflects the importance liberal arts courses have, in forging new careers

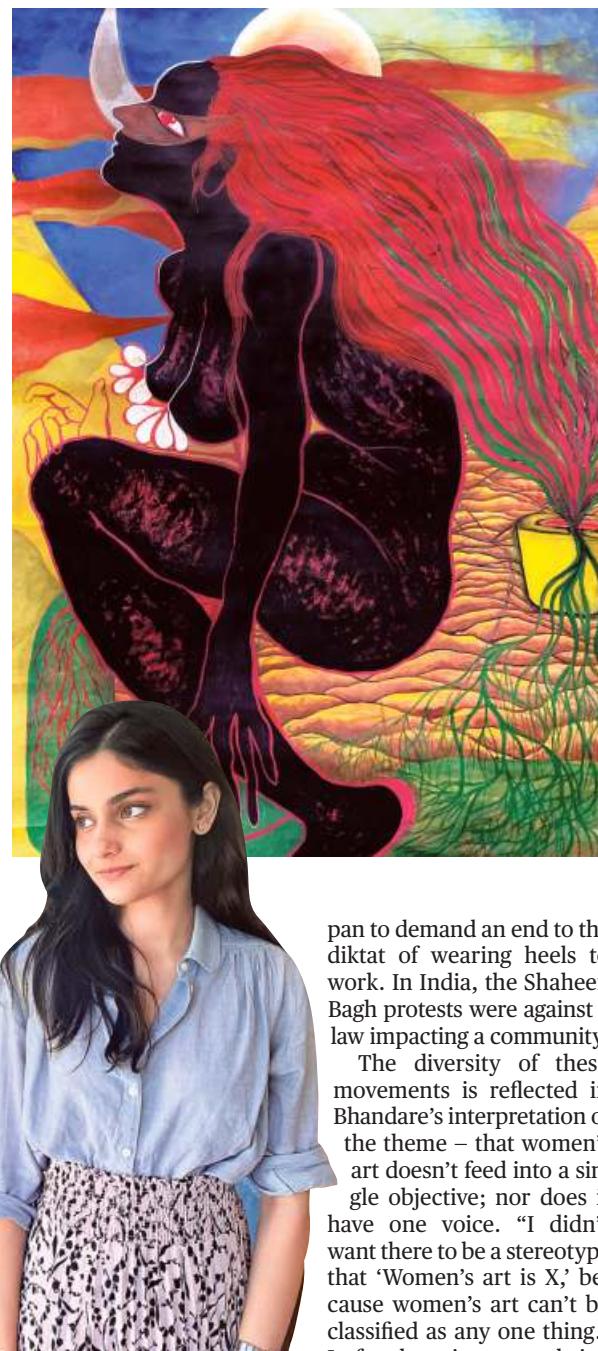
SUNALINI MATHEW

Teesta Bhandare, 26, says she was never very good at painting or drawing, but when she took her first art history course at the undergraduate level in Scripps College in the U.S., she enjoyed it a great deal.

"I took five more art critique classes across 18 art movements and periods. Given the fact that my university was in L.A., I took the advantage of going to as many galleries, museums, and art fairs [there] as I could. Then I went to study law in the U.K., when I had easy access to London – another art hub for me to explore."

At her 2,000 square foot Safdarjung work space, is her first curated show of 12 contemporary women artists and 38 pieces, sourced mostly from the artists themselves.

Titled Voices of Women, the show's inspiration was the resilience of women and the way they have come together over the last couple of years in protest movements across the world. "The marches may not always have the same objective," says Bhandare. In the U.S. they were meant to support female reproductive rights; in Ja-



pan to demand an end to the diktat of wearing heels to work. In India, the Shaheen Bagh protests were against a law impacting a community.

The diversity of these movements is reflected in Bhandare's interpretation of the theme – that women's art doesn't feed into a single objective; nor does it have one voice.

"I didn't want there to be a stereotype that 'Women's art is X,' because women's art can't be classified as any one thing." In fact her aim was to bring

Clockwise from left: KA by Anuradha Upadhyay, Que. Sera 22a by Kanchan Chander; and Bhandare ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT



together work from established and growing artists. The subject matter, styles, media used are diverse.

Along the way, she discovered that until the 19th century, women were not allowed to study the nude, even a female nude, and weren't allowed to paint their own bodies.

She began to see how male artists could objectify women's bodies in the way they draw them, while women, who are often drawing their own bodies, see them

in a different perspective.

"There's a nude by Anuradha Upadhyay (KA) – it's more a celebration than an objectification," she says.

The themes explored are sexual intimacy and relationships (as in Tarini Sethi's *Anomaly*), the female form (in Kanchan Chander's *Que. Sera 22a*), with some being autobiographical elements (In Bharati Kapadia's series *Leaves from My Journal*).

At A 2/22 Safdarjung Enclave; March 14th-19th; 11 a.m. to 8 p.m.

PRODUCTS

Summer's here

Label Ritu Kumar, a designer brand that brings India's rich craft to garments, has just launched its Spring Summer collection. Called Songs of Summer, it is inspired by summer days, and has graphic stripes and geometrical prints in Parisian silhouettes, all carried in lightweight fabrics. Label also has a range of accessories including bags, belts, and jewellery.

At Label Ritu Kumar stores across India and LabelRituKumar.com, upwards ₹2,900



Contact us at delhimetro@thehindu.co.in

5 EVENTS WORTH YOUR WHILE



RETAIL

Craft bazaar
Dastkar has organised a four-day fair called Bonanza 2020, where 80 craft groups will be selling their products at a discounted price. On till March 16, the fair offers handcrafted apparel, home decor, and accessories which include Kashmiri textile crafts, dhokra and terracotta work and crystal and leather products.

VENUE: Nature Bazaar, Andheria Modh

TIME: 11 a.m. - 7.30 p.m.



MUSIC

Jugalbandi
Dhrupad Utsav 2020, a two-day music festival dedicated to Ustad Zia Mohiuddin Dagar, Ustad Zia Fariduddin Dagar, and Pandit Ramakant Gundecha begins today, with a vocal jugalbandi by the Gundecha Brothers (now with son Anant), a solo vocal by Janhavi Phansalkar, and a santoor recital by Satyendra Solanki.

VENUE: The Amphitheatre, Triveni Kala Sangam

TIME: 6 p.m. - 9 p.m.



FOOD

Sunday brunch
Elan, a food court that specialises in South East Asian dishes, has started a special Sunday brunch buffet. The buffet offers an array of signature cuisines ranging from European, Oriental, and Coastal to Indian and Mediterranean. The menu also comprises a choice of alcohol like champagne, house wines, spirits, and cocktails.

VENUE: The Lodhi, Lodhi Road

TIME: 12 p.m. - 5 p.m.



PERFORMANCE

Tribute recitals
Baba Allauddin Khan Music Foundation is hosting a tribute to the Indian classical sarod player Guru Pandit Jotin Bhattacharya. The event will feature sitar recitals by Priyadarshini Saroogi and Soumitra Thakur, a vocal presentation by Dr. Avinash Kumar, and a flute recital by Rajat Prasanna.

VENUE: Triveni Kala Sangam, Mandi House

TIME: 6:30 p.m.

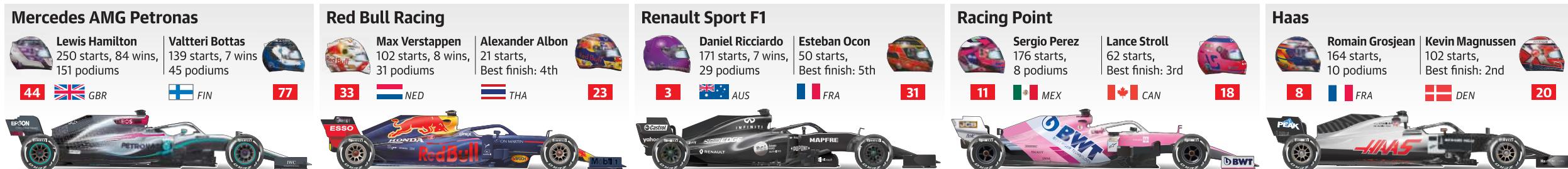


FILM

Japanese drama
The Japan Foundation will screen *Every Day a Good Day*, a 2018 Japanese film directed by Tatsushi Omori. Based on essayist Morishita Noriko's book, it is a story about how a young woman's induction and immersion into the meditative Japanese tea ceremony helped her scale many obstacles in her life.

VENUE: 5A Ring Road, Lajpat Nagar IV

TIME: 2 p.m.



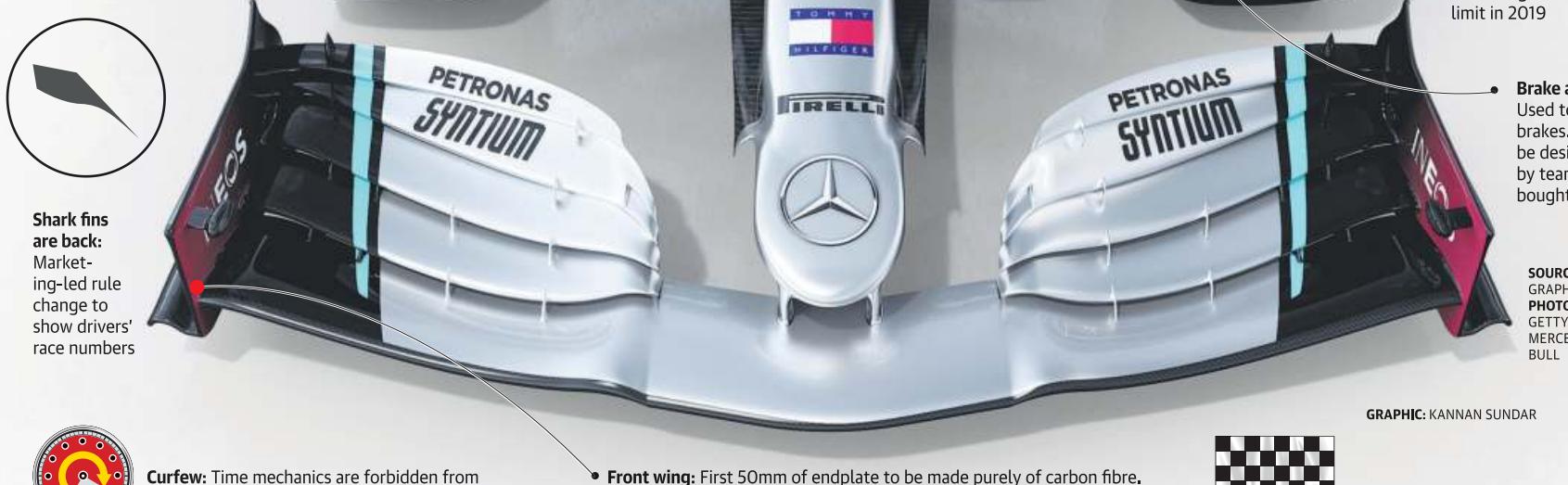
F1 in disarray after Melbourne fiasco

The season-opener was cancelled last-minute amid COVID-19 fears. What does this mean for 2020? And what are the other major talking points?

S. DIPAK RAGAV

The COVID-19 threat

■ Parts of the world are coming to a grinding halt, with the spread of COVID-19 forcing countries to limit public gatherings and restrict travel. But Formula 1 seemingly thought nothing of it, taking thousands of personnel and plane loads of machinery to Melbourne. Lewis Hamilton was critical of the decision, dismissing it as "cash is king". But once McLaren withdrew from the race after one of its team members tested positive for the coronavirus, the authorities were forced to confront the reality of the situation. The announcement of the cancellation on Friday wasn't made until people had begun to queue up at Albert Park — an indication of the mismanagement that had preceded it. The Chinese GP, scheduled for April 17-19, has already been deferred. On Friday, the FIA announced that next week's Bahrain GP, initially scheduled to be held behind closed doors, and the inaugural Vietnamese GP, originally set for April 3-5, will be postponed. The sport faces severe financial losses, which could increase if the season is truncated. The authorities have been pushed to get their act together to deal with the significant threat COVID-19 poses. But they can't escape criticism for their mishandling of the lead-up to the Melbourne GP.



SOURCE: GRAPHIC NEWS PHOTOS: GETTY IMAGES, MERCEDES, RED BULL

GRAPHIC: KANNAN SUNDAR

Checkered flag: Return to using traditional checkered flag to end race

Hamilton chases history, Verstappen spoils for a fight, Vettel faces an existential crisis

■ Despite Hamilton's dominant run over the past several seasons, 2020 promises some intriguing driver battles. The six-time champion, on 84 race wins, could realistically pass Michael Schumacher's mark of 91 wins and tie the German's record of seven titles. But young sensation Max Verstappen, who enjoys playing mind games, won't make it easy. If Red Bull can give the Dutchman a car to fight for wins from the start, we could see a feisty duel between the old and new guard. Verstappen was sublime last year. He seemed to have smoothed off some of his rough edges and the resulting consistency showed he was ready for a title race. At Ferrari, Sebastian Vettel faces an existential battle. The four-time champion's reputation has diminished every year since 2017, after losing two titles to Hamilton (2017 and 2018) because of a string of driving errors. He was blown away last year by Charles Leclerc, who was in his first season at Ferrari. Vettel, who is out of contract in 2021, needs a faultless year to reassert his supremacy at the Maranello, especially considering Leclerc has signed a deal till 2024, which suggests that the Italian maestro is ready to bet on the 22-year-old.

What's happening with 'The best of the rest'?

■ Last year saw former champion McLaren come out of a deep rut to finish a creditable fourth, winning a tight battle for 'The best of the rest', behind the top three. It will be interesting to see if the team can continue this upward trend, pitted against the likes of Renault, Racing Point and Alpha Tauri (which was Toro Rosso until 2019). Interestingly, Racing Point was very quick in pre-season testing, with the car looking a lot like last year's Mercedes, prompting many to call it the Pink Mercedes. If the team can sustain the form shown in testing, the midfield battle could get very competitive. It's a make-or-break year for Renault, which has not delivered despite a vast outlay of resources. It could struggle to retain the exciting Daniel Ricciardo. Indeed, another bad year could force the French company to pull the plug on its F1 participation.

Scuderia Ferrari

Sebastian Vettel	240 starts, 53 wins, 120 podiums	Charles Leclerc	42 starts, 2 wins, 10 podiums
5	GER	16	MON

McLaren

Carlos Sainz Jr	102 starts, Best finish: 3rd	Lando Norris	21 starts, Best finish: 6th
55	ESP	4	GBR

Scuderia AlphaTauri

Pierre Gasly	47 starts, Best finish: 2nd	Daniel Ricciardo	93 starts, 3 podiums
10	FRA	26	RUS

Alfa Romeo

Kimi Raikkonen	312 starts, 21 wins, 103 podiums	Antonio Giovinazzi	23 starts, Best finish: 5th
7	FIN	99	ITA

Roku Williams Racing

George Russell	21 starts, Best finish: 11th	Nicholas Latifi	Debut season
63	GBR	6	CAN

GAME THEORY

The Bruno Fernandes effect

Manchester United is on an 11-match unbeaten run in all competitions, after enduring a seven-game stretch in which it suffered four defeats. Experts say Portuguese midfielder Bruno Fernandes has played a big part in turning things around after joining the club in January. Do the numbers support this claim?

WINS, POINTS AND GOALS | Although it's a small sample — five games in the Premier League, nine overall — United has had better results with Fernandes in the side, winning more, scoring more, and securing more points per game than it did before his arrival. Fernandes is yet to lose a game at United during the first pre-season test. It certainly caught rivals by surprise.

UNITED WITHOUT FERNANDES

	Games	Won	Drawn	Lost	Win%	Points per game	Goals per game
Premier League	24	9	7	8	37.50%	1.4	1.5
Other Competitions	14	9	3	2	64.29%	-	1.7

UNITED WITH FERNANDES

	Games	Won	Drawn	Lost	Win%	Points per game	Goals per game
Premier League	5	3	2	0	60.00%	2.2	1.6
Other Competitions	4	3	1	0	75.00%	-	3.5

BEST GOAL INVOLVEMENT (FOR UNITED IN THE PREMIER LEAGUE)

Fernandes' influence in the final third has been significant. He leads United in goal involvement this season — he has contributed more goals and assists per 90 minutes than his teammates

Player Apps Mins Goals Assists Goals+Assists per 90

Bruno Fernandes	5	478	2	3	0.94
Marcus Rashford	22	1882	14	4	0.86
Mason Greenwood	22	648	5	0	0.69
Anthony Martial	23	1885	11	3	0.67
Daniel James	27	2175	3	6	0.37

THE UNDERLYING ATTACKING NUMBERS (FOR UNITED IN THE PREMIER LEAGUE)

His goal involvement is excellent, but has he merely hit a hot streak? He has taken the most shots per game and created the second-most chances per game, both of which are more repeatable measures than goals and assists. So, the underlying numbers are encouraging

MOST SHOTS PER GAME

Bruno Fernandes	3.8
Marcus Rashford	3.4
Anthony Martial	2.6
Paul Pogba	2
Andreas Pereira	1.6

MOST KEY PASSES PER GAME

Paul Pogba	2.3
Bruno Fernandes	2.2
Fred	1.4
Andreas Pereira	1.3
Marcus Rashford	1.1

Top Indians ▶

Sumit Nagal Rank 127 ▲ No change Prajneesh Gunneswaran Rank 132 ▼ No change



SOURCE: WHOSCORED.COM



SOURCE: WHOSCORED.COM



SOURCE: WHOSCORED.COM



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Friday the 13th brings bad news for IPL

Governing Council decides to suspend tournament till April 15

CRICKET

AMOL KARHADKAR
MUMBAI

The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) has suspended the Indian Premier League's 13th edition till April 15 owing to the COVID-19 outbreak. The IPL was scheduled to be played in nine cities across the country from March 29 to May 24.

"The BCCI is concerned and sensitive about all its stakeholders, and public health in general, and it is taking all necessary steps to ensure that, all people related to IPL, including fans, have a safe cricketing experience," said a statement issued by BCCI secretary Jay Shah.

"The BCCI will work closely with the Government of India along with the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare and all other relevant Central and State Government departments in this regard," the statement added.

Uncertainty

It may widely be perceived that the IPL will start on April 15, but *The Hindu* understands that no one in the BCCI is certain whether the 13th edition will be played or not.

Shah, BCCI president Sourav Ganguly and IPL Govern-



On hold: Fans will have to wait to learn who will lay claim to this edition's trophy. ■ FILE PHOTO: K.V.S. GIRI

ing Council chairman Brijesh Patel were huddled together at the BCCI headquarters since morning before the decision was announced.

Later in the afternoon, Uday Shankar, Asia-Pacific head of The Walt Disney Company which has the IPL global broadcast rights, joined the IPL authorities.

An official later told *The Hindu* that the uncertainty around the nature of the coronavirus calamity had left the BCCI with no choice but

to defer the tournament.

"If at all the IPL starts, it will be around April 20, but the decision will be made around April 10."

"If the tournament doesn't start by April 20, it will have to be deferred till next year," the official said.

According to the official, the "six-week window from April 21 till May 31" would suffice to host 60 matches with "multiple double-headers". But the decision will depend on the "extent of the virus in-

fection by the first week of April".

He said IPL authorities had informally consulted the franchises and some of the big teams were hesitant to begin the IPL without any overseas participation.

"Besides players, most teams have foreigners in their coaching staff. Since the visa issue is unresolved, they were not so keen on starting the tournament without coaches, not just the players," the official

revealed.

Briefing
The franchises are likely to be formally briefed about the possible window and venues at a meeting with the Governing Council on Saturday.

The IPL authorities haven't given up on staging the T20 league this year. On Friday, despite suspending the tournament till April 15, umpire appointment letters were sent to Indians shortlisted for the league.

Lucknow and Kolkata ODIs called off

South Africa to visit India at a later date to play three matches

SA IN INDIA

RAKESH RAO
LUCKNOW

After a washout of the series-opener at Dharamshala on Thursday, the remaining two One-Day Internationals involving India and South Africa were cancelled as a precautionary measure against COVID-19 pandemic.

The BCCI took the decision to call off the matches at Lucknow (March 15) and Kolkata (March 18) on Friday evening, hours after the teams landed here by a chartered flight from Dharamshala.

The statement, issued by

BCCI secretary Jay Shah, read: "The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI), along with Cricket South Africa (CSA), on Friday announced to reschedule the ongoing ODI series in view of the COVID-19 outbreak. Cricket South Africa will visit India at a later date to play three ODIs. The BCCI-CSA will jointly work out the revised schedule."

Speculations surrounding the possibility of the BCCI calling off the ODI series were rife since Thursday afternoon following its announcement of holding the ODI at Lucknow without spectators. This was in keep-

ing with the health advisory from the Union Government.

Trigger
What must have also prompted the BCCI to cancel the ODIs was Friday's decision of the Uttar Pradesh Government to invoke the Epidemic Act, after 11 cases of Coronavirus were reported in the State.

This meant, over 500 people, including players, match officials, security personnel, media persons and those representing various stakeholders, had to be quarantined before being allowed inside the stadium.

On its part, the Uttar Pra-

desh Cricket Association (UPCA) was contemplating issuing fresh accreditation card on match-day even to the commentators and media persons, holding BCCI's central accreditation.

Unseasonal rain

In the afternoon, unseasonal rain lashed the city and overcast weather gave rise to conversations around the possibility of a rain-curtailed match on Sunday, if not another washout like the one seen at Dharamshala.

But before the day ended, BCCI's decision to call off the ODIs laid all speculations to rest.

BASKETBALL
FIBA 3x3 Olympic qualifying tournament from March 18 to 22 in Bengaluru postponed.

CHESS
All national tournaments

Events affected in India by coronavirus

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

ATHLETICS

Federation Cup National junior athletics championships to be held in Bhopal from April 6-8 postponed.

BADMINTON

India Open suspended at least till April 12 after the Badminton World Federation (BWF) said in a statement that the escalation of the COVID-19 outbreak globally has forced it to cancel or postpone all tournaments from March 16 to April 12.

FOOTBALL

ISSF World Cup qualifier against Qatar in Bhubaneswar on March 26 postponed.

FIFA World Cup qualifier against Afghanistan on June 9 in Kolkata postponed.

MOTORSPORTS

Indian Super League final between ATK FC and Chennaiyin FC in Goa on March 14 to be held in empty stadium.

FIFA World Cup qualifier against Qatar in Bhubaneswar on March 26 postponed.

FIFA World Cup qualifier against Afghanistan on June 9 in Kolkata postponed.

TENNIS

All domestic tournaments cancelled.

Trophy matches in Aizawl from April 14-27 postponed.

Remaining 28 matches of I-League to be played in empty stadiums.

GOLF

India Open from March 19-22 in New Delhi postponed.

All tournaments of the Professional Golf Tour of India from March 16 postponed indefinitely.

SHOOTING

ISSF World Cup for rifle, pistol and shotgun in New Delhi from March 15-25 postponed.

COVID-19: Sports Minister asks Sindhu to carry on

FAR FROM CONSISTENT: P.V. Sindhu, despite winning the first game, failed to find a way past

Nozomi Okuhara. ■ FILE PHOTO: NAGARA GOPAL

The Indian challenge ends at the Super 1000 event

Future course of action to be decided today

SHAYAN ACHARYA
MUMBAI

Board of Control for Cricket in India president Sourav Ganguly said here on Friday that the future course of action on the Indian Premier League would be decided after a meeting with franchisees on Saturday.

Following Health Ministry guidelines, the BCCI has decided to suspend the league till April 15. However, there is no clarity on whether the tournament will start on April 15 or a revised date will be announced.

"Let's see. We can't answer that right now," Ganguly said after a long meeting at the BCCI headquarters on Friday. He said it was not possible to predict how things would pan out.

As per the schedule, the tournament was to begin on

March 29 and end on May 24. Asked whether the window would be extended, Ganguly said: "It's too early to comment on that. We will discuss all the aspects, see how things go and decide accordingly."

With the Delhi government refusing to give permission to host any sporting activities, including the IPL, there is speculation that the number of venues could be reduced.

However, Ganguly said: "Our priority is safety and that's why we decided to postpone it. We will see how things go and then get a better idea (about the venues)."

Asked whether the franchises were happy with the Board's decision, Ganguly stated: "Nobody has a choice."

Irani Cup to go ahead as scheduled

AMOL KARHADKAR
MUMBAI

Despite suspending the Indian Premier League until April 15 and cancelling the ODIs against South Africa, the BCCI has decided to go ahead with the Irani Cup as scheduled from March 18 to 22.

Saba Karim, BCCI's General Manager-Cricket Operations, confirmed to *The Hindu* that the annual fixture between the Ranji Trophy champion and Rest of India will go ahead behind closed doors at the SCA stadium in Rajkot.

Humna Vihari is likely to lead Rest of India versus Ranji champion Saurashtra.

No AITA tournaments till further notice

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The All India Tennis Association (AITA) has announced that it had cancelled all the domestic events scheduled for the next two months with immediate effect owing to the threat of coronavirus outbreak.

AITA secretary-general Hironmoy Chatterjee said that all tournaments scheduled from March 16 would not be held, and the revival of the events would be announced in due course of time.

The AITA also brought attention to the statement from the International Tennis Federation (ITF) which has cancelled all events around the world till April 20.

The ATP and WTA have also announced the cancellation of events for the next six weeks.

The AITA reiterated that all the domestic and international events would not be staged in the country till further notice.

England cancels Lanka tour

Physical and mental well-being of players and support teams paramount: ECB

ENGLAND IN SL

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
COLOMBO

England's cricket team abruptly pulled out of a tour of Sri Lanka on Friday citing the "unprecedented" crisis caused by the coronavirus pandemic.

A practice match here was halted as the team announced it would be flying back to London, and the first of two Tests due to start on March 19 has been indefinitely postponed.

"At this time, the physical and mental well-being of our players and support teams is paramount," said an England and Wales Cricket Board statement an-

nouncing the end of the tour. "We will now look to bring them home to their families as soon as possible. These are completely unprecedented times, and decisions like this go beyond cricket."

The four-day practice game against a Sri Lankan Board President's XI side was halted near the end of the second day. England was fielding when captain Joe Root came on to call the players off.

The match attracted few spectators. Only a handful of England fans and a dozen locals were at the grounds to watch the two teams ahead of the first Test in Galle.

Root made it clear this

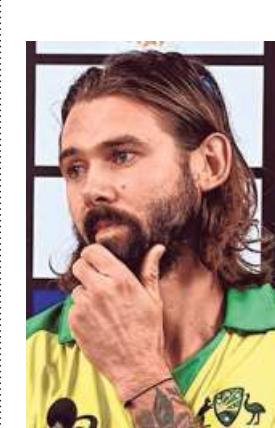
week that players had been told to take extra precautions and not have contact with fans or members of the opposing team. "It is against our nature as a team, we quite like to socialise and interact with fans and take selfies, autographs and stuff. But it means that we can't do that on this trip," Root told reporters on Wednesday.

There were no handshakes between the teams before the practice game.

"We were told that England wants to return because of the threat of the coronavirus," a Sri Lankan cricket official told AFP.

"They decided to stop the practice match immediately and get back home."

Richardson cleared of virus



Kane Richardson.
■ FILE PHOTO

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
SYDNEY

Australia fast bowler Kane Richardson has been cleared of a suspected coronavirus infection and rejoined his teammates at the SCG on Friday. Richardson, who returned from South Africa with the ODI squad, was isolated and tested as a precaution after developing a mild sore throat.

Arsenal manager Mikel Arteta has, however, tested positive for coronavirus, the Premier League club said on Thursday, with the first-team squad set to self-isolate as a result.

Arsenal is scheduled to play Brighton in the Premier League on Saturday, the game likely to be postponed.

The 24-year-old Indian squandered a sparkling start as Okuhara produced a rear-guard action to overcome Sindhu 21-21, 21-15, 21-13 in a 68-minute last-eight encounter at the Arena Birmingham. Sindhu's defeat ended India's campaign at the Super 1000 tournament.

Sindhu had come into the match with a 9-7 head-to-head record against Okuhara, having demolished the Japanese in the final of the 2019 World Championships.

The Indian began the contest with the same intensity, quickly moving to a 3-0 lead and swelling the advantage to 7-2 with a precise shot at the backline. The Japanese narrowed the gap to 5-8 before Sindhu unleashed a shot at the back and grabbed another point when Okuhara found the net.

Sindhu entered the break with a five-point cushion. The Indian continued to dominate the proceedings after the breather and went on to win the game.

In the second, Okuhara showed more intent, employing a low serve and trying to put Sindhu on the backfoot. It worked as she grabbed an 11-5 advantage at the interval.

Errors continued to pile up for the Indian as Okuhara pulled away to a 16-7 lead.

Sindhu missed the lines and found the net too often, allowing Okuhara to move to

19-11. The Japanese sealed the match when Sindhu committed another error.

Error-prone Sindhu falls to Okuhara

The Indian challenge ends at the Super 1000 event



Far from consistent: P.V. Sindhu, despite winning the first game, failed to find a way past

Nozomi Okuhara. ■ FILE PHOTO: NAGARA GOPAL

COVID-19: Sports Minister asks Sindhu to carry on

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

Wary of the COVID-19 threat, top shuttler P.V. Sindhu, on Thursday, called up Sports Minister Kiren Rijiju from the United Kingdom, seeking his suggestion on whether to continue playing in the All England Championships.

"She didn't let the moment slip even as Sindhu failed to keep pace in the rallies. With the Indian going long twice, Okuhara led 18-10 and soon roared back into the contest by winning the second game."

TV PICKS

All-England Badminton Championships: Star Sports 3, 3.30 p.m.
Premier League: SS Select 1 (SD & HD), 6 p.m. & 8.30 p.m.
ISL: (Final) Star Sports 2 (SD & HD), 7.30 p.m.

IN BRIEF



Czech Olympic champion Dana Zatopkova dead

PRAGUE
Dana Zatopkova, the 1952 Olympic javelin champion and wife of four-time Olympic champion Emil Zatopek, died at the age of 97 on Friday, the Czech Olympic Committee said. Besides the gold from the Helsinki Olympics, Zatopkova won the Olympic silver in Rome in 1960. In 1958, she set the World record of 55.73m at the age of 35. She was European champion in 1954 and 1958. AFP



A lovely gesture by Cavaliers' Love

LOS ANGELES
Cleveland Cavaliers forward Kevin Love has committed \$100,000 to help workers at the team's arena and support staff impacted by the suspension of the NBA season. The dearth of games will be a big financial blow to the legion of ticket-takers, ushers and food vendors who keep the events running but don't get paid when they aren't working. "... I'm committing \$100,000 through the @KevinLoveFund in support of the @Cavs arena and support staff that had a sudden life shift due to the suspension of the NBA season," Love wrote on Instagram. AFP

Bengaluru races cancelled

BENGALURU:
In view of the notifications, directions, advisories issued by the Government of India and State Government Authorities regarding precautionary measures to be taken for Novel coronavirus (COVID-19), the Stewards of the Bangalore Turf Club Limited have decided to cancel all the remaining Bangalore Winter races (On-course races) and suspend all inter venue betting (off-course) operations from March, 13, 2020 till further notice.

Mane in joint lead

KOLKATA
Order of Merit leader Udayan Mane was in joint lead with three others at 10-under 130 at the halfway stage of the Bengal Open golf championship at the Tollygunge Club on Friday. Top scores: 130-Udayan Mane (67, 63), Khalin Joshi (67, 63), Om Prakash Chouhan (65, 65), Aadil Bedi (65, 65); 131-N.Thngaraj (65, 66), Mukesh Kumar (66, 65), Digvijay Singh (62, 69); 132-Dipanjan Kaushal (70, 62); 133-S. Chikkarangappa (68, 65).

Harika stays in seventh place

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA LAUSANNE
Indian Grandmaster Dronavalli Harika drew with Ukraine's Anna Muzychuk in the 10th round to remain seventh on the points table of the FIDE Women's Grand Prix chess tournament here. Harika has five points. Harika, who was in the lead in the middle part of the tournament, is out of contention for the top prize. The results: (Tenth round): D. Harika 5 drew with Anna Muzychuk (Ukr) 5.5; Alina Kashlinskaya (Rus) 5.5 drew with Nana Dzagnidze (Geo) 6.5; Antoaneta Stefanova (Bul) 5 bt Anna Muzychuk (Ukr) 6; Zhansara Abdumalik (Kaz) 6 bt Pia Cramling (Swe) 4; Alexandra Goryachkina (Rus) 5.5 bt Ju Wenjun (Chn) 4; Marie Sebag (Fra) 3.5 drew with Alexandra Kosteniuk (Rus) 3.5.



Champions: Saurashtra team celebrates after trumping Bengal in the Ranji Trophy final. ■ VIJAY SONEJI

Saurashtra wins maiden Ranji title

Unadkat springs into action to put the skids on Bengal's innings

Y.B. SARANGI
RAJKOT

A magnificent tale of grind and toil came to a halt as Saurashtra, led by an inspiring Jaydev Unadkat, stopped Bengal on the fifth and final day to win its maiden title and bring the Ranji Trophy to its spiritual home on Friday.

At the Saurashtra Cricket Association Stadium here, Bengal, starting from 354 for six and needing 72 runs to overhaul the host's first innings aggregate of 425 runs, could not hold out against Unadkat's intensity and fell short by 44 runs.

Unadkat took two wickets for 12 runs in seven overs and effected a run out as Bengal could only manage 27 runs in 14 overs to total 381.

The match ended in a draw, with the home side posting 105 for four in its second essay and Saurashtra took the title in its fourth final appearance in last eight seasons on the basis of gaining the first innings lead.

The first 83 minutes of the morning belonged to Unadkat.

Able leadership
The lanky left-arm seamer exhibited exemplary leadership to inspire his team to win the coveted trophy, named after Ranjitsinhji of Jamnagar.

Unadkat dealt the first blow when he trapped dangerous Anustup Majumdar (63) in front with a beauty in the sixth over of the day. Two

balls later, he ran Akash Deep out freakishly to swing the match in the host's favour.

Akash's run out hampered Bengal's progress and hurt its morale.

Wicketkeeper Avi Barot's throw missed the stumps following Unadkat's delivery. Noticing that Akash was still out of his crease marginally, the Saurashtra skipper picked up the ball and hit the stump successfully. Television replays showing Akash's lack of effort in putting his bat or foot inside the line baffle many.

Even as Arnab Nandi (40 not out, 126b, 5x4, 1x6) fought a lone battle, Dharmendrasinh Jadeja claimed Mukesh Kumar's wicket and Unadkat had Ishan Porel lbw

to trigger wild celebrations in the home camp.

Saurashtra – 1st innings: 425

Bengal – 1st innings: Sudip Gharami c Vishvaraj b Dharmendrasinh 26, Abhimanyu Eswaran lbw b Mankad 9, Sudip Chatterjee c Vishvaraj b Dharmendrasinh 81, Manoj Tiwary lbw b Jani 35, Wriddhiman Saha b Mankad 64, Anustup Majumdar lbw b Unadkat 63, Shahbaz Ahmed b Sakariya 16, Arnab Nandi (not out) 40, Akash Deep (run out) 0, Mukesh Kumar c Vishvaraj b Dharmendrasinh 5, Ishan Porel lbw b Unadkat 1, Extras (b-20, lb-14, nb-1, w-1, pen-5) 41, Total (for three wickets in 34 overs) 105

Fall of wickets: 1-38, 2-65, 3-82, 4-105

Bengal bowling: Porel 3-15-0, Mukesh 12-2-33-0, Shahbaz 14-5-32-2, Akash 4-0-13-1, Chatterjee 1-1-0.

Result: Saurashtra won on the basis of gaining first innings lead

Saurashtra bowling: Unadkat 37-10-96-2, Sakariya 28-10-

23 NCOEs to be set up

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Twenty-three National Centres of Excellence (NCOE) will be set up across the country which will merge all existing schemes presently operating in the Regional Centres and Academic Institutions of Sports Authority of India (SAI).

According to the decisions taken at SAI's governing body meeting here on Friday, the government has identified 14 priority sports that will be focused on.

The NCOEs will have state-of-the-art infrastructure, sports science support and diet as per the requirement of an athlete without monetary ceiling.

The SAI press release said that, "The general body also approved the appointment of more than 350 sports science experts and more than 100 specialised mess and kitchen staff, including

55-1, Dharmendrasinh 52-14-3, Mankad 21-7-45-2, Chirag Jani 23-3-32-1.

Saurashtra – 2nd innings: Harvil Desai c Abhishek (sub) b Shahbaz 21, Avi Barot c Shreyan (sub) b Chatterjee 39, Vivhraj Singh Jadeja c Saha b Akash 17, Arpit Vasavada c Abhishek (sub) b Shahbaz 3, Sheldon Jackson (not out) 12, Extras (b-8, lb-4, nb-1) 13, Total (for three wickets in 34 overs) 105

Fall of wickets: 1-35, 2-35, 3-124, 4-225, 5-241, 6-263, 7-361, 8-361, 9-370

Bengal bowling: Porel 3-15-0, Mukesh 12-2-33-0, Shahbaz 14-5-32-2, Akash 4-0-13-1, Chatterjee 1-1-0.

Result: Saurashtra won on the basis of gaining first innings lead

Man of the match: Arpit Vasavada.

I wanted to do it for the team: Unadkat

The side has come a long way playing lots of finals, says the skipper

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
RAJKOT

Saurashtra skipper Jaydev Unadkat on Friday said the self-belief gained from the tough semifinal win over Gujarat helped his side turn the tide in its favour on the last day of the Ranji Trophy final.

Unadkat said Saurashtra, which had some players who were sick, was keen to win its maiden title. "Though the energy levels were down, I think the way we won the semifinal gave us belief.

"We still had a lot of hope and that is why we went through," said an emotionally charged Unadkat.

"This was probably one of my slowest innings in the domestic circuit. It was a tough pitch. Needed to put my head down and play a crucial knock."

On winning the championship, Pujara said, "When we came to finals last year, we had discussed that we had the potential to win. We decided to work hard for the trophy."

Pujara said he expected Unadkat to return to the Indian side. "Jaydev was modest that he would not be thinking about the Indian call but I will be surprised if he is not picked in the Indian team," said Pujara.



The coveted one: Seasoned campaigners Jaydev Unadkat and Cheteshwar Pujara are pleased as punch as they hold the Ranji Trophy. ■ VIJAY SONEJI

Road to Wimbledon events cancelled

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Road to Wimbledon under-14 tennis tournaments, scheduled to be played in Kolkata and Delhi, for boys and girls in the under-14 age group, from March 14, have been cancelled, owing to the outbreak of coronavirus around the world.

"We will with work the All India Tennis Association in exploring alternative selection options for the Road

to Wimbledon UK Finals in August 2020, currently planned to go ahead," said a release from the All England Tennis Club.

"We were very much looking forward to working with the very best and most promising young players aged under-14 to introduce them to grass court tennis."

"However, the grass courts will still be there and we hope to come back next year instead," the release said.

Australia crushes New Zealand

Kiwis restrict Aussie batsmen, but stumble in chase

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
SYDNEY

Australia crushed New Zealand by 71 runs in the first One-Day International at an empty Sydney Cricket Ground on Friday.

After New Zealand had kept the home side to 258 for seven, the Australian bowling attack dismissed the visitors for 187.

Cricket Australia barred spectators from the match owing to the coronavirus pandemic, leading to the strange sight of players acknowledging milestones to empty grandstands.

It was also revealed that Australian fast bowler Kane Richardson was in quarantine early in the day and had been tested for the virus after feeling unwell.

However, he was subsequently cleared and returned to the ground to rejoin his teammates.

Australia skipper Aaron Finch chose to bat, and the

home side at one stage was looking at a score in excess of 300 following a superb opening partnership by Finch and David Warner.

But once Warner (67) and Finch (60) were dismissed,

the Australian innings lost momentum and New Zealand clawed its way back into the game, despite a late flourish from Marnus Labuschagne, who made 56 off 52 balls.

SCOREBOARD

Australia: D. Warner c Sodhi b Ferguson 67, A. Finch c Latham b Santner 60, S. Smith c Santner 14, D. Short c Nicholls b Sodhi 5, M. Labuschagne c Taylor b Ferguson 56, M. Marsh c Guptill b Sodhi 27, A. Carey c Taylor b Sodhi 1, P. Cummins (not out) 14, M. Starc (not out) 9; Extras (lb-3, nb-2): 5. Total (for 7 wkts. in 50 overs): 258.

Fall of wickets: 1-124, 2-145, 3-146, 4-165, 5-224, 6-226, 7-248.

New Zealand bowling: Boult 10-0-37-0, Ferguson 9-0-60-2, Neesham 7-0-44-0, Santner 10-0-34-2, de Grandhomme 6-0-29-0, Smith 8-0-51-3.

New Zealand: M. Guptill c Smith b Cummins 40, H. Nicholls c Carey b Hazlewood 10, K.

Toss: Australia.

Man-of-the-Match: Mitchell Marsh.

Australia won by 71 runs.

ATK and Chennaiyin in the ultimate battle

Both teams have won two titles each and will go for a record third

ISL FINAL

AMITABHA DAS SHARMA
FATORDA



Battlelines drawn: ATK's Roy Krishna, left, and coach Antonio Habas, right, will match wits with Chennaiyin FC's Lucian Goian, second from left, and coach Owen Coyle. ■ AFP

thanks to Roy Krishna and David Williams who proved devastating in the frontline. The Fiji-Australia combination accounted for 22 goals, with Krishna contributing 15.

The final will be a test of the attacking prowess of the two teams. Chennaiyin owes it to the coaching acumen of Owen Coyle for reaching this far. The Irishman inspired one of the most remarkable

turnarounds in the history of the tournament as Chennaiyin was lying in the penultimate spot at one stage.

Lethal combo

The key to the revival was the strikeforce of Lithuanian Nerijus Valskis (14 goals) and Brazilian Rafael Crivellaro (7), who emerged as one of the most successful combinations. ATK and Chennaiyin

have met 14 times, the former winning six matches and the latter four. The other four games have ended in draws. In the current season, ATK beat Chennaiyin away but lost 3-1 at home.

The two sides have played two finals each and won on both occasions. It remains to be seen which emerges as the most successful team in the history of the ISL.

Keep a cool head and a fiery heart'

ATK head coach Habas' advice to his players

AMITABHA DAS SHARMA
FATORDA

Habas said on the eve of the final.

When asked about the inconsistencies visible in some of his side's performance, Habas retorted by saying, "If there are no problems then we can do a Liverpool."

"This is a league with playoffs and in this format we have to get our best form in the final."

"So I would advise my team to play with a cool head and a fiery heart to

achieve the target," Habas said.

When asked about the inconsistencies visible in some of his side's performance, Habas retorted by saying, "If there are no problems then we can do a Liverpool."

"This is football and we have to analyse the mistakes and correct them as far as possible to bring up a better performance," he said.

When it came to motivating the side in a match that will be played closed doors, Habas said football is not bigger