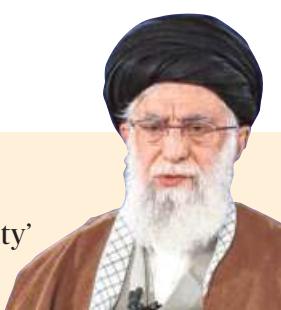




Sonia convenes meet of Opposition parties to discuss COVID-19
page 9



Travel curbs relaxed for limited category of OCI card holders
page 10



Iran's Khamenei says fight to 'liberate' Palestine is Islamic duty'
page 14

NEARBY



No curbs on industries but traffic throttled

GURUGRAM Though the Haryana government has allowed industries to work with full strength and permitted the opening of shops, markets and private companies, the restrictions on movement across Delhi-Gurugram border continue to hamper smooth running of commercial and industrial establishments. However, the actual implementation of the restrictions on the border has slackened.

CITY ▶ PAGE 3

PM announces ₹1,000 cr. aid for Bengal

Toll touches 80; Modi, Mamata undertake aerial survey of Amphan-hit areas; Odisha to get ₹500 crore

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

KOLKATA / BHUBANESHWAR

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday announced a rehabilitation package of ₹1,000 crore for West Bengal and ₹500 crore for Odisha after an aerial survey of the devastation caused by cyclone Amphan.

"An advance assistance of ₹1,000 crore will be arranged by the government of India, so that the State government does not face any major hardship during these difficult times," Mr. Modi said following the survey of affected areas with Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee and Governor Jagdeep Dhankar.

"In addition ₹2 lakh will

be given from the Prime Minister's Relief Fund to the family of the deceased and ₹50,000 each for the seriously injured," Mr. Modi added. The death toll from the cyclone rose to 80 on Friday with eight more bodies being recovered. It is expected that as more bodies were found by disaster management teams and sent for postmortem, officials said. The number of fatalities is likely to go up as many places are still inaccessible, officials added.

The State government had announced a relief and rehabilitation package of ₹1,000 crore on Thursday and a compensation package of ₹2.5 lakh to the families of



Status check: PM Narendra Modi and West Bengal CM Mamata Banerjee surveying the cyclone-hit areas. ■ PIB/AFP

the deceased. Indicating that the "State and the Centre should work together at this hour of crisis", Ms. Banerjee said the Prime Minister had witnessed the large-scale damage in North and South

24 Paraganas. "For an hour Prime Minister witnessed the damage. From Rajarhat, Bhangar, Hasnabad, Sandeshkhali, Basirhat, Hingalganj (North 24) to Patharpurima, Namkha-

na, Kakdweep, Basanti (South 24) – the entire area was shown aerially. The entire area is flooded, dams on rivers collapsed. I have also shown photographs of Kolkata indicating the damage," Ms. Banerjee said.

Following the survey, Mr. Modi and Ms. Banerjee met at Basirhat in North 24 Paraganas. Senior State officials briefed the Prime Minister. Following the briefing, Mr. Modi and the State government will conduct a detailed survey of the extent of the damage. A more extensive aid package is expected after the submission of the report.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

MORE REPORTS ▶ PAGE 11

RBI cuts repo rate again, down to 4%

Loan moratorium extended till Aug. 31

Revival plan

The RBI has announced another set of measures to buttress the economy from the COVID-19 fallout

- Interest on working capital can be converted to a term loan
- Banks' group exposure limit upped to 30%
- It refrains from projecting growth, inflation figures for FY21
- ₹15,000 crore liquidity facility for Exim Bank extended by up to 90 days

RBI will continue to remain vigilant and in battle readiness to use all its instruments and even fashion new ones, as the recent experience has demonstrated

SHAKTIKANTA DAS, RBI Governor

growth and mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on the economy, while ensuring that inflation remains within the target, RBI said.

Demand collapse

RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das termed the risk to growth outlook "gravest".

"Domestic economic activity has been impacted severely by the two-month lockdown. The top six industrialised States that account for about 60% of industrial output are largely in red or orange zones," Mr. Das said.

"High frequency indicators point to a collapse in demand beginning in March 2020 across both urban and rural segments," he added.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

EDITORIAL ▶ PAGE 6

Pak. plane with 98 on board crashes near Karachi



Massive damage: Firefighters spraying water on the wreckage of the aircraft that crashed on Friday. ■ AFP

After apparent engine failure, aircraft crashes in a crowded area near airport

ASSOCIATED PRESS
KARACHI

A passenger plane with 98 people on board crashed in a crowded neighbourhood on the edge of the Jinnah International Airport near Karachi on Friday after what appeared to be engine failure during landing.

Karachi Mayor Wasim Akhtar said at least five or six houses were destroyed as the domestic flight operated by the Pakistan International Airlines crashed. Smoke bil-

lowed from the site where the flight came down, some roofs had caved in, and debris lay scattered in streets as ambulances rushed through crowds.

Local TV stations reported that three persons in the front row of the aircraft survived and aired footage of a man on a stretcher, identified as Zafar Masood, the head of the Bank of Punjab.

Seemir Jamali, executive director at the nearby Jinnah Hospital, said 17 dead bodies

and six wounded persons had been brought in. There were no estimates of casualties on the ground.

Pakistan's Prime Minister Imran Khan tweeted: "Shocked & saddened by the PIA crash... Immediate inquiry will be instituted. Prayers & condolences go to families of the deceased."

Deeply saddened: Modi Prime Minister Narendra Modi in a tweet said he was deeply saddened by the loss

of life due to the crash.

A transmission of the pilot's final exchange with air traffic control (ATC) indicated that he had failed to land and was circling around to make another attempt. "We are proceeding direct, Sir – we have lost engine," a pilot says. "Confirm your attempt on belly," the ATC responds, offering a runway. "Sir – mayday, mayday, mayday...Pakistan 8303," the pilot is heard saying before the transmission ends.

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) further reduced the key interest rate or the repo rate by 40 bps on Friday, after a yet another out-of-turn Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) meeting as the COVID-19 pandemic induced lockdown continues, albeit with calibrated relaxations.

The central bank also extended the loan repayment moratorium for another three months till August 31.

The six-member MPC announcement has reduced the repo rate to 4% with five members of the panel voting for the steep cut while one member, Chetan Ghate, voted for a 25 bps cut.

The MPC also decided to continue with the accommodative stance 'as long as it is necessary to revive

High frequency indicators point to a collapse in demand beginning in March 2020 across both urban and rural segments," he added.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

EDITORIAL ▶ PAGE 6

Maharashtra pushes India tally to record 6,510 cases

State has 2,940 new cases; country-wide toll rises by 148

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

With 2,940 cases recorded by Maharashtra alone, Friday marked yet another new high in daily COVID-19 cases.

Data from State health departments show that with the addition of 6,510 cases, there have been a total 1,24,525 confirmed cases with 69,140 active infections and 51,666 recoveries country-wide. Fatalities increased by 148, to take the total death toll to 3,720.

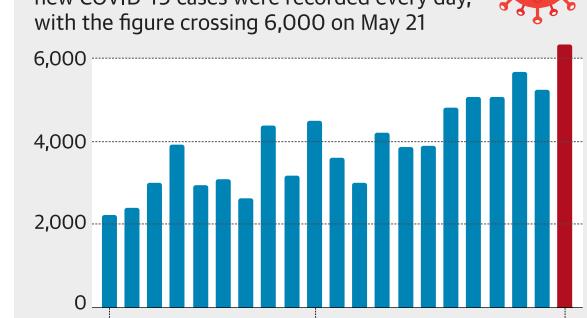
Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan, taking

COVID-19

charge as the chairman of the World Health Organisation (WHO) executive board on Friday, said in a release: "Today we have a mortality of 3% only. In a country of 1.35 billion, there are only 0.1 million COVID-19 cases. The recovery rate is above 40% and doubling rate is 13 days. I am aware that I am entering this office at a time

Rising trend

With May 17 and May 21, more than 5,000 new COVID-19 cases were recorded every day, with the figure crossing 6,000 on May 21



of global crisis on account of this pandemic. We all understand that there will be many health challenges in the future and all these challenges demand a shared response."

V.K. Paul, chairman of Empowered Group-I, set up to tackle the COVID-19 threat, said at a press conference: "Because of the lockdown, India has been able to limit the virus in a manner where 80% of active cases

India reaches out to Pak. to fight locusts

ATUL ANEJA

NEW DELHI

India has reached out to Pakistan to counter a locust invasion which threatens to destroy crops and undermine food security in south and southwest Asia – a region where the COVID-19 pandemic has already disrupted farming.

An official source who did not wish to be named said India had proposed a trilateral response in partnership with Pakistan and Iran to combat the desert locust wave sweeping across the Afro-Asian region.

"India has suggested to Pakistan that both countries coordinate locust control operations along the border, and that India can facilitate supply of Malathion, a pesticide, to Pakistan," the official said.

Desert locusts pose a major threat to food security in the region, including India.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

CROPS DESTROYED IN MADHYA PRADESH ▶ PAGE 11

Scorched slum



Remains of the day: Firefighters and residents of Kirti Nagar JJ colony in west Delhi on Friday, after more than 200 houses were gutted in a fire on Thursday night. ■ SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR (REPORT ON PAGE 3)

Now, complaints in 24-hour 'quarantine'

Initiative of Delhi's Madhu Vihar police station aims at minimising physical contact

HEMANI BHANDARI

NEW DELHI

With a number of COVID-19 cases surfacing among Delhi Police personnel, a police station in east Delhi has begun 'quarantining' complaints. The initiative aims at minimising physical contact between policemen and people visiting the station.

Madhu Vihar police station personnel are not touching written complaints for a period of 24 hours after receipt. Station House Officer Rajeev Kumar said "complaints are quarantined" before they are picked up for further proceedings. Not on



The Madhu Vihar police station in Delhi, which has also put sheets to maintain distance between duty officers and visitors. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

virus in case of emergency.

Mr. Kumar said whenever a person comes with a complaint, the duty officer takes a picture on his phone and

reads it. The person is then asked to put the complaint in a file kept on the table after which it is uploaded to the computer and an acknowledgement of receipt is sent on the complainant's mobile phone.

"In case the complaint needs to be immediately touched, the policemen iron it first before holding it," said the SHO. At the police station, briefings by the SHO are sent on WhatsApp in the morning and the staff also share documents online as far as possible. "Video calls are preferred to meeting in person," said Mr. Kumar.

Health bulletins released by the Delhi government in the past three days had also recorded biggest single-day increases.

"In case the complaint needs to be immediately touched, the policemen iron it first before holding it," said the SHO. At the police station, briefings by the SHO are sent on WhatsApp in the morning and the staff also share documents online as far as possible. "Video calls are preferred to meeting in person," said Mr. Kumar.

"In case the complaint needs to be immediately touched, the policemen iron it first before holding it," said the SHO. At the police station, briefings by the SHO are sent on WhatsApp in the morning and the staff also share documents online as far as possible. "Video calls are preferred to meeting in person," said Mr. Kumar.

"In case the complaint needs to be immediately touched, the policemen iron it first before holding it," said the SHO. At the police station, briefings by the SHO are sent on WhatsApp in the morning and the staff also share documents online as far as possible. "Video calls are preferred to meeting in person," said Mr. Kumar.

Of the 12,319 cases, 5,897 people have recovered and

there are 6,214 active cases.

Six more areas in South West district were declared as containment zones, authorities said on Friday.

The number of such zones in Delhi now stands at 79, up from 69 on May 20.

The revisions were in-

itiated after the Health and Family Welfare Department on Monday raised the issue of a decrease in the number of containment zones even as the number of cases registered a steady increase.

SEE ALSO ▶ PAGES 2 & 3

DETAILS ON

PAGE 9

A ND ONE

600-plus new cases reported in 24 hours for the first time

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

Delhi witnessed yet another biggest single-day jump with 660 new COVID-19 cases reported in the past 24 hours, taking the total number of cases to 12,319. This is the first time more than 600 new cases have been reported over a 24-hour span.

Health bulletins released by the Delhi government in the past three days had also recorded biggest single-day increases.

IN BRIEF

Foot overbridge opened for public movement

NEW DELHI
A foot overbridge constructed by the Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC) connecting Samaypur Badli metro station and Badli railway station, was opened for public movement, officials said on Friday. "The 88 metre-long FOB connects the concourse of the Samaypur Badli metro station on the Yellow Line with the platforms 1 and 2 of the Badli railway station of Northern Railway," the DMRC said in a statement.

Air quality of Delhi-NCR		
Delhi	Gurugram	Noida
199	139	206
222	224	206
Good 0-50	Satisfactory 51-100	Moderate 101-200
Poor 201-300	Very poor 301-400	Severe >401
AIR QUALITY INDEX AT 4 P.M. YESTERDAY (AVERAGE OF PAST 24 HOURS) [SOURCE: CPCB]		

BJP leaders detained at police station

NEW DELHI
Leader of the Opposition in the Delhi Legislative Assembly, Ramvir Singh Bidhuri, and BJP MLA from Rohtash Nagar, Jitendra Mahajan, were detained by police when both sought to give a memorandum to the DM of Shahdara district against what they alleged was the failure of the Delhi govt. to provide free ration to the poor. Both were taken to the Jyoti Nagar police station later and let off.

Gurugram reports one more COVID-19 death

GURUGRAM
A COVID-19 positive patient died in Gurugram on Friday, taking the number of fatalities in Haryana to 16 as 37 new cases surfaced in the State, officials said here. This was the second death due to COVID-19 reported in Gurugram in two days.

Five fresh virus cases in Gautam Buddha Nagar

NOIDA
Five more persons tested positive for COVID-19 in Gautam Buddha Nagar on Friday, taking the total number of cases in the district to 307, officials said. Also, five people were discharged from hospitals after recovery.

Nizamuddin centre: HC to hear plea on May 26

NEW DELHI
The Delhi High Court on Friday said its Division Bench will hear next week, a plea seeking release of 916 foreign nationals, who participated in the religious congregation at Nizamuddin and are held in institutional quarantine since March 30 despite being tested negative for COVID-19.

There is no respite, say Haryana hoteliers

They allege that appeals to CM Manohar Lal for assistance have gone unanswered

ASHOK KUMAR

GURUGRAM
Hit hard by the COVID-19-induced lockdown, hoteliers in Haryana have alleged that there is "no breather" from the State and central governments to the industry and they may be forced to switch their business "as a last resort" in case the situation prevailed for long.

Speaking to *The Hindu*, Hotel and Restaurant Association of Haryana president Colonel (Retd.) Manbeer Choudhary said they had given four representations to the Chief Minister Manohar Lal but "there is no respite".

He said the level of frustration among the hoteliers was so "high" that a few of them were even mulling selling off their properties or seeking the Change of Land Use (CLU) to switch business. "In Haryana, we have the CLU system and presently we have licences for running hotels. But if we want to change the activity, we need the permission from the government," said Mr. Choudhary. He added a few of the hoteliers in Gurugram were willing to open their premises for PG accommodation to make up for the losses, but he had advised them against it as it was illegal.

Mr. Choudhary, however, added he had asked the ho-

Empty Old Delhi streets prelude to a solemn Id

Shops that used to be packed with customers till 1 a.m. now close before sunset

SHINJINI GHOSH
NEW DELHI

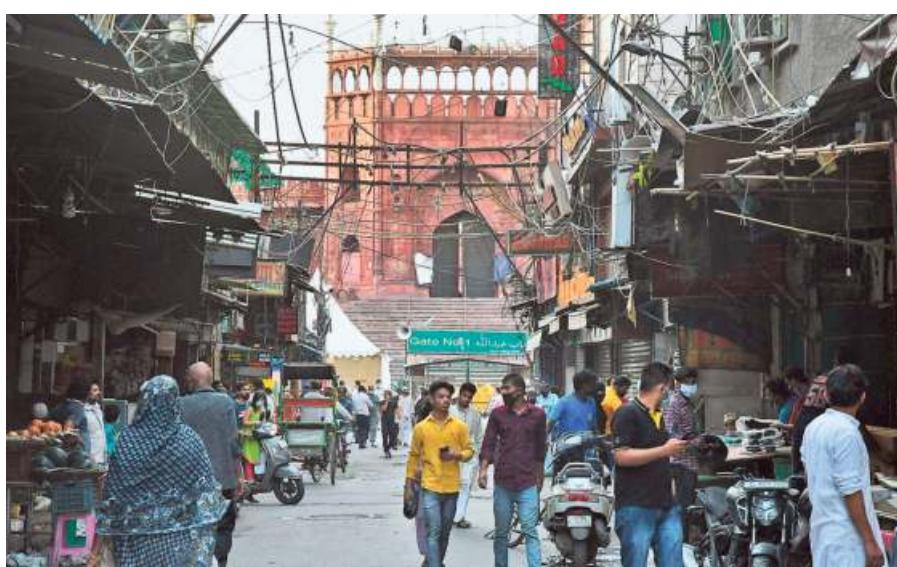
The streets of Old Delhi bore a deserted look on the last Friday before Id as residents stayed indoors owing to lockdown restrictions due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Seeing the empty narrow streets and just a few people in Jama Masjid, the residents of the Walled City said that this Id would be a first of its kind with bare minimum of festivities.

Shopkeepers, who are usually inundated with customers at this time of the year, said that restrictions on movement, implementation of curfew, and a depleted income forced most people to remain indoors.

Mohammad Danish, a shopkeeper of a garments store opposite to Jama Masjid, said: "This street is usually always bustling with people and before Id we used to end up keeping our shops open till 12.30 a.m.-1 a.m. daily. There used to be a festive air with people everywhere. Now, with the curfew timings in place, people usually shut shop by 6.30 p.m., which also means that our business has been reduced to nothing."

Farman, a footwear seller, added: "With two months of lockdown, people have no money left to spend on buying new items. We have hardly had any sales. There are days



Shops near Jama Masjid on Friday. ■ SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

when we earn ₹100-₹200 only. It's a very sensitive situation right now. People are of the opinion that if we cannot go to the Masjid for *namaaz* then what is the point of celebrating anything and shopping?"

Several residents said that given the circumstances the country was reeling under, religious leaders had advised people to follow the guidelines issued by the government.

"Life comes first and then

comes nation. If the nation is under threat and does not survive then what will the people do? So, we have decided to remain indoors this Id and not step out to buy anything. For one month we have been observing Ramzan from within our houses which is also something that has never been done before. When we didn't get to observe Ramzan like we do, what can we possibly celebrate?" said Shakir Siddiqui, a retired government official.

Some like Rizwana Habib added that instead of spending their money on shopping this Id, they were helping the poor and needy.

"The usual celebration and shopping is absent. But several people are donating money to help the poor and needy by providing them food and clothes. Some even paid the

school fees for children whose parents could not afford it due to the lockdown," said Ms. Habib, who runs a primary school in Chawri Bazar.

Mohammad Nafis, a resident of Lal Kuan said: "Brotherhood between people irrespective of their religion is of utmost importance. So, for the sake of all and for humanity at large, it has been decided that we stay away from the usual festivities."

With the characteristic revelry missing from the streets, a contingent of police and security personnel marched through the lanes with loudspeakers, reiterating the need for people to remain indoors.

Joint CP (Souther Range) said that outside force may be provided in the evening hours to enforce night curfew effectively.

Delhi Police Public Relations Officer M.S. Randhawa said, "We are reaching out to people with a request to maintain lockdown guidelines during celebration."

A police officer said they held a meeting with clerics and sensitised them about

We request the public to avoid coming out of their homes, unless necessary

POLICE OFFICER

the guidelines that need to be followed over the next two days and on Id. "We have requested them to spread the message and ensure no gatherings happen at Mosques or any other place. We are also putting up posters with an appeal to the public to follow lockdown orders," said the officer.

"We have also briefed the beat staff to ensure lockdown orders are followed in market areas. Markets should function in odd-even pattern and shopkeepers must ensure social distancing and have hand sanitiser at entry point. We request the public to avoid coming out of their homes, unless necessary," added the officer.

Meanwhile, a total of 324 policemen have been found COVID-19 positive till Thursday.

AIIMS RDA seeks action after death of mess worker

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

A day after his death of an All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) mess worker, his sample has tested positive for COVID-19 on Friday. The hospital has closed the mess after his death.

All India Doctors' Association said that the worker was admitted in the hospital with COVID-19 like symptoms and died hours after he was brought in.

The association is now seeking resignation of hostel superintendent and senior warden of the hostel stating that the hostel administration failed to implement COVID-19 preventive measures on the campus.

Orders inspection

Meanwhile, the High Court on Friday ordered immediate inspection of a night shelter managed by Delhi Government's DUSIB, at AIIMS where 22 people have tested positive and directed the Delhi Chief Secretary to examine the situation and take corrective measures without any delay.

The court also wondered when the night shelter was within the AIIMS premises, why they were shifted to far off hospitals.

Rent waiver only if contract has 'force majeure' clause

HC rejects Khan Market tenants' plea

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court has remarked that if the rent contract contains a 'force majeure' clause providing for some sort of waiver or suspension of rent, only then the tenant could claim the same in circumstances such as the outbreak of a pandemic, like the current COVID-19 outbreak.

Justice Prathiba M. Singh also said that the question of waiver, suspension or any remission in the rental payments would operate differently for each category of agreements.

'Force Majeure' is defined by Black's Law Dictionary as "an event or effect that can be neither anticipated nor controlled", the High Court said. The term includes both acts of nature such as floods and hurricanes, and acts of people such as riots, strikes and wars.

If, however, there is no contract at all or if there is no specific force majeure clause, then the issues would have to be determined on the basis of the applicable law, the court said while rejecting some Khan Market tenants' plea seeking suspension of rent payment.

The court said that the petitioner tenants are also not 'lessees' as an eviction decree has already been passed against them.



A video grab of people running away with the loot in Shahdara's Jagatpuri. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

which the fruit seller left and moved his cart elsewhere. However, the seller forgot to take his crates of mangoes," said the officer.

After sometime, a few persons came and asked the rickshaw pullers if they were blocking the view of his cart.

"The rickshaw pullers said that it wasn't theirs, after which people started taking the mangoes," the officer

said. In the video of the incident, which went viral, people can be seen fleeing with mangoes in their hands.

The police said that they reached out to the fruit seller, who wasn't willing to give a written complaint. But after persuasion, he filed a complaint. Based on it, a case on charges of robbery was registered on Friday evening.

DUSU demands end to 'forced rent extraction'

It held discussions with PG, flat owners

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

Delhi University Students' Union (DUSU) demanded an end to the "forced rent extraction from pandemic-stricken students" on Friday.

Following multiple requests for help from students, who were being coerced by owners of paying guest facilities, DUSU office-bearers appealed to owners to stop harassing student tenants for rent and ensure the safety of their belongings.

The union appealed to all flat and PG owners to "refrain from high-handed demands and involuntary extraction of monthly rentals."

Pradeep Tanwar, vice president of DUSU, said, "We held multiple conversations with the PG and flat owners of Kamala Nagar,

Lajpat Nagar, and other areas where a sizeable proportion of DU's day scholars reside. We have sized up the matter and are continuously monitoring the situation. We will not allow any forced extraction of rent from the pandemic-stricken students. We will also make sure that the belongings of students, who left the national capital in haste, are well taken care of by the owners of the rented accommodations."

PRADEEP TANWAR

Vice president of DUSU

and wards.

Justice Prathiba M. Singh also said that the question of waiver, suspension or any remission in the rental payments would operate differently for each category of agreements.

'Force Majeure' is defined by Black's Law Dictionary as "an event or effect that can be neither anticipated nor controlled", the High Court said.

The term includes both acts of nature such as floods and hurricanes, and acts of people such as riots, strikes

Revisit rules on RS passes for freelance scribes: HC

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court has said that it would be advisable for the Media Advisory Committee (MAC) of the Rajya Sabha to "revisit" its rules of restricting the issuance of passes to journalists under the freelance category to only sessional passes.

Justice Navin Chawla made the observation while dismissing the plea of Anil Chamadia, a freelance journalist, seeking direction to the MAC to issue a permanent pass to him for covering the proceedings of the Rajya Sabha.

Mr. Chamadia had challenged the decision of MAC taken in the meeting held on July 06, 2017 discontinuing its earlier practice of issuing an annual pass to the journalist under the freelance category.

He argued that issuance of only sessional passes to freelance journalists would restrict their right to access information when the Parliament is not in session. He contended that non-issuance of an annual pass would deny the freelance journalist of first-hand access to information.



A view of a five-star hotel in Gurugram. ■ ASHOK KUMAR

teliers to wait till June 1 as the things were likely to improve.

He said that "neither the State nor the Centre had come to their help", but the Reserve Bank of India had gone a "good job" by deferring the EMIs for the industry as such. Mr. Choudhary added the hoteliers were not seeking any "cash transfers", but they stood at "cross roads" and needed "support".

He said the national association of the hotel industry too had met the union leaders in this regard.

Mr. Choudhary said the government could help the

hotel industry by waiving off the fixed electricity load charges for six months since there was no business and reducing the property tax and Goods and Services Tax rate. "If the GST is reduced, the consumer will spend more," said Mr. Choudhary.

In a fresh representation to the Chief Minister on Thursday, the association has demanded that hotels be allowed to resume operations from June 1.

He said the national association of the hotel industry too had met the union leaders in this regard.

Mr. Choudhary said the government could help the

25% waiver announced on fixed electricity charges is still not implemented. I got an electricity bill of ₹18 lakh for my hotel during lockdown and the department asked me to deposit the complete bill," said Mr. Choudhary.

He also questioned the rationale behind opening domestic flights, but not allowing hotel bookings. "They talk about bringing industry from China, but they fail to handle even the existing industry. The government is least concerned about the ground realities," alleged Mr. Choudhary, without mincing any words.

While the CoC recognised that there was a need to announce results without

inordinate delay, it highlighted various issues such as infrastructural constraints, technological obstacles, economic hardships, dislocation of students and challenging household environments among other concerns.

In fact, in a survey, students had categorically stated that such an exam would be unfair especially given that they were taught for a different mode of assessment altogether.

Similar suggestions have been made by the sociology department as well as teachers of the economics departments.

Instead, the CoC proposed that for UG students the average marks in the previous five semesters make up 75% of the sixth semester marks.

The remaining 25% be counted from internal evaluation in the sixth semester. A similar mode could be used for PG students.

Mr. Choudhary, however, added he had asked the ho-

2 CITY

2 CITY

2 CITY

2 CITY

2 CITY

No curbs on industries but traffic throttled

Restriction on movement across Delhi-Gurugram border continues but enforcement sees slight slack

ASHOK KUMAR
GURUGRAM

Though the Haryana government has allowed industries to work with full strength and permitted the opening of the shops, markets and private companies, the restrictions on the movement across Delhi-Gurugram border continues hampering the smooth running of commercial and industrial establishments.

However, the actual implementation of the restrictions on the border has slackened.

Demanding free mobility within the National Capital Region, NCR Chamber of Commerce and Industry (Gurugram) president H.P. Yadav demanded that the States should stop the blame-game and fight the problem collectively.

"Most of the people working in Gurugram are not be-



Only a few policemen were at the Delhi-Gurugram border to enforce curb on inter-State movement, on Friday. ■ ASHOK KUMAR

ing allowed to come from Delhi and the neighbouring districts of Haryana. If uninterrupted mobility is not allowed, it will be difficult to run the industry and the trade establishments smoothly," said Mr. Yadav, in a press statement.

Echoing similar sentiments, Manesar Industries Welfare Association vice-president Manmohan Gaid

said the entire National Capital Region should be treated as one entity and free movement of people and vehicles be allowed. He said that more than half of the owners of various industries in Manesar belonged to Delhi and were not being allowed to come to Gurugram. "We had a meeting with the authorities in this regard two weeks ago and submitted them a

"Presently, the inter-State movement of workers is restricted and there is very little clarity on the procedures for their movement passes," read the letter.

However, the situation on the ground presents a different picture and the imple-

mentation of the cross-border restrictions has been relaxed. Sub-Inspector Vijay Singh said the volume of traffic had gone up following the opening of the industries, private companies and commercial establishments, making it impossible to check every vehicle.

"If the vehicles are stopped for checking, then it leads to long snarls. Also, most of them, anyway, have movement passes or cite medical emergency. Though we try and stop vehicles to make enquiries, it is not possible to carry out the checking all through the day," said Mr. Singh.

The Delhi Police team manning another checkpoint a few metres behind the Gurugram Police on Delhi-Gurugram Expressway also claimed that the vehicles were not checked throughout the day.

'Official death toll based on audit panel report'

There's a mismatch in death, burial figures

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The difference in the numbers of COVID-19 deaths and burials as reported by the Delhi government and the municipal corporations respectively, may be attributed to the fact that the deaths mentioned in the government's health bulletin are first certified by a Death Audit Committee, a government official said on Friday.

"If the vehicles are stopped for checking, then it leads to long snarls. Also, most of them, anyway, have movement passes or cite medical emergency. Though we try and stop vehicles to make enquiries, it is not possible to carry out the checking all through the day," said Mr. Singh.

The Delhi Police team manning another checkpoint a few metres behind the Gurugram Police on Delhi-Gurugram Expressway also claimed that the vehicles were not checked throughout the day.

Virus spread	
Total number of COVID-19 cases	12,319
Total deaths	208
New cases in the last 24 hours	660
New deaths	14

SOURCE: DELHI GOVERNMENT HEALTH BULLETIN

than the figures from the hospitals.

On May 14, the Delhi government stopped releasing hospital-wise figures for COVID-19 deaths in the city. A government official said that all hospitals sent death reports to a Death Audit Committee appointed by the Delhi government on April 20.

"The committee goes through the reports and only the ones that fall into the criteria mentioned in the ICMR [Indian Council of Medical Research] guidelines will be certified as COVID-19 deaths," the official said. These deaths are mentioned in the health bulletin released by the Delhi government every day.

The Delhi government spokesperson did not respond to multiple calls and messages

HC rejects plea to scrap death audit panel

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Friday declined to entertain a plea seeking direction to the Delhi government to come out with actual figures related to COVID-19 cases and deaths, and to scrap the death audit committee.

The court disposed of the petition filed by All India Lawyer's Union, asking it to approach the court again at an appropriate time.

The petition sought direction to the Delhi government to publish the data related to confirmed COVID-19 cases and deaths, through a daily bulletin every 24 hours, based on the figures being provided by various government and private hospitals in the city.

The petition stated that the Delhi government constituted a Death Audit Committee on April 20 and the figures are being released by the committee after collecting the data.

It said there was discrepancy between the actual information being provided by various hospitals and figures being released by the Delhi government.

Healthcare employees in city wear black ribbons to work

They are protesting cancellation of 14-day quarantine for staff

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

Doctors working in various hospitals across the city wore black ribbons to work on Friday as a sign of protest against the government's decision to cancel the 14-day quarantine for all healthcare workers, after they work on COVID-19 duty for the same number of days.

A Delhi government order on May 18 had stated: "Regular quarantine of healthcare workers after performing duty in COVID-19 areas is not warranted."

The Delhi government issued the order following a similar central government order

on May 15.

Before the order, all healthcare workers in the Capital who were on COVID-19 duty were quarantined for 14 days after they had worked for 14 days.

Families at risk'

"We have been working hard defying all odds. Cancelling our quarantine is an injustice to our families and even to our community. We need quarantine so that we can work with mental peace without putting our families back home at risk," a group of healthcare workers at Delhi government's Lok Nayak Hospital, sporting black ribbons on their arms, said in a video.

Dr. Barman said that FORDA had written to the Union Health Minister and the Delhi Health Minister to restore quarantine for all healthcare staff, but neither Minister had responded to them so far.

bons on their arms, said in a video.

The Federation of Resident Doctors' Association India (FORDA) had called for the protest. Shivaji Dev Barman, president of FORDA, said that many patients do not show any symptom and by not quarantining healthcare workers, their family and friends will be exposed to the virus.

Dr. Barman said that FORDA had written to the Union Health Minister and the Delhi Health Minister to restore quarantine for all healthcare staff, but neither Minister had responded to them so far.

Doctor at NDMC HQ tests positive for virus

The dispensary has been sealed

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

A doctor working at a dispensary on the ground floor of the New Delhi Municipal Council (NDMC) headquarters tested positive for COVID-19 on Friday. The doctor is the third NDMC employee to be infected.

The dispensary has been sealed and the doctor is under home quarantine, NDMC spokesperson said.

The senior allopathic doctor had been showing symptoms since the last two-three days and he tested positive on Friday. The rest of the NDMC office is functioning," the spokesperson added.

The dispensary had four doctors and about 15 healthcare workers. It catered to NDMC employees as well as the public.

"Contact tracing is being done using computer records of the patients who met the doctor. The entire ground floor will be sanitized," the spokesperson said, adding: "Around 200 people came to consult just two allopathic doctors every day. The doctor could have been infected at the dispensary, but we are looking into it."

The rest of the healthcare workers are asymptomatic and they are under observation, said officials.

TO ADVERTISE PLEASE CONTACT

Mr. N SELVA KUMAR
PH: 9820350726
selvakumar@thehindu.co.in

Mr. MANOJ KUMAR KUSHWAHA
PH: 9999490055
manoj.kushwaha@thehindu.co.in

THE HINDU
India's National Newspaper

REGIONAL APPOINTMENT

THE ENGLISH AND FOREIGN LANGUAGES UNIVERSITY
(A Central University)
HYDERABAD - 500007
Employment Notification No. I/2020

In supersession of the employment notification No. III/2019, dated 12 July 2019, The English and Foreign Languages University, Hyderabad issues a Revised Notification inviting applications from the eligible candidates for appointment to various faculty positions (Professor: 18, Associate Professor: 27 and Assistant Professor: 13) at Hyderabad and its Regional Campuses at Shillong and Lucknow. The Application along with detailed Notification and Information Booklet for filling the application form can be downloaded from the University Website www.efluniversity.ac.in.

The application, filled in all respects, shall reach the undersigned by 6:00 pm on or before 15.06.2020.

Date: 23.05.2020

Note: Those who have applied in response to the earlier notification i.e., No. III/2019 are required to apply again. However, they need not pay the application fee again.

Sd/-
REGISTRAR I/c

Fire engulfs over 200 houses in Kirti Nagar

No casualty has been reported, cause of blaze yet to be ascertained: fire officials

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

Over 200 houses were gutted in a major fire that broke out at a JJ cluster in west Delhi's Kirti Nagar on Thursday night. Officials said that no casualty was reported in the incident.

According to the Delhi Fire Service (DFS), a total of 30 fire tenders were pressed into service. The fire was brought under control and a cooling operation was undertaken following that.

"We got a call regarding a fire at a JJ cluster in Kirti Nagar at 11.30 p.m. A team of firefighters rushed to the location and later more staff and engines from other stations had to be pressed into service," said a DFS official.



The fire broke out at a JJ cluster in west Delhi's Kirti Nagar late on Thursday. ■ SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

added.

In another incident, a 50-year-old man died after his car caught fire on a flyover in Mangolpuri area here, the police said on Friday.

The deceased has been

identified as Ram Kishan, a resident of Karala, they said.

On Thursday, the police were informed that a car had caught fire on a flyover. The vehicle was later found on a flyover near Kali Mata Mandir, Outer Ring Road, a senior police officer said.

The body of the driver was found inside the car. He was declared dead after he was rushed to a hospital, the officer said.

The vehicle was carrying some plastic material. It has a CNG kit and the cause of fire was yet to be ascertained, they said. A case under relevant sections of the IPC has been registered at Mangolpuri police station and an investigation is underway, the police added.

During the operation, the fire also led to minor explosions of small LPG cylinders. The flames were doused by 3 a.m., the officials said.

The cause of the fire was yet to be ascertained, they

added.

The deceased has been

identified as Ram Kishan, a resident of Karala, they said.

On Thursday, the police were informed that a car had caught fire on a flyover. The vehicle was later found on a flyover near Kali Mata Mandir, Outer Ring Road, a senior police officer said.

The body of the driver was found inside the car. He was declared dead after he was rushed to a hospital, the officer said.

The vehicle was carrying some plastic material. It has a CNG kit and the cause of fire was yet to be ascertained, they said. A case under relevant sections of the IPC has been registered at Mangolpuri police station and an investigation is underway, the police added.

During the operation, the fire also led to minor explosions of small LPG cylinders. The flames were doused by 3 a.m., the officials said.

The cause of the fire was yet to be ascertained, they

added.

The deceased has been

identified as Ram Kishan, a resident of Karala, they said.

On Thursday, the police were informed that a car had caught fire on a flyover. The vehicle was later found on a flyover near Kali Mata Mandir, Outer Ring Road, a senior police officer said.

The body of the driver was found inside the car. He was declared dead after he was rushed to a hospital, the officer said.

The vehicle was carrying some plastic material. It has a CNG kit and the cause of fire was yet to be ascertained, they said. A case under relevant sections of the IPC has been registered at Mangolpuri police station and an investigation is underway, the police added.

During the operation, the fire also led to minor explosions of small LPG cylinders. The flames were doused by 3 a.m., the officials said.

The cause of the fire was yet to be ascertained, they

added.

The deceased has been

identified as Ram Kishan, a resident of Karala, they said.

On Thursday, the police were informed that a car had caught fire on a flyover. The vehicle was later found on a flyover near Kali Mata Mandir, Outer Ring Road, a senior police officer said.

The body of the driver was found inside the car. He was declared dead after he was rushed to a hospital, the officer said.

The vehicle was carrying some plastic material. It has a CNG kit and the cause of fire was yet to be ascertained, they said. A case under relevant sections of the IPC has been registered at Mangolpuri police station and an investigation is underway, the police added.

During the operation, the fire also led to minor explosions of small LPG cylinders. The flames were doused by 3 a.m., the officials said.

The cause of the fire was yet to be ascertained, they

added.

The deceased has been

identified as Ram Kishan, a resident of Karala, they said.

On Thursday, the police were informed that a car had caught fire on a flyover. The vehicle was later found on a flyover near Kali Mata Mandir, Outer Ring Road, a senior police officer said.

The body of the driver was found inside the car. He was declared dead after he was rushed to a hospital, the officer said.

The vehicle was carrying some plastic material. It has a CNG kit and the cause of fire was yet to be ascertained, they said. A case under relevant sections of the IPC has been registered at Mangolpuri police station and an investigation is underway, the police added.

During the operation, the fire also led to minor explosions of small LPG cylinders. The flames were doused by 3 a.m., the officials said.

The cause of the fire was yet to be ascertained, they

added.

The deceased has been

identified as Ram Kishan, a resident of Karala, they said.

On Thursday, the police were informed that a car had caught fire on a flyover. The vehicle was later found on a flyover near Kali Mata Mandir, Outer Ring Road, a senior police officer said.

The body of the driver was found inside the car. He was declared dead after he was rushed to a hospital, the officer said.

<p

Heath official held for 'graft' in Himachal

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHANDIGARH

Himachal Pradesh Police has arrested a senior health official allegedly on corruption charges after an audio surfaced in which the accused was purportedly heard demanding a bribe of ₹5 lakh.

The State police's Vigilance and Anti-Corruption Bureau arrested Director of Health Services Ajay Kumar Gupta late in the night of May 20 and booked him on corruption charges.

Mr. Gupta was summoned by the police to its headquarters for questioning, after which he was arrested.

"After the arrest the accused was taken to Indira Gandhi Medical College and Hospital for medical check-up, where doctors found his blood pressure and insulin levels on the higher side. He has not yet been discharged. We will start questioning him once he is fit and discharged," Shalini Agnihotri, Superintendent of Police, told *The Hindu* on Friday.

RSS man praises doctors at AMU for saving his life

He was treated at JNMCH for virus

ANUJ KUMAR
GAZIABAD

healed," he said.

A front-line hospital in the fight against COVID 19, JNMCH was under fire from certain BJP leaders. A local MLA even held it responsible for the spread of the virus in the city.

Principal praised

Mr. Sundar hailed the principal, Shahid Siddiqui, for giving personal attention to every patient. "Every day, he would ask me, 'Shyam Babu, how are you?'

Prof. Siddiqui said Mr. Sundar was an elderly person but, thankfully, he didn't have any co-morbidities. "When he was admitted, he had bilateral pneumonia and fallen oxygen saturation. He was given high flow oxygen for a couple of days."

On how he might have got infected, Mr. Sundar said he might have contracted the virus from the chain of prominent real estate businessman who passed away because of the infection.

A harrowing train ride for AMU students

They were made to travel on general compartments in Shramik Special without food and water

ANUJ KUMAR
GAZIABAD

The Howrah-bound Aligarh Muslim University students were in for a shock when they found that they had to board general bogies in 04198 Mathura Jn-Howrah Shramik Special on Thursday evening.

"We were told by the university administration that the West Bengal government had made arrangements in the sleeper class for us. At the station, we were handed over tickets with ₹710 printed on them which is usually the price of a sleeper class ticket in a superfast train for this distance," said Md. Farrukh, a final year student of political science, over phone.

He alleged that they were promised five coaches but got only four. "Each coach has 18 seats and around 30-34 students. There is no way that social distancing could be followed. Male students vacated seats for female students and tried to sleep on the floor."

"As a student of political science, we study about the importance of federal structure in our country, but I am realising how it works on the



Students travelling in the train without social distancing.

■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

ground during this journey," he remarked.

After the students tweeted and tagged higher officials in the West Bengal government and AMU administration, the train made a stop at Bilaspur in Madhya Pradesh and they were provided food and water, around 12 hours after they had boarded the train. But in the scorching heat, students were seeking cold water. "In

44 degrees heat, the water we got was undrinkable. We had to wait to let it cool," said Ms. Praveen. "This experience also made us realise first hand

garh, and have now entered Odisha," Baby Parveen, a student of master's in ELT, who hails from Asansol, said.

"The bogies were not properly sanitised and we had to use sanitisers provided by the university administration. Many of us could not sleep the whole night and were feeling sick. Those who are keeping fast are feeling giddy. Once we ran out of water bottles that we brought with us, there was no provision for food and water," she complained.

Shafey Kidwai, AMU spokesperson, said the Vice-Chancellor and the Registrar spoke to the Railway officials and urged them to make arrangement for food and water.

"As it was an arrangement made by the West Bengal government, we didn't have much of a say. The university sent 210 students by buses to Mathura. Out of these, 70 students returned by the same buses to Aligarh as they didn't find the arrangement up to the mark. But most of them were desperate to reach home by Id," he said.

Mr. Farrukh, who hails from Uttar Dinajpur, said none of their elected representatives took the calls but officials of the West Bengal government reached out to them.

Help from officials

"They expressed surprise over the fact that they were packed in general bogies and promised to provide relief."

One of them was Naveen Chandra, a 2018 batch IAS officer, posted as Assistant Collector Malda.

"One of the students tagged me in a tweet," Mr. Chandra told *The Hindu*. "It was not part of my official work. I just felt that they need to be helped. I called my colleagues in Odisha who found out that the train would halt in Rourkela. They agreed to provide food packets and cold water," he said.

They were also contacted by nodal officer Prabhat Kumar Mishra who expressed shock over the arrangements and promised buses at Dankuni and Behrampur stations to take students to their respective districts in the State.

First flight from London lands in Jaipur

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
JAIPUR

The first special international flight from London, carrying 148 Rajasthani expatriates, arrived at Sanganer international airport here on Friday amid strict security measures. The family members stood at the airport's exit gate to catch a glimpse of their loved ones, as the passengers were whisked away for the mandatory 14-day quarantine.

The airport has started operating after almost two months of closure. About 2,000 overseas Indians living in Canada, Russia, Philippines, Kazakhstan, Georgia and Tajikistan are expected to return here by 13 Air India flights till June 1.

Industry hamstrung by absence of labour, demand in Punjab

Central government appealed to rescue affected sectors

VIKAS VASUDEV
CHANDIGARH

As labour exodus continues amid the ongoing lockdown, several sectors ranging from agro-processing, hosiery, engineering to auto components in Punjab are finding it difficult to get back on track in the absence of demand and shortage of labour.

'Difficult to get back'
Several industry players believe that unless demand is revived it would be difficult for the businesses to get back to normal. "The Central government had recently announced a financial package but it's mostly to revive the supply chain, there

has hardly been any focus to boost demand," Narinder Bhambra, president of Fastener Manufacturers Association of India, told *The Hindu*.

"Most of the industries engaged in the manufacturing of automotive components are shut in Ludhiana and even when we plan to restart, the problem of labour shortage is expected to hit us hard," he said, adding that FMAI has written a letter to Union Minister Nitin Gadkari, asking the government to come to the rescue of the industry, which is involved in manufacturing of nuts, bolts, studs, rivets and screws.

Extended work hours in Assam tea estates slammed

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GUWAHATI

The All Adivasi Students' Association of Assam (AASAA) has slammed the Assam government's decision to extend the daily working hours across the State's tea gardens from eight to 12 hours.

The association said the "draconian" change in the working hours was inhumane, autocratic and pro-planter made on the flawed premise that making plantation workers toil more would fuel productivity.

"Apart from undermining the rights of workers and dignity of human life, the decision mocks the struggles of students' bodies and trade unions over the decades," AASAA president Pradeep Nag told newsmen at Tangla in Udaguri district.

'Withdraw decision'

The Sarbananda Sonowal government must withdraw the decision or face an agitation, he added.

The Adivasis, comprising more than 110 communities with origins in central India, are referred to as "tea tribes" in State government documents although they have been demanding the elusive Scheduled Tribe status. Assam also has the "ex-tea tribe", meaning Adivasis who are no longer associated with plantation work.

The two categories of Adivasis together comprise about 20% of Assam's population and are a major electoral force across at least 35 of 126 Assembly and four of 14 Lok Sabha constituencies.

The community was considered loyal to the Congress until a majority of them began switching allegiance to the Bharatiya Janata Party since the 2014 parliamentary polls.

Rival Adivasi organisations too have expressed dissatisfaction over the extended working hours. They resented that the stakeholders of the Adivasi society were not taken into confidence while arriving at the decision.

Assam had on May 8 followed other BJP-ruled States in approving labour reforms in a bid to boost the economy hit by the COVID-19 lockdown.

WEST CENTRAL RAILWAY
MATERIAL MANAGEMENT DEPARTMENT
(E'- Tender Notice for the supply of Stores, No.EPS/09/2020)

PCMM/WCR on behalf of the President of India invites the following advertised tenders through E-procurement System. No manual / postal offers shall be entertained.Tenders can be accessed under the link website "<https://www.reps.gov.in>" for details and for submission of Tender..

Sr No.	Tender No.	Short Description	Tendered qty	Opening Date
1	40205001	Erection, commissioning and testing of 132 KV/27 KV, 21.6 MVA Transformer	03 Nos.	19.06.2020
2	38201347	Distributor valve complete without common pipe	484 Nos.	19.06.2020
3	38204180	7/8 inch (22 MM) Dia bull lock bolt pin	188635 Set	19.06.2020
4	20194042B	HEAD LIGHT LAMP	643 Nos.	19.06.2020
5	20193568A	INTERMEDIATE OVERHAULING (IOH) REPLACEMENT KIT	59 Set	19.06.2020
6	20204145	Capacitor Harmonic Filter	52 Nos.	19.06.2020
7	20204200	MVB based Graphical Driver Display Unit 10.4"	12 Nos.	19.06.2020
8	38204177	Spares of APM (EL-60) Consisting of 15 items	1975 Set	19.06.2020
9	38204175	7/8 inch (22 MM) Dia bull lock bolt pin	68264 Set	19.06.2020

for Principal Chief Material Manager

रेल यात्रा के दौरान शिकायत हेतु 138 पर एवं सुरक्षा हेतु 182 पर सम्पर्क करें

OBITUARY & REMEMBRANCE
DEATH ANNIVERSARIES
7th ANNIVERSARY

R. ARUNMOZHIMARAN M.A.B.L., Advocate, Virudhunagar
Expired on 23.05.2013
Fondly Remembered by:
Dr. R. Arunmozhimaran
M.S.Ortho & Family

SEVENTEENTH ANNIVERSARY
We Miss You

LALITHA JANARDHAN
22.01.1978 - 23.05.2003
D/o LATE SRI S.JANARDHAN
"Time has gone by but memories of you are still fresh in our minds."
Grieved by :
Sudha Janardhan (Mother)
Kshama Srivinasan(Cousin)

For enquiries on
announcements in this
section, please contact our
office at the following number
between 10a.m. and 8p.m.
New Delhi : 011- 43579797
Rate for New Delhi:
(Minimum Rs. 320/- 2 Lines
Extra Line - Rs.160/-)
(B/W Display): Rs.60/-Per Sq.cm
(C/I Display) : Rs.70/-Per Sq.cm
Log on to
www.thehinduads.com
For Placing Advertisements
Online

In memory of your loved ones
To dedicate a space in this section,
Please contact:
011-43579797
from 10 a.m. to 8 p.m.
For Placing Advertisements
Online log on to
www.thehinduads.com

DONATE EYES-GIFT SIGHT

PLUCKING RIGHTS OF KEWRA

- It is intended to issue plucking rights of KEWRA from the garden consisting of trees standing on the defence land at Gopalpur Military Station for the period **upto 14 Apr. 2021**.
- Interested parties may collect the Offer Form and Terms and Conditions Documents from '**Q' Branch, Headquarters Army Air Defence College** between **0900 hours to 1300 hours** on all working days from **08 Jun 2020 to 13 Jun 2020** at the cost of **Rs 500/-** (Rupees five hundred only).
- Offer forms collected by interested parties during previous invitation for the award of plucking rights, but not utilized by them, will not be acceptable for the current invitation of bids.
- Offer Forms will be deposited in a sealed envelope, **"BID FOR PLUCKING RIGHTS OF KEWRA"**, duly marked on top, addressed to Headquarters Army Air Defence College, PIN 92899, C/O 99 APG.
- Offer Form may be put in a sealed box in 'Q' Branch, Headquarters Army Air Defence College between **0900h to 1300h from 16 Jun 2020 to 20 Jun 20** or can be sent by registered post so as to reach Headquarters, Army Air Defence College by **1300 hours on 20 Jun 2020** along with Bank Draft as security deposit.
- Security Deposit** in the form of bank draft and per Terms and Conditions will be enclosed along with the Offer Form before posting or putting the Offer Form in the sealed box in 'Q' Branch, Headquarters Army Air Defence College.
- The Offer Forms will be opened at **0900 hours on 22 Jun 2020** by a Board of Officers.

Colonel Q
Headquarters Army Air Defence College C/o 99 APG

"CORRIGENDUM"

The on-line tenders for the works invited vide this office N . I . T . N o . PWD/BWD/T.A/NIT/2019-228782 dated 30/04/2020 published vide R.O. No. 019/2020-2021(Classified) dated 01/01/2020-2020 and Corrigendum NIT No.953-1012 dated 06/05/2020 published vide R.O. No. 0311/2020-2020-2021 (C l a s s i f i e d) dated 06/05/2020 in Weekly Girijai Shimla. The work appearing at Sr. No.1 and 3 are hereby postponed due to technical reasons. Now the starting date for downloading of bids is 04/06/2020 instead of 19/05/2020 and deadline for submission of bids is 19/06/2020 instead of 02/06/2020. All other Terms & conditions shall be remained unchanged. The bidders are advised to note other details of tenders from the department website [www.htenders.gov.in](http://htenders.gov.in)

Sd/-

Executive Engineer
HPPWD Division Bhawarna
Pin-176083, Tel:01894-247777
e-mail: cepwbd-bhaw-hp@gov.in on behalf of Governor of H.P

HIM SUCHNA AVAM JAN SAMPARK
HP/0560/20-21

PRESS NOTE

NOTICE INVITING BIDS FOR ROAD/ BRIDGE/ BUILDING WORKS.

Executive Engineer, Bharwain Division, HP. PWD, Bharwain-177109 on behalf of Governor of Himachal Pradesh, invites on line e-tenders on item rate basis from approved and eligible contractors registered in CPWD/HPPWD for the following works:-

Sr. No.	Name of Work	Estimated Cost	Earnest money	Cost of the documents	Time allowed for completion (Months)	Time & date of opening of technical bids	Class of contractor
1.	C/O 4Nos. bridge over Mawa Sindhan Saghni, Ghanari & Amboa Khad on Una Gagret road (SH: C/O RCC T-beam bridge 90.035 meter (Total span 6x14.50 each) double lane bridge over Amboa Khad at RD 10/450)	33499042/-	367490/-5000/-</td				

Announce ₹50,000 crore relief package for daily wagers: BJP

Party's 'Save Maharashtra' campaign alleges govt. failed to check spread of virus

SHOUMOJIT BANERJEE

PUNE
Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) State unit president Chandrakant Patil on Friday demanded a ₹50,000-crore relief package for daily wage earners hit by the lockdown from the State government. Mr. Patil also expressed dissatisfaction with the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) government for failing to curb the spread of COVID-19.

"Along the lines of the package announced by the Centre, the State government should also declare a big package to provide relief to daily wagers like autorickshaw drivers, domestic helps and others whose activities have come to a standstill owing to the lockdown. So far, the State has not given a single rupee to daily wage earners," said Mr. Patil, at the party's 'Mera Angan, Mera Ranangan (my home, my battlefield) - Save Maharashtra' campaign.

Protest in strongholds
Mr. Patil, who wore a black mask as a symbol of protest, took out a demonstration in his hometown of Kolhapur. Other BJP leaders, including Eknath Khadse, participated in the protest in their respective strongholds and held placards criticising the State's performance.

Senior BJP leader and Pune MP Girish Bapat claimed his party was not interested in playing politics



Pandemic politics: Leader of Opposition Devendra Fadnavis (centre) and other BJP leaders at the Save Maharashtra agitation outside the party headquarters in Mumbai on Friday. ■ VIVEK BENDRE

during a pandemic, but held the State government responsible for failing to control the spike in cases.

He said, "We had not launched a single agitation against the government for the last two months since the start of the outbreak. We will continue to cooperate with the government. However, as elected representatives, it is our duty to point out loopholes in handling this crisis and give them direction."

Denying that there was a political colour to their protest, Mr. Bapat said the government had not yet announced any relief measures for daily wagers and de-

manded a monthly subsidy of ₹10,000 for them. Pune Mayor Murlidhar Mohol and Pune BJP unit chief Jagdish Mulik attributed the failure to check the rise in cases to an alleged lack of coordination between the city's top authorities. However, the BJP, with over 100 corporators, has absolute majority in the municipal corporation.

Ludicrous allegations'

Ramesh Iyer, Pune city Congress general secretary and party spokesperson, said, "Mr. Bapat's statements on the civic administration's failure is ludicrous as the BJP dominates the civic body. Is

the MP saying that his party colleagues are inefficient?"

Mr. Iyer wanted to know why the BJP remained silent so long and had launched an agitation at this critical moment. He said, "What has been Mr. Bapat's contribution in checking the spread of the virus within Pune city? Despite being Pune MP, he was nowhere to be seen, and has woken up after 60 days. Why hasn't he been helping the State government and local authorities by coordinating with the Centre?"

Mr. Iyer said senior BJP leaders had rarely ventured out to take stock of the situation in Pune's red zones.



The picture posted by Aaditya Thackeray on Twitter showing children holding posters against the government. ■ TWITTER

BJP faces brunt of trolls

#MaharashtraDrohiBJP trends on Twitter

ALOK DESHPANDE

MUMBAI

The Maharashtra unit of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) on Friday faced criticism on social media for organising an agitation against the State government over its alleged failure to check the spread of COVID-19.

#MaharashtraDrohiBJP was the top trending hashtag on Twitter. It was started in response to the BJP's Maharashtra Bachao campaign. Leaders from the Shiv Sena, the Congress and the Nationalist Congress Party criticised the BJP leaders for wearing black masks and holding placards criticising the government.

Environment Minister Aaditya Thackeray tweeted,

"One political party state unit has set a new low and a new world record- the only party in the world to indulge in politics and in spreading fear, hate and division when the world has forgotten all of it to help each other. This party has forgotten the pandemic. History will never forget BJP's action today."

ture of children holding BJP flags and wrote, "Absolutely shameful, what lust for power politics can make leaders do. Making kids stand in the heat, with their masks lowered, not covering the face for a political protest when we need to keep them safe and indoors. Corona ko bhula gaye, politics pyara hai."

Leader of Opposition Devendra Fadnavis said the State was using paid trolls to push its agenda. Mr. Fadnavis tweeted, "Maharashtra has highest number of patients and deaths due to corona. The state government is paralysed and live in virtual world."

Environment Minister Aaditya Thackeray tweeted, "One political party state unit has set a new low and a new world record- the only party in the world to indulge in politics and in spreading fear, hate and division when the world has forgotten all of it to help each other. This party has forgotten the pandemic. History will never forget BJP's action today."

WEATHER WATCH

RAINFALL, TEMPERATURE & AIR QUALITY IN SELECT METROS YESTERDAY



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

Forecast for Saturday: Thunderstorm accompanied by lightning and gusty winds, with speeds reaching upto 40 kmph, very likely at isolated places over Jammu and Kashmir, Ladakh, Gilgit-Baltistan and Muzaffarabad

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	2.9	32.6	25.4	Kozhikode	0.4	35.0	27.0
Ahmedabad	—	44.0	26.4	Kurnool	—	43.2	28.7
Aizawl	17	23.3	18.9	Lucknow	—	41.6	24.0
Allahabad	—	45.0	25.4	Madurai	—	39.4	28.9
Bengaluru	—	35.3	22.1	Mangaluru	—	34.6	27.0
Bhopal	—	42.0	25.6	Mumbai	—	34.5	28.0
Bhubaneswar	—	35.4	27.8	Mysuru	—	34.0	24.0
Chandigarh	—	42.3	23.5	New Delhi	—	43.8	23.7
Chennai	—	41.2	29.0	Patna	—	35.8	24.8
Coimbatore	—	35.4	25.2	Port Blair	—	37.2	27.2
Dehradun	—	37.6	19.6	Puducherry	—	39.0	28.0
Gangtok	14	38.8	16.6	Pune	—	39.1	23.8
Goa	—	34.5	27.5	Raipur	—	41.0	21.5
Guwahati	18.8	27.0	21.5	Ranchi	—	38.4	21.5
Hubballi	—	36.0	23.0	Shillong	—	28.2	20.5
Hyderabad	—	43.0	23.9	Shimla	—	32.8	21.2
Imphal	1.2	30.8	21.4	Srinagar	—	28.8	11.0
Jaipur	—	43.8	23.9	Tiruvananthapuram	74	27.8	22.4
Kochi	74	32.0	25.4	Tiruchi	—	40.2	29.4
Kohima	—	25.7	15.6	Vijayawada	—	45.1	28.6
Kolkata	1.2	30.8	23.9	Visakhapatnam	—	35.3	29.0

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)

Pollutants in the air you are breathing

CITIES	SO ₂	NO _x	CO	PM2.5	PM10	CODE
Ahmedabad	—	.46	15	.54	.92	■
Bengaluru	—	.33	37	—	..80	■■■
Chennai	18	3	50	.25	—	—
Delhi	—	.67	37	.279	.279	■■■
Hyderabad	.9	.71	23	.25	.129	■■■
Kolkata	.8	.8	23	.18	.25	■■■
Lucknow	.8	.22	32	.251	—	■■■
Mumbai	32	12	11	.14	.65	■■■
Pune	26	24	56	.51	.31	■■■
Visakhapatnam	13	.62	.6	.52	.170	■■■

In observation made at 6.00 p.m., Nandeshwar, Gujarat recorded an overall air quality index (AQI) score of 264 indicating an unhealthy level of pollution. In contrast, Shillong, Meghalaya recorded a healthy AQI score of 11

NO₂: Sulphur Dioxide. Aggravates respiratory illness, causes haze to form by reacting with other air particles, causes acid rain, pollutes coastal waters.

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

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

Plea against burials near residential areas rejected

BMC circular challenged in High Court

SONAM SAIGAL

MUMBAI

The Bombay High Court on Friday dismissed a petition challenging a Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) circular on burial of COVID-19 patients in cemeteries close to thickly populated residential areas.

The petition by Bandra residents claimed there was a high chance of contamination if the bodies of these patients were buried in cemeteries close to residential areas. The circular, dated April 9, had identified 20 burial grounds.

A Division Bench of Chief Justice Dipankar Dutta and Justice S.S. Shinde dismissed the petition and said there was no scientific proof to support the apprehension of the petitioners that the novel coronavirus could spread through cadavers.

Video shows no physical distancing on special train

Koshiyari objects to Education Minister's communication with UGC

ALOK DESHPANDE

MUMBAI

A day after the Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP) wrote to Governor Bhagat Singh Koshyari against Higher and Technical Education Minister Uday Samant, the latter on Friday sent a letter to the Chief Minister taking objection to the minister's communication with the University Grant Commission (UGC) on cancelling final-year exams.

The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh-affiliated student wing has followed the opposition Bharatiya Janata Party in visiting Raj Bhavan to complain against the State government. Mr. Koshyari, a former BJP leader and RSS volunteer, reacted quickly af-

Airport gears up for flights to resume

Only Terminal 2 will open for passengers; steps taken to ensure physical distancing



Staff in protective gear check the tickets of passengers arriving to board flights at Mumbai airport. ■ FILE PHOTO

mitted spokesperson said.

CSMIA plans to maintain physical distancing through clear markings ensuring a minimum 1.5 m distance between each passenger. Air India, Air Asia India, IndiGo, SpiceJet and Vistara will resume services from May 25. GoAir, which entirely operates from Terminal 1, has opened bookings only from June 1.

"All airlines will begin operating from Terminal 2. Thermal screening of passengers at all entry gates will be mandatory before they enter the terminal," a Mumbai International Airport Li-

checkpoints, food courts, lounge area and the boarding area. Officials said seating arrangements at the food court and terminal building have been reshuffled.

As per the SOP issued by the Ministry of Civil Aviation, no food will be served on board and consuming eatables on board will also be prohibited since it would require taking off the masks.

Within Maharashtra, two flights will be operated to Nagpur from Mumbai and Delhi each, despite the mayor saying no to flights.

Temporary quarantine centres have been created at the departure visitors' lounges.

On Friday, the airport continued to be sanitised and disinfected. Passengers will be advised to use fewer baggage trolleys, which will be sanitised every four hours.

16 flights to Delhi

On Monday, the maximum number of flights from Mumbai will operate to Delhi (16), followed by Bengaluru (11), Chennai (8) and Kolkata (7). Four flights will go to Cochinchina and one each to Ahmedabad and Goa.

Within Maharashtra, two flights will be operated to Nagpur from Mumbai and Delhi each, despite the mayor saying no to flights.

Senior advocate Mihir Desai, appearing for professor Saibaba, said the application was filed on April 2, but the jail authorities rejected

HC rejects professor Saibaba's parole plea

SONAM SAIGAL

MUMBAI

The Nagpur Bench of the Bombay High Court on Friday rejected the application filed by former Delhi University professor G.N. Saibaba seeking parole to meet his terminally ill mother.

Professor Saibaba, who is wheelchair-bound, is serving a life sentence at Nagpur jail for his alleged Maoist links. The application was filed by the professor's brother on his behalf.

A Division Bench of Justices R.K. Deshpande and Amit Borkar rejected the plea primarily because the place in Hyderabad he intends to visit has been declared a containment zone.

The court granted him liberty to apply for parole once again after the



Time after time

The RBI might have played out its hand for now with the latest repo rate cut

The RBI has once again stepped up to the plate at the right time with measures that will reduce the cost of capital and ease the financial burden on businesses due to the extended lockdown. With Friday's repo rate cut of 40 basis points, the RBI has shaved off 1.15 percentage points from the rate chart in the 58 days since the lockdown began, bringing the repo rate down to 4% and the reverse repo rate to 3.35%. With this, it does appear that the central bank may have played out its rate cut card for now as prudence would dictate that it reserves some leverage for the future if economic conditions deteriorate even further. In fact, there are those who believe that the latest cut may be no more than a sentiment booster as economic activity is at its nadir and there are not many investment proposals on the anvil that may benefit from the lower interest rate. Existing borrowers may be the only beneficiaries of the rate cut at this point in time. That said, the RBI deserves a pat on the back for listening to feedback over some of its moves initiated earlier during the lockdown. Thus, the extension of the repayment moratorium on loans is a welcome measure. A large proportion of commercial borrowers have availed themselves of the moratorium but retail borrowers have not taken to it in a big way. Yet, going forward, there may be more opting for it given that the extended lockdown has left many a business in a shambles and salaries have either not been paid or are being disbursed with delays.

The RBI has also shown empathy by allowing accumulated interest on working capital loans to be converted into a term loan repayable by the end of this fiscal. Borrowers would otherwise have been faced with the daunting prospect of paying up their interest dues in one shot at the end of the moratorium period. The extended period given may however still not be enough as it will offer borrowers only about seven months from the end of the moratorium period during which they will have to crank up their businesses and service their loans. The RBI could have put off accumulated interest repayment by one year; it might well find itself in a situation where it is forced to offer another extension in the next few months. The increase in group exposure limit for banks to 30% from 25% will help large corporate borrowers who may find themselves handicapped in raising funds from the markets now. There was some disappointment in the markets that the RBI did not relax norms for loan restructuring by lenders. The central bank has played its cards well here because there is no way of knowing the true extent of distress now, and hence it will be difficult to propose the right restructuring norms. Chances are that this may well form part of the RBI's next announcement.

Cold neighbourhood

India and Nepal must not let their differences grow into a full-blown diplomatic crisis

India and Nepal have reached a flashpoint over the Kalapani territorial issue that appears to threaten the basis of their special relationship, which has nurtured open borders and the free movement of people. Nepal Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli took New Delhi by surprise this month with an aggressive posture on the issue, especially over the inauguration of a motorable road to the Lipulekh pass, near the disputed Kalapani area, which is used by Indian pilgrims to Kailash Mansarovar. For India, the Lipulekh pass has always been part of the road to Tibet, and was mentioned as one of the border passes for trade in a 1954 agreement with China, which was also reaffirmed in another trade agreement in 2015. Since 1981, when China re-opened the Kailash-Mansarovar pilgrimage route for Indians, they have also used the pass to walk into Tibet. The road built now follows the same alignment, and would essentially cut down their travel time by three days each way. As a result, the government has been even angered by Nepal's strong protests, followed by fiery speeches by Mr. Oli and Foreign Minister Pradeep Gyawali, threatening to send more forces to the India-Nepal border. The Nepali cabinet's decision to adopt a new political map that claims not only Lipulekh but other areas that are in Indian territory that have been claimed by Nepal invoking the 1816 Sugauli treaty with the British, was described by India's MEA as "artificial", "unilateral" and "unacceptable". Tensions have also been fuelled by Mr. Oli's jibe that the "Indian virus looks more lethal than the one from China" and the Indian Army Chief's contention that Nepal raised the dispute at the "behest of an external force", namely China.

Boundary disputes are common ground for countries that have an ancient history and shared borders, and the Kalapani issue is one such dispute that India and Nepal have resolved to sort out. It is unfortunate that the respective Foreign Secretaries, tasked by Prime Minister Modi and then Nepal leader Sushil Koirala in 2014 to discuss the matter, have failed to find an acceptable date for a meeting since then. India must concede it has dragged its feet on the issue: even two weeks ago, when matters came to a boil in Kathmandu, the MEA's response that it would convene the meeting after the pandemic had been dealt with, was unnecessarily dismissive of an issue important to Kathmandu. Mr. Oli's government had raised it last November as well; its offer to send a political envoy to New Delhi was rebuffed. It is clear that the struggle within the ruling Nepal Communist Party has spurred Mr. Oli's more combative posture. Given the importance of ties with Nepal, often romanticised as one of "roti-beti" (food and marriage), India must not delay dealing with the matter, and at a time when it already has its hands full with the pandemic and a faceoff with China in Ladakh and Sikkim.

Lower the temperature, defuse the issue

The border trouble between India and Nepal is a matter best handled bilaterally, through quiet diplomacy



JAYANT PRASAD

The inauguration of a road from Dharchula to Lipu Lekh (China border) by India's Defence Minister Rajnath Singh (an event over videoconferencing on May 8) has now been followed by Nepal's charge claiming that the stretch passes through Nepalese territory.

This road follows the traditional pilgrimage route for the Kailash-Mansarovar yatra. This is an arduous walk, which I did in 1981, the year the yatra re-started after about 25 years, when India and China agreed to reopen the pilgrimage route via Lipu Lekh. The conversion of the trekking route to a metalled road is a boon to both pilgrims and traders.

Explaining Nepal's stand
The controversy has given Nepal's Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli an opportunity to hide his government's incompetence and failure to meet the basic needs of the people, and to divert attention away from the rising tide of opposition from within his own party. His temperate remarks in the Nepalese Parliament are best ignored in the interest of preserving India-Nepal ties.

Nepal deployed its armed police at Chharung, close to Kalapani, in its Sudur Paschim. While there is nothing untoward in deploying the armed police, whose mandate is to man the borders of Nepal, it is the manner and timing of the deployment that raised eyebrows in New Delhi. The Nepalese contingent was dropped to the location by helicopters, very visibly.

The Indo-Tibetan Border Police is also located in Kalapani since it is close to the India-China border. Indian forces are not there because of Nepal.

The Nepalese government has raised the stakes further and has made a negotiated settlement more complex by authorising a new map extending its territory across an area sensitive for India's defence.

The Sugauli Treaty

The boundary delineation has a long history. Before the 1816 Treaty of Sugauli, the Nepalese kingdom stretched from the Sutlej river in the west to the Teesta river in the East. Nepal lost the Anglo-Nepalese War and the resulting Treaty limited Nepal to its present territories.

The Sugauli Treaty stated that "[t]he Rajah of Nipal [Nepal] hereby cedes to the Honourable [the] East India Company in perpetuity all the under-mentioned territories", including "the whole of the lowlands between the Rivers Kali and Rapti." It elaborated further that "[t]he Rajah of Nipal [Nepal] renounces for himself, his heirs, and successors, all claim to or connection with the countries lying to the west of the River Kali and engages never to have any concern with those countries or the inhabitants thereof."

The present controversy has arisen since the Nepalese contest that the tributary that joins the Mahakali river at Kalapani is not the Kali river. Nepal now contends that the Kali river lies further west to the Lipu Lekh pass.

The British used the Lipu Lekh pass for trade with Tibet and China. The Survey of India maps since the 1870s showed the area of Lipu Lekh down to Kalapani as part of British India. Both the Rana rulers of Nepal and the Nepalese Kings accepted the boundary and did not raise any objection with the government of India after India's Independence.

As a reward for the military help rendered by Jung Bahadur Rana in quelling the 1857 uprising, the areas of Nepalgunj and Kapilavastu were restituted to Nepal soon thereafter. The British did not return any part of Garhwal or Kumaon,



REUTERS

including the Kalapani area, to Nepal.

India did not exist in 1816 when the Treaty of Sugauli was concluded. And India's present borders, not just with Nepal, but with many of its other neighbours, were drawn by the erstwhile British regime. India inherited the boundaries of British India. It cannot now unravel the historic past.

On the way to resolution

The Nepal-India Technical Level Joint Boundary Working Group was set up in 1981 to resolve boundary issues, to demarcate the international border, and to manage boundary pillars. By 2007, the group completed the preparation of 182 strip maps, signed by the surveyors of the two sides, covering almost 98% of the boundary, all except the two disputed areas of Kalapani and Susta. It also ascertained the position of 8,533 boundary pillars.

The remaining issues concerning the boundary are not difficult to resolve unless they are caught up in domestic or international concerns. The next steps are the approval of the strip maps by the respective governments (that of the Nepalese Government is still awaited), the resolution of the differences of opinion over Kalapani and Susta, and speeding up the erection of damaged or missing border pillars.

India has successfully resolved far more intractable border issues with Bangladesh not so long ago, covering both the land and maritime boundaries. The land boun-

dary settlement required an exchange of territories in adverse possession of the two countries, including the transfer of population, and a constitutional amendment (Number 100 of May 15, 2015) to give effect to the 1974 India-Bangladesh Land Boundary Agreement.

The maritime boundary issue was even more difficult. India agreed to go to the Hague-based Permanent Court of Arbitration, knowing well that if the Court applied the principle of equity, India would lose up to four-fifths of the disputed area, as India had established its claim on a baseline that took into account the curved nature of the India-Bangladesh shoreline, thus boxing Bangladesh's maritime claims to within Indian and Myanmar waters. The Court ruling accepted much of Bangladesh's claim. Despite the Indian member of the tribunal giving an adverse entry, the government of India accepted the ruling.

Compared to what was accomplished between India and Bangladesh, the India-Nepal border issues appear more easily solvable, so long as there is political goodwill and statecraft exercised on both sides. The way to move forward is to formally approve the strip maps, resolve the two remaining disputes, demarcate the entire India-Nepal boundary, and speedily execute the work of boundary maintenance.

Ties are unique

India's leadership and the Indian people have been conscious of the self-respect and pride of the Nepalese people. Jawaharlal Nehru wrote in *The Discovery of India* as also in *Glimpses of World History* that Nepal has been the only truly independent country of South Asia.

Nepal, in turn, has in the past responded to India's needs as a friendly neighbour. Its political leaders contributed to India's struggle for freedom. The only time since Independence that foreign troops were deployed on In-

dian soil was when, in 1948-49, Nepalese soldiers under the command of General Sharda Shamsher Jang Bahadur Rana came to India's northern cantons, deployed by deployments in Jammu and Kashmir and Hyderabad.

The people-to-people relationship between India and Nepal is unmatched. In the far corners of India, sometimes locals turn against those from other Indian States, but seldom against the Nepalese. It is the government-to-government relationship that generally lags. There is nobody in India that wishes ill for Nepal.

For India's Chief of Army Staff, General Manoj Mukund Naravane, to charge at an interaction at the Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses, New Delhi, that Nepal, at someone else's behest, has objected to India laying a road connecting the Lipu Lekh pass, was ill-advised. It widens the door for that someone else to foment more trouble. This is a matter best handled bilaterally, through quiet diplomacy.

The Official Spokesperson of India's Ministry of External Affairs, Anurag Srivastava, has said recently that India and Nepal have an established mechanism to deal with all boundary matters. He has affirmed that India is committed to resolving outstanding boundary issues through diplomatic dialogue, in the spirit of India's close and friendly bilateral relations with Nepal. The best is to activate the existing mechanisms as soon as possible, before any further damage is done.

The more the trouble festers, those who stand to gain by deteriorating India-Nepal relations will benefit. There is need for the two countries to lower the temperature and defuse the issue. They must invest time and effort to find a solution. Raking up public controversy can only be counterproductive to the relationship.

Jayant Prasad is a former Indian Ambassador to Nepal

Notes on a digital currency plan, made in China

The expansion of the central bank's pilot is the first such serious initiative in the world



PARTHA RAY & SANTANU PAUL

While the world is grappling with the fallout of COVID-19 and speculating on how far China can be blamed for the pandemic, a silent digital revolution is taking place in China. On April 29, 2020, the People's Bank of China (PBoC), the country's central bank, issued a cryptic press release to the general effect: "In order to implement the FinTech Development Plan (2019-2021), the People's Bank of China has explored approaches to designing an inclusive, prudent and flexible trial-and-error mechanism. In December 2019, a pilot programme was launched in Beijing. To intensively advance the trial work of fintech innovation regulation, the PBoC supports the expansion of the pilot program to cover the cities of Shanghai, Chongqing, Shenzhen, Hangzhou, Suzhou, as well as Xiongan New Area of Hebei, by guiding licensed financial institutions and tech companies to apply for an innovation test."

This expansion of the pilot marks the initiation of China's central bank digital currency (CBDC). Christened Digital Currency Electronic Payment (DCEP), available via a mobile wallet app, pegged 1:1 with fiat currency, and designed to

replace MO (comprising currency issued by the PBoC less the amount held by banking institutions), this is the first such serious initiative in the whole world.

Historically, monetary authorities everywhere have been sceptical of cryptocurrencies. Wild fluctuations in the value of cryptocurrencies, the implied challenge to the monopoly of central banks in issuing fiat currencies, the looming possibility of software bugs, the tainted shadow of the dark web have all been responsible for the unwelcome reception. In contrast, authorities were far more intrigued by CBDCs. In fact, the Basel-based Bank for International Settlement (BIS) has been conducting surveys on this issue for some time. The recent survey of 2019 ("Proceeding with Caution - A Survey on Central Bank Digital Currency", BIS Papers No 101, January 2019) revealed that while in general, central banks have been proceeding cautiously towards introducing central bank digital currencies, some have been planning to issue a fiat digital currency in the short to medium term. In particular, the survey revealed that nearly 25% of central banks have the required authority to issue a CBDC, while a third do not, and 40% remain unsure.

Logical outcome
Chinese investors, however, were always enamoured of cryptocurrencies. With the bearish turn in the Chinese stock market in 2015-16, bitcoins became increasingly popular as an alternative asset



class in China. As in media reports, in the recent past, China has emerged as the capital of the crypto ecosystem, accounting for nearly 90% of trading volumes and hosting two-thirds of bitcoin mining operations. The PBoC tried hard to curtail this exuberance but achieved limited success. According to the *China Daily*, by the end of 2017, the Chinese Cabinet approved the PBoC's own digital currency development programme, conducted jointly with qualified commercial banks and institutions. The recent move to introduce the CBDC in China is a logical outcome of the efforts to curb and tackle its runaway cryptomarket practices. Or, the philosophy of the PBoC could simply have been, if you cannot beat them, join them.

Advantages and a concern
At a practical level, the benefits of CBDC are manifold. First, paper money comes with high handling charges and eats up 1% to 2% of GDP. Second, by acting as a powerful antidote for tax evasion, money laundering and terror financing, CBDCs can materially boost tax revenues while also improving financial compliance and national security. Third, as a tool of financial inclusion, particularly in emergencies, direct benefit transfers can be instantly delivered by state authorities deep into rural areas, directly into the mobile wallets of citizens who need them. On this count, it is noteworthy that the U.S. Congress recently debated the merits of implementing digital dollars in the context of the COVID-19 stimulus bill. Fourth, CBDCs can provide central banks an uncluttered view and powerful insights into purchasing patterns at the citizen scale. In the long run, it is believed that CBDCs will make cross-border payments fast and frictionless. That said, all these salutary benefits come packaged with a deep and abiding concern about the relentless rise of a surveillance state and the concomitant erosion in citizen privacy and anonymity. If face-recognition technology enables states to spy on the physical movement of citizens, will CBDCs be used to spy on every movement of their money?

What is the design of DCEP, the Chinese CBDC? An earlier research paper by PBoC Deputy Governor Fan Yifei favoured a two-tier CBDC model where instead of directly interacting with the public, the central bank would involve financial intermediaries such as commercial banks. In tier 1, the central bank would interface with financial intermediaries. In tier 2, the financial intermediaries would interface with the general public. Such a model is accretive in that it preserves the power of existing financial systems and extends their influence further. It is

believed that the DCEP uses a DLT architecture (with central controls) which preserves the primacy of the monetary authority, unlike private cryptocurrencies such as Bitcoin (BTC) and Ethereum (ETH) that are truly decentralised.

Signals from the move
What may China be signalling with the launch of DCEP? It is possible that China has decided to use DCEP as its silver bullet to slay three dragons. First, on the world economic stage, it may want DCEP to challenge the hegemony of the U.S. dollar as the default global reserve currency. Second, in its war with American BigTech, it may want to showcase DCEP as its weapon of choice to counter FB or Facebook's Libra, which is planning to offer a common cryptocurrency to 2 billion-plus FB users across the world. Third, and still in the realm of speculation, it may wish to use the DCEP to clip the wings of AliPay and WeChatPay, gigantic fintech duopolies that control 90% of China's domestic digital payments, and whose ambitions may one day pose a threat to the aura and authority of the central bank.

From gold to silver to paper to digital, the march of currencies goes on. China has rolled the dice on central bank digital currencies, challenging other nations to follow. Welcome to the future of money.

Partha Ray is Professor of Economics at the Indian Institute of Management Calcutta. Santanu Paul is Co-founder and CEO of TalentSprint, an edtech company

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.

Stark inequalities

It is strange that the country's leader who often tweets on a variety of subjects has not said much about the suffering of migrant workers. What then are the PM's Relief Fund and the PM CARES Fund for? It is saddening to read about the sorry plight of workers who are almost experiencing trauma like people used to at the time of Partition – throats dry, stomachs empty and feet blistered; many may have never completed their journey. It may not be an exaggeration to say that had

there been a general election round the corner, all the political parties would have come to the rescue of migrant workers, rolling out the red carpet with food packets and water bottles.

It is baffling that we, as a country, do not have verified data on migrant workers. As the present migrant crisis is 'once-in-a-century' phenomenon, we should learn a lesson or two and draw up a national policy on migrant workers. In a crisis in future, it should spell out who bears their transportation

charges; who would pay them wages and provide them shelter and a comprehensive social package. The disparity between urban and rural workers must also be eliminated.

A. JAINULABDEEN,
Chennai

Mystical spinner
I was one of those countless parents in search of a good cricket coach on the eve of India's World Cup euphoric triumph in 1983 in England. I took my young son to Bengaluru where, to my huge surprise, I saw

Erapalli Anandrao Srinivasa Prasanna, post retirement, coaching youngsters. He was self-effacing and accessible. Standing at the bowler's end and instructing the boys, he, without a run-up, bowled one ball towards the batsman's end. I thought, seeing the flight of the ball, it was a full toss that would land near the batting crease. No, it was not to be. Three-quarters of the way, it suddenly dipped as if it had developed a sudden increased gravitational pull, landed on the good length spot just outside the off-

stump and turned only that much to knock down the middle stump. He was the very personification of guile. Like Bishen Singh Bedi, he never hesitated to give the ball that extra bit of air to tempt a batsman to have a go at it. If one were to look into the record books, it would be evident that most of his victims were top or middle order

stumps around the

A 'model State' under great strain

In the crucial months of February and March, the Gujarat government was focused on preparing for the 'Namaste Trump' event and the Rajya Sabha elections. **Mahesh Langa** reports on how Ahmedabad is grappling with the rapidly rising number of COVID-19 cases as the government tackles allegations of mismanagement

On May 15, in the wee hours of the morning, the Ahmedabad police stumbled upon a body at the Dandiama BRTS stand. They took it to V.S. Hospital for an autopsy which revealed that Gunvant Makwana, 67, was a COVID-19-positive patient.

Five days earlier, Makwana had developed a fever, cold and a cough. His family got him admitted to the Ahmedabad Civil Hospital. The family said they learnt from the daily medical bulletin issued by the Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation on May 13 that Makwana had tested positive for COVID-19. Makwana was discharged two days later as he had mild symptoms. He was asked to remain under home quarantine. How he turned up dead at a bus stop close to his home remains a mystery.

The police said they told his son, Kirti Makwana, to collect his father's body when the autopsy was completed. The family said they had no idea about his condition until then. Gujarat's largest COVID-19 hospital, with a capacity of 2,000 beds, had not informed them that Makwana was being discharged, they said. "We came to know only from the police that he had passed away. We had no contact with him after he was admitted on May 10," said Kirti.

The tragic incident caused outrage in the State, which has reported over 12,000 COVID-19 cases and over 750 deaths. Under fire for the apparent mismanagement by the State health authorities, Chief Minister Vijay Rupani ordered a probe into the matter by a senior bureaucrat.

However, this was not the first such incident. Earlier, on April 20, around 25 COVID-19 patients were forced to spend hours on a street after they were denied admission into the Ahmedabad Civil Hospital, prompting the Gujarat government to rush senior health officials there to resolve the matter. One of the patients, a woman, posted their story on social media. She said they had been waiting for hours without food to get admitted after testing positive for the virus. When the video was shared widely, officials rushed to the spot and promptly admitted the patients. They cited discrepancies in case papers for admission, which they said had made data entry a problem.

On May 11, 44-year-old Umesh Tamaicha was admitted in the Civil Hospital after testing positive for COVID-19. Early morning on May 16, Tamaicha succumbed to the infection, but his family was informed about his death only about 10 hours after he died. "We were told about his death only in the evening. Till then, we had no idea about the treatment given to him and how and when his condition deteriorated," said Kalpana, Tamaicha's sister. The family did not receive his watch and mobile phone – both were allegedly stolen after his death. This too had happened at the hospital earlier – a woman's gold jewellery, cash and mobile phone were all allegedly stolen after her death.

Such horror stories have become routine at the Civil Hospital as the Gujarat government grapples with the pandemic. The State, touted as a "model of development" by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, is facing its worst crisis in recent memory.

Preparing for 'Namaste Trump'

On March 17, Ahmedabad recorded its first COVID-19 case. By the end of the month, the city had recorded fewer than 30 cases and three deaths. But since then, in just two months, the city, with a population of about 6.5 million, has recorded 9,724 cases and 645 deaths. Despite stringent lockdown measures in the city, the deadly virus has spread quickly. Over the last three weeks, about 250 cases have been reported daily in Ahmedabad.

Though it is the second hardest hit city in India by the pandemic (the first being Mumbai) in terms of total cases and fatalities, in absolute numbers Ahmedabad's mortality rate is nearly 6.5%, which is almost double the national average. In Gujarat, Ahmedabad accounts for nearly 74% of the total cases and 80% of the total fatalities.

While the rapidly rising number of infections and deaths is a matter of concern for the people in Gandhinagar as well as in New Delhi, what is of particular concern is that the virus has spread through the lower-income areas in the walled city. Political events in Gujarat in February and March indicate that the State and civic authorities perhaps underestimated the ferocity of the pathogen in striking Ahmedabad in the initial phase of the outbreak.

In late February, weeks before the pandemic gripped the city, there were frenzied preparations for the high-profile visit of U.S. President Donald Trump to Ahmedabad. A mega event, 'Namaste Trump', was scheduled at the Motera Stadium where President Trump and Prime Minister Modi were to address a crowd of 1.25 lakh people. The entire



Doctors and medical staff at the Ahmedabad Civil Hospital. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT



C We came to know only from the police that he had passed away. We had no contact with him after he was admitted on May 10

KIRTI MAKWANA
Son of Gunvant Makwana who was COVID-19 positive and found dead at a bus stop

State government machinery and the Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation were tasked with making arrangements for the 'Namaste Trump' event, scheduled on February 24. They spent half of January and the whole of February preparing for the President's visit. This was despite the fact that nearly a month earlier, on January 30, the World Health Organization (WHO) had declared COVID-19 as a 'public health emergency of international concern'.

It was only on March 5, 10 days after Trump's visit, that the Gujarat government woke up to the potential health crisis and announced its plan to combat COVID-19. According to the plan, the civic body and the State Health Department were to work together and screen people coming from abroad. Gradually, the ambit of screening was widened to include domestic passengers. Screening meant measuring a person's temperature using a thermal infrared thermometer.

From March 6 to March 22, as many as 6,000 passengers arrived at Ahmedabad airport. All of them were screened. Those who landed after March 15 were asked to remain quarantined at home for two weeks.

A political drama unfolds

During this month, however, the State government was preoccupied with something else. The Assembly was in session for the Budget and was to convene 26 times between February 24 and March 31. In addition, Rajya Sabha elections for four seats from the State were scheduled to be held on March 26. According to the numbers then, the Bharatiya Janata Party was expected to retain two of the three seats it held, while the Congress was set to increase its tally from one seat to two.

Despite being short of numbers, the BJP was determined to retain all the

three seats. Within a few days, five Congress MLAs resigned from the House, forcing the Opposition party to take its remaining MLAs to neighbouring Rajasthan to prevent poaching by the ruling party. While a potential healthcare crisis loomed on the horizon, a political drama began to unfold in the State.

Just days before the first COVID-19 case was reported in Ahmedabad, the Gujarat government declared the virus an epidemic under the Epidemic Diseases Act of 1897. As a precautionary measure, the government decided to shut all schools, colleges and educational institutions, swimming pools and multiplexes for two weeks starting from March 16. However, on March 14, two days after the WHO declared COVID-19 a pandemic, the Principal Secretary (Health and Family Welfare), Jayanti Ravi, told the media in Gandhinagar: "There is no epidemic. It is only a provision for legal empowerment for preventive action and empowerment."

On March 13, the Opposition party leader in the State Assembly, Paresh Dhanani, demanded that the government adjourn the Assembly session indefinitely as the COVID-19 threat was becoming worse. However, the government rejected the demand and continued the Assembly proceedings till March 23. During this period, there was barely any presence from the Opposition party as it had flown its legislators to Jaipur to prevent them from being poached. By the time the government finally adjourned the Assembly on March 23, the number of cases had started growing.

Infections in the walled city

According to a top medical practitioner in the city, while the authorities mainly focused on people returning from abroad, Ahmedabad was receiving its routine flow of visitors from Mumbai, Indore, Delhi and other places either by train or by road. "No one in the govern-

ment at the State level or in the civic body could gauge the threat posed by inter-State travellers as potential virus carriers," he said.

By mid-April, the city had 350 confirmed cases of which 27 had come to the State through domestic travel and 15 through international. The rest were local transmissions in the lower-income areas which are thickly populated and highly congested. Many of these cases were traced to the Tablighi Jamaat Maraz khan in Nizamuddin in Delhi.

Highly congested localities such as Jamalpur, Raikhad, Saraspur, Shahpur, Dariapur, Dandiama, Behrampura and Asarva have emerged as major hotspots. These areas are mainly populated by poorer sections. Physical distancing is impossible in these areas. To make matters worse, rumours began spreading on social media and in these localities that the National Register of Citizens exercise was being carried out in the name of testing for COVID-19. Fear that had gripped these localities last year only grew deeper. People turned suspicious.

Ahmedabad Municipal Commissioner Vijay Nehra, who was later transferred to the post of Commissioner, Rural Development, soon after the Centre reportedly censured the Chief Minister for failing to control the rapid spread of the virus, took the help of leaders such as Jamalpur MLA Imran Khedawala, Dariapur MLA Giasuddin Sheikh, and Behrampura Municipal Councillor Badrur Rehman to persuade community members to get tested.

These leaders along with the health workers and medical teams of the civic body repeatedly visited societies and homes to track people with illnesses in order to get them tested. Consequently, Khedawala himself tested positive and recovered from the infection after a few days, while Sheikh, who also tested positive, succumbed to COVID-19.

The entire walled city was declared a

buffer zone and cordoned off. There was heavy deployment of police and paramilitary personnel.

As the infection numbers surged, Nehra, who had adopted an intensive testing strategy as part of the containment strategy, warned on April 24 that the city may have as many as 8 lakh cases by the end of May. His statement created a flutter in Gandhinagar, prompting the Chief Minister to assure the people that the situation was under control.

Delays in containing the spread

However, on May 5, the situation turned alarming when the State reported as many as 441 cases and 49 deaths. In Ahmedabad alone there were 349 cases and 39 deaths. Sensing that things were spiralling out of control, the Centre directed the Rupani administration to quickly bring matters under control. The State government appointed Additional Chief Secretary Rajiv Kumar Gupta to supervise, monitor and coordinate works related to COVID-19 in the city. Another senior bureaucrat, Mukesh Kumar from Gandhinagar, was brought in to be the Municipal Commissioner since Nehra had to be placed under quarantine at home after coming in contact with an infected person. Chief Secretary Anil Mukim and Prime Minister Modi's point person in Gujarat, K. Kailashnath, rushed from Gandhinagar to the municipal corporation to take stock of the situation. Additionally, Chief Minister Rupani also made a statement that "Ahmedabad was his top priority" and requested Union Home Minister Amit Shah to send a team of experts from AIIMS to Ahmedabad.

However, on the ground there is ample evidence that there were delays in containing the spread of the virus. Since April 30, fruit and vegetable vendors, shopkeepers and salesmen at grocery markets were identified, but screening and testing on a mass scale was done only after Gupta was roped in by the State administration.

On May 16, the government said that out of 35,000 people identified as 'super spreaders', approximately 6,500 were tested. Of them, 709 were found to be infected. Earlier, around 350 'super spreaders' had tested positive. In all, over 1,000 'super spreaders' have tested positive indicating that there is a serious problem.

Second, it was only on May 6 that the civic body ordered all private clinics, nursing homes and hospitals to open in the next 48 hours or lose their licence, to allow screening and checking of people. "More than 60% of those dying of COVID-19 have co-morbidities like diabetes, hypertension and heart-related ailments," Principal Secretary Ravi said.

"Co-morbidities and delayed hospitalisation due to late diagnosis have

Co-morbidities and delayed hospitalisation due to late diagnosis have played havoc as more than 25% of those who died succumbed to the infection within two days of hospitalisation.

Infectious diseases expert

played havoc as more than 25% of those who died succumbed to the infection within two days of hospitalisation," said an infectious disease expert who is on the panel of experts of the State government.

Burden on government hospitals

Ahmedabad had imposed stringent lockdown measures. It shut down all essential services except milk parlours and pharmacies when the number of cases began increasing. But the burden of tackling the rising numbers, like everywhere else in India, has fallen on government hospitals. The Ahmedabad Civil Hospital became the primary hospital for COVID-19 treatment in the city. Plagued by mismanagement and lack of adequate staff, both doctors and paramedics, the hospital has recorded almost 50% of the State's total deaths due to COVID-19. "Senior doctors have stayed away from treating COVID-19 patients as they fear contracting the virus. So, the entire burden is on resident doctors, juniors and paramedical staff," a doctor at the hospital said.

Subsequently, testing was reduced substantially despite the rising number of cases. "The positivity rate in Ahmedabad is more than 20%. This means 20% of the total samples test positive. That's massive," said the infectious disease expert. He recommended enhancing testing to gauge the magnitude of the epidemic in the city.

When Kalpana's brother Umesh Tamaicha tested positive, the family said it had to force the health authorities to test his wife and two daughters. "Umesh's wife tested positive and we admitted her in a private hospital. One daughter also contracted the infection but she is quarantining at home. Thankfully both are asymptomatic," said Kalpana. Similarly, when a local Congress leader, Habib Mev, died of COVID-19, his family too said they had to beg the municipal authorities to get tested.

Right now, the city's main COVID-19 centres have nearly reached their capacity. Private hospitals requisitioned under the Epidemic Diseases Act are at loggerheads with the municipal authorities about charges fixed by the administration for providing treatment to the infected persons. The days ahead will be extremely crucial for the city as lockdown measures are being relaxed everywhere except in containment zones.



FROM PAGE ONE

PM announces ₹1,000 crore aid for Bengal

"Meanwhile a central team will also conduct a survey in the State," the Prime Minister said.

It is a "difficult fight" as the battle against coronavirus and the one against Amphan move in two different directions, Mr. Modi said after conducting aerial survey of the flood-hit region.

"To fight Corona, it is said stay at home, do not go out or maintain a distance of two yards, whereas in case of cyclone it is instructed that one needs to shift to a safe place, move out of your house. Two different types of fight West Bengal had to

fight.

"However, under the leadership of Mamataji, the State government has put in its full effort," Mr. Modi said.

On Thursday night, Ms. Banerjee had said at least 80 people had died in the cyclone.

Later Mr. Modi, undertook an aerial survey of affected areas in Odisha along with Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik and Union Ministers Dharmendra Pradhan and Pratap Sarangi, and held a high level review here.

Odisha government had said that 45 lakh people in 89 blocks were affected.

RBI cuts repo rate again, down to 4%

The central bank refrained from giving a projection for GDP growth for the current financial year and stopped at saying that growth expected in the "negative territory" with some pick-up in growth impulses from the second half of 2020-21 onwards. "It is in the growth outlook that the MPC judged the risks to be gravest," Mr. Das said.

Inflation target has also been held back by the central bank. "The MPC is of the view that headline inflation may remain firm in the first half of 2020-21, but should ease in the second half, aided also by favourable base effects," Mr. Das said.

India reaches out to Pak. to fight locusts

A typical locust swarm, which can vary from less than one sq. km to several hundred sq. km, can devastate farmlands. A one sq. km swarm, containing about 40 million locusts, can in a day eat as much food as 35,000 people, assuming that each individual consumes 2.3 kg of food per day, says the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO). In India, small swarms of desert locusts, in the past weeks, have already arrived from Pakistan, moving east into Rajasthan, and reaching Jodhpur.

"We are preparing for a worst-case scenario. Starting from the Horn of Africa, and joined by desert locusts from breeding grounds en route, one locust stream can travel over a land corridor passing over Yemen, Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan and India, impacting farmlands in Punjab, Haryana and the Indo-Gangetic plain. But another stream passing over the Indian Ocean can directly attack farms in peninsular India, and then head towards Bangladesh," another

official had earlier told *The Hindu*. The official source said India and Pakistan had a regular mechanism, led by their "Locust Officers," who hold six annual border meetings, between June and November. This dialogue is held either at Munabao in Rajasthan or Khokhropar on the Pakistani side. Officials of the two neighbours are also in wireless contact with each other during these months from their perches in Jodhpur and Karachi.

India is also offering to energise another mechanism marshalled by the Locust Warning Organisation, to coordinate a robust joint response by New Delhi, Islamabad and Tehran. So far, Iran has welcomed India's offer of pesticide to control desert locusts in its arid South Khorasan province, and Sistan-Balochistan province that borders Pakistan, the source said.

Analysts spotlight that despite established protocols, it is not clear whether Pakistan will respond positively to India's proposal, given the downturn in New Delhi-Islamabad ties.

Maharashtra pushes India tally to record 6,510 cases

"But lockdown cannot go on forever, it is meant for a purpose which we have achieved to a very large extent. Now we have to make things difficult for the virus," Dr. Paul said, adding that India used its lockdown period to build its medical staff strength and infrastructure. "In less than two months, we have 1,093 facilities with 1,85,306 beds; 2,402 COVID care facilities with 1,38,652 beds with oxygen facility. It has been used only in some places but preparation is national."

Warning that the country could be in for a long haul, Dr. Paul added: "We have to stay very cautious with the lockdown measures being done away with in several places across India. Since we don't have a vaccine or medicines, awareness and caution are our best bet

right now. Social distancing is vital as India still doesn't have herd immunity. We have to work at building immunity and adopt early care seeking behaviour."

Giving details of how the lockdown has helped slow down the rise of COVID-19 cases in India, Pravin Srivastava, Secretary, Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, said: "The growth rate of COVID has witnessed a steady fall from April 3, 2020 when lockdown was able to put a brake on the speed of growth. The number of cases today would have been much higher, had lockdown not been implemented."

The MOSPI released estimates saying the lockdown had resulted in preventing approximately 14 lakh-29 lakh cases and averted 37,000 to 78,000 deaths.

8 die in T.N., Telangana, A.P.; Kerala adds 42 cases

Almost all Kerala cases are returnees from abroad and other States; Karnataka tally goes up by 138 cases

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Three more patients succumbed to COVID-19 in Telangana on Friday, taking the toll in the State to 48.

Andhra Pradesh reported one virus death in Krishna district.

The focus was also on Kerala as it reported its highest single-day spike in cases, with 42 persons testing positive for SARS-CoV-2.

While 40 cases were returnees from other States and abroad, two persons developed the disease locally.

Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan said that even as Kerala was bracing itself for a surge, it was taking a conscious stand to welcome all its people home, fully confident that with the right precautions and aggressive containment measures, the crisis could be managed.

By Q3 and Q4 of FY20-21, it is expected to fall below target. Thus, the MPC's forward guidance on inflation is directional rather than in terms of levels. Going forward, as and when more data are available, it should be possible to estimate the path of inflation with greater certainty," he added. Since February last year, the RBI has reduced the policy repo rate by a cumulative 250 bps, from 6.5% to 4%. And there could be further scope for a rate cut if the inflation trajectory evolves as expected, RBI said. The bank also extended the loan repayment moratorium for another three months, till August 31.

SUMIT BHATTACHARJEE
VISAKHAPATNAM

The Andhra Pradesh High Court on Friday ordered the Central Bureau of Investigation to investigate the Dr. K. Sudhakar case.

A Division Bench, comprising Justice Rakesh Kumar and Justice K. Suresh Reddy, asked the CBI to probe whether the police used excessive force while taking the doctor into custody and also directed it to look into the larger conspiracy as alleged by him. It directed the CBI to file the investigation report within eight weeks.

According to lawyers who represented the petitioners, the High Court took cognizance of a report from a Visakhapatnam District Magistrate, who stated that there were six injury marks on the

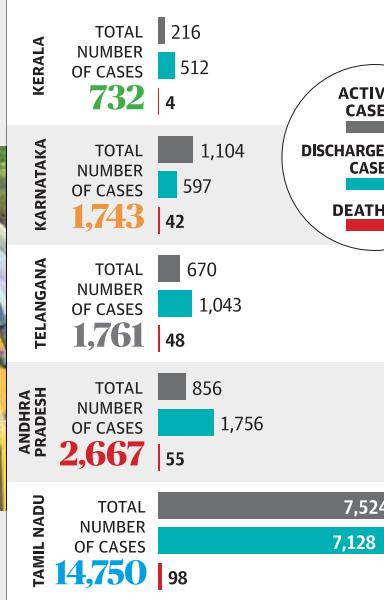
Flouting norms

Though the government is insisting on social distancing norms to contain the spread of COVID-19, people hardly follow the rules in many places



No safety: People travelling in a crowded autorickshaw in Visakhapatnam on Friday.

■ K.R. DEEPAK



Kerala has so far reported 732 cases of COVID-19, of which, 216 persons were under treatment. A total of 512 persons recovered.

The number of people under surveillance rose to 84,258, of whom 83,649 were either on home or insti-

tutional quarantine, while 609 were in hospitals.

A.P. toll now 55

Andhra Pradesh's fatalities rose to 55 with the latest death. On the other hand, 51 persons recovered and were discharged.

Among 8,415 samples tested in a day, 62 cases were positive. Of these, four from Chittoor and 14 from Nellore were linked to Koyambedu market in Chennai. The total positive cases in the State stood at 2,514, of which 1,731 were discharged and remaining were under treatment, while another 153 cases were from other States.

138 cases in Karnataka

In Karnataka, a total of 138 new COVID-19 cases were reported on Friday.

The highest number of cases was from Chickballapur at 47, followed by Hassan with 14, Raichur 10 cases and Bengaluru Urban five.

Telangana's toll on Friday

rose to 48. Besides, 62 more samples tested positive for the virus. The new cases included 42 from Greater Hyderabad, one from Rangareddy and 19 were migrants. Of 1,761 cases detected till date, 670 were active.

786 new cases in T.N.

The number of COVID-19 cases in Tamil Nadu shot past the 14,000-mark after another 786 persons tested positive on Friday. The State reported four more deaths taking the toll to 98 and Erode district was no longer in the green zone with one person testing positive after 37 days.

Chennai's overall case tally climbed to 9,364, with 569 of the 786 patients testing positive in the city.

Of the 14,750 cases, 7,128 persons had recovered from COVID-19. The State's total of active cases stood at 7,524.

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

HC orders CBI probe into action against A.P. doctor

Excessive use of force during his arrest to be investigated

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
ANDHRA PRADESH

The Andhra Pradesh High Court on Friday ordered the Central Bureau of Investigation to investigate the Dr. K. Sudhakar case.

Since the local police – in the opinion of the court – could not be entrusted with the investigation, the CBI was directed to register a case based on the statement before the Magistrate.

On May 17, Dr. Sudhakar was taken into custody by the Visakhapatnam Police. They tied his hands, allegedly beat him and dragged him into an autorickshaw. He was suspended a month ago for levelling allegations against the government for not providing N95 masks and PPE kits to doctors treating COVID-19 patients.

doctor, which was missing from the government's report. The Bench also viewed the videos circulated, along with the counter-affidavit filed by the Chief Secretary.

According to the police, he was in an inebriated condition and was creating nuisance in full public glare on the highway. He was sent to King George Hospital, where doctors certified the presence of alcohol in his blood.

He was later sent to the Government Hospital for Mental Care for assessment, said Police Commissioner Rajeev Kumar Meena. The hospital certified that he was suffering from "acute and transient psychosis".

The footage of Dr. Sudhakar's arrest had gone viral and the IMA had written to Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy for action against the policemen concerned.

He was as an anaesthetist at the Narsipatnam hospital in Visakhapatnam district.

According to the police, he was in an inebriated condition and was creating nuisance in full public glare on the highway. He was sent to King George Hospital, where doctors certified the presence of alcohol in his blood.

He was later sent to the Government Hospital for Mental Care for assessment, said Police Commissioner Rajeev Kumar Meena. The hospital certified that he was suffering from "acute and transient psychosis".

The footage of Dr. Sudhakar's arrest had gone viral and the IMA had written to Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy for action against the policemen concerned.

M.P. woman delivers baby on train

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
VIZIANAGARAM

Kamala, wife of a migrant worker, gave birth to a boy on a Shramik Special train. Both the infant and the mother are doing well, officials of the South Central Railway said.

According to the Divisional Railway Manager, Vijayawada, P. Srinivas, the woman, along with her husband Suraj, boarded the train at Coimbatore on Thursday. The couple, who migrated to Tamil Nadu in search of livelihood, were travelling from Coimbatore to Rewa in Madhya Pradesh. When the train was between Jolarpet and Katpadi, Ms. Kamala developed labour pain. Co-passengers helped her in delivering the baby, officials said.

This is in contrast to the stand the State government had taken in the High Court of Karnataka, where it said it was correct in collecting the prescribed train fare from workers in the event of their home States not depositing advance fares. The State government has been bearing the travel costs of return of migrants to the State from other parts of the country.

According to the Divisional Railway Manager, Vijayawada, P. Srinivas, the woman, along with her husband Suraj, boarded the train at Coimbatore on Thursday. The couple, who migrated to Tamil Nadu in search of livelihood, were travelling from Coimbatore to Rewa in Madhya Pradesh. When the train was between Jolarpet and Katpadi, Ms. Kamala developed labour pain. Co-passengers helped her in delivering the baby, officials said.

Residents for 20 years

While Maqsood and his family were from West Bengal, Sriram and Shyam hailed from Bihar.

Shakeel was a local who worked as driver in a nearby factory.

Maqsood and his family had been staying at Kareemabad in Warangal city for the last 20 years. He and his wife had been working at a gunny bag manufacturing



Police personnel trying to retrieve the bodies from a well at Geesugonda in Warangal. ■ M. MURALI

Nine bodies recovered from well in Warangal

6 of them belonged to a migrant family

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
WARANGAL

In all, nine bodies have been recovered from an agricultural well in Gorrekunta village under Geesugonda mandal in Warangal Rural district of Telangana over the past two days.

Bodies of four members of a migrant worker's family from West Bengal were found on Thursday.

On Friday morning, police arranged to pump out the water after finding another body floating in the well. This led to the recovery of four more bodies.

The dead were identified as Maqsood Alam, 50; his wife Nisha Alam, 45; their sons Shabaz Alam, 21 and Sohail Alam, 20; daughter Bushra Alam, 22; Bushra's three-year-old son; Sriram, 35; Shyam, 40; and Shakeel 40.

Residents for 20 years

While Maqsood and his family were from West Bengal, Sriram and Shyam hailed from Bihar.

Shakeel was a local who worked as driver in a nearby factory.

Police have moved the bodies to MGM hospital for post mortem.

A case of suspicious death under Section 174 of CrPC has been registered, the Inspector said.

TELANGANA

■

Warangal Commissioner of Police V. Ravinder said the owner of the mill informed the Geesugonda police on Thursday morning that his employees were missing.

Later in the afternoon, he informed them of four bodies in a well adjacent to the mill.

"There are no injuries on the bodies. Post-mortem report will throw light on the cause of the deaths. We have formed teams to investigate the case," Mr. Ravinder said.

Geesugonda police Inspector G. Shiva Ramaiah said they suspect that financial problems in the wake of the lockdown may have driven the family to suicide.

Police have moved the bodies to MGM hospital for post mortem.

A case of suspicious death under Section 174 of CrPC has been registered, the Inspector said.

IN BRIEF



A.P. launches 'ReStart' to revive MSME sector

VIJAYAWADA
Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy has launched a new programme christened 'ReStart' to support the MSME sector in the State. The programme is expected to benefit 98,000 units that

Airlines make Aarogya Setu mandatory

Amid ambiguous government guidelines on use of app, most carriers insist on all-clear before travel

JAGRITI CHANDRA
NEW DELHI

All airlines have made the government's contact-tracing app, Aarogya Setu, a pre-requisite for booking a flight, despite concerns over privacy and data surveillance due to ambiguities in the Centre's guidelines for resumption of air travel from May 25.

IndiGo, the largest airline in the country, which will operate 450 flights to begin with, requires passengers to "download the Aarogya Setu app on your phone to be able to fly". Additionally, passengers will also have to "fill an online health declaration before being issued the online boarding pass", the carrier said in a mail to customers.

Vistara, SpiceJet and AirAsia India, also, announced similar measures.

All airlines, barring GoAir, have opened flight bookings.

The move by airlines come despite Minister for Civil Aviation Hardeep Puri clarifying at a press conference on Thursday: "If you don't have the app or the phone instrument is not compatible, it doesn't mean

The app conundrum

As per Ministry of Civil Aviation guidelines, passengers must declare medical status either through Aarogya Setu app or in a self-declaration form at the time of check-in. But when they arrive at the airport without the app they will have to go to a counter to download it

MINISTER PURI:
Not having the app or a compatible phone will not deprive a person of air travel

INDIGO: Download the Aarogya Setu App to be able to fly

VISTARA: Will accept passengers after certification of their health status on Aarogya Setu

SPICEJET: Downloading Aarogya Setu will be mandatory for passengers

AIR ASIA: Guests must complete their self-declaration form and download Aarogya Setu

you will be deprived of air travel. You will be given a self-declaration form to fill."

Mr. Puri was responding to a question on ambiguities in the guidelines prescribed by the Ministry which, at certain stages of the journey, provides travellers an option to fill up a self-declaration form and at other stages, prescribes mandatory use of the app. This has also resulted in each airline interpreting the advisory differently.

Similarly, in the section for measures to be adopted by airlines, the preface recommends: "Airlines should devise a system that web-check-in or tele check-in is possible only when the passenger certifies the status of their health through the Aarogya Setu App or a self-declaration form."

But contrary to these protocols, if a passenger does not have the app when he or she reaches the airport then "the passenger should be facilitated to go to a counter provided by the airport where Aarogya Setu can be downloaded. Children below fourteen years of age would be exempt from this requirement," according to the measures suggested for airports to follow.

As a result, Vistara said in a press statement that it will accept passengers for flight bookings only "after certification of their health status on the mandatory contact tracing Aarogya Setu app".

In response to a query, Vistara replied, "We will ensure strict compliance with all guidelines/SOPs of MoCA

(Ministry of Civil Aviation) including the requirement of self-declaration form by passengers in case they do not have the Aarogya Setu app."

"Wearing a mask and downloading the Aarogya Setu App will be mandatory for passengers," said SpiceJet in its statement.

Air Asia says passengers must do both: "Guests must mandatorily web check-in, complete their self-declaration form and download the Aarogya Setu app."

An official of another airline explained why it has made the app compulsory for passengers despite the Minister's remarks. "It's not mandatory as we know but not having (the app) means

undergoing thermal screening, temperature check or downloading the app at the airport. (Having the app) ensures a more hassle free experience," he said.

The Ministry of Home Affairs on May 17 backtracked on the app being mandatory and suggested that employers ensure that it is downloaded "on best effort basis".

Visa, travel curbs relaxed for limited category of OCIs

Life-long visa to OCIs was temporarily suspended in March

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Visa and travel restrictions were relaxed by the Union Home Ministry on Friday for a limited category of stranded Overseas Citizen of India (OCI) cardholders to come to the country.

The life-long visa to OCIs was temporarily suspended in March in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. The first lockdown that began on March 24 and ended on April 14 has seen three extensions. The current phase ends on May 31.

Several OCIs said they felt discriminated as it stopped them from flying to India on the special flights being arranged by the government under the Vande Bharat Mission. The categories allowed by the MHA on Friday include minors born to Indian nationals abroad and holding OCI cards, those who wish to come to India on account of family emergencies like death in family, couples where one spouse is a cardholder and the other is an Indian national and they have a permanent residence in India and university students who are cardholders (not legally minors) but whose parents are Indian citizens living in India.

On May 7, the MHA issued an order prohibiting international travel to and from 107



Grievance redressed: Several OCIs said they could not fly to India on special flights under Vande Bharat Mission.

for bringing back the specific categories of OCI cardholders who are stranded abroad.

The OCI scheme, operational since December 2005, provides facilities like life-long visa, exemption from registration with Foreigners Regional Registration Office and parity with NRIs in economic, financial and educational fields except purchase of agricultural properties, political and public employment rights.

363 cases,
29 deaths
in Gujarat

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
AHMEDABAD

With 29 deaths reported on Friday, the COVID-19 toll in Gujarat has gone up to 802, even as its mortality rate remains above 6%. The total number of cases jumped to 13,273, with 363 new cases.

Another worrisome trend is the growing number of patients requiring ventilator support. As on Friday, 63 patients are on ventilator, the highest number since the beginning of the outbreak.

But the number of patients being discharged is growing: 392 persons were discharged on Friday.

There are 6,591 active cases undergoing treatment at hospitals.

Ahmedabad reported 26 deaths and 275 cases on Friday.

Paul says forecast showing cases going to zero was misinterpreted

On April 24, NITI Aayog member made a presentation detailing lockdown impact

JACOB KOSHY
NEW DELHI

That India would see a decline in new COVID-19 cases by May 16 was a "misinterpretation," V.K. Paul, who leads the government's COVID committee on managing medical emergency, said at a media briefing on Friday.

"No one has ever said that the number of cases would go down to zero at a particular date, there is a misunderstanding, which needs to be corrected. For the misunderstanding, I feel sorry and apologise," he said in a response to a question that sought an explanation.

As *The Hindu* has previously reported, on April 24, Dr. Paul, NITI Aayog member and internationally acclaimed paediatrician, had made a detailed presentation at the daily briefing of the Health Ministry detailing the lockdown's impact in curtailing the spread of the novel coronavirus.

This is the first time Dr. Paul has acknowledged the issue at a public forum.

His presentation suggested that the first lockdown had prevented India from seeing a 1,00,000 cases in April. It had also slowed the

No one has ever said that the number of cases would go down to zero at a particular date, there is a misunderstanding, which needs to be corrected. For the misunderstanding, I feel sorry and apologise.



rate of transmission and increased the doubling time, the period it took for cases to double, to about 10 days. However, included in this was a PowerPoint slide that projected the benefits from "extending the lockdown" beyond April 15. This had a curve showing the number of active cases plummeting to zero by May 16.

While it's true Dr. Paul didn't actually say the cases would go down to zero, a vi-

deo of the day's presentation available on YouTube shows him using that slide to demonstrate the lockdown's impact in slowing down the increase in cases.

From May 3, India would hit its peak in adding daily cases at a little above 1,500 and this would drop to 1,000 by May 12, and down to zero by May 16, this curve showed. *The Hindu* had reported on April 25 that members of his own committee didn't agree with that assessment.

While the presentation was made available to the media and heavily criticised on social media, electronic copies of that slide no longer appeared to show the questionable curve in new cases declining to zero.

Booking period for 30 special trains increased

Tickets can be bought 30 days ahead

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Indian Railways on Friday increased to 30 days the advance booking period of the 30 special trains that started on May 12.

These trains, which were running with an advance booking period of seven days till now, will operate along with 200 new time-tabled trains from June 1 and the Shramik special trains.

For the 200 new trains, the Railways said nearly 6 lakh tickets were booked till Friday afternoon for over 12.54 lakh passengers. The online bookings for these trains opened on Thursday morning, and booking via counters and agents was allowed from Friday. "There shall be no Tatkal booking [in the 30 special trains] ... RAC/Waiting list tickets

will be issued... However, waitlisted passengers will not be allowed to board these trains as per extant instructions," Railways said.

Booking of tickets will be permitted through computerised PRS counters in Post Offices and Yatri Ticket Sudha Kendra (YTSK) licensees among others. They can also be booked online through authorised agents of the Indian Railway Catering & Tourism Corporation (IRCTC) and Common Service Centres, it added. "This will be implemented with effect from train booking date 24th May 2020 and for train starting date of 31st May 2020 onwards."

A spokesperson said a total of 2317 Shramik special trains, ferrying more than 31 lakh migrants, had run till midnight of May 21.

'80% success chance for Oxford trials'

Serum Institute chief says the potential vaccine is based on a tried-and-tested platform

REUTERS
PUNE

If the world is to gain access to a vaccine for COVID-19, there is a good chance it will pass through the doors of the Serum Institute of India here.

The institute, the world's largest manufacturer of vaccines by volume, is working on several candidates, including potentially mass-producing the AstraZeneca/Oxford University one, as well as developing its own.

The efforts are partly being shepherded by Umesh Shaligram, the R&D head. The institute is a private company but every day, shortly before midnight, he receives a WhatsApp message from the government asking for updates.

"We have begun to see approvals come through in days, even on a Sunday night, for trials and things like that," he said, noting



The Serum Institute is working on several vaccine candidates against the novel coronavirus.

REUTERS

some of these processes typically took four to six months.

India quietly plays a key role in manufacturing 60%-70% of all vaccines sold globally with the Serum Institute playing a lead role, said the company's Chief Executive Adar Poonawalla.

Mr. Poonawalla, whose family owns the vaccine maker, said scientists, drugmakers and man-

nufacturers were collaborating at an unparalleled scale to spur development and availability. "We are all in a race to battle the disease, there is no one-upmanship here," he said.

Serum has partnered with U.S. biotech firm Codagenix, its U.S. rival Novavax and Austria's Themis to potentially manufacture three COVID-19 vaccine candidates.

Another candidate in the works is the experimental vaccine developed by a team at the University of Oxford and now licensed to drugmaker AstraZeneca, with whom Serum is in talks to mass produce the vaccine, which is now in the clinical trial stage.

The United States has secured almost a third of the first 1 billion doses planned for the potential vaccine, initially known as ChAdOxi and now as

AZD1222, by pledging up to \$1.2 billion.

Mr. Poonawalla aims to initially produce 4.5 million doses a month, beginning from June, and then gradually ramp up to 350-400 million doses a year.

"Hopefully we will build a stock of a few million doses to give to our country and other high-risk areas across the globe come October-November when the trials ought to be concluded," the 39-year-old said.

He had been given to understand by the development team that the trials had an 80% chance of success, given that the vaccine is based on a tried-and-tested platform. Based on the information currently available, he said he anticipated AZD1222 would be a single-dose vaccine and not require a booster dose.

He sees AZD1222 potentially priced at about ₹1,000.

Economists, activists moot 7-point revival plan
NEW DELHI
A group of economists and activists on Friday proposed a seven-point plan, which includes helping migrant workers go home in 10 days and free universal healthcare services to COVID-19 patients, to address the economic, health and humanitarian crisis due to the pandemic. In a statement, the group of 24 experts said the Centre had failed to address the urgent need for economic support to those who had been hit by the crisis.

HCQ cover extended to frontline workers

Health Ministry revises the guideline for the use of prophylaxis

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare has recommended the use of hydroxychloroquine (HCQ) for asymptomatic frontline workers, such as surveillance workers deployed in containment zones and paramilitary/police personnel involved in COVID-19-related activities, in its revised guideline for the use of prophylaxis released on Friday evening.

The previous advisory issued on April 23 provided placing the high-risk population (asymptomatic healthcare workers involved in the care of suspected or

confirmed COVID-19 cases and asymptomatic household contacts of laboratory confirmed cases) under chemoprophylaxis with HCQ.

The Ministry has noted that studies on the prophylaxis of the SARS-CoV-2 infection at the ICMR has found there is a significant dose-response relationship between the number of prophylactic doses taken and frequency of occurrence of SARS-CoV-2 infection in symptomatic healthcare workers tested for infection.

Another investigation from three Central government hospitals in New Delhi indicates that

VISAKHAPATNAM METROPOLITAN REGION DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY	
UDYOG BHAVAN, SIRIPURAM, VISAKHAPATNAM-530003 (A.P.)	
NOTICE INVITING TENDER through e- Procurement	
NIT No.: VMRDA/NIT/01 (Rc. No.01/2020/VMRDA/PLNG/L5) dt 22.05.2020	
Name of the Work: "Consultancy Services for Preparation of Strategic Concept Plan for the area around Proposed Bhogapuram Airport"	
Visakhapatnam Metropolitan Region Development Authority (VMRDA) is inviting bids for Consultancy Services for Preparation of Strategic Concept Plan for the area around Proposed Bhogapuram Airport.	
Bid Document Download Start Date and Time 26.05.2020, 11:00 AM	
Pre-Bid Meeting Date and Time 30.05.2020, 11:00 AM	
Bid Document Download End Date and Time 06.06.2020, 02:00 PM	
Bid Submission Date and Time 06.06.2020, 03:00 PM	
Bid Opening Date and Time 06.06.2020, 04:00 PM	
The Request for Proposal (RFP) can be downloaded on AP e-procurement portal i.e. www.apeprocurement.gov.in .	
For further details please visit www.vmrda.gov.in and www.apeprocurement.gov.in . Contact person: Sri. Suresh Kumar B (Chief Urban Planner, VMRDA) on +91-9866076913, e-mail: cupvmrda@gmail.com .	
Sd/- METROPOLITAN COMMISSIONER, VMRDA, VISAKHAPATNAM	

GOVT. OF ODISHA	
DEPARTMENT OF WATER RESOURCES	
OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER,	
EASTERN CIRCLE (R&B), BALASORE	
e-mail : sec_bls@rediffmail.com	
Government of Odisha "e" Procurement Notice	
Bid Identification No. SEEC-13/2019-20	
No.2441 / dt.19.05.2020	
Nature of work :- Road Works	
Number of works :- 02 (Two) No of Road Works	

Mousuni licks its wounds as leaves turn yellow, resorts stare at certain doom

It's a long road to recovery for the island on the Bay of the Bengal because of severe damage to infrastructure and ingress of saltwater even into tall vegetation

SHIV SAHAY SINGH
MOUSUNI

The inhabitants of the sinking island of Mousuni woke up to a bright sunny morning and an unusually calm sea on Friday, two days after Cyclone Amphan wreaked havoc on the island. As the residents of the boat-shaped island, with a population of about 30,000, started clearing the debris, they noticed something unusual about the trees. All of them had turned yellow, their leaves withered and sporting a lifeless look.

"All the trees have burnt," island resident Subhas Bhandari said. Mr. Bhandari, who had refused to move to a cyclone shelter on Wednesday, watched the storm from one of the holiday homes he manages at Salt Bheri, the southernmost tip of the island on the Bay of Bengal.



Broken homes: Residents of Kalikapur stand in the debris of their homes razed to the ground by cyclone Amphan. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Affirming what Mr. Bhandari had described, many other islanders said the gale was so strong that seawater droplets were carried and deposited on the trees by the wind. Every tree on the island, even mighty banyan trees that had stood their ground, had turned yellow and appeared dead.

About 90% of houses had suffered damage, said Serafat Ali Sheikh, a resident. Mr. Sheikh had just finished washing the leaves of two guava saplings with water from a deep tube well in a bid to revive them. "We were able to evacuate

10,000 people from their homes and keep them in cyclone shelters," said Mr. Sheikh, who is the husband of the panchayat pradhan. "This helped us ensure that nobody died."

Successive high-intensity cyclones – Fani followed by Bulbul and now Amphan – had made people on the island more cautious. The islanders said

the latest storm was far more destructive.

"I wasn't able to complete the repairs of the portions affected by Cyclone Bulbul and now my home is com-

pletely damaged," S.K. Ajharruddin, a resident, said. "Whatever little we are earning we are putting in building and rebuilding homes."

Business loss

The impact of the cyclone was so powerful that the sheds of the newly constructed holiday homes were not only blown away but smashed into little pieces. The island, which is located about 120 km south of Kolkata, had found a chance to stay afloat with these holiday homes that were built a couple of years ago. Facing the bay, 42 such "resorts" and homes had sprung up, providing a steady influx of tourists.

Swapan Koyal, who was clearing debris from the roof of one such "resort", said that after the lockdown, the cyclone had struck a major blow to the new-found

vocation of the islanders. In a few resorts, the damage is so extensive that the residents are at a loss about which part of the debris to start clearing. In one resort, a solitary mule stood forlorn, surrounded by fallen trees.

About 35 km from Mousuni is Lot No. 8, an important intersection for connectivity in the Sunderbans. Vessels from this point leave for Sagar Island and Ghoramara.

Behind the massive electricity pylons meant to transmit power to Sagar, a small habitation of a dozen houses has been razed to the ground.

The residents, who said that they were fishermen, were cooking in the open. "As many as 536 people had taken shelter in our school and medical centre from Tuesday to Thursday," said Swami Adhyatmanand of the Bharat Sevashram

Sangh. "The storm was so strong that a part of the roof of our structure was ripped off," he added.

The monk, while discussing what relief could be provided, said that 90% of the houses in the Kalikapur region had suffered damage. Economic activities such as betel nut cultivation had also been badly affected.

Particularly galling for the region's residents is the extent of destruction in what they have believed to be 'sacred land' – a place where millions of pilgrims descend every year during Makar Sankranti, to cross the river to Sagar. The most visible signs of the havoc wrought by Amphan are the trees along the entire road leading to the Sunderbans: many uprooted, some snapped in half and yet others dangling perilously atop electric poles.

Odisha CM offers help to West Bengal

STAFF REPORTER
BHUBANESWAR

Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik on Friday spoke to his West Bengal counterpart Mamata Banerjee, extending men and material to overcome the crisis caused by Amphan.

Odisha Disaster Rapid Action Force and Fire Service personnel had been deployed at other States during disasters.

Mr. Patnaik on Thursday made an aerial survey to assess the damage in the affected districts of his State.

The Odisha government said about 45 lakh people have been affected in 89 blocks of the State and one lakh hectares of cultivated land impacted.

Plaint against man for Godse image on note

STAFF REPORTER
BHOJPUR

A man in Madhya Pradesh has allegedly 'replaced' Mahatma Gandhi's image with that of his assassin Nathuram Godse's on a ₹10 note and posted the picture on social media.

The National Students' Union of India (NSUI), the student wing of the Congress, filed a complaint with the police on May 20, demanding that a case be registered against Shivam Shukla, who they claim is a student leader of the ABVP, on charges of sedition and fraud.

Storm of rage in battered Kolkata

Residents demand clearing of blocked roads and restoration of utilities

SUVODIT BAGCHI
KOLKATA

On Friday evening, a few hundred residents of Naktala in south Kolkata took to the streets, blocking a key road connecting the Tollygunje Metro station to a large neighbourhood further east, Garia. Their ire was directed at local councillor Susmita Dam.

"For the past 50 hours, there is no electricity," said a resident, an information technology professional who spoke on the condition of anonymity.

"Thus water pumps are not working and houses are without water. The trees are not cleared and neither have the lamp posts been put in place. Every department is blaming the other and we are in darkness as the temperature is rising," the resident added.

The fear and confusion that prevailed on Wednesday, when the cyclone tore through the city, is fast turning into anger as thousands



Obstacle course: A man carrying his bicycle on a street blocked by fallen trees in Kolkata's Naktala area. ■ RAJEEV BHATT

of fallen trees remain entangled in electric, telephone, and television cables across the city's streets. Blocked roads have disrupted traffic.

The members of Udayan Sangha who count the Trinamool's secretary general Partha Chatterjee as a key patron and wield influence in Naktala, could be seen trying to calm down the residents.

A similar protest at the Santoshpur connector on the

Eastern Metropolitan bypass shut an arterial road in southeast Kolkata, leading to chaos and frayed tempers.

"They are not even allowing ambulances," said a young woman who was trying to take her mother to the hospital. "She is in a serious condition due to kidney trouble," she said.

Ms. Dam wasn't immediately reachable by phone. The term of the Kolkata

Municipal Council's elected councillors has lapsed but elections have been delayed by the COVID-19 outbreak. The KMC's appointed administrator Firhad Hakim had said on Wednesday that normalcy would be restored in 48 hours.

Poll worries

The Trinamool's local leaders are worried lot with two elections due inside a year. "First COVID and now Amphan before KMC and next year's Assembly polls,

we have to significantly buckle up," said a party official, who declined to be identified. "Sad part is most of our local leaders, particularly MLAs and MPs, have left everything to Didi and are not on the ground."

"There cannot be so many simultaneous protests at around the same time – 8 p.m. – unless it is coordinated. Only some political network can coordinate such simultaneous protests," a Trinamool Minister said.

Locust swarms attack crops in M.P.

First such invasion since 1992-93

STAFF REPORTER
BHOPAL

Six swarms of locust entered Madhya Pradesh on May 17 from Rajasthan but have caused minimal crop damage so far as fields lie fallow. This is the first such invasion since 1992-93 when the swarm was much smaller, said the Madhya Pradesh Agriculture Department.

"Due to lockdown, farmers in Rajasthan, who are aware about their movement, couldn't possibly kill them in time. It's a yearly phenomenon which was stymied each year before it reached Madhya Pradesh," Avnish Chaturvedi, Deputy Director, Agriculture Department, told *The Hindu*.

The swarms, which could be 1-2 km to 10-12 km long and 1.5-2 km wide, move around 100-150 km every day during daylight in the wind direction. Around late evening, they settle around greenery and attack it. "Fortunately there are no crops in Madhya Pradesh at this time of the year," said Mr. Chaturvedi.

District-level teams

The State government has set up district-level teams comprising revenue, police and agriculture officials to track the swarms during the day. "After they settle somewhere around 7-8 p.m., we mobilise our local resources there. The most effective time to kill locust, using pesticide, is between 3 a.m. until around 9 a.m. when it flies away," he said.



Winged menace: Dead locusts coat a road after pesticides were sprayed.

Mr. Chaturvedi admitted that once the humidity increased and crops were sown, controlling the swarms would be a challenge. "We are yet to take a crop damage assessment," he said.

On May 21, a swarm settled at a village in Neemuch district, which borders Rajasthan. Another descended on three villages in Ujjain district, and the third one on another three villages in the district. In Sheopur district, one swarm descended on a village.

In all the cases, authorities mobilised tractor-mounted pumps and fire tenders to spray pesticide. Central locust control teams are also aiding efforts.

Another swarm descended on two villages in Ratlam district where 65-70% control was achieved.

UN praises LGBTQI initiative

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GUWAHATI

The United Nations Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth has listed Manipur's 'khudol' (gift) among the top 10 global initiatives for an inclusive fight against the COVID-19 pandemic.

Khudol is a crowdfunded initiative of Ya_All, an Imphal-based NGO. The initiative entails ensuring food supplies and health services for the LGBTQI+ community, people living with HIV, daily-wage earners, children and adolescents.

Man booked for spreading rumours

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GUWAHATI

The police in Manipur's Kakching district have booked a man for spinning a yarn about a quarantine centre romance.

Officials did not spell out the quantum of punishment for the social media announcement that had been uploaded as a prank.

The Kukis of the district's Sugnu area had set up a quarantine centre for the community. Locals became restive when a social media post claimed that a volunteer on COVID-19 duty named Mangboi had fallen in love and eloped with Sharon Lamkang, a quarantined woman. The false post claimed that the police were looking for them.

Ban on Zoom: SC issues notice to Centre

Plea says video app made users 'vulnerable and prone to cyber threats'

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Friday asked the government to respond to a petition seeking a ban on the use of video communications app 'Zoom' for official and personal purposes.

A Bench led by Chief Justice of India S.A. Bobde issued notice to the Centre on

the plea raising privacy concerns. The court said the government should file a reply in four weeks.

The plea by Delhi resident Harsh Chugh said the app made users "vulnerable and prone to cyber threats."

It has alleged that the Zoom app "practices data hoarding and cyber hoarding," which include mass

storage of personal data of its users and stores cloud recordings, instant messages and files.

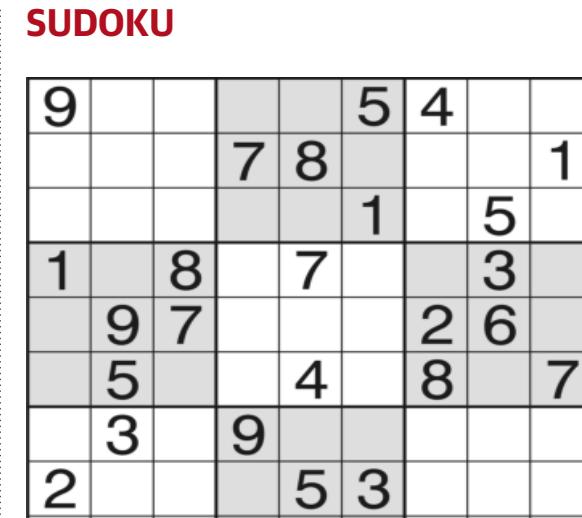
"Zoom is reported to have a bug that can be abused intentionally to leak information of users to third parties.

The app has been falsely claiming that calls are end-to-end encrypted when they are not," the petition said.

It claimed that Zoom had apologised publicly for "misleadingly routing traffic through China" where Internet is heavily monitored by the government.

The plea has alleged that Indian Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT-In), the nodal cybersecurity agency, has also warned Zoom users of cyber risks.

SUDOKU



Solution to puzzle 12942

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

Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

<tbl_header



Instapick

Bread garden: Following sourdough and banana breads, the latest is the bread garden, most often on focaccia. Bakers are using onions, herbs and other ingredients to make vibrant and lush gardenscapes, creating a comforting canvas of carbs. Don't miss Teri Culletto's (@vineyardbaker) series of focaccia gardens inspired by Vincent van Gogh. Follow #breadart on Instagram.



Talking point

Monaco Grand Prix: Regarded as the most difficult circuit in Formula One, the race was set to take place this weekend. On what is traditionally the biggest day of the year in motorsports, ESPN will stream presentations of some classic editions from 2018 and 2019. In addition, the day will have four hours of competition in the F1 Esports Virtual Grand Prix Series. Tomorrow, on the ESPN app.



Dancing on a different stage (Clockwise from left) Divya Ravi, Rathimalar Govindarajoo, Roopa Krishnamurthy and Anita Ratnam • SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT



Unboxing dancers

In a new Instagram series, Anita Ratnam invites artistes to improvise

SUSANNA MYRTLE LAZARUS

With venues closed for the foreseeable future due to the ongoing pandemic, dancers are looking for alternate stages. In *Boxed*, an online series curated by Chennai-based veteran dancer Anita Ratnam, they find the freedom to choose where they would like to dance. Even if it is a bathtub, a kitchen or a flight of stairs.



In the first two weeks of lockdown, Ratnam noticed that many dancers were taking to Instagram, performing from their living rooms. "I was interested in what this period means for young dancers – especially those between the ages of 20 and 39 – who have just finished training and want to express themselves," she says. To give them a

platform, she and her team at Narthak came up with the concept of *Boxed*. Each 15-minute episode features five dancers, performing their original choreography for two minutes each, in a space of their choice. They also explain why they chose that particular spot.

No boundaries

Explaining the name of the series, Ratnam says, "We are all boxed into our homes. What can we do to acknowledge our immediate space? So I asked artistes to choose the space they wanted. Costumes were not allowed, nor could they use the music of their [individual] form. The idea was not to reach for anything that they were comfortable with." Instead, various music clips were sourced directly from composers and shared with the dancers.

Watch *Boxed 3.0* and *4.0* on Instagram @anitaratnam on May 30 and 31

Pick of the week

Concerts, stand-up and other online events you just can't miss.
The event preview and calendar will resume in a few weeks.



Your theatre calendar



Need a laugh?



Music on your mind



Quiz away



Keep it moving



Get fit, virtually



#LockdownWithWeekend

On Saturday, our Instagram Live series features **Sendhil Ramamurthy**, who most recently made an appearance in Mindy Kaling's Netflix show, *Never Have I Ever*. He will talk about playing Mohan, and his other roles in sci-fi and espionage series. At 7.30 pm. On Sunday, **Rebekah Blank**, who launched Atmosphere Kombucha and founded Fab Cafe (a unit of Fabindia), will talk about the new beauty foods with columnist and wellness expert Vasudha Rai. At 5 pm. Tune in to both sessions on @thehinduweekend.

In Idol pursuit

Nepal-origin *American Idol* finalist Arthur Gunn talks about his musical journey

ANURAG TAGAT

As much as the term "unprecedented" is overused during a pandemic, it is the closest word to describing the finale of long-running music competition, *American Idol*. Usually hosted in a studio space to roaring audiences and star judges in attendance, finalist Dibesh Pokharel, aka Arthur Gunn, was standing in his tasteful back porch on Sunday, as host Ryan Seacrest was about to announce season 18's winner.

On the other side of the splitscreen was Just Sam, the R&B/pop crooner moniker of Harlem contestant Samantha Diaz. Seacrest sat in a studio, opened an envelope to announce Just Sam as the winner, and the last glimpse we get of Gunn is his family – four sisters, his mother and dad – walking over to celebrate his second place finish. Before the finale aired, the Nepali-origin singer said over the phone from Wichita, "My approach to this was, as an artiste, musician and singer, there are many platforms out there and this was one I should try out. I was just trying to experiment what it would be like to be a part of this."

As is the case with most *American Idol* finalists, their journey into music stardom has often just begun regardless of whether they win the grand prize or not. Finalists such as Jennifer Hudson, Adam Lambert, Katherine McPhee and Chris Daughtry are still widely known for their music, sometimes overshadowing the actual winners.

The 22-year-old probably knows this, which is why the fans he's accrued in the US, Nepal and India are a big deal. After all, Gunn – born and raised in Kathmandu and having immigrated



Arthur Gunn • SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

with his family to the US about six years ago – released his Nepali language album, *Grahan*, in 2018 and has close to 2.8 lakh subscribers on YouTube. Post-*Idol*, these fans have bumped his channel's total views up to over 14 million. Songs like 'Nyano Ghar' have over five million views on YouTube and two lakh plays on Spotify, but as is the case with *Idol* contestants, their covers are what get them a following. When Gunn and his backstory were highlighted early in the competition, he found new fans.

He's quick to realise this time is crucial, which is why he has already put up a snippet of his new song 'Love is my Redemption' on YouTube. "So far, I've been hearing from a lot of people in India and Nepal and all over the world. It feels really motivating, and gives me that positive energy that I can do this," he concludes.

American Idol Season 18 airs Monday to Friday, 9 p.m. on Star World, with repeats on Saturday and Sunday at 11.30 a.m.

With OTT platforms shopping for content, filmmakers who have been creative during lockdown might benefit



ADITYA MANI JHA

Filmmaker Satish Raj Kasireddi was working on a series for Netflix when the Indian government announced a three-week lockdown on March 24. "I was getting restless, and this was a war-like scenario. That led me to think about how filmmakers were working during times of war – they continued to do their job," he says.

The Netflix series was inevitably delayed, but Kasireddi ended up conceptualising (and co-producing, alongside Priyanjoli Basu and Ahab Jafri) *Lockdown Shorts*, an anthology of short films by a lineup of young, independent filmmakers working at home, during lockdown. Among them is Arif Ali, who is the brother of Bollywood director Imtiaz Ali and the Kolkata-based filmmaker Sourya Deb.

Keeping it simple

The idea is to utilise whatever resources one can acquire at or near home and make a short film, no

more than five minutes long. Terence Hari Fernandes, one of the 10 directors featured in *Lockdown Shorts*, says, "A lot of people involved in this first batch have a solid history of independent filmmaking, doing projects with low budgets, and not much by way of resources. So they are used to working under constraints."

The films are now ready for release on a streaming platform; the team is currently in talks with several players (none have responded to our queries). Meanwhile, the search for future films continues.

Lockdown Shorts is one of several projects, both in India and around the world (see box), where filmmakers are challenging themselves to create art while confined to their immediate environments.

Singer and actress Andrea Jeremiah (from *Vada Chennai*) is set to star in a single-actor short film called, quite simply, *Lockdown*, directed by AadHAV Kannadasan (actor and writer known for his popu-

Shot in quarantine



Busy across the globe



Songbird

Directed by: Adam Mason
Produced by Michael Bay (*Transformers*), this thriller will be the first film out of Los Angeles shot during the lockdown.



Yash Gill's Power Half Hour

Directed by: Milli Bhateria
Doctor Who star Sacha Dhawan plays the lead in this 30-minute film, as a stand-up comic working on a livestream for the first time.



Spaces #1 and #2

Directed by: Greek filmmakers The Thessaloniki International Film Festival invited directors to create short films inspired by the Georges Perec essay *Species of Spaces*. On YouTube.

lar Tamil films *Ponmaalai Pozhudhu* and *Kaalidas*).

Surviving solitude

Rahul Riji Nair, who works in the Malayalam film industry, recently released *Survival Stories* on YouTube – a collection of eight shorts (all but one written by Nair himself) made under lockdown. In these stories, characters find themselves trapped in different ways and have to overcome barriers. "I think the idea of survival is particularly relevant right now," says Nair. "Filmmakers are thinking, 'In the absence of cinema halls, will OTT platforms take over everything?' And like any other artiste, I also have my own fears and concerns."

The film starts off as horror and ends up resembling a genteel comedy, all within five minutes or so. An impressive feat, considering the circumstances – Nair speaks about adapting to a process where dozens of people were remotely working on the post-production. In the last film, we meet an old dog after he is abandoned at his house. We see the poor fellow drinking out of potted plants, parched. When a neighbour tips over a bucket, then calls out to the dog, the audience holds its breath: will man's best friend be rescued? "Jayakrishnan Vijayan, who shot that film, has a nice bond with that dog (it is his neighbour's)", Nair says, adding, "He knew when it takes a nap, and shot the dog-fainting scene at just the right time."

Clearly, the lockdown has tested our resourcefulness in more ways than one – and filmmakers are rising to the challenge.



I think any designer who doesn't consider loungewear as a key category anymore is kidding themselves. It may be the only thing people lean towards, at least until the end of this calendar year

MASABA GUPTA



Blending style, sophistication and comfort, it can be worn as sleepwear, on the beach or to a black-tie event. What could be more versatile?

MALINI RAMANI



Kaftans can also be paired with pants, which is one of my signature looks and a chic alternative to a kurta

ANJALI PATEL



The return of the Kaftan

A celebrity essential during lockdown, this 'day to night' garment is all set for the long haul

SUJATA ASSOMULL

If I had to describe my dressing style as a season, it would be 'Summer', so it is surprising that I only discovered the kaftan after moving to Dubai five years ago. When the sea of billowing, beautiful kaftans at *iftars* and *suhours* made sense. So for my first Eid here I pulled out a kaftan that was actually upcycled from a white chikan dupatta my mom had bought 20 years ago—originally made for a beach holiday, it was the perfect fit as many of the kaftans worn in Dubai are Made in India. "Indian aesthetics have always appealed to the Middle Eastern market, and the quality

and finish of the kaftans that come from India are comparable to those by international design houses and better priced," says Dubai based Mukta Shah-dadpuri aka The Style Circuit, who has hosted pop-ups for Tarun Tahiliani, Shivan and Narresh and Anushka Khanna.

Dubai-based influencer Rosemin Manji often posts pictures of herself in Delhi-based design studio D'Ascoli's silk digital-printed kaftans and at Abu Dhabi's Ataya (a landmark exhibition held prior to Ramadan under the patronage of HH Sheikha Shamsa Bint Hamdan Bin Mohammed Al Nahyan), Anita Dongre's stall is always a major draw.

For designers like Malini Ramani,

Style diaries (Clockwise from left) Snapshots of collections by Malini Ramani, Good Earth, Gucci, Verandah and Sonam Kapoor in a Sabyasachi creation



Payal Singhal and Namrata Joshipura, regulars on the Dubai pop-up circuit, kaftans are always a strong part of their line-up. But it isn't just Dubai; this breezy and forgiving robe is positioned for a comeback across the world, courtesy the pandemic.

Boho to 'wedding-ready'

Singhal has included kaftans in her collection since 2010 - her embroidered versions are suited to occasion wear, especially those priced around ₹49,286 on her website. She also has laid-back digital kaftan-tunics, made for beach holidays (around ₹8,719) and notes that there has been a rise in clients taking to the silhouette.

At this time of the year, as summer is taking off, global designers from Gucci to Pucci have always highlighted the kaftan. After all, while its origins can be traced back to the Mesopotamian era, this silhouette first achieved high fashion status in the Swinging 60s when Yves Saint Laurent, Balenciaga and Dior included it in their collections. Over a decade later, Elizabeth Taylor wore a Gina Fratini multi-colored, kaftan-style dress to her second wedding to Richard Burton. Perhaps following in her chic footsteps, two years ago Sonam Kapoor Ahuja turned to an

silhouette.

For designers like Malini Ramani, and finish of the kaftans that come from India are comparable to those by international design houses and better priced," says Dubai based Mukta Shah-dadpuri aka The Style Circuit, who has hosted pop-ups for Tarun Tahiliani, Shivan and Narresh and Anushka Khanna.

Dubai-based influencer Rosemin Manji often posts pictures of herself in Delhi-based design studio D'Ascoli's silk digital-printed kaftans and at Abu Dhabi's Ataya (a landmark exhibition held prior to Ramadan under the patronage of HH Sheikha Shamsa Bint Hamdan Bin Mohammed Al Nahyan), Anita Dongre's stall is always a major draw.

For designers like Malini Ramani,

ivory chikan kaftan by Abu Jani Sandeep Khosla for her wedding reception afterparty. Adding "new bride" glamour to its bohemian vibe, Bollywood's favourite fashion girl layered it with uncut diamond neckwear. Jetsetters have pulled off the beach to ballroom upgrade with the right accessories. Beaded, metal or precious jewellery - anything goes, thanks to the kaftan's exotic personality. "I'm surprised more Indian designers have not looked at this style until recently, while international designers have them as wardrobe staples," observes Singhal.

From celebrity drawing rooms

Growing up, many of us may have seen our mothers and grandmothers wear kaftans as housecoats. Perhaps the rise of resort wear as a category made the kaftan haute? Ask Malini Ramani, one of our first resort wear designers, for whom kaftans, jumpsuits and paréos are a staple. "Blending style, sophistication and comfort, it can be worn as sleepwear, on the beach or to a black-tie event. What could be more versatile?" she asks, also pointing to its popularity in this time of social distancing. It helps that a picture of actor Kareena Kapoor Khan at home in a block-printed yellow Masaba Gupta kaftan went viral, with fashion magazines pronouncing it "the coolest 'at home' outfit".

Popular labels include Anupama Dayal, Shivan and Narresh and Anjali Patel's Verandah, while couture darlings Sabyasachi and Anamika Khanna have given it a formal feel with craft-based embellishments and sequins. "Kaftans can also be paired with pants, which is one of my signature looks and a chic alternative to a kurta," says Anjali Patel, referring to another go-to #WFH silhouette.

The upgrade

The kaftan is as, if not more, flexible than the kurta. Ramani is already full of ideas on how she will be taking this 'destination' essential forward: from new lengths, to adding pockets, to matching them with masks and scarves.

Verandah's Anjali Patel also sees reinvention happening around this shape. Her label is known for their vintage oversize take on the kaftan but now she will add more structured shapes, and shorter, belted and maxi-dress styles. Kaftan dresses also feature in the much-anticipated H&M x Sabyasachi collection, expected to drop at the end of summer.

With a dash of daring, courtesy slits and other details, this style is inclusive, working for all shapes and sizes, says Gupta, adding, "The days of the kaftan being associated with a house gown are over. It will all change now. The house gown is the new runway gown!"

The writer is a former editor, luxury consultant and author

FOOD SPOT



RAHUL VERMA

In these trying times, stories of courage and kindness keep our spirits up. My friend Ashish was telling me on the phone how he and his friends and family had been feeding some 2,500 labourers every day. Indeed, there are people across the country who have been doing what they can to make a difference to people's lives.

What talking to Ashish (who al-

A taste of the old

It's a time to keep our resilience high by reaching for the familiar

so runs a picturesque resort in a place called Sonapani in the Kumaon hills), I asked him about his food delivery business. Ashish and his partners run Café Lota in Delhi, Roots and some other outlets, and had started a superb



Wholesome meals (Above) Kerala Veg Stew with rice; Molgapodi Idli • SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT



food service called Melting Pot Tiffins. This had been suspended, he said. But I think our conversation enthused him, and he wrote back to say that he was resuming it.

It is not as elaborate as it once was, but Melting Pot Tiffins offers some delicious food. The dishes - neatly packaged in plastic containers in a cardboard carton -

are called Lota Special Lockdown meals, and are delivered between 12 noon and 9 pm from Café Lota. You can also pre-order and pick them up from the restaurant, which is next to Pragati Maidan, between noon and 6 p.m. (9990247940 for WhatsApp messages; 7838960787).

The menu offers some signature regional dishes and a collection of small plates (between ₹200 and ₹275): idlis with gun powder, a chaat prepared with two kinds of *muttar*, beetroot kababs, chicken idlis, fish chops.

The main meals include favourites from Bihar, Rajasthan, and Kerala, among others. On the menu are Rajasthani Chicken Mokul, *kurkuri bhindi*, *jeera* rice and *bajre roti* (₹680); DIY Do Mutter Key Chaat, Paneer Pasanda and Tawa Pudina Parantha (₹635); be-

san key gatte kurkuri bhindi, *gatta pulao* and *khoba roti* (₹475); Anand's Fish Chop, Toddy Shop Fish Curry, red rice, *appam* (₹800); beetroot Shikampuri, Kachcha Aam Prawn Curry, flat *appam*, red rice (₹820).

My dinner was superb. One of the meals was Bihari and consisted of *crispy aloo methi*, *alo chokha*, *baigan chokha*, *teekha pyaza* and *sattu ka paratha* (₹540).

Then there was *molgapodi idli*, Suryani chicken stew, flat *appam* and red rice (₹700).

The *chokhas* were nice and spicy, and the *alo methi* was delicious and went very well with the *sattu* filled *parathas*.

Of course, the crunchy onions added to the taste. Both the Kerala mango prawn curry and the chicken stew were sublime - the curries were

light and fragrant, and the prawns and chicken wonderfully succulent. I enjoyed the Kerala chicken stew and flat *appams* too.

The fish chop (created by chef Anand, hence the name) was, again, excellent. Chef Udit of Café Lota tells me that they use *rahu*, which they boil and mash, then turn into patties, sautéed with a coating of crusty semolina. The chicken idlis were interesting too - minced chicken steamed and garnished with curry leaves and chillies. The chicken was meltingly soft, and the south Indian spices gave it a nice touch.

I hope Lota's Lockdown meals bring succour to people's lives.

"There is nothing like comfort food during these trying times," Café Lota says. True, that.

The writer is a seasoned food critic

FILM REVIEW

A film lost in time

Nawazuddin Siddiqui's *Ghoomketu* has taken too long to see the light of day to have remained impactful

NAMRATA JOSHI

Ghoomketu, the film - much like the titular character - doesn't quite know what it wants to be. It aims to bite off more than it can actually chew. Is it a spoof of the film industry or a celebration of it? Or is it a film that just uses one too many a starry cameo - Amitabh Bachchan, Ranveer Singh, Sonakshi Sinha, Nikhil Advani, Chitrangada Singh - to somehow stay afloat when there is little by way of imagination, inventiveness, and exuberance to the script and the telling.

Nawazuddin Siddiqui plays *Ghoomketu*, a young writer from Mahona village in Uttar Pradesh, who runs away to Mumbai with a screenwriting Bible in hand and gives himself 30 days to



Eye catching Nawazuddin Siddiqui in a scene from the film

• SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

yap). Needless to say, the two keep criss-crossing. Now how did the family manage to exercise such clout? That question is still hanging in the air for me, as are many others. There is lot that feels utterly half-baked, like the Badlani track. And, the portions which show promise and potential - the village bits - get sidelined at the alter of Bollywood.

Misra tries to go for the deliberately whimsical in trying to deal with the film industry

but can't quite pull it off and ends up using tired old tricks of the trade - star cameos, recreating popular film songs and scenes, split screen conversations between characters, simulating old black and white Hindi films for some scenes, using silent films-like inserts for others and caps it all with an inane item song, shot within a bioscope, which talks about speed breakers and compares a woman's body parts to a car's heaving chassis.

You can figure out the rest. Surrounded by innumerable caricatures for characters, Siddiqui is earnest and tries to make the most of being the centre of the film's universe.

However, if there is any life, liveliness and urgency to *Ghoomketu*, it's in the triumvirate of Raghuvir Yadav, Swanand Kirkire, and Ila Arun, especially Arun who is sense and sensibility, all heart, mind and fun.

The loud, angry skirmishes of these siblings could have easily lapsed into a parody but feel real because of the performers' lived-in energy.

Completed in 2014, the film has taken six long years to see the light of day and the hoariness and disconnect shows. Especially in the figure of Ranveer Singh, who hardly looks the way he used to. Not just the Indian cinema or its stars, but also the polity, society, government, and we the people have changed by leaps and bounds since then. *Ghoomketu* than, is oddly lost to its audience in another time and world.

Ghoomketu is streaming on Zee 5

THE GUARDIAN QUICK CROSSWORD-13355

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8			9			
			10			
11						
					12	13
14					15	
					16	
17						
18	19					
20					21	
22					23	

© GUARDIAN NEWS AND MEDIA LTD., 2016

Across

1 Actuality (4)

3 About to happen (8)

8 Plough (4)

9 High-ranking army

officer (5,3)

11 One's wife (informal)

(3,7)

14 Blockhead (6)

15 Object used in

fighting (6)

2 Speed (8)

17 Done by people

acting together (10)

20 First performance

21 Pound - lump of

chewing tobacco (4)

22 Place of residence

(8)

23 Suggestive (4)

Down

1 Attractive (8)

2 Speed (8)

China scraps GDP target, hikes defence spending

Country's economic and trade situation is very uncertain and development is facing unpredictable factors, says premier Li

ANANTH KRISHNAN

China has for the first time in 30 years scrapped announcing an annual GDP target, underlining the severe economic challenge facing the world's second largest economy in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic.

"We have not set a specific target for economic growth for the year, mainly because the global epidemic situation, and economic and trade situation, are very uncertain, and China's development is facing some unpredictable factors," Premier Li Keqiang said on Friday at the start of the annual session of the National People's Congress (NPC), or Parliament.

The NPC, scheduled for March 5, had been delayed on account of the COVID-19 outbreak. The NPC's 3,000 or so legislators, barring the top leadership of the Communist Party, attended the session in Beijing's Great Hall



Slowing march: Paramilitary officers marching in front of the Forbidden City in Beijing. China on Friday announced it would hike defence spending by 6.6%. ■ AFP

of the People wearing masks.

The holding of the NPC has been seen in China as reflecting a return to some normalcy after more than three months of lockdown following the outbreak in Wuhan.

The country still faces enormous economic challenges, confronting a slowdown at home and a collapse

of external demand. China's economy contracted by 6.8% in the first quarter, the first contraction since the end of the Cultural Revolution in 1976.

Mr. Li said rather than a target for growth, the focus would be on "ensuring stability on the six fronts and security in the six areas". The

tioning of primary-level governments.

The policy priority this year will be on job creation, with reports of widespread job losses during the first quarter. Mr. Li announced a target for 9 million new jobs in 2020.

Modernisation of PLA

China on Friday also announced it would hike defence spending by 6.6%, down from 7.5% last year. This would bring the proposed military budget to around \$179 billion.

Much of the spending will fund the ongoing modernisation of the People's Liberation Army (PLA), and particularly on the expansion of the PLA Navy and the PLA Rocket Force, which have been garnering an increasing share. The Army has been downsized by 300,000, with a current active force of around 2 million.

Last year, China unveiled

its first homegrown aircraft carrier, while two more are in construction. China in 2019 also unveiled its most advanced intercontinental ballistic missile, the Dongfeng-41, with an estimated 14,000 km range, capable of reaching the U.S.

"The modernisation process has been on track," said Lt. Gen. S.L. Narasimhan, Member, National Security Advisory Board. "This is a good hike given the performance of the economy."

This year's budget will lift China's spending to around four times India's budget of \$44 billion, excluding pensions of \$18 billion. While China does not specify the spending on pensions, the expense is shared by the Ministry of Veteran Affairs as well as provincial governments.

Compared with India, China also spends less on defence imports given its indigenous defence industry.

Sons of Khashoggi 'forgive' his killers

This could help 5 convicts on death row

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
RIYADH

The sons of murdered Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi said on Friday they "forgive" the killers of their father, a move analysts said effectively grants clemency to five convicts on death row.

Khashoggi – a royal family insider turned critic – was killed and dismembered at the kingdom's consulate in Istanbul in October 2018, in a case that tarnished the reputation of de facto ruler Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman.



...we the sons of martyr Jamal Khashoggi announce we forgive and pardon those who killed our father," the Washington Post columnist's son Salah Khashoggi said on Twitter.

The announcement drew anger from Khashoggi's fiancée Hatice Cengiz, who said "no one" had the right to pardon his murderers. "We will not pardon the killers nor those who ordered the killing."

China seeks India's support for legislation

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
BEIJING

China has sought the support and understanding of India and other countries for its controversial decision to impose a new national security law on Hong Kong, saying the new draft legislation is aimed at containing the "secessionist" forces in the former British colony who have posed a "grave threat" to the country's national security and sovereignty.

"When they lose control of the legislature, they can still pass laws. This is against the Basic Law, no doubt about it. Under Xi Jinping's 'one country, two systems', the Communist Party will have complete administrative power over Hong Kong. This is the exact opposite of what was promised."

reason for the draft legislation with a reminder that "upholding national security" in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region is "purely China's internal affair and no foreign country can interfere in this matter".

"Hong Kong's prosperity and long-term stability is in line with the common interests of the whole international community, including your country, as well as protection of your country's legitimate interests in Hong Kong."

"We hope that your government will understand and support China's relevant practices," it said.

New security law will tighten Beijing's grip on Hong Kong

It will allow China to operate its national security organs in the city

ANANTH KRISHNAN

A draft legislation on national security tabled before China's Parliament on Friday will for the first time allow Beijing to draft national security laws for Hong Kong and also operate its national security organs in the Special Administrative Region (SAR).

The draft law, expected to be passed next week by the National People's Congress in Beijing, has been criticised by democratic parties in Hong Kong as undermining the "one country, two sys-

tems" model that gives the SAR a high degree of autonomy.

Article 23

Since the return to China in 1997, Hong Kong has been governed by the Basic Law, which allows the territory "to enjoy executive, legislative and independent judicial power, including that of final adjudication", barring matters of defence and foreign affairs.

Article 23 of the Basic Law requires Hong Kong to pass national security legislation, but past attempts to do so



Pro-democracy activist Joshua Wong, left, speaking to the media against the legislation in Hong Kong on Friday. ■ AP

were shelved when the moves triggered wide protests. The new legislation will require Hong Kong's Legisla-

tive Council (LegCo) to pass legislation "as soon as possible", although it does not specify a time-frame.

More importantly, it will likely allow Beijing to bypass LegCo if it chooses to, declaring that the NPC's Standing Committee "is authorised to draft laws related to the establishment and completion of... the legal system and enforcement mechanisms for the preservation of national security".

Necessary measures

The new legislation said the move is aimed at "preserving national security" and called on Hong Kong "to employ necessary measures to counter, lawfully prevent, stop

and punish foreign and overseas forces' use of Hong Kong to carry out separatist, subversive, infiltrative, or destructive activities."

The law will also for the first time allow China's national security organs to formally operate in Hong Kong. Paragraph four states that organs "relevant for the protection of national security are to set up institutions" in Hong Kong.

Martin Lee, a leading pro-democracy politician and barrister who helped draft the Basic Law in the 1980s, said the legislation was a contravention of the "one country, two systems" model as envisioned by Deng Xiaoping.

"When they lose control

Fight to liberate Palestine is Islamic duty: Iran's Khamenei

He hits out at Western governments and their Arab 'puppets'

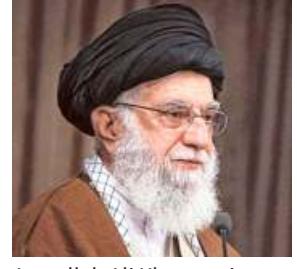
AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
TEHRAN

Iran's supreme leader said it was an "Islamic duty" to fight for the "liberation of Palestine" in a landmark speech on Friday amid rising tensions with regional arch-enemy Israel.

Ayatollah Ali Khamenei lashed out at Western governments and their Arab "puppets" for supporting the Jewish state, in his first ever address marking Quds (Jerusalem) Day.

The 80-year-old leader also appeared to confirm for the first time that Iran has helped to provide Palestinians with arms.

The remarks came at the end of a week that saw Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu launch a Twitter tirade against Mr. Khamenei and reports that the two



Ayatollah Ali Khamenei

role of U.S. puppets, have provided the necessary pre-conditions for this, such as economic ties and the like; these efforts are completely fruitless and sterile."

"Everyone must fill the hand of the Palestinian fighter and strengthen his back... We will proudly do our best in this way."

"One day we realised that the only problem of the Palestinian fighter... was the lack of weapons."

"We planned" to resolve this issue, and "the result is that the balance of power in Palestine has changed: today Gaza can stand up to the Zionist enemy's military aggression and win."

Every year since the 1979 Islamic Revolution, Iran has marked Quds Day on the last Friday of Ramzan in solidarity with the Palestinians.

Sides carried out cyber-tacks on each other.

"The aim of this struggle is the liberation of the entire Palestinian land" and "the return of all Palestinians to their country," Mr. Khamenei said on state television.

The policy of normalising the presence of the Zionist regime in the region is one of the major policies of the U.S., he said.

"Some Arab governments in the region, which play the

Trump slams studies that contradict him

ASSOCIATED PRESS
WASHINGTON

"A Trump enemy statement," he said of one study. "A political hit job," he said of another.

As President Donald Trump pushes to reopen the country despite warnings from doctors about the consequences of moving too quickly during the coronavirus crisis, he has been lashing out at scientists whose conclusions he doesn't like.

Twice this week, Mr. Trump has not only dismissed the findings of studies but suggested – without evidence – that their authors were motivated by politics and out to undermine his efforts to roll back restrictions.

One of the studies, funded in part by his own government's National Institutes of Health, raised alarms about the use of hydroxychloroquine.

The idea behind the OST, first proposed in the early

Will exit Open Skies Treaty, announces U.S. +

Russia 'continuously and flagrantly' violated the treaty, says Mike Pompeo

SIRIRAM LAKSHMAN

The U.S. has given notice that it will exit the Open Skies Treaty (OST), an agreement that allows countries to monitor signatories' arms development by conducting surveillance flights over each other's territories. U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, who announced the withdrawal, said Russia had "continuously and flagrantly" violated the treaty.

U.S. President Donald Trump said the deal could be amended or a new one could be made.

"I think we have a very good relationship with Russia. But Russia didn't adhere to the treaty, so until they adhere, we will pull out. But there's a very good chance we'll make a new agreement or do something to put that agreement back together," he said on Thursday.

The idea behind the OST, first proposed in the early



Donald Trump

years of the Cold War by former U.S. President Dwight Eisenhower, came to fruition decades later and was signed in 1992, during the George H.W. Bush presidency and after the Soviet Union had collapsed. The OST came into effect in 2002 under the George W. Bush administration and it allows its 34 signatories to conduct unarmed reconnaissance flights over the territory of treaty countries. The U.S. has used the treaty more intensively than Russia. Between 2002 and 2016, the U.S. flew 196 flights over Rus-

sia (in addition to having imagery from other countries) compared to the 71 flights flown by Russia, as per a BBC report. Chris Ford, a senior U.S. diplomat for non-proliferation, also cited changes to the security environment as a reason for the U.S. exiting the OST.

The U.S.'s exit last year from another arms deal the West had signed with Russia – the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) treaty – as well as its imminent departure from the OST has raised the strong possibility that the Trump administration may not renew the New Start Treaty, an agreement signed by the Obama administration with Russia that caps Russian and U.S. nuclear arsenals. The New Start Treaty is due to expire next February.

The Trump administration has been worried that extending New Start would negatively impact an arms

deal with China and Russia. The State Department told the U.S. Congress earlier this year that it is concerned that China's nuclear stockpile could be doubled if the New Start Treaty continued as is, without including China, as per a report in Foreign Policy magazine.

Marshall Billingslea, the Trump administration's Special Envoy for Arms Control, said, on Thursday, that the New Start Treaty suffered from "some serious verification inadequacies", and that the U.S. intended to establish a new arms control regime which would include China.

Meanwhile, Russia said it would continue to honour its commitments under the treaty. "As long as the treaty is in force, we intend to fully follow all the rights and obligations that apply to us," Deputy Foreign Minister Alexander Grushko told RIA Novosti news agency.

IN BRIEF



Man who filmed shooting of black jogger arrested

Investigators in the southern U.S. state of Georgia have arrested a man who filmed the fatal shooting of the black jogger, Ahmaud Arbery.

The man was charged with felony murder and criminal attempt to commit false imprisonment.

Myanmar editor jailed over coronavirus error

A Myanmar news editor has been jailed for two years after his agency reported a COVID-19 death that turned out to be false, his lawyer said on Friday. Chief editor Zaw Ye Htet was arrested on April 13, the day his news agency published the article. AFP

In stunning reversal of fortunes, Turkey emerges as kingmaker in Libya

A string of victories by Turkish-backed fighters have dealt a heavy blow to the ambitions of aspiring strongman Khalifa Haftar

DECLAN WALSH
CAIRO

A string of victories by Turkish-backed forces in western Libya this week dealt a heavy blow to the ambitions of aspiring strongman Khalifa Haftar and signaled the arrival of Turkey as a potential decisive force among the foreign powers battling for supremacy in West Asia's biggest proxy war.

On Monday, Libyan fighters backed by Turkish fire-power captured a major air base west of Tripoli, the capital, used drones to destroy newly arrived Russian air defense batteries, and on Thursday pressed their offensive by ousting Mr. Haftar's forces from a key town south of Tripoli.

The triumphs marked a stunning reversal of fortunes for the UN-backed Tripoli go-

vernment, which looked weak and badly besieged by Mr. Haftar until President Recep Tayyip Erdogan of Turkey sent troops and armed drones in January.

"It's Turkey's Libya Now," read the headline on a briefing posted by the European Council on Foreign Relations.

Over a year ago, Mr. Haftar began an offensive to capture Tripoli and appeared to have the upper hand in the conflict, positioning his foreign sponsors, including Russia, to play a major role in Libya's future.

But on Wednesday, triumphant soldiers loyal to the government in Tripoli paraded through central Libya with a captured air defense system, built by Russia and financed by the United Arab Emirates, in a pointed humiliation of

Mr. Haftar's two most powerful foreign backers.

Then, on Thursday, Mr. Haftar's forces were driven out of Asaba, a small but strategic town they had held 60 miles outside the capital.

The U.N. envoy to Libya, Stephanie Williams, warned the Security Council this week that the escalating fighting, driven by a flood of foreign-supplied weapons, warplanes and mercenaries, risked "turning the Libyan conflict into a pure proxy war".

Although Turkey's dramatic gains this week appeared to change the course of the war, they were by no means conclusive. The fortunes of the players in the conflict have seesawed wildly since the fall of dictator Muammar Qaddafi in 2011.

On Thursday, Mr. Haftar,

76, a self-styled field marshal and onetime CIA asset who has been compared by critics to Mr. Qaddafi, vowed to strike back with what his air force chief called "the largest aerial campaign in Libyan history" against Turkish targets in Tripoli.

"All Turkish positions and

MARKET WATCH

	22-05-2020	% CHANGE
Sensex	30,673	-0.84
US Dollar	75.95	-0.45
Brent oil	34.54	-4.87

NIFTY 50

	PRICE	CHANGE
Adani Ports	310.60	-6.55
Asian Paints	1617.40	-43.60
Axis Bank	336.95	-20.25
Bajaj Auto	2553.75	-86.60
Bajaj Finserv	4315.55	-233.65
Bajaj Finance	1895.30	-94.90
Bharti Airtel	593.20	-1.35
BPCL	315.20	2.00
Britannia Ind	3167.10	56.15
Cipla	639.35	-22.75
Coal India	125.20	0.70
Dr Reddys Lab	3892.85	-45.35
Eicher Motors	13922.40	-165.20
GAIL (India)	87.20	-0.75
Grasim Ind	532.35	5.40
HCL Tech.	530.40	-4.45
HDPC	1516.15	-81.15
HDFC Bank	838.85	-20.70
Hero MotoCorp	2150.60	31.10
Hindalco	124.85	-4.65
Hind Unilever	1987.90	17.00
ICICI Bank	291.05	-13.35
IndusInd Bank	338.35	-8.45
Bharti Infralet	207.50	1.65
Infosys	692.35	20.15
Indian Oil Corp	75.50	1.05
ITC	186.35	-2.60
JSW Steel	166.15	-3.75
Kotak Bank	1160.20	9.95
L&T	815.70	-9.80
M&M	426.35	18.05
Maruti Suzuki	5134.30	84.20
Nestle India Ltd.	16215.15	-80.30
NTPC	90.95	0.70
ONGC	76.15	-0.85
PowerGrid Corp	155.85	-3.05
Reliance Ind	1431.55	-9.70
State Bank	150.85	-1.10
Shree Cement	19910.25	659.10
Sun Pharma	469.40	2.95
Tata Motors	82.80	-1.30
Tata Steel	274.45	-9.25
TCS	2020.35	29.15
Tech Mahindra	529.65	9.60
Titan	849.65	-0.20
UltraTech Cement	3638.95	67.45
UPL	371.15	4.35
Vedanta	89.10	-1.10
Wipro	189.00	-0.10
Zee Entertainment	163.25	9.30

EXCHANGE RATES

Indicative direct rates in rupees a unit except yen at 4 p.m. on May 22

CURRENCY TT BUY TT SELL

US Dollar 75.75 76.07

Euro 82.51 82.89

British Pound 92.24 92.64

Japanese Yen (100) 70.46 70.77

Chinese Yuan 10.62 10.66

Swiss Franc 77.86 78.20

Singapore Dollar 53.22 53.46

Canadian Dollar 54.04 54.27

Malaysian Ringgit 17.37 17.45

Australian Dollar 49.44 49.65

Source: Indian Bank

IN BRIEF

Maruti, Chola partner for vehicle finance

NEW DELHI Maruti Suzuki has partnered with Cholamandalam Investment & Finance Company Ltd. to offer customised vehicle financing to buyers, including an offer to 'buy now pay later'. The offer will allow buyers the flexibility to pay EMIs after 2 months of availing the loan.

GoAir bookings to open from June 1

MUMBAI GoAir flights are not available for booking from May 25. An airline spokesperson said bookings were open from June 1. Airline officials said while they were ready to resume flying, some aspects are being discussed. Reportedly, the cockpit crew needed some training as they did not operate a single flight in two months.

Lucas TVS deploys AI for staff social distancing

CHENNAI Lucas TVS has selected BLP industry AI's 'Trust AI', an AI tool to help staff maintain social distancing amid COVID-19. It issues an alert when anyone is less than the desired distance from a colleague. The tool uses IP and CCTV cameras combined with computer vision to enforce social distancing.

INTERVIEW | RAJIV KUMAR

'Recovery contingent upon virus intensity declining, tapering off'

The government has not ignored the issue of minimising distress in the present crisis, says NITI Aayog Vice-Chairperson

YUTHIKA BHARGAVA

Rajiv Kumar, Vice-Chairperson, NITI Aayog, expects to see a recovery in demand starting this festival season. Edited excerpts from an interview:

The recently-announced economic package focuses on supply-side liquidity. Do you think additional steps are needed to spur demand?

■ Demand is not only consumption demand. Aggregate demand is made up of investment, intermediate and consumption demand. If all our liquidity measures are successful, and the businesses are able to revive themselves, then their aggregate demand will rise.

What we want to do is to increase demand, not through helicopter money but through productive use of the money so that the in-

RBI extends moratorium by 3 months

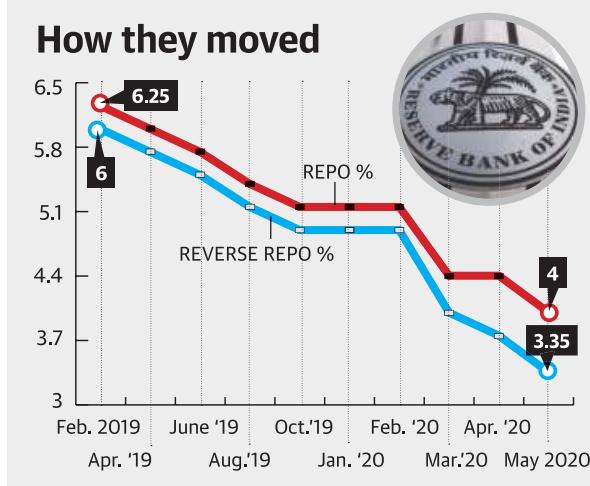
Facility also for borrowers who did not opt for the same in March, says SBI

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

MUMBAI

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has extended the moratorium on repayment for term loans by another three months till August 31.

All other conditions for the facility remain unchanged, that is, the loan will not be classified by the lender as 'non-performing' and there will not be any impact on the individual credit score. "In view of the extension of the lockdown and continuing disruptions on account of COVID-19, it has been decided to permit lending institutions to extend the moratorium on term loan instalments by another three months, i.e., from June 1, 2020 to August 31, 2020. Accordingly, the repayment schedule and all subsequent due dates, as also the tenor for such loans, may be shifted



ed across the board by another three months," the RBI said.

In end March, the regulator announced the moratorium for a three-month period – March 1 to May 25. The banking regulator has also extended the interest pay-

ment deferment for working capital loans by another six months.

Rajnish Kumar, chairman, State Bank of India, said borrowers who did not opt for the moratorium in March would also be allowed to avail themselves of the facil-

ty for the next three months. Mr. Kumar said only 20% of SBI borrowers had availed of the loan moratorium.

"Moratorium extension is the need of the hour. We are extending moratorium to all borrowers across all segments," said Padmaja Chunuru MD CEO Indian Bank.

On the issue of moratorium to non-banking finance companies, Mr. Kumar said the bank would extend the facility on a case-by-case basis, depending on the cash flows of non-banking institutions. Banks had decided to extend moratorium to NBFCs in case these firms face negative cash flow, that is, if cash outgo is higher than the inflows.

NBFCs had extended the repayment moratorium to their customers, but faced difficulty in getting one for themselves from banks.

"The uncertainty associated with the pandemic, normalisation of economic activity and relaxation made in social distancing makes it imperative that policy response is calibrated and swift," the SBI Chairman said.

"In this context, extension of moratorium till August 31, enlargement of the Large Exposure Framework, and the option to convert accumulated interest for moratorium period into term loan are welcome measures. On the export side, increase in export credit period to 15 months from one year and

"Banks were disappointed as the central bank gave no indication on relaxing debt restructuring norms, despite requests from lenders.

As per Reserve Bank of India guidelines, banks have to make higher provision for restructuring debt which are standard assets, which means lenders had to set aside higher amount of capital.

"Going forward, we expect a one-time restructuring by RBI and a change in asset quality norms from 90 days to 180 days. This relaxation should be given along with a well-laid out calendar of returning to the current norm of 90 days in the next two years," said Soumya Kanti Ghosh, Group Chief Economic Adviser, SBI.

RBI has, however, permitted lenders to convert accumulated interest on working capital facilities over the

"The economy would take considerable time to recover, a higher EMI will be difficult to honour. A one-time restructuring would have enabled a more certain recovery," said Abizer Diwanji, Partner & Leader Financial Services – EY India.

RBI also permitted lenders to reassess the working capital cycle of a borrower up to an extended period till March 31, 2021 to provide necessary leeway to lenders to make an informed assessment about the impact of the pandemic on the entity.

"Such changes in credit terms permitted to borrowers to specifically tide over COVID-19's fallout will not ... result in asset classification downgrade," the central bank added.

RBI has also extended the resolution timeline of stressed assets as it exempted the six-month period

from the calculation of the 30-day review period and 180-day resolution period, if the review/resolution period had not expired as on March 1, 2020.

Discusses credit flow in meeting with PSB chiefs



Nirmala Sitharaman

Some of the large lenders, including SBI, convened a meeting of the asset-liability committee to take a view on the interest rates.

According to bankers, the FM tried to understand the ground situation as far as lending was concerned, and wanted to ensure that the loan guarantee scheme for MSMEs reached all entities needing it.

"Since March 1, banks have sanctioned ₹6 lakh crore of loans. Our bank has sanctioned ₹15,000 crore, of which ₹12,000 crore has been disbursed. Over 1.36 lakh customers have been benefited," said A.K. Goel, MD and chief executive officer of UCO Bank.

the chief executive of a public sector bank who attended the meeting. "The Finance Ministry is aware that transmission of interest rates has not happened fully," the official told *The Hindu*.

Bankers said lending rates are set to come down after Friday's RBI rate cut.

"We want to continue helping customers all over India get everything they need so they can continue to practice social distancing.

"To enable this, we are creating work opportunities for close to 50,000 seasonal associates across our fulfilment and delivery networks," he said. "This will also keep as many people as possible working during this pandemic while providing a safe work environment for them,"

ing and financial stocks as Sensex constituents such as HDFC, HDFC Bank, ICICI Bank, Axis Bank and Bajaj Finance, along with Reliance Industries contributed the maximum to the day's fall.

The broader Nifty settled the day at 9,039.25, down 67 points or 0.74%. The losses were primarily led by bank-

Investment values unit at ₹4.91 lakh cr.

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

MUMBAI

Private equity major KKR has agreed to buy 2.32% stake in Reliance Industries' wholly owned digital subsidiary Jio Platforms Ltd. for ₹1,367 crore, making it KKR's largest investment in Asia.

With this transaction, Jio Platforms assumes an equity value of ₹4.91 lakh crore and an enterprise value of ₹5.16 lakh crore. Over the last month, leading technology investors such as Facebook, Silver Lake, Vista and General Atlantic had announced aggregate investments of ₹78,562 crore in Jio Platforms. Commenting on the deal, Mukesh Ambani, CMD, Reliance Industries, said,

"We are looking forward to leveraging KKR's global platform, industry knowledge and operational expertise to further grow Jio."

Jio Platforms, a wholly-owned subsidiary of Reliance Industries, is a next-generation technology platform focused on providing high-quality and affordable digital services across India, with more than 388 million subscribers.

Henry Kravis, co-founder and co-CEO of KKR, said, "We are investing behind Jio Platforms' impressive momentum, world-class innovation and strong leadership team." KKR is making the investment in Jio from its Asia private equity and growth technology funds.

Apart from relaxations in debt recast norms, banks were expecting dilution in asset classification norms. At present, an account becomes non-performing as

No relaxation in debt recast dismays banks

Tweaks in asset classification expected

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

MUMBAI

Banks were disappointed as the central bank gave no indication on relaxing debt restructuring norms, despite requests from lenders.

As per Reserve Bank of India guidelines, banks have to make higher provision for restructuring debt which are standard assets, which means lenders had to set aside higher amount of capital.

"Going forward, we expect a one-time restructuring by RBI and a change in asset quality norms from 90 days to 180 days. This relaxation should be given along with a well-laid out calendar of returning to the current norm of 90 days in the next two years," said Soumya Kanti Ghosh, Group Chief Economic Adviser, SBI.

"This does not mean RBI will not offer the relaxation later. They are aware of the situation. Companies are yet to start operations. Once they start, we will be in a better position to assess their need and loans could be restructuring accordingly," said a CEO of a large public sector bank.

However, banking and financial sectors were the worst hit in the markets on Friday as RBI kept mum on the moratorium, with stocks such as Axis Bank, Bajaj Finance, HDFC Bank and ICICI Bank featuring among the top losers in the Sensex pack. The BSE Bankex and BSE Finance indices were the worst performers among the sectoral indices, shedding 2.44% and 3%, respectively.

"RBI has not announced any relief on the restructuring of loans to address the risk of rising asset quality issues in the banking sector, which has come as a disappointment for equity markets," said Gaurav Dua, senior VP, head, Capital Market Strategy & Investments, Sharekhan by BNP Paribas.

Key ICC meet on May 26

Nominations Committee to finalise election procedure

AMOL KARHADKAR

MUMBAI
The International Cricket Council's Nominations Committee is set to formalise the election procedure for the post of chairman at a meeting on May 26.

Shashank Manohar's four-year stint as the first independent chairman would have ended at the ICC Board's annual meeting in June. However, with the pandemic forcing postponement of the annual meeting, Manohar has agreed to an extension till August.

And, the sub-committee headed by Manohar is set to decide timelines for the election. Around 90 former ICC directors may secretly propose a candidate; eligible nominees are then sought out and their interest ascertained; a list is then presented to the ICC Board for final selection.

The meeting has gained importance with Board of Control for Cricket in India



Shashank Manohar.
■ FILE PHOTO

(BCCI) president Sourav Ganguly indirectly throwing his hat in the ring.

On Thursday, two Cricket South Africa (CSA) executives, including former captain Graeme Smith, now Director of Cricket, supported Ganguly's candidature.

However, with neither Smith nor acting chief executive Jacques Faul having a say in the process, CSA chief Chris Nenzani was quick to issue a clarification that CSA's official stand on the

next chairman is yet to be decided.

BCCI treasurer Arun Dhumal on Friday stated it would "prefer an Indian" at the helm. Interestingly, Ganguly only recently fulfilled the criterion of being a director. It is understood the former India captain attended the last ICC Board meeting in March only as a BCCI representative.

Director now

"Since the official communication by the BCCI hadn't nominated him as director, he had to be referred to as BCCI representative."

"But after the meeting, the BCCI completed the formalities and he has been inducted as an ICC director," said a source.

As a result, the ICC Board meeting on May 28, primarily to discuss the possibility of staging the T20 World Cup in Australia in October-November, will be Ganguly's first as an ICC director.

'Back to Cricket Guidelines'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
DUBAI

The International Cricket Council (ICC) on Friday recommended a slew of radical measures, including appointment of chief medical officers, a 14-day pre-match isolation training camp and use of gloves by umpires while handling the ball, as international cricket plotted its return from the coronavirus hiatus.

The 'Back to Cricket Guidelines' has also asked for the formulation of an adequate testing plan during practice and match situation. It has stated that players should not hand over caps, jumpers etc. to the umpires between overs.

The ICC has called on respective boards to provide a safe workplace for the cricketers and recommended maintaining a 1.5m distance (or as directed by the respective governments) between players at all times, and thorough sanitisation of personal equipment.

As far as bowlers are concerned, the apex body has issued specific guidelines considering their workload and the risk they run of getting injured. Recommendations include having a larger squad for reduced workload.

Training periods

The ICC suggested format-specific training periods for bowlers, allowing them a minimum of 5-6 weeks of training, with the last three weeks involving bowling at match intensity in order to facilitate return to T20Is.

The minimum preparation period for ODIs has been set at six weeks, while for Tests, it recommended a preparation time of up to 2-3 months with the last 4-5 weeks involving bowling at full throttle.

Using these guidelines, the ICC advised affiliates to work in tandem with their respective governments to work their way back into cricketing activities.

India Open to be held in December

BWF releases the revised calendar for 2020

RAKESH RAO
NEW DELHI

The revised calendar of the Badminton World Federation (BWF) has scheduled the \$400,000 India Open badminton from December 8 to 13.

Besides the India Open, originally scheduled in March, the country will also host the annual \$170,000 Syed Modi India International at Lucknow from November 17 to 22. However, this World Tour Super 300 tournament clashes with the cash-rich \$1,350,000 Indonesia Open, a World Tour Super 1000 event.

The \$90,000 Hyderabad Open, a BWF Tour Super 100 event, has been allotted the August 11-16 slot.

Apart from the World Tour events, BWF's premier team competition, the Thomas and Uber Cup Finals, will be held from October 3 to 11 at Aarhus, Denmark.

Revised schedule:

Sept. 1-6: Taipei Open (Taipei City); Sept. 8-13: Korea Open



Good news: BWF has made provision for three Indian tournaments in its reworked calendar. ■ FILE PHOTO: NAGARA GOPAL

(Seoul); Sept. 15-20: China Open (Changzhou); Sept. 22-27: Japan Open (Tokyo); Oct. 13-18: Denmark Open (Odense); Oct. 20-25: French Open (Paris) and New Zealand Open (Auckland); Oct. 27-Nov. 1: Macau Open (Macau); Nov. 3-8: China Open (Fuzhou); Nov. 10-15: Hong Kong Open (Hong Kong); Nov. 17-22: Indonesia Open (Jakarta) and Syed Modi International (Lucknow); Nov. 24-29: Malaysia Open (Kuala Lumpur) and Korea Open (Gwangju); Dec. 1-6: Thailand Open (Bangkok); Dec. 8-13: India Open (New Delhi); Dec. 16-20: BWF World Tour Finals (Guangzhou).

IN BRIEF



Multiple Slam champion Cooper passes away

SYDNEY
Eight-time Grand Slam-winning Australian tennis player Ashley Cooper has died aged 83. Tennis Australia said on Friday. The former Australian, Wimbledon and US singles title-holder, was part of the golden era of Australian men's tennis in the 1950s winning four Grand Slams singles titles and four in doubles. Tennis Australia said he would be remembered as "a giant of the game, both as a brilliant player and an astute administrator." AFP

Chances of India touring Australia is 9/10: CA chief

MELBOURNE
There is a 9 out of 10 chance that India will make the trip Down Under for a four-Test series later this year, Cricket Australia chief executive Kevin Roberts said.

"I guess there's no such thing as certainty in today's world so I can't say 10, but I'm going to say nine out of 10. Who would know whether we can have crowds I'd be surprised if we can't get the Indian tour away," said Roberts.

Border not for putting IPL ahead of T20 WC

MELBOURNE
Former Australia skipper Allan Border is against IPL taking precedence over this year's T20 World Cup. "(I'm) not happy with that. The world game should take precedence over local competition. So, the World T20, if that can't go ahead, I don't think the IPL can go ahead. I would question that decision - it's just a money grab, isn't it, that one?" he said in an ABC radio programme. PTI



Bryant memorabilia fetches premium prices

NEW YORK
NBA legend Kobe Bryant's handprints in concrete sold for \$75,000 in a Beverly Hills auction of sport memorabilia. The item fetched more than 18 times its pre-sale estimate of \$4,000-6,000. Other highlights included a full uniform worn by Bryant during the 1999-2000 NBA Finals and embroidered with an official NBA logo under a black band worn in memory of Wilt Chamberlain that sold for \$43,750. Bryant-related items realised \$202,590 at the auction, where one 2006-07 season game-worn jersey sold for \$22,400. AFP

Well-prepared to resume: Chandhok

MMSC vice-president awaits clarity, but hopeful of a September restart

**S. DIPAK RAGAV
RAYAN ROZARIO**

With the government permitting the opening of sports facilities, albeit without spectators, the motorsport community is waiting for further clarity before the vroom of engines is heard on race tracks across the country.

The Sports Authority of India has formulated a Standard Operating Procedure, categorising sports as non-contact, medium/minimum contact, full contact and water sports, but there was no mention of motorsports.

Vicky Chandhok, former FMSCI president and vice-president of the Madras Motor Sports Club (MMSCL), told *The Hindu*, "We need to find out more about which category motorsport falls in. Also, with two tracks in Tamil Nadu, we need to wait and see what regulations the State government here

comes up with."

Chandhok, however, said that they are well-prepared to resume racing activities once clearer regulations are out. Usually, the month of June is when the national racing championships resume at full steam with races in Coimbatore and Chennai. This year, Chandhok expressed hope that racing and rallying activities can get back on track by September.

The South India Rally, a part of the FIA APRC, was

scheduled to be run in March in Chennai before it was postponed. "In terms of social distancing, I think both the rallying and racing community can adhere to it," said Chandhok.

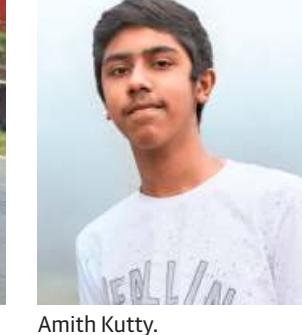
Narain to mentor gamer
Meanwhile, India's first Formula One driver Narain Karthikeyan has decided to take the country's fastest gamer, 16-year-old Amith Kutty, under his wing.

"Amith will be testing for

NK Racing Academy in our karting programme once the lockdown is lifted. We will evaluate his capabilities, train and ultimately push him to a race seat in the Rotax Max national championship," said Narain.

The academy on Friday announced a tie-up with Ultimate E, an eSports organisation co-founded by racing stars Aditya Patel and Armaan Ebrahim to identify talent and help gamers transition to race tracks.

Waiting game: Racing in India hopes to get back on track by September. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT



Amith Kutty.
■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Now playing: vintage Indian cricket reels on YouTube

Jairaj Galagali's channel features Films Division videos dating back to the 1940s

**KANISHKA
BALACHANDRAN**
CHENNAI

Going down the rabbit hole of entertaining cricket videos on YouTube, the black and white reels of Indian cricket - dating back to the 1940s - stand out.

Jairaj Galagali, at his study in California, introduces each video in a deep baritone before playing the Films Division reel of the match/series. Galagali has no connection with the Films Division.

The IIT-Bombay graduate from Karnataka worked at ISRO before shifting in 1996 to the USA, where he's now a director with Oracle.

In his spare time, he has painstakingly retrieved and released vintage reels of Indian Test cricket on his You-

Tube channel 'Jai Galagali'. It is satiating cricket fans, more so in the absence of live sport during the lockdown.

To beat a crisis

Galagali's hobby began around four years ago in the midst of a family crisis. As a coping mechanism, he turned to P.G. Wodehouse and cricket videos.

"Our world was shaken up. I had to keep myself sane," he tells *The Hindu* over phone from California.

"But I found hardly any cricket videos of the '60s and before, which I had watched as a kid, so I decided to do something."

That started an interesting and frustrating journey, with several international calls to retrieve precious Films Di-

vision reels from the government with permission and payment. Fortunately, they were digitised in the DVD format, but in the absence of any indexing or demarcation, identifying the reels was a gigantic task. "It was like visiting an archaeologi-

cal spot where nothing shows up in order," says Galagali.

Treasure trove

Following bureaucratic delays, the videos were shipped to America, a moment that brought "tears of joy" to Galagali.

The treasure trove covers legendary moments of India cricket, such as the debut of his childhood hero B.S. Chandrasekhar, Tony Greig cradling G. Viswanath after a century, West Indies' tour in 1948-49, Pakistan's visit in 1952, the 1977-78 tour of Australia (sourced from Australia) and much more.

Galagali is overwhelmed by his growing followers, who span generations. One boy wrote to him after show-

ing the 1964-65 Australia series to his ill grandfather. "He's down with dementia, but the clip brought back a flood of memories," he wrote.

Surprise message

A day after uploading the Madras Test of 1973, Galagali received a surprise message from the Pataudi family. "I can't thank you enough. You brought back so many memories of my dad," wrote the late Tiger Pataudi's daughter Soha.

Galagali's immediate aim is to prioritise the older decades first. "The generation that watched the likes of Nari Contractor, Subhash Gupte, Lala Amarnath is fading fast," he explains. "This is my gift to them."

Will these benefits also accrue to those who already have diabetes or hypertension? "Well, there is some evidence to show that dairy products help in causing satiety, so people don't stuff themselves. There are known, definite health benefits with gut microbiota. But we need to do a randomised clinical trial to see if there are specific benefits for them," Dr. Mohan explained.

Carlsen in knockouts with last-round win

RAKESH RAO
NEW DELHI

Facing a must-win situation, World champion Magnus Carlsen produced a final-round victory over Alireza Firouzja to enter the knockout phase of the Lindores Abbey Rapid Challenge chess tournament on Thursday.

Winning with black

After losing the penultimate league round to Daniil Dubov, Carlsen was in danger of losing out on a knockout spot.

But the Norwegian favourite carved out a 50-move win with black.

The results (11th round):

A. Firouzja (FIDE, 4.5) lost to Magnus Carlsen (Nor, 6); Wesley So (USA, 6) drew with

Hikaru Nakamura (USA, 7.5); Wei Yi (Chn, 2.5) lost to Alexander Grischuk (Rus, 5.5); Sergey Karjakin (Rus, 7) drew with Ding Liren (Chn, 6); Daniil Dubov (Rus, 5.5) drew with Levon Aronian (Arm, 5.5); Jan-Krzysztof Duda (Pol, 4) drew with Yu Yangyi (Chn, 6).

10th round: Carlsen lost to Dubov; Nakamura bt Duda; Aronian drew with Karjakin; Yu bt Wei; Grischuk lost to Firouzja; Ding drew with So.

Ninth round: Wei drew with Karjakin; Duda lost to Firouzja; Aronian drew with Dubov.

League standings (after 11 rounds): 1. Nakamura (7.5); 2. Karjakin (7); 3-6. Yu, So, Carlsen, Ding (6 each); 7-9. Dubov, Aronian, Grischuk (5.5 each); 10. Firouzja (4.5); 11. Duda (4); 12. Wei (2.5).

Whole fat dairy products offer some health benefits, says study

Intake is linked to lower incidence of hypertension'

RAMYA KANNAN
CHENNAI

It's the stuff of dreams, for some people at least. A study now claims that consumption of whole fat dairy products actually offers some protection from metabolic syndrome (MetS), diabetes and hypertension across races.

A multi-centric study has showed that higher intake of whole fat dairy is associated with lower risk of MetS, diabetes, and hypertension. "To date, most studies were conducted in North America and Europe, with limited information from other world regions (China, India, South America, and Africa)," the paper said. The aim was to

study whether there was a link between eating dairy products and the onset of MetS (defined as a cluster of five conditions: high blood pressure, abdominal obesity, elevated triglycerides, low HDL cholesterol, and high blood sugar); diabetes and hypertension, in a population that was healthy at the start of the study.

The study was conducted as part of the PURE study being conducted in 21 countries, including India, on five continents.

A higher intake of total dairy (at least two servings per day, compared with zero intake) was associated with a lower prevalence of MetS. Higher intake of whole fat

dairy consumed alone, or consumed jointly with low fat dairy were associated with a lower MetS prevalence. In contrast, higher intake of low fat dairy was associated with a modestly higher prevalence of MetS.

</

**For Download any newspaper in PDF at morning
Go to DailyEpaper.in OR Search on Google**

DailyEpaper.in

ENGLISH

The Hindu
The Indian Exp
Business Standard
Hindustan Times
The Telegraph
Deccan Chronicle
Business Line
The Pioneer
The Financial Exp
The Times Of India
The Economic Times
Mint

HINDI

Dainik Jagran
Dainik Bhaskar
Jansatta
Amar Ujala
Pioneer
Hindustan
Prabhat Khabar
Rajasthan Patrika
Business Standard

TELEGU

Eenadu
Sakshi
Nava Telangana

MARATHI

Loksatta
Sakal
Lokmat

Weekly News

Employment News
Karmasangsthan
Karmakshetra

GUJRATI

Sandesh

Daily Update All Indian Newspaper in PDF

रोजाना सुबह कोई भी न्यूज़ पेपर पीडीएफ़ में डाउनलोड
करने के लिए www.DailyEpaper.in को विजिट करें

OR

IF You Are Preparing For IAS, PCS, SSC Exam Then Just Download
UPSC IAS All in One App From PlayStore. You will get here UPSC
Complete Solution Free (All Study Material, Video Lecture, Magazines,
Newspaper & The Hindu Analysis Video



UPSC IAS All in One - Mission 2020

Web360 Education

★★★★★ 98

3+

⚠ You don't have any devices.

Add to Wishlist

