

THURSDAY, MAY 21, 2020



INDIA'S NATIONAL NEWSPAPER SINCE 1878



'NYAY'
for Farmers
Launching from Chhattisgarh
**RAJIV GANDHI
KISAN NYAY YOJNA**

Bhupesh Baghel
Chief Minister, Chhattisgarh

Commencing from 21st May to Commemorate the Martyrdom of Rajiv Gandhi

- ◆ 19 lakh paddy, maize and sugarcane farmers to get the benefit
- ◆ Paddy farmers to receive additional 10,000 rs per acre
- ◆ Direct transfer of 5700 cr into farmers' accounts in 4 installments
- ◆ Rs 250 cr worth sugarcane purchased with support price of 355 rs
- ◆ Rs 15,231 cr already paid for the purchase of 83.67 metric ton paddy

With Farmers in their Every Step, Every Journey

**DELIVERED
WHAT WE PROMISED**

- ◆ Immediately on forming the govt, 8,755 cr loan waiver benefiting 17.87 lakh farmers
- ◆ Rs 20,095 cr with bonus paid to paddy farmers
- ◆ Rs 1,000 cr assistance under Kharif Insurance/RBC
- ◆ Rs 260 cr outstanding irrigation taxes waived off



NEARBY



Spike in COVID-19 cases for second day in a row

NEW DELHI
Delhi reported 534 new COVID-19 cases in the past 24 hours, taking the tally to 11,088, said the government health bulletin. This is the highest single-day jump in the number of cases so far. Ten more deaths have pushed the toll to 176.

CITY ▶ PAGE 2

Work begins to colour code Delhi districts

NEW DELHI
The Delhi government has started the process of dividing the city into red, orange and green zones based on the number of cases. Currently, all 11 districts of the Capital are red zones and ostensibly under lockdown.

CITY ▶ PAGE 2

Five held for ferrying migrants on fake passes

NEW DELHI
Five persons have been arrested in Barwana for allegedly ferrying migrant workers to Bihar with forged e-passes issued to a different person in Panipat, the police said on Wednesday. Twenty-four labourers were found travelling inside two vehicles to Muzaffarpur.

CITY ▶ PAGE 2

Locusts cross Thar desert to invade Rajasthan

JAIPUR
The invasion of locusts had started from the India-Pakistan border on April 11 and they have now crossed the Thar desert and affected 16 of the 33 districts in Rajasthan. State Agriculture Minister Lal Chand Kataria described the locust attack as the "biggest threat" in the midst of the lockdown.

REGION ▶ PAGE 4

Nepal's new political map unacceptable, says India

'It is not based on historical facts'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

Nepal's new official map is "artificial" and unacceptable to India, the Ministry of External Affairs said on Wednesday after Kathmandu unveiled a new political map that claimed Kalapani, Limpiyadhura and Lipulekh of Uttarakhand as part of its sovereign territory.

"This unilateral act is not based on historical facts and evidence. It is contrary to the bilateral understanding to resolve the outstanding boundary issues through diplomatic dialogue. Such artificial enlargement of territorial claims will not be accepted by India," said official spokesperson Anurag Srivastava, urging Kathmandu to opt for diplomatic dialogue to set-

Amphan batters West Bengal, Odisha

Five persons killed; thousands of houses damaged; trees, electric poles uprooted by strong winds

SHIV SAHAY SINGH
SATYASUNDAR BARIK
KOLKATA/BHUBANESWAR

Three persons were killed as super cyclonic storm Amphan made landfall near Sagar Islands in South 24 Parganas district of West Bengal on Wednesday, while a baby died in Bhadrak district of Odisha and a woman drowned in Kendrapara.

Thousands of kutch houses in the coastal parts of West Bengal were damaged. Embankments were breached in the low-level areas because of the massive storm surge. Preliminary reports said one person each died in Minakha and Basirhat of North 24 Parganas district and a third in Howrah.

According to the Regional Meteorological Centre at Alipore in Kolkata, the landfall started at 2.30 p.m. and continued till 7 p.m. The landfall was reported near Sagar Island of the Sunderbans between Digha in Purba Medinipur and Hatia in Bangladesh.

Sanjib Bandyopadhyay, a senior official at the Alipore centre, said wind speeds of 150-160 km per hour were recorded in the coastal areas after the cyclone made a landfall. In Kolkata, wind speeds of 112 km per hour were recorded.

Heavy rainfall was reported across all districts of south Bengal. The super cyclone was one of the fiercest the State has witnessed in recent years – more powerful than Bulbul (2019) and Aila (2009).

"The trajectory of Amphan is conforming to what we have been forecasting," M. Mohapatra, Director-General of the India Meteorological Department, said at a press briefing in New Delhi.

Electricity supply was disrupted in certain coastal areas after electric poles were uprooted by strong



Rocking the boats: Strong winds hitting Kendrapara, Odisha ahead of the landfall of cyclone Amphan on Wednesday; and (below) NDRF personnel engaged in rescue work at Ramnagar in Purba Medinipur district of West Bengal. ■ ANI, PTI

Tracking the path



winds. In other districts of south Bengal, there were reports of old houses collapsing and trees being uprooted. The storm surge in the coastal areas of South 24 Parganas and North 24 Parganas was predicted to be about four to five metres above the astronomical tide level, which would inundate low-level areas in the Sunderbans.

The weather office has predicted that the cyclonic storm will remain over Gan-

getic West Bengal in different intensities till Thursday morning. Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, along with senior officials, was monitoring the situation at the State Secretariat.

Heavy damage: Mamata
"Entire south Bengal is hit. South Bengal is finished. I would request [the Centre] to provide humanitarian relief and not to engage in any politics," said Ms. Banerjee.

The West Bengal govern-

ment has evacuated three lakh people, two lakh from South 24 Parganas alone.

Restrictions have been imposed on the movement of people in Kolkata and adjoining areas, and ferry services have been suspended in the Hooghly. The Kolkata Airport has suspended the movement of cargo flights for Wednesday.

Two lives were lost and power infrastructure was damaged as four coastal districts bore the brunt of the

cyclone in Odisha. A three-month-old child died when a wall collapsed in Tihidi block of Bhadrak district. A woman drowned when she had gone for fishing in Kendrapara district.

Thousands of trees were uprooted as gusty wind blew over coastal districts. Balasore, Kendrapara, Jagatsinghpur and Bhadrak districts were severely affected.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8
MORE REPORTS ▶ PAGE 11

China accuses India of trespass, LAC heats up

It referred to recent skirmish in Sikkim

SUHASINI HAIDAR
DINAKAR PERI
NEW DELHI

China accused the Indian Army of crossing into its territory and "blocking" its patrols and "attempting to unilaterally change the status" on the Line of Actual Control (LAC) between the two countries in Sikkim and Ladakh.

As both sides increased troop strength at points of conflict along the LAC, sources indicated that military commanders were holding talks to defuse the situation.

In a statement released on Tuesday in Chinese, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Beijing referred to the recent skirmish in Sikkim, claiming that "the Indian Army crossed the line across the western section of the Sino-Indian border and the Sikkim

section to enter Chinese territory".

The statement said the Chinese side had taken up the matter with India, asking it to "immediately withdraw personnel across the line, restore the status quo of the relevant areas, strictly restrict the front line troops, observe the important consensus reached by the leaders of the two countries and the agreements signed by the two sides, and jointly maintain peace and stability in the border areas".

The Ministry of External Affairs declined to respond to the comments by the Chinese Ministry. Official sources said deliberations were on and they were at a "crucial stage".

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

Back on the road



The new normal: Daily wage labourers pulling a handcart loaded with sacks of sand, cement and bricks on Ranjit Singh flyover on a hot Wednesday afternoon as construction activities gradually resume in the Capital. ■ SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

Haryana rolls back decision to resume inter-State bus service

Gurugram allows opening of all markets, longer business hours for shops; restrictions on cross-border movement to stay

VIKAS VASUDEVA
ASHOK KUMAR
CHANDIGARH/GURUGRAM

Two days after it announced to resume inter-State bus service, the Haryana government on Wednesday rolled back its decision.

State Home and Health Minister Anil Vij said the deci-

sion to not ply inter-State buses was taken after he apprised Chief Minister Manohar Lal about the practical difficulties amid the COVID-19 pandemic. Bus services within the State, however, will continue to run on selected routes, he said. Mr. Vij said he had also written to the Chief Minister

on May 19, raising concerns over high possibility of spread of the virus if people started travelling freely from one State to another. "It would be difficult to test or quarantine so many people. Besides, the number of cases is high in some neighbouring States such as Delhi," he said.

In Gurugram, the district administration has allowed opening of all markets and also increased the operation timings and days for different categories of shops. However, the restrictions on cross-border movement between Gurugram and Delhi remain. Industries, including e-

commerce activity, have been allowed to run with 100% staff, while the private offices can operate with half staff strength. The four-page order by Deputy Commissioner Amit Khatri paved the way for opening of the posh Galleria Market, Sector 29 market and Sadar Bazar in Old Gurugram.

Essential commodities shops can now remain open from 7:30 a.m. to 6:30 p.m. all through the week. The remaining shops have been divided into two categories, from the three earlier, and can remain open from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. Each shop can open three days a week.

India has to come to terms with inequality'

NARAYAN LAKSHMAN
CHENNAI

Both in the battle against COVID-19 and in the broader context of making social investments and reducing inequality, "huge variations" persist across India, according to economist Thomas Piketty.

"India has to come to terms with its problem of inequality," he said in an interview to *The Hindu*, adding that the political mobilisation to bring about a meaningful change could emerge from a crisis such as the pandemic.

FULL INTERVIEW ▶ PAGE 10

A N D N D E

Timings

DELHI

THURSDAY, MAY. 21
RISE 05:28 SET 19:09
RISE 04:38 SET 17:56
FRIDAY, MAY. 22
RISE 05:27 SET 19:10
RISE 05:13 SET 18:51
SATURDAY, MAY. 23
RISE 05:27 SET 19:10
RISE 05:50 SET 19:48

Delhi Weather

max min

Delhi City 40 22

Safdarjung 40 22

Palam 42 22

including drivers, agent and facilitator were arrested," Mr. Sharma informed.

Interrogation revealed that Nagpal runs a grocery shop in Bawana and the labourers who purchased grocery from him approached him for help. He assured them that he will arrange transportation to their hometowns.

Mohit then introduced them to Chaudhary and Krishan, who agreed to provide genuine e-passes and vehicle for the journey at ₹5,200 each, police said, adding that they further approached Mukul who arranged the vehicle. Mukul and Shankar contacted Mukul's cousin Anshul, who managed forged passes with the help of his friend Ravinder, a cyber-cafe operator in Panipat, police said.

The name of Mohit Kumar, a resident of Panipat, for marriage function, police said.

Quick verification

Police then contacted the DM Panipat office and it was revealed that the passes were fake. "All the migrants were misled. A case was registered at the Bawana police station and five people,

Spike in COVID-19 cases for second day in a row

Number of containment zones may increase in next few days

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

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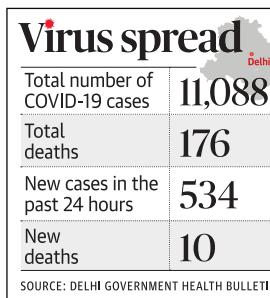
With 500 new cases, Tuesday had also recorded the biggest single-day spike till then.

Ten more deaths have also been reported, taking the toll to 176. But all the deaths did not happen in the past 24 hours.

Of the 11,088 cases, 5,192 people have recovered and there are 5,720 active cases.

Containment zones

Meanwhile, the Health and Family Welfare Department of the Delhi government has raised the issue of decreasing number of containment zones but increasing cases in the city.



Department Secretary Padmini Singla, in an order on Monday, had said that 300-400 new cases are reported every day but equivalent number of containment zones were not being declared by the District Magistrates.

She added that around 30 containment zones had been delisted in just a month. The issue was discussed in a video conference with the District Magistrates on Tuesday, said officials.

"Whenever there is a requirement, we declare an area as a containment zone."

There was no need, so we did not declare it," the Delhi government spokesperson said when contacted.

On April 30, there were 98 containment zones; on Wednesday, there were 69, as per the Delhi government's health bulletin.

Though the number of zones decreased by 29.5%, in the same period, COVID-19 cases jumped 215.4% from 3,515 to 11,088.

More areas

Following Ms. Singla's order, multiple areas in the city have been declared containment zones. Parts of Zamrudpur in Greater Kailash and Dakshinpuri, both in south Delhi, have been declared containment zones, officials said on Wednesday.

"We are planning to declare three more areas in the Central District as containment zones by Thursday," a Delhi government official said.

"Whenever there is a requirement, we declare an area as a containment zone."

Work begins to colour-code city

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The Delhi government has started the process to divide the city into red, orange, and green zones based on the number of cases.

Currently, all 11 districts of the Capital are red zones and are under strict lockdown measures.

Parts of the city with few or no COVID-19 cases will be designated orange or green zones and will witness relaxations in the ongoing lock-down measures.

down. "The Health Department officials have started working on this, but there is nothing conclusive at this point," a Delhi government official said on Wednesday.

Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal had earlier requested the Centre to declare containment zones in Delhi as red zones and all other parts as green zones.

He lives in the Tihar residential complex and his family has been quarantined.

Earlier, 15 inmates and a head warden at the jail had tested positive.

Man arrested for poisoning wife's lover

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

A 40-year-old man and his family were given a pesticide-like liquid on the pretext of being administered COVID-19 medicine in Outer North Delhi's Alipur, the police said on Wednesday.

The victims have been hospitalised and three people have been arrested.

The main accused is the husband of the woman with whom the 40-year-old man was allegedly having an affair. DCP (Outer North) Gaurav Sharma said Pradeep (42), a resident of

Ramzanpur, had hired two women for his plan.

On May 17, the victim, Vikram alias Vicky, a home guard, was at home when two women knocked on his door and introduced themselves as government health professionals. "They told him and his family that they have a liquid medicine for COVID-19 and offered it to the family. After consuming it, they felt uneasy after which they were shifted to a hospital," Mr. Sharma said. With the help of CCTV footage, the accused were held, said the police.

As 990 registered cases and 433 complaints were pending with EOW, Mr. Shrivastava directed that pending cases, particularly those in the backlog for a long time, must be disposed of at the earliest.

Five held for ferrying migrants with fake e-passes

The alleged culprits were taking 24 labourers from Bawana to Muzaffarpur



Migrant labourers with their families in Delhi en route to Madhya Pradesh. ■ FILE PHOTO: SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

Five persons have been arrested in Bawana area for allegedly ferrying migrant workers to Bihar with forged e-passes issued to a different person in Panipat, police said on Wednesday.

Deputy Commissioner of Police (Outer North) Gaurav Sharma said that the accused have been identified as Nannu Prasad (28), Rakesh Mohan (42), both residents of Uttam Nagar, Krishan Mohan (45), Mohit Nagpal (33), both from Bawana and Shankar Choudhary (45), from Ghoga Dairy.

Police said that on Monday night, two tempo travellers were stopped in Bawana area for checking and found 24 migrant labourers travelling inside the vehicles for Bihar's Muzaffarpur.

"The drivers showed e-passes issued by the District Magistrate of Panipat in Haryana. On inquiry, the migrants said they were residents of Bawana, which created suspicion. Police scanned the QR codes of the passes, but it could not be read," Mr. Sharma said, adding that it was further revealed that the pass was issued in

the name of Mohit Kumar, a resident of Panipat, for marriage function, police said.

Quick verification

Police then contacted the DM Panipat office and it was revealed that the passes were fake. "All the migrants were misled. A case was registered at the Bawana police station and five people,

including drivers, agent and facilitator were arrested," Mr. Sharma informed.

Interrogation revealed that Nagpal runs a grocery shop in Bawana and the labourers who purchased grocery from him approached him for help. He assured them that he will arrange transportation to their hometowns.

Mohit then introduced them to Chaudhary and Krishan, who agreed to provide genuine e-passes and vehicle for the journey at ₹5,200 each, police said, adding that they further approached Mukul who arranged the vehicle. Mukul and Shankar contacted Mukul's cousin Anshul, who managed forged passes with the help of his friend Ravinder, a cyber-cafe operator in Panipat, police said.

Needy are not getting ration, says plea

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The assistant superintendent at Rohini jail has tested positive for COVID-19, officials said on Wednesday.

"Around 3-4 days ago, he reported high sugar level and sore throat, following which he was asked to stay at home and rest. Meanwhile, he went to DDU Hospital for a virus test... his report came back positive on Tuesday," a senior jail official said.

He lives in the Tihar residential complex and his family has been quarantined.

Earlier, 15 inmates and a head warden at the jail had tested positive.

In the hearing held through videoconferencing, the court also gave the petitioner liberty to move a fresh plea if the direction is not complied with by the government.

With the direction, the court disposed of the petition by third year law student, who had said that the Delhi government announced that e-coupons can be obtained by filling up a simple form online. However, the form is not simple and the website for applying for e-coupon has crashed, the petition had said.

About four lakh migrant workers have registered on the government's e-portal to go back to their home States and 25 trains had left from Delhi for different States on Wednesday carrying 37,500 migrants, according to officials.

Migrants can register on <https://epass.jantasamavadi.org>.

Give ration to e-coupon holders by today: HC

Needy are not getting ration, says plea

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Wednesday directed the Delhi government to ensure that all the persons who did not get ration despite having e-coupons be provided ration by Thursday evening.

A Bench of Justice Hima Kohli and Justice Subramonium Prasad gave the direction while hearing a petition alleging that thousands of needy people in the Capital are not getting ration under the public distribution system (PDS) despite having e-coupons issued by the Delhi government.

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Earlier, the government had told the court that it had disbursed ₹19.8 crore to 39,600 workers registered under the Act.

AAP govt. told to renew registration of workers

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Wednesday asked the AAP government to renew the registrations of over five lakh construction workers who fulfil the eligibility criteria, so that they can be provided relief under its scheme for labourers during the COVID-19 lockdown.

The direction came on a petition by social activist, Sunil Kumar Aledia, seeking registration of all construction workers here under the BOCW Act so that they can get the benefit of the re-

lief package of ₹5,000 per month being provided to each labourer during the lockdown.

The plea has contended that only a small section out of the over 10 lakh workers in the city are registered under the laws regulating their welfare and service conditions and thus, a huge chunk of the labourers are not getting benefits actually meant for them.

Earlier, the government had told the court that it had disbursed ₹19.8 crore to 39,600 workers registered under the Act.

Duo set aside religion to bury their friend

At a loss for whom to ask for help, wife of deceased calls up his age-old buddies



Sajid Khan (left) and Ravindra Pramanik at a cemetery in Delhi on Wednesday. ■ SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

He said that the investigation of all complaints/cases should be conducted in a time-bound manner with utmost transparency. He also directed all officers to ensure strict compliance in their respective jurisdictions.

A proposal regarding designated court for EOW is pending with Registrar General of Delhi High Court and it was discussed at the meeting. The CP directed the officers to take up this matter with authorities concerned in the Delhi High Court.

Mr. Shrivastava also instructed officers to examine

the protocol followed in EOW for taking up cases of economic offences less than ₹2 crore through district investigation units.

'Shady' deals

He was informed that some office-bearers of Revanta Multi State CGHS were buyers under the garb of Land Pooling Policy of DDA. CP enquired how buyers may verify the authenticity of such schemes from the government agencies concerned so that innocent people may not be duped by any fraudulent company.

The direction came on a petition by social activist, Sunil Kumar Aledia, seeking registration of all construction workers here under the BOCW Act so that they can get the benefit of the re-

More buses to hit the streets soon, says govt.

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The first day of lockdown 4.0 on Tuesday saw 3,400 buses hit the streets, a statement issued by the Transport Minister's office read.

Of these, as many as 2,000 were Delhi government buses while the others had been specially hired, it added.

"On Tuesday, nearly 1,000 DTC buses were working on an SOP for public transportation and added that while thermal screening at some key terminals and bus stops had begun, this would be extended to other facilities soon.

'Taxis not allowed to access NCR towns'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

Taxis have been allowed to operate in the Capital but aren't being allowed to access satellite NCR towns such as Noida, Ghaziabad, Gurugram and Faridabad, the Delhi Taxi Tourist Transporters Association has complained to the Chief Ministers of the three States.

The issue is affecting resi-

dents of these towns employed in other States and vice versa. It is also affecting the business of taxi operators and drivers who want to get back on their feet after over 50 days without work, the association's president Sanjay Samrat wrote.

"Our vehicles are stopped at State borders. We have sought intervention of the Chief Ministers of the three States," Mr. Samrat said. The petition by social worker, Vikram Gahlot, has contended that the Delhi Legislative Assembly did not have the powers to enact the DMC Act and therefore, the statute be declared as ultra vires the Constitution and be struck down.

Mr. Gahlot has also contended that since the Act was not valid, the appointments made under it, including that of the Chairwoman, would also be invalid.

Fire at house claims 70-year-old man's life

'NYAY'

for Farmers

Launching from Chhattisgarh

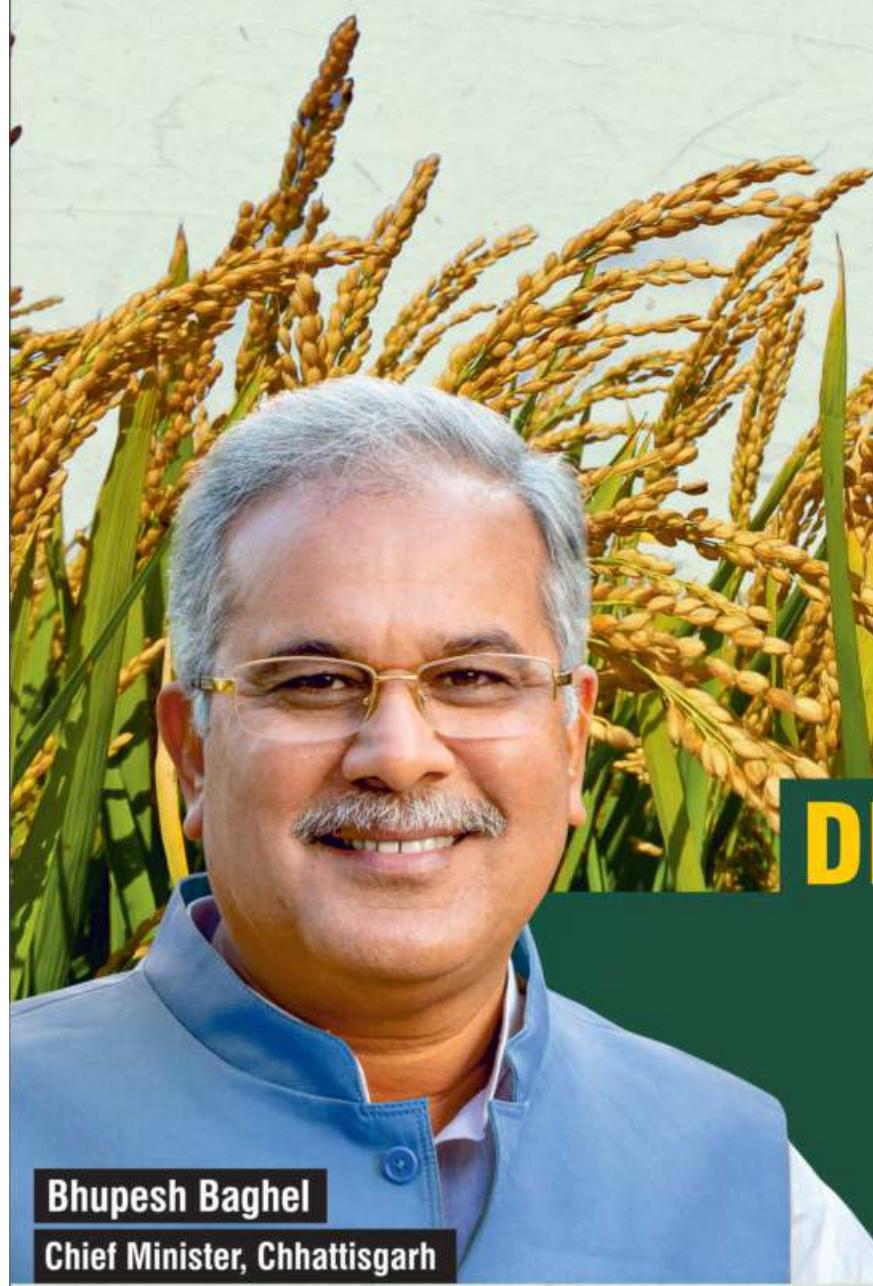
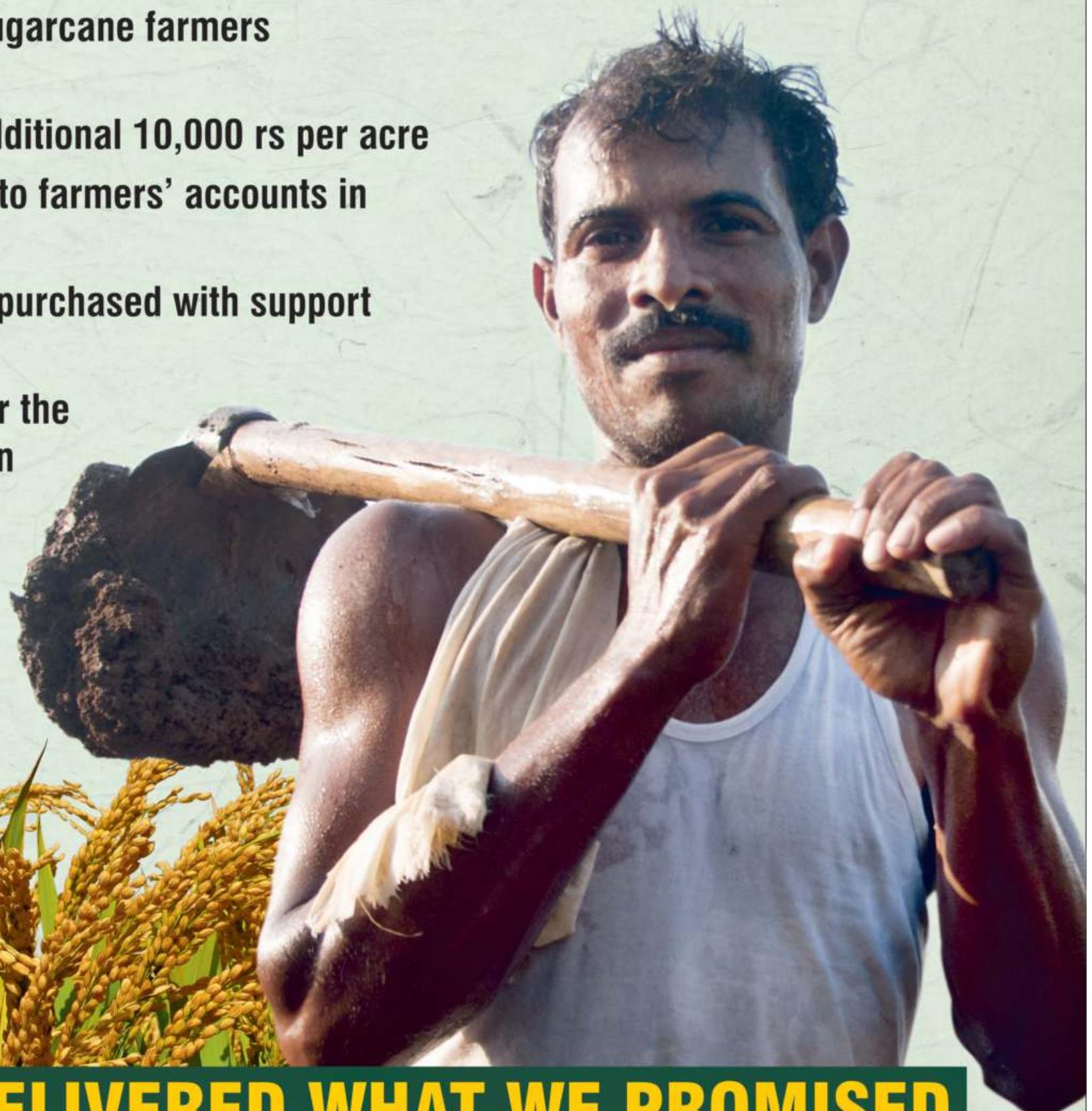


RAJIV GANDHI

KISAN NYAY YOJNA

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Bhupesh Baghel
Chief Minister, Chhattisgarh

Smt. Sonia Gandhi & Shri Rahul Gandhi to Inaugurate the Scheme

S-25418/3

OBITUARY & REMEMBRANCE

DEATH

ENTERED INTO GLORY



BISHOP DR. B A JAMES SANTHOSAM

01.07.1948 - 20.05.2020

Founder & President

Prince of Peace Ministries

2 Tim 4:7

"I have fought the fight,

I have finished the race,

I have kept the faith"

PRINCE OF PEACE FAMILY

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Locusts cross Thar desert to invade 16 districts in Rajasthan

Agriculture Minister terms pest attack the biggest threat amid lockdown

MOHAMMED IQBAL

JAIPUR

The invasion of locusts had started from the India-Pakistan border on April 11 and they have now crossed the Thar desert and affected 16 of the 33 districts in Rajasthan, taking advantage of favourable wind conditions with the onset of summer.



Locust invasion in Rajasthan being explained with the help of a map at an official meeting in Jaipur. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Locust swarms have travelled far in search of food because of lack of vegetation in the agricultural fields after the rabi crop harvest.

State Agriculture Minister Lal Chand Kataria described the locust attack as the biggest threat in the midst of the COVID-19 lockdown, at an official meeting here on Wednesday, while giving instructions for controlling the spread of insects with the cooperation of farmers and through effective surveys.

The locust swarms have reached Sikar, Bundi, Bhilwara

the Union Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare for their sprayers and deployed 70 vehicles for surveys in the fields. While 600 tractor-mounted sprayers were also involved in the control operations, bids had been invited for drones to spray pesticides in the areas inaccessible to vehicles, he said.

The U.N. Food and Agriculture Organisation had recently warned that locusts were breeding in large numbers in Sudan and Eritrea on Africa's

Red Sea Coast as well as in Iran. With very little crops available in the fields, the locusts are settling on babool and khejri trees in the State, while the Agriculture Department has controlled the outbreak on about 40,000 hectares.

The grasshoppers emerged in January 2019 from eastern Africa and travelled through Saudi Arabia and Iran to enter Pakistan, where they invaded the cotton-producing belt of Sindh. The adult locusts then flew in to the Indian side of Thar desert, damaging the crops in western Rajasthan and northern Gujarat.

State Agriculture Commissioner Om Prakash said a provision of ₹5 crore had been made for hiring the vehicles

for spraying high-intensity malathion insecticide and ₹10 crore for providing plant protection chemicals to the farmers at 100% subsidy.

Three arrested for 'helping' migrant workers cross Yamuna

Workers were given inflated tubes and charged money

ANUJ KUMAR

GAZIABAD

After the Uttar Pradesh police increased patrolling on the Haryana border to stop migrant workers from entering the State, the workers have started crossing the Yamuna in Saharanpur.



A grab of a video of the incident. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

On Tuesday, three local residents were arrested for helping such migrant workers cross the river, under the charges of breaking lockdown norms and endangering the lives of the workers, the police said. An official release stated that the three persons were arrested under Sections 188, 269 and 270 of the IPC and Section 3 of the Epidemic Act, 1897.

The release said that the arrested persons also named six of their accomplices who, they said, had fled the spot. They helped migrant workers cross the river with the help of inflated rubber tubes and allegedly also charged from them.

Images and videos have surfaced in which locals can be seen pushing an inflated tube in the river with at least half-a-dozen people on it. Local sources said the migration was more rampant in Chiklana area where the water is shallow.

Dinesh Kumar P, Senior Superintendent of Police (Saharanpur) told *The Hindu*, "Patrolling has been increased along the 70-km long border that the district shares with Yamuna Nagar district of Haryana... We

have arrested persons who are endangering the lives of workers in the name of helping them. They are using their situation to make money. The migrant workers have been sent to shelter homes. Following the policy of the State government, we are not sending back any migrant worker in distress."

Asked if the district administration could use boats to bring these workers from the Haryana border, Mr. Kumar said only those migrant workers were being received who were sent by the Haryana government through the inter-State border. "There is a process. We are dealing with at least 10,000 migrant workers. We have so far sent at least 70,000 workers to Bihar and U.P. But the spillover is so much that the Haryana government has not been able to put all the migrants in shelter homes or quarantine centres."

IN BRIEF

Haryana CM, USIBC chief talk investment

NEW DELHI

A large number of opportunities, including promotion of home healthcare, transition of automobile component manufacturing to aerospace machinery manufacturing and use of transformational technology like 5-G, Edge, Artificial Intelligence were

identified during a videoconference at Chandigarh on Tuesday. It was jointly chaired by Haryana CM Manohar Lal and United States India Business Council president Nisha Biswal. Mr. Lal

assured that the government would facilitate all investment that may come to Haryana as a result of the discussion.

G.B. Nagar administration issues Lockdown 4.0 rules

District records 4 new COVID-19 cases

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

GAZIABAD

Gautam Buddh Nagar administration On Wednesday released guidelines for the fourth phase of COVID-19-induced lockdown. The district recorded four fresh cases of COVID-19 on Wednesday, taking the tally of active cases to 81

Metro services, inter-State buses services and vehicular traffic between Noida and Delhi will remain suspended. The district administration had asked for

clarification on the movement of vehicles between Noida and Delhi on Tuesday, but the State government had not responded till Wednesday evening.

Street vendors have been allowed to operate provided they use face masks and gloves and ensure social distancing. Dry cleaners and printing press have been allowed to resume services.

Parks will be open from 7 a.m. to 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. to 7 p.m. The administration advised the RWAs to balance community hygiene and convenience of residents.

Government of NCT of Delhi Department of Information and Publicity

May 19, 2020

ADVERTISEMENT

Sub.: Appeal to all Stranded Persons in Delhi

It is brought to the notice of all the stranded persons, especially the migrant workers in Delhi, that Delhi Government is making all arrangements for your travel to your native States through Special 'Shramik' Trains in coordination with the Indian Railways as well as by buses in coordination with their respective States.

Number of Special 'Shramik' trains are running every day from various railway stations of Delhi and thousands of stranded migrants have safely reached their native States/Hometown. Delhi Government is making all efforts to ensure that every migrant stranded in Delhi reaches his/her home at the earliest.

All migrants stranded in Delhi who have registered on our website (<https://epass.jantasamvad.org/train/passenger/>) will receive the SMS from the BW-DLHELP regarding the date of their journey. Delhi Government hereby appeals to all the migrants stranded in Delhi not to try to visit any Railway Station or the screening Centres without receiving the SMS.

DIP/Shabdharth/0040/20-21

Uttar Pradesh Rajkiya Nirman Nigam Ltd

OFFICE OF THE PROJECT MANAGER
Suda Samarpit Unit, Mathura,
Suda Unit, Livelyhood Building, Govindpur Near Krishna Vilash,
N.H.-2, Mathura

Notice no. 303/PoliceLine/Tender/RNN/2020

Dated-18-05-2020

NOTICE FOR EXPRESSION OF INTEREST (EOI)

For and on behalf of Managing Director, U.P. Rajkiya Nirman Nigam Ltd., Project Manager, Suda Samarpit Unit, Mathura, Suda Unit, Livelyhood Building, Govindpur Near Krishna Vilash, N.H.-2, Mathura invites online offers in two bids system from eligible Architectural firms for providing Architectural Consultancy services for "Construction of 4 Nos Similar Type of Towers (G+12) Transit Hostel in Police Line Campus, Mathura (U.P.) Interested eligible Architectural firms may furnish their EOIs online, on or before 29-05-2020 (2020-21) by 02:00 PM, other details are available on web portal <https://etender.up.nic.in>. For any changes/corrigendum please follow UPRNN website www.uprnn.co.in and <https://etender.up.nic.in> regularly.

PROJECT MANAGER

CORRIGENDUM NOTICE

SR. NO. NAME OF BOARD/CORP./AUTH OLD REFERENCE/NIT NO. NATURE OF CORRIGENDUM WEBSITE OF THE BOARD CORP./AUTH NODAL OFFICER/CONTACT DETAILS/EMAIL

1 MUNICIPAL CORPORATION, AMBALA CITY	MCA/XEN/2020/1119 DATED 02.05.2020	Closing date of Tender extended from 19-05-2020 to 27-05-2020 at 05:00 PM	https://etenders.hry.nic.in	mcamb.54@gmail.com
2 DHBVN HISAR	NIT NO. -02/SE/CBO/MRBD/2020 (ID 2020_HBC_127960_1)	EXTENDING CLOSING DATE UPTO 22-06-2020 & PRE - BID MEETING RE-SCHEDULE ON 04.06.2020	www.dhbvn.org.in	8059900357 Sebco@dhbvn.org.in
3 HVPNL PANCHKULA	NIT NO.12/2019-20/XEN/TS DIVISION, HVPNL, HARYANA DATED: -14/02/2020 (ONLINE TENDER ID NO. 2020_HBC_118292_1)	Last date of online bid submission is extended upto 26/05/2020 (13:00 hrs) Due date for opening of E-tender (1st Technical Bid): - 27/05/2020 at 15:00 hrs.	www.hvpn.org.in	0172-2583789 pro@hvpn.org.in
4 HVPNL PANCHKULA	21/GNL-161 DATED 22.03.2020	The last date of online bid submission is extended upto 03-06-2020.	www.hvpn.org.in	0172-2583789 pro@hvpn.org.in
5 HVPNL PANCHKULA	02/CCD-344/VOL-VI DATED 11.05.2020	The last date of online bid submission is extended upto 04-06-2020.	www.hvpn.org.in	0172-2583789 pro@hvpn.org.in
6 HVPNL PANCHKULA	22/CCD-286/VOL-XI/2020-21 DATED 17.03.2020	The last date of online bid submission is extended upto 02-06-2020.	www.hvpn.org.in	0172-2583789 pro@hvpn.org.in
7 HVPNL PANCHKULA	03/CCD-190/H/VOL-IX DATED 13.05.2020	The last date of online bid submission is extended upto 03-06-2020.	www.hvpn.org.in	0172-2583789 pro@hvpn.org.in
8 HPGCL, PANCHKULA	15/CE/PLG/BIOMASS I-U/30/2020	The due date of Bid submission is extended upto 02-06-2020 till 13:00 hrs and opening of Part-I (Techno-Commercial bid) shall be on 04-06-2020 at 15:00 hrs. (Please check department website for further details).	www.hpgcl.org.in	rajesh.verma@hpgcl.org.in cpld@hpgcl.org.in
9 HPGCL,PANIPAT	(NIT NO.PTP/POM-331722) (TENDER ID 2020_HBC_115225_1)	Start date 15.01.2020 at 17:00 hrs. & Last date 26.05.2020 at 15:00 hrs.	www.hpgcl.org.in	0180-2566015 xenmtplg1@gmail.com
10 HPGCL HISAR	2020_HBC_118209_1 NIT NO.310/RGTPP/MM-II/TOE-4013 DT. 13.02.2020	Opening is 02.06.2020 up to 15.30 Hrs. Supply of TFT Monitors, External & Internal Hard disk & coaxial to RJ45 Hub at RGTPP, Khera	https://etenders.hry.nic.in	8222023551 mm2rgtp@gmail.com
11 HPGCL,PANIPAT	(NIT NO.PTP/POM-200026) (TENDER ID 2020_HBC_119537_1)	Start date 20.02.2020 & Last date 29.05.2020 at 13:00 hrs	www.hpgcl.org.in	0180-2566015 xenmtplg1@gmail.com
12 HPGCL,PANIPAT	(NIT NO.PTP/POM-200030) (TENDER ID 2020_HBC_119547_1)	Start date 20.02.2020 & Last date 29.05.2020 at 13:00 Hrs	www.hpgcl.org.in	0180-2566015 xenmtplg1@gmail.com

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

CORRIGENDUM-1

Following corrigendum in regard to E-Tender No. ST195048D due on 27/05/2020 is issued:-

SN	Condition Type	From	To
1.	Nit Header	Tender Opening date - 27.05.2020	Tender Opening date - 03.06.2020

All other terms and conditions remain unchanged.

PRINCIPAL MATERIALS MANAGER/CORE/PRAYAGRAJ

FOR & ON BEHALF OF PRESIDENT OF INDIA

Serving Customers with a Smile

When push comes to shove



Desperate measures: Passengers helping a child into a bus through the window at the Jubilee bus station in Secunderabad on Wednesday, as the Telangana State Road Transport Corporation resumed services. ■ AFP

Centre will consider plea on virus tests: HC

'SOP framed only after consultations'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

KOCHI
A Division Bench of the Kerala High Court on Wednesday observed that the Central government would consider the request of the State to conduct reverse transcription polymerase chain reaction (RT-PCR) tests for expatriates before allowing them to board flights to the country.

The Bench, comprising Justice Anu Sivaraman and Justice M.R. Anitha, while closing a public interest litigation, observed it had no doubt that proper procedures would be put in place and revised in a time-bound manner by the Central government after considering the situation and taking note of requests made by individual States, besides ex-

pecting medical advice and available data.

The court said the Standard Operating Protocol (SOP) had been framed after proper application of mind and consultation with medical experts. The concerns expressed by the State would be considered by the Centre while formulating and revising the SOP in respect of the required testing.

Petitioner C.R. Neelakandan of Kochi contended that lack of proper testing before allowing expatriates to board flights could pose a danger. If asymptomatic passengers were permitted after an inconclusive temperature test alone, there was every possibility of the virus being transmitted to others during travel.

Bengaluru residents jolted by deafening burst

Fighter plane was on test sortie: IAF

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
BENGALURU

A fighter aircraft on a test sortie, supposedly a Sukhoi-30 MKI at that, flew too fast and perhaps low enough on Wednesday to shatter Bengaluru's midday peace.

At 1.20 p.m., people living in the east and south-eastern parts of Bengaluru, already harried by COVID-19 fears, were jolted by a deafening burst. Residents of almost half of the city reported on social media platforms that they felt tremors and rattling of windowpanes and objects at home for about nine seconds.

Officials of the State disaster monitoring agency KSNDMC quickly dismissed initial fears of an

earthquake.

After hours of confusing information, the mystery was somewhat cleared by the Indian Air Force, around 9.30 p.m. IAF merely said, "A routine IAF Test Flight involving a supersonic profile which took off from Blrur Airport and flew in the allotted airspace well outside City limits. The aircraft was of Aircraft Systems and Testing Establishment (ASTE) [sic]."

The sound was heard as a boom, thunder, blast.

According to multiple unofficial sources, a Sukhoi-30 MKI fighter plane, probably being test flown by ASTE pilots, was flying over the city around the time. It may have gone supersonic – that is, breached the speed of sound (beyond Mach 1 or around 1,200 km per hour).

From just 16 cases in hospitals on May 8, in two weeks, the number of patients undergoing COVID-19 treatment rose to 161, he said. The State anticipated

3 die in Telangana, Karnataka; 24 cases add to Kerala's tally

Pinarayi says there should be no discrimination against non-resident Keralites

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Two more people died due to COVID-19 in Telangana, and one in Karnataka, on Wednesday. Tamil Nadu saw three more deaths, taking the toll in the State to 87.

In Kerala, the COVID-19 case load spiked again on Wednesday, when 24 persons tested positive, all ex-

COVID-19

cept one being imported cases of infection.

Briefing the media, Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan said that while 12 of the new positive cases were persons who had returned from abroad, 11 had come from other parts of the country. One person in Kannur was believed to have contracted the disease through contact with known or unknown sources of infection.

Five persons had recovered from COVID-19.

Kerala had reported 666 COVID-19 cases in all, of which 161 were active. The total of recovered cases was 502. The government put 74,398 persons under surveillance, of whom, except for 533 who were in hospitals, the rest were in home or institutional quarantine.

The State had tested 48,543 samples, of which 46,961 have returned a negative result. In the sentinel surveillance, of 6,900 samples tested so far, 5,728 were negative. Mr. Vijayan said that given the manner in which the case load was going up, the State should brace for a serious situation.

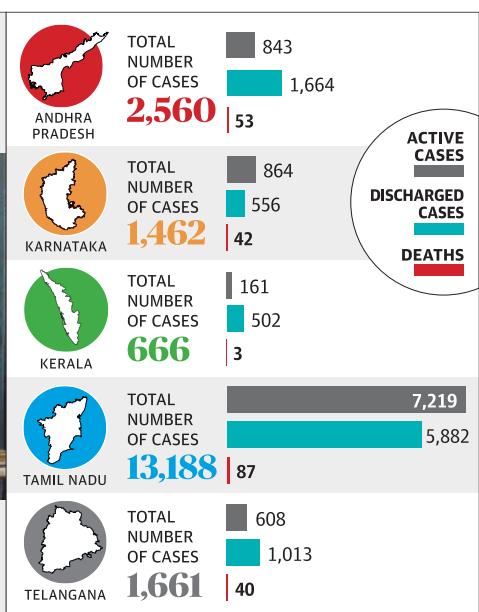
From just 16 cases in hospitals on May 8, in two weeks, the number of patients undergoing COVID-19 treatment rose to 161, he said. The State anticipated

Back to work

Despite rise in COVID-19 cases, the government has relaxed restrictions in the fourth phase of the lockdown



Ready to go: A worker cleaning the mascot of a fast-food company, ahead of the reopening of an outlet in Secunderabad on Wednesday. ■ AFP



this and containment strategies had been devised.

COVID-19 was a pandemic which spared no nation and there should be no discrimination against returning non-resident Keralites.

The Government, through the National Health Mission had created an additional 2,948 temporary posts in 21 categories, anticipating the need to strengthen COVID-19 containment activities. This was apart from the 3,770 such posts created earlier.

5 cases in Hyderabad

With two more people dying of the virus in Telangana on Wednesday, the COVID-19 toll in the State was 41.

Besides, 27 samples tested positive on Wednesday. Of these, 15 were from the Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation area, and 12 were migrants from Jagtial and Jangaon districts. Two people were discharged.

A total of 1,661 cases had been reported in the State. While 608 were active cases, 1013 were discharged. Among migrants, 89 tested

positive for the virus. With the easing of lockdown restrictions from Tuesday, more people were coming out of their homes, travelling to work and other places.

Health officials expected a spike in coronavirus cases in the coming weeks.

Mumbai-returnees continued to test positive in Karnataka, with 51 of 67 new cases on Wednesday having a travel history to the city.

Tamil Nadu saw another sharp rise in the number of COVID-19 cases on Wednesday. A total of 743 persons, including 83 who returned from Maharashtra, tested positive for COVID-19, taking the State's overall tally across the 13,000-mark. This, while 987 persons were discharged from hospitals across the State. Tamil Nadu now has a total of 13,191 cases.

As on date, a total of 5,882 persons were discharged after recovery and there are 7,219 active cases. Three more persons including two women died, taking the total deaths to 87.

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

IN BRIEF



HC asks how KSPCB plans to preserve lakes

Lockdown has reduced pollution levels'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
BENGALURU

The Karnataka High Court on Wednesday directed the Karnataka State Pollution Control Board (KSPCB) to spell out in what manner it is going to take steps to keep the Bellandur and Varthur lakes and the Vrishabhavati river bodies as clean as they stand today due to reduced cause for pollution in view of the lockdown.

"pollution level of these water bodies appears to be nearly zero today due to the lockdown. It is proof that pollution was due to effluents," a Division Bench, comprising Chief Justice Abhay Shreenivas Oka and Justice Hanchate Sanjeev Kumar, observed orally, while hearing a PIL petition filed by Geetha Misra, a resident of Rajajinagar.

No frothing now' Appearings for the petitioner, advocate G.R. Mohan said that several water bodies in the city, particularly the Bellandur and Varthur



A photo of Varthur lake in Bengaluru last year.

lakes and Vrishabhavati river, are not frothing due to the clean environment as a result of the closure of industries and commercial activities due to the COVID-19 lockdown.

Pointing out that the cause for pollution are effluents from industrial and commercial establishments, the petitioner sought a direction to the authorities not to permit industrial activities in and around the catchment areas of the lakes and the river within the limits of the Bruhat Bangalore Mahanagara Palike.

Excavation work for the construction of the fifth and sixth reactors is progressing ahead of schedule and the first pouring of concrete for these last two reactors, to be built on an outlay of

Russian team at Kudankulam to address problems in generator

Experts reach KKNPP site to inspect 'unusual vibrations'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
TIRUNELVELI

A seven-member Russian technocrat team reached the Kudankulam Nuclear Power Project (KKNPP) site on Wednesday to inspect the 'unusual vibrations' in the generator section of the second reactor that has temporarily hampered the operation of the reactor at its maximum power generation capacity of 1,000 MWe.

The Nuclear Power Corporation of India (NPCIL) is operating 2 x 1,000 MWe VVER reactors at Kudankulam with Russian assistance. The first reactor has been generating power since July 2013 even as the construction of the third and fourth reactors is under way at a cost of ₹39,747 crore.

The Nuclear Power Corporation of India (NPCIL) is operating 2 x 1,000 MWe VVER reactors at Kudankulam with Russian assistance. ■ PTI



NPCIL is operating 2 x 1,000 MWe VVER reactors with Russian assistance. ■ PTI

too generated in the past 1,000 MWe electricity – owing to "some unusual vibrations" noticed in the generator section.

To address these technical glitches, the KKNPP sought the help of the Russians tasked with creating the nuclear park at Kudankulam with six reactors for the NPCIL.

After arriving in Ahmedabad, the Russian team landed in Madurai on Wednesday on a chartered flight and reached the KKNPP site by road in the afternoon.

Rectify problems' Highly placed sources in the KKNPP told *The Hindu* that the Russian team would take stock and rectify problems as agreed upon in the Inter-Governmental Agreement signed between India and Russia while finalising the nuclear deal.

The team is expected to leave for Russia on June 2, the sources added.

WEATHER WATCH

RAINFALL, TEMPERATURE & AIR QUALITY IN SELECT METROS YESTERDAY

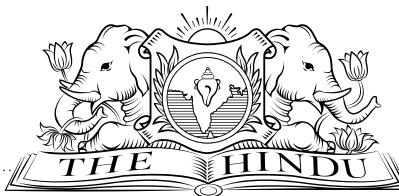


TEMPERATURE DATA: IMD, POLLUTION DATA: CPCB, MAP: INSAT/IMD (TAKEN AT 18.00 HRS)
Forecast for Thursday: Thunderstorms accompanied by lightning and squall very likely at isolated places over Bihar; with lightning and gusty winds at isolated places over Arunachal Pradesh, Assam and Meghalaya; with lightning and gusty winds at isolated places over Lakshadweep, Kerala, Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram and with lightning at isolated places over south interior Karnataka.

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	10.9	30.0	24.2	Kozhikode	10.9	30.0	24.0
Ahmedabad	43.8	28.7	27.0	Kurnool	—	38.0	27.0
Aizawl	—	29.9	19.9	Lucknow	—	39.0	24.0
Altanabadi	40.3	26.2	20.0	Madurai	—	40.0	28.0
Bengaluru	—	32.2	21.8	Mangaluru	0.4	33.0	26.0
Bhopal	—	41.3	—	Mumbai	—	36.0	25.0
Bhubaneswar	50.8	31.8	20.0	Mysuru	—	32.0	22.0
Chandigarh	—	37.8	19.8	New Delhi	—	40.0	22.0
Chennai	—	41.3	31.3	Patna	—	34.0	27.0
Cochin	—	34.0	23.8	Port Blair	6.7	32.0	26.0
Dehradun	—	36.3	17.9	Puducherry	—	39.0	29.0
Gangtok	—	18.8	16.4	Pune	—	38.0	23.0
Goa	—	35.0	24.2	Raipur	—	41.0	23.0
Guwahati	75.0	30.5	25.4	Ranchi	—	48.6	20.0
Hubballi	—	34.0	23.0	Shillong	3.0	32.0	13.0
Hyderabad	—	40.9	27.2	Shimla	—	31.0	17.0
Imphal	2.0	29.7	21.9	Srinagar	—	22.0	8.0
Jaipur	—	40.0	28.4	Thiruvananthapuram	1.2	34.0	26.0
Kochi	34.6	32.8	23.8	Tiruchi	—	39.0	29.0
Kohima	—	24.3	14.7	Vijayawada	—	43.0	28.0
Kolkata	20.7	33.6	23.5	Visakhapatnam	—	34.0	29.0

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)
Pollutants in the air you are breathing
Yesterday

CITIES	SO ₂	NO ₂	CO	PM _{2.5}	PM ₁₀	CODE
Ahmedabad	—	34	21	.42	75	■
Bengaluru	.6					



Working safely

Employers should see the value of reduced attendance and encourage staff protection

Opening up economic production from a lockdown, even partially, when the COVID-19 pandemic has not peaked in the country poses an extraordinary challenge. Countries around the world are focusing on making the workplace safe, and issuing guidelines to help workers return to their jobs. Reducing the number of people present at any given time is a universal principle, either through resort to shifts, or arrangements to enable employees to work from home. The Union Health Ministry has addressed the issue through a manual of preventive measures that covers all types of workplaces and depends heavily on behavioural change, with some additional requirements for confined spaces such as offices. Fortunately, the first line of defence against the novel coronavirus is a set of simple measures that involves little expenditure: physical distancing of at least one metre, mandatory use of face masks or cover, frequent hand washing with soap, respiratory etiquette, sanitising contact surfaces and self-monitoring of health. These requirements have by now become familiar to everyone, and employees need only be nudged into adopting them through persistent communication, free provisioning of masks and sanitising materials, and organising office space suitably. Physical distancing of even one metre, if not the 'do gaz' or six feet that Prime Minister Narendra Modi advocated, does pose difficulties because of the lack of space and density of workers in many places. But employers should see the value of keeping staff attendance at safe levels even within the legally permitted ceiling, which now extends to 50% in specified sectors and even in some government offices. Failure to maintain distancing, more so in a poorly-ventilated, closed environment, gives the virus a free run, as Chennai's wholesale vegetable market showed starkly.

The Centre's protocol for symptomatic cases at the workplace, requiring testing, and, where warranted, quarantining of both the worker and close contacts, and a two-day closure of offices experiencing an outbreak, should underscore to employers the importance of prevention. Responsibility, however, does not devolve entirely on offices and establishments, and it is imperative for other activities, such as public transport used by many workers, to meet COVID-19 requirements. Some institutions are mandating installation of the Aarogya Setu app by employees returning to work, when the legal basis of this monitoring mechanism remains shaky and there are no assured benefits in terms of health care. At this stage of the pandemic, when a gradual resumption of economic activity in multiple sectors ranging from construction to food takeaways is a necessity, the most feasible interventions at the workplace are voluntary and those that cost the least. There may still be occasion to resort to intermittent lockdowns if opening up leads to mounting cases. A prudent course would be to navigate the present with a minimalist approach, as the quest for a medical breakthrough makes progress.

A hole in the whole

Health-care services cannot be allowed to be overwhelmed by the pandemic

Mathematically, the whole is equal to the sum of its parts, neither more nor less. But the COVID-19 pandemic has taken the parts and overwhelmed the whole. The lockdown, as it was conceived originally, was meant to be, at best, a stopgap arrangement that would help nations tide over the crisis caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus. But as the days rolled on, and the lockdown moved on from phase to phase, it has caused a paralysis in general health care. As sparse health-care resources in most parts of the country have been channelled towards the COVID-19 effort, the numbers have risen, but normal health-care services have been in suspended animation for just under two months now. Staff running several national health programmes, and State health missions, besides health-care workers from tertiary hospitals down to the primary health centres, have been diverted to buttress public health efforts in the COVID-19 battle. And the epidemic still rages on, with thousands of people testing positive every day and the number of cases crossing past the one lakh mark. Lockdowns have been partially lifted in some areas and in others, a mere semblance of normalcy has returned. As conditional movement has been allowed, people travelling across States bring positive cases to States or districts that have remained case-free for a while now.

But the time has now come for the country to attempt an equipoise of sorts, balance the different requirements of health care, along with efforts to continue to fight COVID-19. While health-care services themselves have been on the backfoot for non-COVID-19 conditions, except in emergencies, access too, for the bulk of the population, has been hampered by the non-availability of public transportation. Recent data culled from the National Health Mission pointed to less than normal coverage in key areas such as immunisation, institutional deliveries; further, delay, or failure, in delivering life-saving drugs to persons with HIV, tuberculosis, or inability to offer support for other chronic conditions have been documented. The usually robust private health system, which caters to various segments of the population, also took a back seat, or played a supportive role. While the Finance Minister's announcement on increase in health allocations as part of the ₹20-lakh crore relief package is welcome, more than money is required to set this right. If life after COVID-19 is not to be worse than life before the pandemic, the governments need to ensure that the country's multi-layered health system is not sacrificed at the altar of one virus; they need to give it their whole attention, now.

China, better prepared for the post-COVID world

There are good reasons why the pandemic is unlikely to end Beijing's ambitious power outreach, a point India must note



M.K. NARAYANAN

Several weeks before the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic, India's Minister for External Affairs, S. Jaishankar, had observed (at a lecture) that "what defines power and determines national standing is also no longer the same... Technology, connectivity and trade are at the heart of the new contestations...." The Minister could never have imagined that within a few weeks, his prediction would be overtaken by a tectonic shift in the global situation thanks to a virus and a pandemic.

The Minister did mention a point about "known unknowns", but what he could hardly have anticipated is how radical the changes would be, thanks to the phenomenon of "unknown unknowns". Within the span of a few weeks, following the Minister's dissertation, pronounced unpredictability created an unprecedented situation. Seldom have so many lives been lost across continents in a single tragic event.

Deep economic impact

By now, India has surpassed China with regard to the number of confirmed COVID-19 cases, and has moved past the figure of 100,000 cases. What distinguishes the present pandemic from earlier ones is its economic impact, which is perhaps even more threatening than the human costs involved. In the case of India, all forecasts have had to be shredded. Job losses have been massive, specially in urban areas. India's exports in the month of April, for instance, were the worst in the past 30 years. The harrowing plight of India's migrant workers and the images of hungry, aimless, dispossessed migrant worker families trudging along the highways of the nation

have seared the conscience of the nation. It could well have been equated to China's May Fourth Movement (1919), except that, unlike in the case of China, the event has yet to catalyse the nation.

Well before this, India had been witnessing a persistent economic downward slide. The pandemic could, thus, not have come at a more inopportune moment. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's announcement of a ₹20-lakh crore stimulus package was, hence, timely even though economists now believe that in real terms it amounts to around 2% of GDP rather than 10% as the government makes out. Finding resources for even this stimulus package will, however, not be easy. The Centre's finances are not in the best of health. It has already had to resort to a second tranche of \$1 billion loan from the World Bank to support COVID-19 relief measures. The finances of States are, to say the least, in a perilous state. Questions are, thus, bound to be raised as to whether adequate funds would be forthcoming for relief purposes.

Package is more a mosaic

Following the Prime Minister's announcement, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman has provided several details of the stimulus package. Most critics affirm that it has been a financial stimulus at best, and much less likely to provide the much needed stimulus to the economy. Among the more important items are: providing a stimulus to Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) through a ₹3-lakh crore loan scheme; helping other stressed business sectors such as non-banking financial companies, or NBFCs, power distribution companies and the real estate industry; provisioning of free food grains to migrant workers for the next two months; provisioning of a ₹1-lakh crore subsidy to agricultural cooperative societies; hiking the allocation for the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme,



GIFTY IMAGES/ISTOCKPHOTO
or MGNREGS, by ₹40,000 crore; extension of credit facilities to street vendors; interest subvention for small businesses, etc.

A valid criticism is that the patchwork of stimulus packages reveals a disjointed mosaic of ideas and thoughts. Also, that these would be more relevant to a Budget discussion than a stimulus package. In the list of items mentioned as part of the stimulus package are aspects such as throwing open of defence production and coal sectors to the private sector, references to opening up of defence and aerospace for private companies, support to budgetary provisions for domestic defence procurement, bringing out a negative import list of weapons and military platforms, etc. Many are, hence, viewing the stimulus package as a panic reaction to an increasingly difficult situation rather than a deliberate plan of action. It is indeed difficult to see how in the absence of a proper and well-designed plan, a patchwork of stimulus packages would enable India to return to growth rates of 7% to 8%.

China's calibrated moves

In the extant circumstances, comparisons with China have, hence, become inevitable. China may not have anticipated the latest COVID-19 pandemic, but since its early recovery, China has followed a calibrated approach – one that stems from a policy of deliberate strategic progression conceived over the years. It may be worthwhile to understand the facts so as to underscore the gap that cur-

rently exists between China and India.

Almost five years ago, China's President, Xi Jinping, had floated the idea of "a Community of Common Destiny of Mankind", in the course of an address to the UN General Assembly (2015). In this, he outlined China's viewpoint on aspects such as economic globalisation and the information technology revolution. The Belt and Road Initiative – which encompasses policy, infrastructure, trade, financial, and people-to-people connectivity, and, implicitly also, security ties – was an adjunct to it. The 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China (2017), thereafter, gave its imprimatur, considering it essential to enable China to achieve pre-eminence status within the global order. Ever since, China has embarked on not only attaining economic and technological progress but also in defining how power would be determined in the new globalised era through devising new international norms in many emerging domains such as cyber, space, artificial intelligence, etc. This must not be lost sight of.

India must plan well
Mounting an effective challenge to China at this time would require a well-conceived and carefully calibrated plan of action by India. As of now, this is not evident. India and China will certainly emerge from the pandemic more diminished than previously, but to varying extents. Each country will, no doubt, suffer an economic setback, but while both nations would be among the very few that would still have a positive growth rate in the near future (1% in the case of China and 1.8% in the case of India, according to the International Monetary Fund) – given the size of China's economy, it does not translate into a massive shift in India's favour.

Setting the standards

China also set about rewriting international rules, premised not so much on governing where global goods are made, but on setting standards that define production, exchange and consumption. China Standards 2035 plans to set new standards with regard to the Industrial Internet of Things (IIoT) and define next generation information technology and biotechnology infrastructure. China is hoping, thereby, to reap the "early bird" advantage, even as other industrial nations struggle to recover from the devastation caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Internationalisation of Chinese standards would provide China a clear advantage by providing it an opportunity to set the standards in emerging industries such as high-end equipment manufacturing, unmanned vehicles, new mate-

rials, cybersecurity and the like. This would enable it gain a dominant position in the global economy.

It is important to understand the implications of all this, when shrill voices are being heard that the COVID-19 pandemic is likely to end China's ambitious power outreach, and that countries such as India would be the beneficiaries. The converse may actually turn out to be true, given that China has, for years, adopted a policy of gaining a strategic advantage not only in military matters but also in economic and technical areas. This must not be lost sight of.

India must plan well
Mounting an effective challenge to China at this time would require a well-conceived and carefully calibrated plan of action by India. As of now, this is not evident. India and China will certainly emerge from the pandemic more diminished than previously, but to varying extents. Each country will, no doubt, suffer an economic setback, but while both nations would be among the very few that would still have a positive growth rate in the near future (1% in the case of China and 1.8% in the case of India, according to the International Monetary Fund) – given the size of China's economy, it does not translate into a massive shift in India's favour.

Admittedly, there is a great deal of talk of companies demitting China at this time, partly due to the pandemic and partly due to other reasons. India would more than welcome some of the entities exiting China, but there are no "green shoots" to suggest that such a shift has, or is, about to take place. Many alternatives are available to these companies and it would be excessively optimistic on our part to hold on to the belief that India is the only alternative choice for most of them.

M.K. Narayanan is a former National Security Adviser and a former Governor of West Bengal

Grasping the defence self-reliance nettle

The government's moves will help address vulnerabilities in crises as well as strategic and national security concerns



P.S. RAGHAVAN

The measures, recently announced by the Finance Minister, to promote self-reliance in defence production, address long-standing strategic and national security concerns about the extent of India's external dependence for its defence-preparedness. For most of the past decade, India had the dubious distinction of being the world's largest arms importer, accounting for about 12% of global arms imports. Saudi Arabia jumped to first place in 2018 and 2019, but India still takes over 9% of global imports. This external dependence for weapons, spares and, in some cases, even ammunition creates vulnerabilities during military crises. COVID-19 has, once again, focused minds on the impact of supply chain disruptions on both civil and defence sectors. It is a no-brainer that with its security environment, its great power ambitions and its technological capacities, India should have a robust defence manufacturing capacity.

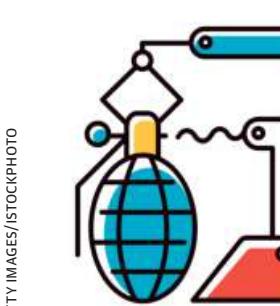
The facts that new Defence Procurement Procedures (DPP) 2020 are under formulation and that we now have a Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) tasked with promoting indigenous equipment in the armed

forces, provide a conducive backdrop to this initiative.

An opportune moment

The decision to notify a list of weapons systems for sourcing entirely from Indian manufacturers, the promise to progressively expand this list and a separate Budget provision for domestic capital procurement will encourage our private defence manufacturers, whose research capacities, technological skills and quality commitment are often better appreciated by foreign clients for whom they are subcontractors. There is a range of platforms and subsystems, developed in India and qualified in trials, some of which face hurdles to their induction by our armed forces because of foreign competition. These include missile systems such as Akash and Nag, the Light Combat Aircraft and the Light Combat Helicopter, artillery guns, radars, electronic warfare systems and armoured vehicles.

The government has promised a time-bound defence procurement process, overhauling trial and testing procedures and establishing a professional project management unit. The significance of these measures is underscored by the fact that over the past five years, the Indian government has approved over 200 defence acquisition proposals, valued at over ₹4 trillion, but most are still in relatively early stages of processing. Of course, this delay now provides the opportunity to re-examine them and to prioritise



those with indigenous research and development. The CDS could also examine them from a tri-service angle, to avoid redundancy of capacities across the services.

The decision to corporatise the Ordnance Factory Board is another long overdue reform. Over the decades, our ordnance factories have been the backbone of indigenous supplies to our armed forces, from weapons systems to spares, ammunition and auxiliaries (including uniforms and boots). Their structure, work culture and product range now need to be responsive to technology and quality demands of modern armed forces. Corporatisation, including public listing of some units, ensures a more efficient interface of the manufacturer with the designer and end user. The factories would be better integrated into the larger defence manufacturing ecosystem.

The government has rightly clarified that self-reliance would not be taken to overzealous extremes. The thrust for indigenous research and development will

coexist with the import of cutting-edge military technologies to obviate near-term defence vulnerabilities.

At the same time, our defence planners will frame "realistic" specifications for their desired weapons platforms, based on the requirements of India's defence strategy, rather than on aspirational considerations which, the Finance Minister said, may lead to a single foreign vendor. It is also imperative that when we import weapon systems, we should plan for the ammunitions and spares for them to be eventually manufactured in India so that we are not driven to seek urgent replenishments from abroad during crises. The same goes for repair, maintenance and overhaul facilities and, at the next level, the upgrade of weapons platforms.

FDI impact

The liberalisation of foreign direct investment in defence manufacturing, raising the limit under the automatic route to 74%, should open the door to more joint ventures of foreign and Indian companies for defence manufacturing in India. It would also sustain a beehive of domestic industrial activity in the research, design and manufacture of systems and sub-systems. Our companies, which have long been sub-contractors to prominent defence manufacturers abroad, would now get the opportunity to directly contribute to Indian defence manufacturing.

The development of a thriving indigenous defence industry needs an overhaul of existing regulations and practices. A long-term integrated perspective plan of the requirements of the armed forces should give industry a clear picture of future requirements. DPP 2020 should incorporate guidelines to promote forward-looking strategic partnerships between Indian and foreign companies, with a view to achieving indigenisation over a period of time for even sophisticated platforms. Cost evaluation has to evolve from mechanical application of the L1 (lowest financial bid) principle to prioritising indigenous content. The definition of indigenisation itself needs to privilege technology over value or volume. Investment, Indian or foreign, will be viable only if the door to defence exports is opened, with a transparent policy. To give private industry a level playing field for developing defence technologies, conflicts of interest, created by the role of our Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) as the government's sole adviser, developer and evaluator of technologies have to be addressed.

Above all, a radical reset has to overcome resistance to change. Of the key components of any major reform – money, method and mindset – mindset is the most critical and the most intractable. It takes a crisis to change it.

P.S. Raghavan is Chairman, National Security Advisory Board. The views expressed are personal

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.

New moorings

The changing face of China's diplomacy is a fact (Editorial page, May 20). Present day Chinese envoys are of a different class, aggressive on social platforms. This is used to attack, intimidate and silence journalists, lawmakers and think tank scholars – essentially, anyone who contradicts China's official narrative of events. India has not been spared either. There has been a lashing out at Indian officials and media outlets when there have been references to COVID-19 as 'Wuhan Virus' or 'Chinese

Virus' initially. Similar exchanges happen with regard to the Dalai Lama or Arunachal Pradesh. Once the current crisis settles, there will be a new world order that will emerge and India should be ready for this transition.

H.N. RAMAKRISHNA,
Bengaluru

■ India needs to understand the direction as well as the strategy of its strongest and largest neighbour's foreign policy in order to have a proper policy of its own. One wonders if sitting on a swing by the banks of the Sabarmati or exchanging of

handicrafts constitutes a policy. There was a time when the Prime Minister himself took personal interest in grooming youngsters joining the cadre which ensured professionalism.

M.K. SUBBIAH,
Bengaluru

■ China's distancing from its soft diplomacy to one that is based on a hardened attitude towards many of its neighbours does not augur well for global diplomacy. It would have been of value had the writer expressed his views on Zhou Enlai's handling of the Indian issue

during the 1962 war.

K. CHAKRAVARTI GONDYALA,
Chittoor, Andhra Pradesh

Target WHO

It is in times of crises that partnerships, relations and unions between nations are tested, and this has been especially true in the case of the COVID-19 pandemic, with the appearance of deep schisms in international organisations such as WHO ('World' page, "Reform or face fund cuts, Trump tells WHO", May 20). It is poignant to note that the (constant and consistent) rhetoric from the U.S. has been to blame China on all

counts, followed by WHO for "lack of transparency". One must be reminded that there is no international organisation better suited to collaborate efforts to combat the virus than WHO, an institution that had won applause for the successful fight against polio, smallpox and Ebola. There is also little doubt that WHO is possibly the only global organisation that can conduct a fair

CORRECTIONS & CLARIFICATIONS:

A sentence in the report headlined "Grasshoppers feast on crops in Wayanad" (May 20, 2020) read: "It was not the desert locust, Schistocerca gregaria, which causes panic in the northeast." It should have been northwest.

The Readers' Editor's office can be contacted by Telephone: +91-44-28418297/28576300; E-mail: readerseditor@thehindu.co.in

To read more letters online, scan the QR code
inquiry into the origins as well as the spread and fight against the virus. In trying times, it is counsel and clarity, collaboration and consideration that can enable us all to tide over this issue. We have no room for discord between the global pulpits.

ABHISHEK SURESH,
Kozhikode, Kerala

How public health boosts an economy

A stronger health system in a country can lead to better outcomes on the economic growth front



K. SRINATH REDDY

When public health sneezes, the economy catches cold. Dire predictions for the post-COVID-19 global economy have come from the International Monetary Fund, which called the present crisis the worst downturn since the Great Depression. Grim forebodings for the Indian economy have been sounded by many distinguished economists and the Governor of the Reserve Bank of India.

Will this lead to higher investment in health to protect the economy from the effects of endangered health? The ₹20 lakh crore package recently announced includes proposals to prevent and respond to future pandemics. These include strengthening of health and wellness centres, establishment of infectious diseases hospital blocks in all districts, expansion of the laboratory network and 'One Health' research on zoonotic diseases under the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR). This is a limited response to the threat of infectious outbreaks.

Need for equitable systems

The creation of a well-balanced health system is not the objective of this crisis response, despite the fact that the southern States have shown how efficient and equitable health systems are our best defence against public health emergencies. It is also clear that weak health systems, which do not function well in a steady state, cannot suddenly generate surge capacity when challenged by a public health emergency. Further, a selective investment in some components of infectious disease control will not meet the many other essential demands on the health system. Even during the COVID-19 response, attention has been diverted from maternal and child health, and care for other infectious diseases and non-communicable diseases. Also, where will the additional health workforce needed even for this limited expansion come from, without a planned investment in education, skilling and employment?



What is needed is adequate investment in creating a health system that can withstand any kind of public health emergencies, deliver universal health coverage and other targets of the Sustainable Development Goals, while creating mutually beneficial synergies between health and the economy. The Fifteenth Finance Commission is reportedly examining ways to increase public financing of the health sector, while framing its final recommendations. Given the major role that States have to play in creating strong health systems across the country, the directions and allocations provided by the Finance Commission can become the critical catalyst for transforming the nation's health. Will the Commission invigorate public health and primary care or will it be influenced by the intensive care narrative of COVID-19, which only a fraction of the infected persons need or benefit from? Will it highlight the economic benefits that will accrue from investing in health as a sustained commitment?

Not a 'cost disease'

Ambivalence of economists towards health dominated much of the 20th century. Health systems were mostly seen as unavoidable expenditures, which had to be accommodated as the essential service entourage of a booming economy but not to be placed at the high table of policy priorities. Indeed, one of the most influential economists of the modern era, William Baumol, described healthcare as a 'cost disease' where costs inexorably rise, outpacing the value of services rendered and therefore it is less rewarding than the industrial engines of economic growth.

The rising costs of healthcare in

industrialised countries, especially those without organised universal health coverage, may well invite such a description though the proposition could be debated even there. Public health, which is hidden away in the scullery when economic revelry is in full flow, cannot however be dismissed so easily. The services rendered by public health are far too valuable to be dismissed as a cost disease. Indeed, both population-based public health and individual-centred healthcare are joint accounts in human development that yield rich returns for economic development, if invested wisely.

The evidence-backed proposition that population health and national economic growth have a bi-directional relationship, as do poverty and individual ill health, has made its way into the paradigm of the Sustainable Development Goals. However, investments in health have lagged behind that awareness or have been heavily skewed in favour of advanced clinical care. Public health and primary care were left pleading for more, like a plaintive Oliver Twist, but were disdainfully dismissed.

Robust evidence on correlation

There is robust evidence that investments in public health and primary care pay rich economic dividends. Apart from the WHO Commission on Macroeconomics and Health (2001), two other economists-led reports on

Investing in Health (1993, 2013) concluded that investments in population health will yield rich returns of economic growth. The 2013 report estimated that low- and middle-income countries will realise 9 to 20 fold returns respectively on investments in health. A UN High Level

Commission, headed by the Presidents of France and South Africa, reported in 2016 that investments for augmenting the size and skills of the health workforce yields economic growth through improved population health and productivity, reduced healthcare costs and job creation even in a gloomy global scenario of job loss. The Baumol hypothesis on investments in health was strongly disputed by this report.

India, in particular, stands to gain greatly by investing in health, especially health beyond illness care. Productivity boost promised by a demographically young population can be protected. Education and skilling of a diversified health workforce can uplift health services for health protection at both population and individual levels. When domestic needs are met, this expanded health workforce can also meet global health needs, both as a rapid action force for health emergency response and as a unit taking care of the chronic care needs of aged societies. Innovative health technologies and inexpensive pharmaceutical products can be created at scale, for domestic use and global export.

This calls for stepped up public financing for the health sector. Questions may be posed as to how this can be done at a time of economic downturn. History teaches us that such an investment is especially useful in times of economic adversity. South-East Asian countries invested in health and universal health coverage during and soon after the Asian Financial Crisis of the 1990s. The United Kingdom adopted universal health coverage soon after the Second World War. Japan adopted it in the early 1960s to hasten recovery from the economic injuries inflicted by defeat in that war. All of them recognised that greater investment in health is a winning bet for economic development. India too must choose that path to boost the trajectory of its economic growth.

At the bottom of the Pandora's box lies hope. As COVID-19, which emerged through our indiscretions, exits, its attendant ills which afflict our economic and social life, too can fade away. If we let hope rise, through health.

K. Srinath Reddy is president, Public Health Foundation of India. Views are personal

Keep it retrospective

Incomplete data, too many variables make it difficult to predict the course of the COVID-19 curve



ATANU BISWAS

Plenty of organised data on daily counts of COVID-19 cases are available. Consequently, many statisticians, epidemiologists, data scientists are extrapolating existing data to predict the progression of the disease outbreak, and forecasting the trajectory of the disease over time. No wonder that the numbers are often contradictory in nature. And, no surprise that many of the forecasts have already been proved wrong.

Reliable 'expertise' may be an alien concept for a new and unknown disease. Consequently, although retrospective analysis is alright, the dynamics of any perspective analysis for uncertain and complex events like COVID-19 might be erroneous. Let me explain why.

Various standard epidemiological models, and regression and time series models are generally attempted for modeling cumulative number of cases and deaths data for COVID-19. Can the models depict the complex and unknown trajectory of the disease in the long run? If so, which one? Certainly, I know the common aphorism "all models are wrong but some models are useful". But, any such model relies on strong assumptions about aspects of the disease we haven't thoroughly studied yet. Thus, some assumptions are bound to be violated, and some remain unverified. This is a new disease, at least three varieties have been detected so far, and we are learning new features of the virus everyday. With several blind spots, it is utterly difficult to choose a model.

The key parameters

Once a model is chosen, a few 'parameters' dictate its performance. These key numbers are 'infection rate', 'incubation rate', 'recovery rate', 'birth' and 'death' rates, and also the rate at which recovered individuals return to the susceptible state due to loss of immunity, if at all. Values of most of these parameters are unknown – they are to be estimated from the data of cumulative cases and deaths over time. However, often data quality is questionable – speculations of under-reporting of cases from different parts of the world persist. Sensitivity and specificity of the testing procedures are also known to be high. Again, some models need to assume how people will adhere to government instructions like lockdown.

Also, COVID-19 has 2-14 days of incubation period. And patients may infect others during the incubation period as well. What is more, there are a lot of asymptomatic patients who go on infecting others who, in turn, might not be asymptomatic. This, along with the fact that there is scarcity of test kits in most parts of the world, surely misses many asymptomatic patients in the count of cases. Iceland, for example, managed to test almost 50,000 people of its 3,60,000 population, and found that 0.6% of the population were "silent carriers" of the disease with no symptoms or only a mild cough and runny nose!

According to a survey conducted by the Public Health Authority of Sweden, about 2.5% of Stockholmers had an ongoing COVID-19 infection at the end of March, which was 30 times the number tested positive by then. It became 80 times the number of tested positive cases within three weeks – about 20% Stockholmers were already immune to COVID-19 by that time. Thus, it is clear that the proportion of asymptomatic cases increased at an accelerated rate via a convex path, at least in the case of Sweden. However, Sweden didn't impose any lockdown measure. So, the volume and pattern of asymptomatic patients are likely to differ in countries where lockdown was imposed. But, without a good estimate of the asymptomatic patients – possibly through survey of antibody tests – it's impossible to have a reliable estimate of different unknown parameters of a model.

Testing asymptomatic patients

Again, when somebody is reporting a 3.3% fatality rate for a region, it is based on numbers of deaths and cases. However, there is a huge 'selection bias' in the data due to limited testing capacity – only those more likely to be positive are likely to be tested. If the actual number of undetected asymptomatic patients is 10x the observed cases, the actual fatality rate becomes just 0.3%. Similarly, the predicted trajectory might change significantly with the inclusion of the huge number of "asymptomatic cases" into calculations.

I understand that various policymakers would still need the help of such mathematical models fitted with available case data – to navigate the pandemic as much as possible for taking critical decisions dynamically. However, such contradicting and erroneous predictions from different experts would give rise to either horror or a false sense of relief in common people, both situations being very much undesirable.

Ananu Biswas is a Professor of Statistics at the Indian Statistical Institute, Kolkata

Backing the 'angels in white coats'

India's private healthcare system needs more than the ₹15,000 crore aid recently offered

SUNEETA REDDY

On March 24, the Prime Minister announced a nationwide lockdown. Never since the Second World War have we seen the size, scale and human impact of this lockdown. Yet, we have managed and continue to manage the worst health and economic crisis we have seen in our lifetimes. Over 1,01,000 Indians have so far become infected by the novel coronavirus. We are not yet fully able to test and isolate efficiently, we are yet to find a protocol for cure and the vaccine is still in the distant future. Who will protect India?

While we are fighting for survival, the economic impact of this virus is \$8 trillion and growing as fast as the virus – which is why we need to desperately focus on a cure for the economy and a vaccine that protects the Indian healthcare system.

Indian hospitals and 60,000 nursing homes in the private sector have looked after 68% of Indian healthcare needs. In the process, they have evolved into delivering world-class care and continue to attract patients from 145 countries. Even more remarkably – we do it at 1/10th of international costs. Around 1.4 million Indian doctors across the world and even more nurses are leading the fight against COVID-19. While here in India, we clap for our heroes, should we not support the system that created and supports our 'angels in white coats'? The cost of good care, of commitment in the fight against a disease that has no tested clinical protocols calls for flexibility, resources and knowledge. The coronavirus is an imported virus and so are our PPEs, medicines and technology.

Strengthening the supply chain
Till we have a strong Indian supply chain, we continue to import and use the best because every patient is worth it. The government, recognising the role of Indian doctors and frontline workers, has provided a Rs. 50 lakh insurance cover, which is welcome; yet private hospitals who charge 6% of that continue to be misunderstood.

As a sector that is definitely in need of support, we continue to look towards the government for help –

₹15,000 crore will never be enough to bring this sector, small, medium and large nursing homes and corporate hospitals, out of this epidemic. We might survive COVID-19 but we will lose our front line of defence unless we act now.

While we strongly welcome the set of measures announced by the government for healthcare – increasing the viability gap funding from 20% to 30%, setting up infectious disease rooms in every district hospital, setting up laboratory facilities at block level – much more needs to be done.

Make inputs GST-exempt

First, uncomplicate our cost structure by zero-rating GST or exempt all services and goods that are supplied to the hospital. Today we have no input credit because we fall in the negative list. As positive contributors to the economy, we need to change this vital equation. Second, as the essential support system for COVID-19, hospitals need liquidity. Beyond bank borrowings, the government should set up a three-year fund that will enable sustainability of the sector and fortify the system from any such future outbreak and offer subvention of interest.

Third, incentivise rather than penalise the healthcare institutions that have invested in the future, in Tier II hospitals and technology by allowing companies to retain MAT credit as we continue to pay 25% corporate tax.

The government has done a commendable job in handling COVID-19. The statistics show that we are doing far better than even developed countries. This is the time for us to show that we are not here for just this fight alone – we are here for the future, a future where every Indian is unafraid because they are strong and protected by a vibrant healthcare system.

The crisis has underlined the need to nurture healthy individuals and maintain healthy balance sheets. It is with this hope that we will live another day. It is with this hope that we can exhale with confidence and courage, for there is no light brighter than this human spirit.

Suneeta Reddy is Managing Director, Apollo Hospitals



DATA POINT

Lockdown analysis

How to read the table

Part 1 lists average new cases recorded during lockdown intervals. For instance, T.N. recorded 56, 96 and 586 cases during periods L1, L2 and L3 respectively

Part 2 lists average new cases per million population recorded during lockdown intervals. For instance, Delhi recorded 35, 108 and 282 tests per million during periods L1, L2 and L3 respectively

Part 3 lists the change in tests conducted per confirmed case* between lockdown dates. For instance, Punjab conducted 7 fewer tests per confirmed case on May 4 compared to April 14 and 7 more tests per confirmed case on May 17 compared to May 4

One of the ideas behind locking down a region during COVID-19, is to slow down the disease spread and buy time to improve the "test, trace, isolate and support" cycle. The table looks at how effectively the Indian States were able to increase their testing during lockdown. In the table, L1 indicates March 25 to April 14, L2 indicates April 15 to May 4 and L3 indicates May 5 and May 17. By The Hindu Data Team

State	Part 1: Avg. new cases			Part 2: Avg. new tests			Part 3: Tests/cases		Observations Good
	L1	L2	L3	L1	L2	L3	L2 - L1	L3 - L2	
Chhattisgarh	2	1	1	6	21	43	183	136	
Uttarakhand	2	1	1	4	21	19	64	16	
Kerala	13	6	7	15	16	23	24	7	
Jharkhand	1	5	8	1	1	45	6	39	
Haryana	7	14	32	2	53	99	38	12	
J&K	13	22	34	14	71	253	22	28	
Karnataka	10	19	38	7	37	74	72	10	
A.P.	22	58	46	9	110	166	54	31	
Bihar	3	22	50	3	8	13	-66	-15	
Odisha	3	5	51	6	44	96	130	-133	
Punjab	8	48	62	7	25	59	-7	7	
W.B.	9	39	125	1	9	42	4	12	
U.P.	25	97	138	1	1	12	11	3	
M.P.	36	110	153	1	21	50	6	5	
Rajasthan	46	105	167	17	55	106	10	2	
Delhi	73	157	372	35	108	282	3	1	
Gujarat	29	251	425	5	44	69	-10	-2	
T.N.	56	96	586	5	87	166	28	-17	
Maharashtra	122	542	1267	15	49	71	-5	-4	

*By measuring the number of tests per confirmed case, it is possible to gauge which States are testing enough relative to the size of their outbreaks

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO MAY 21, 1920

FROM PAGE ONE

Amphan batters West Bengal, Odisha

According to a preliminary assessment, 65 33-KV feeders have been affected, impacting 19,38,382 power consumers in Balasore, Bhadrak, Jajpur, Mayurbhanj, Jagatsinghpur and Kendrapara districts. The State government was yet to confirm any death.

As for telecommunication, 90% of the telecom towers were found intact, the Special Relief Commissioner's office said. From the late evening of Tuesday, most coastal districts and some interior areas had started recording heavy rain and strong wind. In the morning, while Dhamra recorded the highest wind

speed of 120 kmph, Paradip followed with 106 kmph. The IMD measured wind speed at 91 kmph in Balasore.

By afternoon, the intensity of rain and wind velocity started to drop. In Kendrapara and Jagatsinghpur, people left for their homes from cyclone shelters. In Balasore district, where the impact continued till evening, people remained in shelters.

Twenty units of the National Disaster Response Force, 16 teams of the Odisha Disaster Rapid Action Force and 231 fire service units were deployed for rescue operation.

(With inputs from Jacob Koshy in New Delhi)

Domestic flights to resume on May 25

Capping of airfares is an unprecedented decision taken by the government, which has often maintained that the cost of an air ticket should be a function of demand and supply.

"Even though temporary, fare capping is an unfortunate decision. CAPA India strongly disapproves of this decision. This is likely to push up airfares, which will affect passengers already struggling to get their refunds," Kapil Kaul, CEO of CAPA India, told *The Hindu*.

Maharashtra Minister Jayant Patil said the State had reservations about re-

sumption of flights. He said precautions were important as Mumbai and Pune had reported a large number of cases.

Goa Health Secretary Nila Mohanan said the State would follow the same protocols as those adopted for anyone entering the State – testing everyone using the Truetest swab test.

In Kerala, the Thiruvananthapuram, Cochin, Kannur and Kozhikode airports are geared up for domestic operations. The State is confident that quarantine facilities for those coming by these flights are adequate.

Two in five COVID-19 patients recovered: govt.

For a pandemic to be under control, those who recover every day must consistently be more than those freshly diagnosed daily.

However, India is among 11 countries that has over a 1,00,000 cases, but has fewer deaths – 3,316 – and only behind Russia's 2,972. Only 2.94% of Indians confirmed positive are on oxygen support, 3% in Intensive Care Units and 0.45% on ventilator support, Mr. Agrawal said.

However, this assessment belies the high variability of case loads and fatality rates within India. Just four States – Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Gujarat and Delhi – account for 70% of India's case load and 64% of fatalities. The re-

covery rate of Maharashtra is only 26%, and Gujarat, with 719 deaths, has a case fatality rate (deaths per confirmed cases) of 6%, which is nearly twice that of India's overall case fatality rate of 3.1%.

On Wednesday, the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) resumed its practice of disclosing the number of samples tested per day. This amounted to 1,08,121, and on the whole, its laboratories have tested 25,12,388 samples since the pandemic started.

In absolute numbers, India may have conducted a large number of tests, but as proportion of its population it is among the world's stingiest testers.

Nepal's new map claims territories of India

India said Nepal was aware of the understanding on this issue and asked the government of Mr. Oli to return to dialogue.

Nepali diplomatic sources maintain the region of Kalapani and the contiguous areas to the east of the river Kali and Susta on the Uttar Pradesh-Bihar border are the only parts of the nearly 1,800-km boundary that remain unresolved. The area of Susta near Gorakhpur can also be noted in the new map. Kathmandu says India

has encroached upon this area and wants New Delhi to evacuate its population from the location.

The newly inaugurated Darchula-Lipulekh link road passes through the disputed region and will cut travel time for the Mansarovar pilgrimage.

Nepal claimed the area and Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli said his government was willing to give a road towards Tibet on lease to India without surrendering the region.

China accuses India of trespass, LAC heats up

The statement marked an escalation in the current tensions at the LAC, threatening to bring what India has thus far maintained were "actions by both armies on the ground" into a diplomatic face-off between the countries, the most serious such event since the Doklam face-off in 2017.

Sikkim's Naku La pass is one of four areas that had seen aggressive action between the troops since mid-April this year, according to sources. Similar skirmishes

had been reported along a stretch in eastern Ladakh at the Pangong Tso lake, Demchok and the Galwan river nala. Both sides had rushed more personnel to the area, and more than a dozen new Chinese boats had been observed on the lake, the sources added.

At Demchok, there is a huge accumulation of Chinese troops, two sources independently confirmed.

(With inputs from Ananth Krishnan in Chennai)

Lockdown did little to stem infections'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Congress on Wednesday questioned the Central government's strategy of handling the COVID-19 pandemic through lockdown and gave out statistics to argue that it had little impact on containing infections.

At an online press conference, party spokesperson Abhishek Manu Singhvi said COVID-19-positive cases went up from 28,000 to 1 lakh between May 3 and 18 when Lockdown 3.0 was in force.

He slammed a report by an expert of the NITI Aayog that predicted no fresh cases post May 16, based on earlier calculations of the rate of growth of infections.

"India's experience on account of an unplanned, knee-jerk and blanket lockdown has probably been the opposite. Is the government running on autopilot? Is it shamelessly misleading its people without any apology?" he said.

"First chart shall be prepared at least 4 hours before

the scheduled departure and the second chart shall be prepared at least 2 hours [unlike the present practice of 30 minutes] before scheduled departure. Only online current booking shall be permitted in between first and second chart preparation," it added.

All passengers will be compulsorily screened and only asymptomatic passengers are allowed to enter /board the train. They will need to reach the station at least 90 minutes in advance.

The Railways said no catering charges would be in-

Railways to start reservations

Bookings for 200 time-tabled trains to run from June 1 can be done from today



More mobility: The trains are in addition to Shramik Specials.

cluded in the fare. The IRCTC, however, will make provision for limited eatables and packaged drinking water on payment basis in limited trains.

"Passengers are encouraged to carry their own food and drinking water... No linen, blankets and curtains will be provided inside the train. Passengers are advised to carry their own linen for the travel. The temperature inside AC coaches shall be suitably regulated for this purpose," it added.

"All passengers must download and use the Aar-

gya Setu application. Passengers are advised to travel light," it said.

New SOP issued

Meanwhile, the Railway Ministry has decided to detrain all passengers travelling in a coach even if one or more passengers show symptoms of COVID-19.

Acting on reports that some passengers who reached their destinations tested positive, the Railway Board on Wednesday wrote to the General Managers of Zonal Railways to detrain passengers and empty the coach for cleaning. A Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) on disinfecting and sanitising the coach was also issued.

"In the event of a passenger or passengers being found infected or showing symptoms, the train would be stopped at the next major station and all travelling public in that particular coach or coaches would be de-trained," a senior official told *The Hindu*.

(With inputs from S. Vijay Kumar)

Bus row: U.P. Cong. chief, ex-MLA held

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
LUCKNOW

Uttar Pradesh Congress president and MLA Ajay Kumar Lallu and former legislator Vivek Bansal were arrested by the Agra police for protesting against the administration's refusal to allow buses to ply into Uttar Pradesh from Rajasthan.

Mr. Lallu was granted interim bail by a local court, but was arrested again by the Lucknow police in connection with an FIR lodged against him and Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra's secretary Sandeep Singh for allegedly sending a faulty list of buses. The two leaders, along with four or five unidentified Congress workers, were booked under the provisions of the Epidemic Diseases Act.

Deputy Chief Minister Dinesh Sharma said the Congress was indulging in a political stunt and claimed that around 460 vehicles submitted in the list were bogus.

Birla orders review of House panels' work

Opposition parties have been pressing for online meetings of the committees

SOBHANA K. NAIR
NEW DELHI

Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla has initiated an exercise to assess the effectiveness of the Parliamentary Standing Committees, from taking stock of the rate of attendance at their meetings to the list of recommendations that have not been accepted by the government.

This comes in the backdrop of efforts by both the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha secretariats to hold online meetings of the committees, after pressure from the Opposition parties. The Parliament session abruptly ended on March 23. None of the department-related standing committees (DRSCs) have met since then.

The Rajya Sabha secretariat had done a similar analysis. Briefing the House,



Om Birla

Chairman M. Venkaiah Naidu, on March 1, pointed out that a total of 95 MPs did not attend a single meeting of the eight DRSCs that reviewed allocations for 18 Ministries after the presentation of the 2020-21 Union Budget on February 1.

As per sources, Mr. Birla had given over a dozen directives after a conclave held on May 12-14. He asked the Se-

cretariat to "follow up intensely" with the members to ensure that they attended meetings of the panels, the sources said.

The Speaker also asked all the committees to give suggestions to improve the rating/ranking of India in global indices.

Govt. orders

In similar orders in March, the government gave blanket instructions to all Ministries to improve Indian's position on various global markers, including the World Press Freedom Index.

The Lok Sabha secretariat, according to the sources, had been asked to prepare a list of cases where a committee's recommendations have not been accepted by the government or where required action is pending

for more than three months. Mr. Birla also sought a compilation of major recommendations of all the committees that have had a significant impact on common citizens.

Mr. Birla and Mr. Naidu have met twice on the issue of resuming the meetings of the committees. So far, at least three panel chairpersons – Shashi Tharoor, Anand Sharma and B. Mahatma – have written to the respective presiding officers to hold meetings online. The secretariats had stalled the suggestion, claiming that the confidentiality clause will be violated if a meeting is held via videoconference. However, now both Mr. Birla and Mr. Naidu have acceded to the demand and the National Informatics Centre will provide a safe platform for holding meetings.

Not the time to play politics, says Priyanka

'Use your banners, but buses must ply'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, in a video message on Wednesday, said the BJP and the Uttar Pradesh (U.P.) government can use its own banners and posters, but the buses should ply to ferry migrant workers as it is the time to serve people and not indulge in politics.

"I want to urge the Chief Minister that our buses will remain parked where they are at the borders [with Rajasthan] till 4 p.m., and it will be 24 hours since they were made available there... If you want, you can paste your posters or banners on them, but kindly allow them to ply so that the migrants can be ferried in them and they reach home safely,"

said Ms. Vadra. However, she made the appeal barely half an hour before the 4 p.m. deadline was to expire.

Ms. Vadra said if the issue had not got embroiled in politics, at least 92,000 migrants could have reached home safely. "This is not the time to play politics. I urge every political party to set aside their political ideology and help people instead," she said.

"We will not accept the Beijing authorities' use of 'one country, two systems' to downgrade Taiwan and undermine the cross-strait status," said Ms. Tsai.

Several U.S. dignitaries sent messages of congratulation, including Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, the presumptive Democratic Presidential candidate Joe Biden, Senior Director of the U.S. National Security Council Mike Pottinger, and Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs David Stilwell.

NSD takes part of its syllabus online

Virtual classes, projects under way

DAMINI NATH
NEW DELHI

Students recording videos of themselves doing yoga poses, making stage lighting plans and practising the Stanislavski method of acting have all become part of the National School of Drama (NSD)'s online learning initiative during the COVID-19 lockdown.

While about 70% of the classes for the NSD's three-year course in dramatic arts required practical training, the remaining syllabus could be adapted to virtual teaching, NSD director-in-charge Suresh Sharma said.

"We can't teach improvisation in acting or model-making for stage online, but certain theoretical aspects can be taught online," he said.

After classes were suspended on March 13 on the directions of the Culture Ministry, online classes started from March 28 and students were given projects to submit by May 15, according to an official.

Various approaches
First-year students were asked to record videos doing yoga and explaining their observations of the experience.

For the movement projects, students were asked to work on different exercises they had learnt in class and choreograph a small piece based on that, the official said. Second and third-year students were asked to continue rehearsing for the productions planned before the lockdown.



About 70% of the classes in dramatic arts required practical training.

While acting students were told to make videos of their work, direction and design students were asked to prepare the set design, light and ground plan.

Webinars for aspirants

In addition to the virtual classes for students, NSD has also launched a "theatre for all" webinar series on topics such as acting, sound and video technology for the stage and festival management for aspiring students and theatre enthusiasts, Mr. Sharma said.

He added that two online workshops of 10 days each – on theatre appreciation and playwriting – would be launched in June. About 30-35 people would be able to register for these, he said.

BJP MPs praise Taiwan as Tsai is sworn in

Meenakshi Lekhi, Rahul Kaswan send congratulatory messages for second term

ANANTH KRISHNAN
CHENNAI

As Taiwan's President Tsai Ing-wen was sworn in on Wednesday for a second term, two MPs from the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) were among the dignitaries from 41 countries who sent in messages of congratulation that were played at the inaugural ceremony.

A joint message from BJP MPs Meenakshi Lekhi and Rahul Kaswan praised Taiwan as "a democratic country". Both India and Taiwan are democratic countries, bonded by shared values of freedom, democracy and respect for human rights. Over the past years, India and Taiwan have enhanced bilateral relations enormously.



Tsai Ing-wen

ly in wide-ranging areas, especially trade, investment and people exchanges," the two lawmakers said in their message. A separate video message from Ms. Lekhi was also played at the inaugural, in which she wished Ms. Tsai "great success and the continued

strengthening of the comprehensive relations between India and Taiwan".

At Ms. Tsai's last inauguration in 2016, India had at the last minute decided against sending two MPs to attend the event, concerned about the possible fallout on ties with China.

India was represented at the ceremony by Sohang Sen, the acting director general of the India Taipei Association. India does not have a formal mission in Taipei as it is among 179 of the 194 member states of the United Nations that do not maintain diplomatic ties.

In her speech, Ms. Tsai called for Taiwan and China to have dialogue, but ruled out any likelihood of a "one

New scheme for Chhattisgarh farmers

They will get up to ₹1

INTERVIEW | THOMAS PIKETTY

'Nationalism is not going to solve the big challenges of the day'

The basic idea of participatory socialism is where everyone has the power to participate in the economy, says the economist

NARAYAN LAKSHMAN

The seminal work of Thomas Piketty, Professor of Economics at the Paris-based School of Advanced Studies in the Social Sciences and at the Paris School of Economics and Co-Director at the World Inequality Lab and World Inequality Database, is particularly salient at the present moment, when the first wave of the catastrophic human toll of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has been followed by the second wave of its severe economic consequences, including loss of livelihoods, internal displacement and starvation among the poor in India and elsewhere. Edited transcript:

Please explain what you mean by "participatory" socialism, a concept you discuss in your latest book, Capital and Ideology.

■ The basic idea of participatory socialism in my view is where everyone has the power to participate in the economy. This means access to private property – I believe in private property and do not want state property or communism – which re-

quires a more progressive tax system in order to reduce taxation on the poorest groups in society and possibly pay for an endowment that everybody will receive. We say that we believe in equal opportunity, but we live in a world where the bottom 50% of the population does not receive any inherited wealth from the upper rungs, whereas some other people receive millions or billions. The other dimen-

...prosperity comes from equality and education and not from the pursuit of more and more inequality. That is the basic idea of participatory socialism – to use the good aspects of private property and the market forces, but to put them in the service of a much more equal and equitable development model and economic system.

You argue that deliberation over ideology can change the political balance of power and resource allocation system, and that



...prosperity comes from equality and education and not from the pursuit of more and more inequality

impacts inequality. Is this more important than redistributive conflict and property rights in historically driving economic development?

■ Both logics are at work. You have conflict between different interests and

groups, but I also want to stress the dimension of learning, deliberation, and intellectual or ideological dimensions.

Pure class conflict in itself does not determine a unique outcome in terms of institutions, policy and legal systems. Your class position, though it is important, does not fully determine your view of the world about how the property rights, tax and educational and frontier systems should be organised. What kinds of relations should you have with other countries? There is an international and transnational dimension of the inequality regime, which is very important. The pure, class-conflict view of the world does not really allow for this rich set of ideologies to play their full role.

However, if you give a big-

ger role for ideas and intellectual transformation, that means that democracy has a role to play, that indeed you also have a theory of elections and deliberation, and you should pay a lot of attention to how this is organised, how you form political parties, and the role of the media.

We have in recent years seen the tendency towards the ideologies of nationalism, populism, protectionism and nativism, across countries. Do you think that this direction of systemic change, said to be linked to disappointment with Bretton Woods institutions, will be exacerbated or turned back by the COVID-19 pandemic?

■ There is a risk that the pandemic could reinforce pre-

existing trends of nationalism and a return to the frontier and identity of the nation state.

But I think this will not last forever, because in the end, nationalism is not going to solve the big challenges of the day, including global warming, inequality, public lands problems. It will require cooperation, some form of internationalism.

Even in the short run, nationalism will not necessarily win the day if something else is being promoted and proposed by political actors. The problem that starting with the Bretton Woods systems and the rise of neo-liberalism, we have organised globalism, internationalism and the international economy in a way that has been very beneficial for the highest wealth and highest human capital individuals.

But that is forgetting social and redistributive objectives. We have to rebuild internationalism in a different manner.

For instance, you cannot trade or have free capital flow between any two countries, if at the same time you do not have some common regulation and taxation of the most powerful economic actors, or if you do not have some system or targets for carbon emissions, and taxing those who do not respect these targets, or if you do not have social rules about minimum wages.

If we do not move in that direction, then nationalism will win the day because it at least proposes to break with the current system of globalisation with no sort of regulation of any kind, and which people are not convinced by any more.

Board exams exempted from lockdown steps

Home Ministry says students, teachers must compulsorily wear masks; thermal screening should be done at the centres

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Union Home Ministry on Wednesday exempted the pending Class 10 and 12 examinations to be conducted by the State and Central Boards from the lockdown. Students and teachers will have to wear masks compulsorily, and there should be provision for thermal screening and sanitisers at all examination centres.

Home Minister Amit Shah tweeted on Wednesday, "Taking into consideration the academic interest of large number of students, it has been decided to grant exemption from the lockdown measures to conduct Board



Long hiatus: Students were in the middle of the Board exams when the lockdown was imposed. ■ SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

examination for classes 10th & 12th, with few conditions like social distancing, face mask etc, for their safety."

Several State Boards and the Central Board of Secondary Education were about to start, or were in the mid-

dle of, the examinations when the lockdown was imposed. The CBSE recently released the date sheet of the remaining 29 papers of Classes 10 and 12 to be held from July 1 to July 15.

Kerala postponement
Earlier this week, the Kerala government postponed the Secondary School Leaving Certificate, higher secondary and vocational higher secondary examinations to be held in the last week of May as the lockdown was extended.

Under the fresh lockdown measures guidelines issued by the Ministry under the Disaster Management Act, 2005 on May 17, opening of

schools has been prohibited. States and the Union Territories for transportation of students to the examination centres."

Admit cards

Asked how the students living in containment zones will be allowed to take the examinations, a senior Ministry official said, "They should be allowed with their admit card. Earlier also students living in curfew-hit areas have been allowed on the basis of admit cards."

The Ministry said examination schedules should be staggered and "special buses may be arranged by

1,041 returnees have tested positive, says U.P.

Spike in number due to influx: govt.

OMAR RASHID
LUCKNOW

muddin and their contacts who tested positive in the State stood at 1,040 on Tuesday, as per the government.

A total of 1,041 inter-State migrants have tested positive in Uttar Pradesh so far, the State Health department said. This is out of a total of 5,175 cases in the State as of Wednesday, while the death toll went up to 127.

While the government officials have of late stressed that the COVID-19 load in U.P. had increased due to the influx of migrants workers, this is the first time the government has acknowledged it in terms of figures.

Compared to this, the number of persons linked to the event in Delhi's Niza-

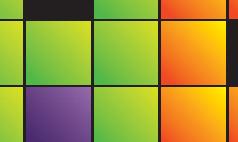
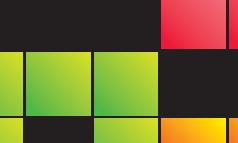
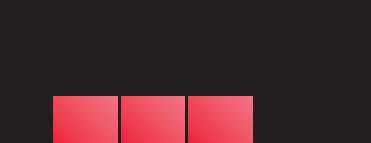
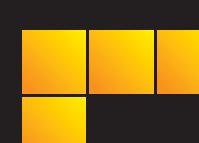
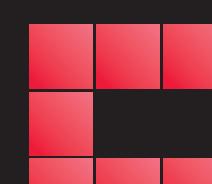
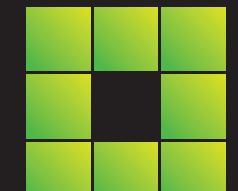


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+ Assam lets off 308 'foreigners'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GUWAHATI

A court directive to decongest Assam's infamous detention centres to prevent COVID-19 has led to the release of 308 "declared foreigners".

Prison officials said most of those who fulfil the conditions of release set by the Supreme Court on April 13 had been released. The remaining few would be released when formalities such as securing sureties were completed.

Till Tuesday, 3,396 prisoners were released from jails across Assam according to the Supreme Court's March 23 directive to decongest jails. We have also released 308 of the 802 declared foreigners from the detention centres," Inspector-General of Prisons Dasarath Das told *The Hindu* on Wednesday.

A declared foreigner, or DF, is a person so marked by any of 100 Foreigners' Tribunals (FTs) in Assam for allegedly failing to prove their citizenship after the State Police's Border wing detects him or her as an illegal immigrant.

The programme was



Indu Bhushan

launched in September 2018. "The National Health Authority (NHA), mandated to implement AB-PMJAY, has focused on how to get the private sector more actively involved in offering treatment for both COVID-19 as well as non-COVID-19 health conditions," the AB-PMJAY said.

It added that to increase the number of hospitals providing COVID-19 treatment and to ensure continued treatment such as haemodialysis, cardiovascular procedures, and chemotherapy for non-COVID-19 critical illnesses, the NHA had started an express empanelment

机制 with less stringent criteria for temporary empanelment of hospitals in March, when COVID-19 cases started rising in the country.

Among the 21,565 hospitals, more than 1,385 have been empanelled since April 1. Of this, 1,310 are through the regular empanelment route and the remaining 75 under express empanelment.

Of the total new hospitals on board, nearly 58% per cent are private ones.

Indu Bhushan, CEO, AB PM-JAY and NHA, said: "We have also supported COVID-19 preparedness and response in the form of managing the national COVID-19 helpline 1075 besides strengthening our network of hospitals and service capabilities to ensure continued service delivery to non-COVID-19 patients under the scheme."

More than 600-700 dedicated agents were answering calls round the clock, he added.

60% of farmers faced losses, finds survey

Majority say lockdown has hurt their preparations for the coming sowing season

PRISCILLA JEBARAJ
NEW DELHI

Most farmers managed to harvest their crops despite the COVID-19 pandemic, but 60% of them still faced losses, mostly related to the lockdown, according to a new survey in 12 States. A majority of farmers also say the lockdown has hurt their preparations for the upcoming sowing season either because they cannot afford inputs such as seeds and fertilizer or because of labour shortages.

The situation is worse for

wage workers, with four out of five seeing their incomes fall over the last month. On average, wages were 76% lower compared to the same time last year.

These are some of the findings from a telephonic survey of almost 1,500 agricultural households in 200 districts of 12 large States, conducted in the first half of May by researchers from Harvard University's T.H. Chan School of Public Health, in association with the Public Health Foundation of India and the Centre

for Sustainable Agriculture, Hyderabad. This was a baseline survey, and is expected to be repeated in June and July, to track the impact of the pandemic on agriculture and food security.

The survey found that 26% of respondents had harvested a crop in the past month, while 26% said this was not a harvesting season for them. Only 10% were unable to harvest their rabi or winter season crop, due to lockdown-related issues such as low market prices, difficulty in market access,

government curbs and a shortage of labour and machinery.

The situation becomes more complicated when looking at different crops and different States. Wheat is the biggest rabi crop and harvesting rates were especially high in northern States like Punjab (95%) and Haryana (81%) which also have high rates of mechanisation. However, while almost 90% of the wheat harvested in Punjab has already been sold, that figure falls to just above 60% for Haryana.

Miss watching your favourite players in action? With IPL postponed indefinitely, like the rest of us, cricketers are doing laundry, cooking and eating chocolate. We check in on them

VIJAY LOKAPALLY

**HARBAJAN SINGH**

Hinaya Heer is Harbhajan Singh's "best friend" and he just adores her. The three-year-old is the "fairy" who has brought such "joy" to his life, he says. "My daughter is my world and I am loving every moment that I get to spend with her," says the jovial off-spinner.

Harbhajan says that he has learnt to live differently in these testing times. "My day is dictated by Hinaya. She keeps me on my toes. She has learned a card game called UNO, and I have to play it endlessly. It is an interesting game and becomes all the more interesting because of the rules that she sets. Anyone can win, but in my house only Hinaya wins. That's how the game pans out. I love losing (to her) actually," Harbhajan says.

He is also using the time to learn wcooking. "It has become a hobby now. I have picked up quite a few recipes such as bhindi aamchuri, aloo gobi, arbi with gravy and dal with different tadkas. I have been experimenting too with my cooking and have earned the appreciation of (wife) Geeta. I have come a long way from having corn flakes for dinner when I was playing county cricket in England," says Harbhajan.

On not being able to play the IPL for CSK, Harbhajan says, "There is a beautiful life outside cricket and I am discovering it with my family. Yes, I miss the sport but I also realise that these are exceptional circumstances where cricket can't be your priority. I am very distressed at the plight of the poor who are struggling to stay afloat."



Reverse sweep on a home pitch

SHIKHAR DHAWAN

Shikhar Dhawan is known to make bowlers dance to his tunes at the crease. Now, with COVID-19 confining him to the serene ambience of his home, Shikhar has discovered new ways to keep himself engaged. A flute has come to replace the bat.

"I have two compartments in my life — cricket and family. Now it is just family. Cricket will be there whenever we resume playing. Until then, it will be my family and me. And of course my love for playing the flute," says Shikhar, who plays for Delhi Capitals in the IPL.

He says always wanted to learn the flute. "I have my guru in Shri Venugopal of Dharwar. I have been taking lessons from him since 2015 and I am pleased with my progress. I have maintained my daily schedule of training, gym work, meditation, cooking, cleaning and washing like everyone else but my sessions of learning the flute are the ones I look forward to."

Shikhar has specialised in some of the ragas and the flute weans him away from the negativity that has gripped people. For him, setting aside time to play with his six-year-old son Zoravar is "special". This "bonding" with the family is to be "cherished", he asserts. "I love spirituality. It teaches you the values of being a good human being. There is so much to learn and enjoy. Why sulk at things beyond your control. There is no place for despondency in my life."

Dhawan signs off with a promise. "Someday I would love to play the flute for you at a concert."

**SURESH RAINA**

For Suresh Raina, who plays for CSK, COVID-19 has rekindled memories of time spent at the Sports Hostel in Kanpur, where he was training to become a cricketer. "Cooking, washing clothes, cleaning floors were an integral part of my daily chores at the hostel. COVID-19 has taught us all some harsh lessons in life that we had forgotten or chosen to ignore. I am lucky to be able to have a home where I am looking after my family but I am deeply pained by the misery around," says Raina.

Used to a hectic lifestyle of living out of a suitcase for 10 months a year, performing in front of thousands of spectators at packed stadiums, Raina settles down to reflect on his life and career. "Cricket is not on my mind really. Most of the day is taken away by my daughter (Gracia) and newborn son (Rio). They keep me very busy and I just love it when they demand attention. Seeing my daughter grow is such a lovely feeling. I have to be at her service 24x7."

The Porsche he drove around in Chennai during the Indian Premier League (IPL) is not in his garage any more. "Once I took my father for a drive in the Porsche. He said nothing but sold it off after convincing me. Not because he needed money. He wanted me to be safe. Too fast was what he did not like about the car. I now have five sports cycles for the family. There is one of Tour de France standard."

Apart from meditation, yoga and exercises, Raina loves one particular daily routine. "Combing my daughter's hair."



PRIYADESHINI S

Stay home, but keep your passion for travel going. This is the message from Tripathome, a video released by Kerala Tourism on April 30 amid the COVID-19 lockdown. "We are asking travellers to share an experience from the 'trip of their life' on our social media," says Rani George, Secretary, Kerala Tourism.

2020 was supposed to be a dream year for tourism in Kerala. In 2019, the State saw its sharpest spike in tourist arrivals, a 17.2% rise since 1996, with 1.96 crore travellers visiting.

But now the industry, which marketed Kerala's tourism potential and earned global recognition as God's Own Country, is staring at the reality of having to live with COVID-19. With Kerala being the bellwether for Indian tourism, all eyes are focussed on how the State opens up for travel.

"Right now, we are in a wait-and-watch mode, but are chalking out an action plan. If things improve, then we may begin marketing by July," says Rani.

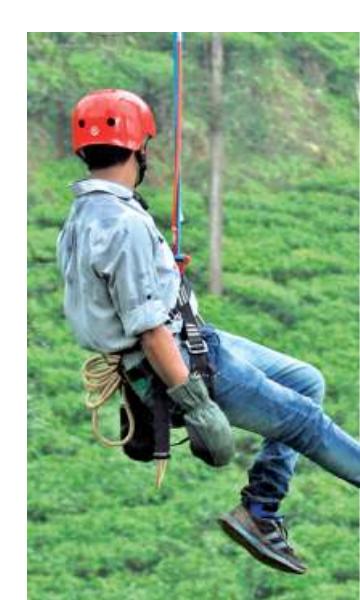
The Association of Tourism Trade Organisations India (ATTOI) has pitched its first proposal Keralam Kaanaam, which sug-

gests revival through regional and local tourism.

Former president of ATTOI, Anish Kumar PK, who is also CEO, The Travel Planners, is optimistic. "Kerala has managed the situation well and we are hoping that we will soon be Coronavirus-free. In that case, people will get the confidence to travel. We don't see international travel starting till the end of the year. Interstate travel too will take time, but travel within Kerala will be possible."

Under this scheme, around 80 hotels have come together to propose the opening of high-end boutique hotels and resorts to local tourists, affording them experiences that were tailor-made for the international guest.

"The tariff for a room per night was ₹10,000 and above. These will be available at discounted rates between 30% and 50%. This kind of high-priced leisure travel was outside the realm of the local traveller. This will allow inflow of cash required to maintain the hotel's staff and property and a fabulous experience for the guest," says Anish, adding that the proposal is for locals and details are on their website malayaliyatram.com. He clarifies that travel will begin only after all clearances are in



place and that the hotels will follow prescribed health guidelines.

"It can be the first step in travel and hospitality post COVID-19," says Anish, who believes that this scheme can be opened up to other states once inter-State travel is allowed. He also feels that other states will use this template when they reopen.

Rani agrees that "holidays in Kerala" will kick off first, followed by domestic travelling. Next will

be the business traveller, is her guess right now.

Adventures to the fore

Pradeep Murthy, director, Muddy Boots, an adventure travel company, and part of the Keralam Kaanaam consortium, makes a pitch for adventure travel as a possible option for a safe and fun experience post COVID-19.

"Malayalis haven't seen their own State. And this is true of people from all states. The key here has to be affordability. It has to be quick, short and cost-effective," he says, pointing out that the crisis affords Kerala Tourism a chance to reposition itself as an adventure tourism destination.

As one of the approved Government of India Adventure Tour Operators, Pradeep says that adventure tourism is inherently self-isolating and therefore in tune with self-distancing norms. "Kerala Tourism should pitch this, as it is the only State in India to mandate adventure tourism, having compulsory regulations regarding the activities."

Some of the adventure activities he offers are ziplining, Nature trek, bamboo rafting, kayaking,

cycling and hiking, which he says would be new for the locals.

Gopinath Parayil, founder, The Blue Yonder, and champion of responsible tourism, says, "It makes a lot of sense to focus on domestic tourism. How many people in Kasargod have seen the backwaters? This is a great know-your-neighbourhood initiative." He has formed resilientdestinations.com to tell stories of sustainable destinations as a response to the crisis. "Post COVID-19, travel and hospitality enterprises should promote transformational, conscious and responsible tourism. We can re-purpose our tools like how our hotel rooms supported the State during the crisis by opening for quarantine," says Gopi.

Sejoe Jose, CEO of Marvel Tours and president IATO (Indian Association of Tour Operators) Kerala Chapter, shares a survey finding conducted by Virtuoso, a global luxury travel network, which suggests that internationally, high-end and senior citizens, a popular profile of visitors to the State, will begin travel only after a COVID-19 vaccine is found. He says, "With the inflow of our regular segment of guests stopped, it makes good sense that we promote our destinations to our people."

Once global, now local

In a bid to restart tourism post COVID-19, industry stakeholders launch Keralam Kaanaam, an initiative to offer hotels and experiences to local travellers at competitive prices



Beauty local Discover the unexplored areas in your State when the lockdown lifts ■ MUDDY BOOTS

CM

YK

A ND-NDE

ABHISHEK GULSHAN

This year, with the silence on the roads and an extended spring, the distinctive song of the Asian Koel - *ko-EL-ko-EL-ko-EL* - has been better heard. Celebrated through history by poets and also captured for caging, this state bird of Puducherry, is now breeding across Delhi-NCR and is resident to South and South-East Asia.

Its scientific name *Eudynamys scolopaceus* signifies fine power, where the genus is derived from the Greek words *eu* meaning fine, *dunamis* meaning power and species *scolopacea* meaning long-billed.

Sexual dimorphism is evident, where males are a glossy black with a greenish sheen to their bodies and females are brown with white dots on their wings and heavy streaking on their head and throat. Both sexes have strong long greenish bills (beak) and captivating ruby-red eyes. In the bird world, the males are generally more pleasant looking than the females, considering they woo females. Personally, I prefer the way the female of this species looks.

Asian Koels, like crows, are omnivores, feeding on fruits, insects, lizards and eggs of birds and other animals but as adults, they largely depend on fruits (frugivores) of fig trees and certain other trees that they may defend voraciously. Considering its opportunistic omnivore diet, it thrives in varied habitats, in-

IN OUR BACKYARD

Birds of different feathers

The Asian Koel, unlike other cuckoos, is distinct in its appearance and can easily be identified when seen or heard



BEE DAY

May 20 was Bee Day, a good time to celebrate the most important pollinators in the world. What can we do for the bees around us?

1. Avoid using chemical insecticides and pesticides. These are poison for beneficial insects like bees and butterflies.
2. Leave wild patches in our gardens to attract them.
3. Plant bee-friendly flowers like Coatbuttons and flowering herbs like oregano.
4. Put out water for them to drink, in shallow containers with pebbles or lillies (these help minimise the depth of the container; the leaves and stones act as a perch).

Drama of the sexes (Above) the female Asian Koel, (top) the male

• SOHAIL MADAN, WIKIMEDIACOMMONS/K. HARI KRISHNAN

cluding the degraded urban setup where fruiting trees are in abundance.

The legend of this bird dates back to the Vedas in 2000 BC, where it is referred to as the *Anya-Vapa*, literally translating to 'that which was raised by others', the earliest mention of its behaviour of brood parasitism. Females lay eggs in nests of similar-sized birds (host) like crows, mynas, jungle babblers and in times of desperation, in nests of considerably smaller birds like the Common Tailorbird, Ashy Prinia. The males distract the host parents for the females to accomplish this task. Sometimes, a small Tailorbird will feed and care for a large baby Asian Koel, though we're not sure why other bird parents are not able to identify the different-looking bird or why they carry on even though they know they are not one of their own.

When I started birdwatching, back in 2012, I believed that the species somehow disappears in winters and magically appears as soon as spring arrives. In fact, the bird's nature of hiding in dense foliage and not calling when not breeding, makes it difficult to spot even for the keenest of birdwatching eyes.

The writer is the founder of NINOX - Owl About Nature, a nature-awareness initiative. He is the Delhi-NCR reviewer for Ebird, a Cornell University initiative, monitoring rare sightings of birds. He formerly led a programme of WWF India.

Lost Stories find stardom

DJ/producer duo Prayag Mehta and Rishab Joshi are on YouTube's Foundry 2020, a global artist development programme



In good company Prayag Mehta and Rishab Joshi

• SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

YouTube has announced DJ/producer duo Prayag Mehta and Rishab Joshi led Lost Stories as one of its top global picks for Foundry 2020, making them the first Indians to be chosen for this programme. Foundry is YouTube Music's artist development programme.

Prayag and Rishab blend Indian folk sounds with electronic music.

Some of their popular tracks include 'Bombay Dreams' with KSHMR, 'Maihi', their official remix of Alan Walker's 'Faded,' and 'Vaseegara' edit with Jonita Gandhi's vocals. The duo says, 'We are thrilled about the exposure and the chance to put India on the international music map.'

At the nursery, *bajra, makka* (corn), *kari-patta* (curry leaf), drumstick, basil and *baboon*, are also being planted. An eight-member team are presently working as bee conservators. They hail from the adjoining Nizamuddin Basti. 'We are communicating with them through video calling, to explain how to handle bees during the summer months,' he says.

our creations.'

Foundry began in 2016 as a series of workshops and content creation sessions at YouTube Spaces in Los Angeles, New York, and London, with the goal of providing artists tools to grow their presence on YouTube. Popular alumnus include Dua Lipa, ROSALIA, Dave, CUCO, Chloe x Halle, Jacob Collier, and Cavetown, all of whom partnered with the programme to catapult themselves into global stardom.

The class of 2020 will also feature Los Angeles singer-songwriter Adam Melchor, Puerto Rican trap artist Eladio Carrion, Brooklyn experimentalist Gabriel Garzon-Montano, Birmingham grime artist and actor Jaykae, Glasgow R&B singer Joesef, Los Angeles-based corridos trailblazer Nathaniel Cano, and Japanese indie rock band Novelbright among others.

Boon for bees

Due to the coronavirus lockdown, Delhi is witnessing an increase in the population of different bees

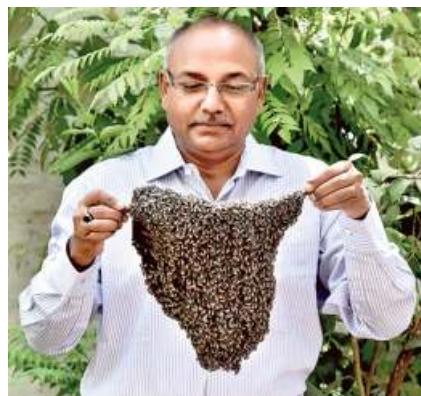
MADHUR TANKHA

The COVID-19 lockdown has been a blessing in disguise for bees. The parks maintained by NDMC – Lodhi Garden, Nehru Park, Talkotara Garden, Children's Park, amongst others – are witnessing an increase in the population of all variants of bees (mason, carpenter, leafcutter, bumble and leafcutter bees that are solitary in nature), but particularly of honey bees that live together and make honey.

Confirming this piece of news on World Bee Day, May 20, S. Chellaiah, Director of Horticulture NDMC, says the lockdown has helped the bee population of this variant to multiply. "In NDMC parks, the population of honey bees has increased by more than 30%. Honey bees play a vital role in our food security," he says.

Ironically, this is not because of any special effort of NDMC staff, 50% of whom hail from U.P. and Haryana, and have not been able to report for duty. "We are blessed with more than 250 shrubs. The rich biodiversity is good for them."

Agri-entrepreneur and bee-keeper Rakesh Gupta, says six bee hives have sprung up at Sunder Nursery during the lockdown. Gupta, who works with Golden Hive Foundation, says the reason is simple: when human interference is minimised, nature regenerates. Also, lower pollution levels have



Showing the way Rakesh Gupta, with a beehive • SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

helped. "Bees can be now living and breeding in isolation," he says, not without irony. "We are not taking honey from the hives as the focus is on regenerating the bees. We do not want cause discomfort to the bees."

Unlike Asiatic, mason, carpenter, leafcutter

ter that are all solitary bees, Honey bee is the social bee. It lives together and provides honey.

To work towards keeping bee populations up, Gupta's organisation, along with the Aga Khan Trust for Culture is planning to ensure the continuity of flowers after spring peters out and the harsh summer hits. "In summer we are focusing on sunflowers of the open pollinated variety. Sunflower has both nectar and pollen for the bees," he says, adding that they will be planted in a staggered way to ensure continuous supply.

"We are not taking honey from the hives," he says. "The focus is not on extracting honey, but on regenerating the bees."

At the nursery, *bajra, makka* (corn), *kari-patta* (curry leaf), drumstick, basil and *baboon*, are also being planted. An eight-member team are presently working as bee conservators. They hail from the adjoining Nizamuddin Basti. "We are communicating with them through video calling, to explain how to handle bees during the summer months," he says.

POOCH CAFE



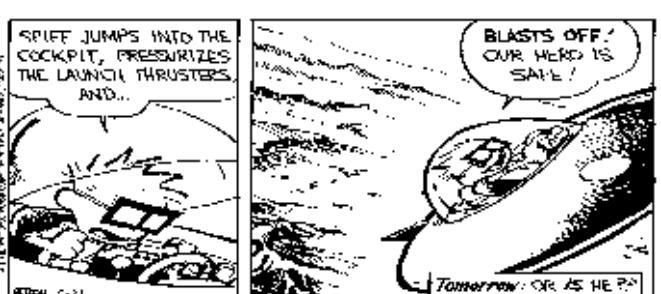
PEANUTS



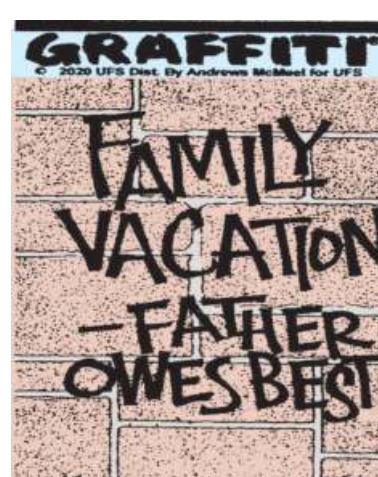
HAGAR THE HORRIBLE



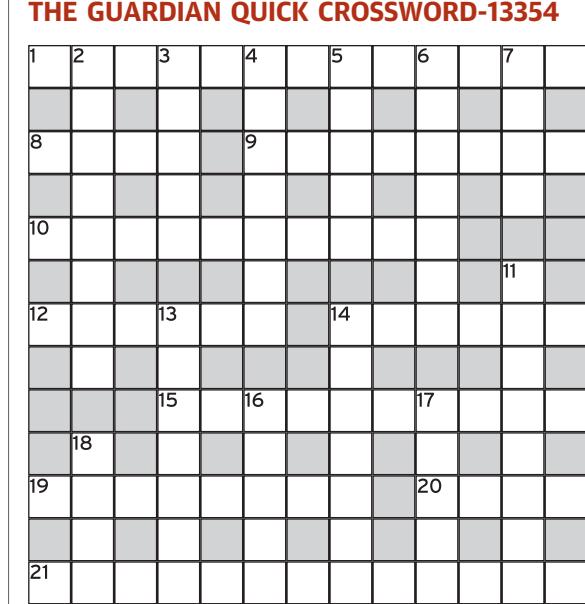
CALVIN AND HOBBES



TIGER



THE GUARDIAN QUICK CROSSWORD-13354



To play The Guardian Quick Crossword, The Hindu Cryptic crossword, Sudoku & other puzzles online, scan the QR code.

drinking ale, typical of Munich (4,4)

13 Questioned intensely (7)

14 Handbill (7)

16 Robinson Crusoe's creator, d. 1731 (5)

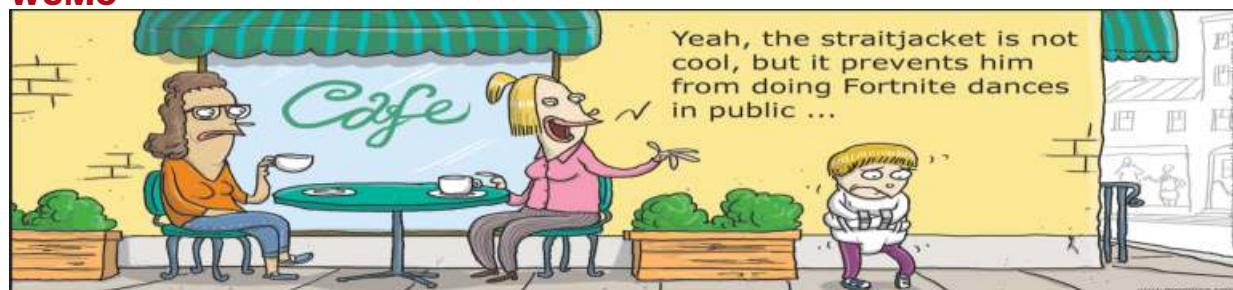
17 Hit on the head (5)

18 Hold back (4)

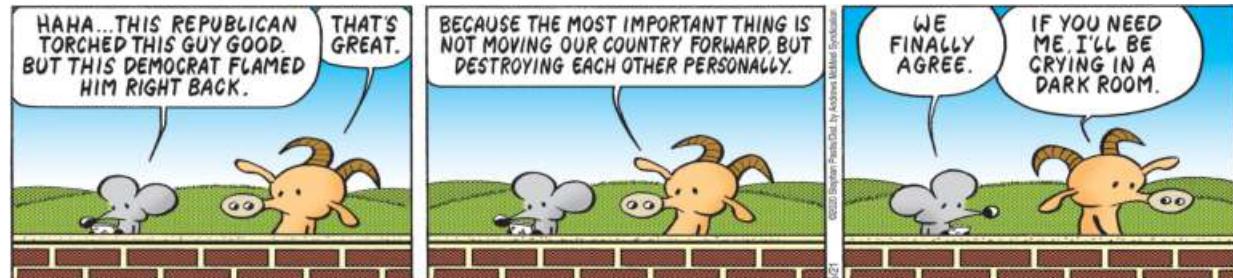
The solution will appear on May 23, 2020.

Solution No. 13353

WUMO



PEARLS BEFORE SWINE



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CM YK

AN-DO

'Vaccine will be for global public good'

Top U.S. health expert Francis Collins says it has to be quickly shared with the world

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

WASHINGTON

If the United States is the first to develop an effective vaccine against the COVID-19, it has to quickly share it with the world, the head of the National Institutes of Health, Francis Collins, told AFP in an interview.

President Donald Trump's administration has suggested that while it would share its scientific knowhow, it would prioritise the production of doses for the U.S. population from the get-go.

But Mr. Collins said he



Mounting casualties: Relatives of a deceased person during a mass burial of COVID-19 victims at the Parque Taruma cemetery in Manaus, Brazil. ■ GETTY IMAGES

"absolutely" agrees with the French and Chinese leaders that a vaccine should be what they have called a "global public good," and expressed particular concern for countries in Africa.

"Certainly if we had a vaccine that works, I would want to be sure as quickly as possible, it is available there (Africa) and in South America – look at Brazil right now," Mr. Collins said.

"We have a great deal of responsibility. We, as the richest nation in the world, need not to just take care of ourselves. That would be a terrible outcome."

NIH – one of the world's top research centres with a \$42 billion budget – is partnering with private companies in the frantic race to find a vaccine against the deadly virus, which has killed more than 3,20,000 people around the world.

The U.S. administration has set a goal of producing 300 million doses by January – enough to vaccinate the entire population.

But if the U.S. succeeds, should it be required to export some of those doses to vulnerable populations in

Brazil posts its worst toll with third highest cases

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

RIO DE JANEIRO

Brazil has seen a record number of coronavirus deaths as the pandemic that has swept across the world begins to hit Latin America with its full force.

After Asia, Europe and North America, Latin America has seen coronavirus infections surge in recent days and now accounts for about 5,80,000 of the world's nearly five million confirmed cases.

Brazil has been hardest-

hit in the region, rising to the third-highest number of cases in the world, as Peru, Mexico and Chile also see steady increases in infections. Health officials reported 1,179 deaths on Tuesday, the first time the daily toll exceeded 1,000, but far-right President Jair Bolsonaro remains bitterly opposed to lockdowns.

Health Ministry has recommended using chloroquine and hydroxychloroquine to treat even mild cases of COVID-19.

other countries, instead of offering it to otherwise healthy Americans?

Mr. Collins says yes, while cautioning that any forecast is based on "a lot of hope."

"Personally, I would certainly think that should be a matter of greatest attention

and not sometime in 2022," he said.

Tentative hope

"Maybe even as soon as the end of this year when we actually have the ability to do so."

One of the more advanced

Russia reports record high death toll

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

MOSCOW

Russia on Wednesday reported its highest ever COVID-19 death toll of 135, bringing the country's total fatalities to nearly 3,000. Overall infections crossed 3,00,000, but the number of active cases dropped for the first time. Russia has recorded far fewer deaths, but critics have cast doubt on the low official mortality rate and accused authorities of under-reporting.

experimental vaccine projects in the world so far is the one undertaken by U.S. biotech firm Moderna, which is working with the NIH.

The company, which got a government grant of nearly \$500 million, reported promising early results from its

first clinical tests on a small number of volunteers on Monday.

The U.S. government has also signed a contract with Paris-based pharmaceuticals group Sanofi, in order to ensure it gets priority on future vaccine production.

That deal sparked outrage in France, forcing the company to clarify that such priority would only be granted for vaccine doses produced in the group's U.S. factories.

Mr. Collins – a doctor and geneticist who has been the NIH director since 2009, serving under Barack Obama and Mr. Trump – admits that U.S. approach could be seen as "America First."

Global cooperation

But the 70-year-old insists that international cooperation in the scientific community is happening.

"Everybody ought to have a chance to get access to something that may save their lives at a time of a pandemic like this," he said. "And we will do everything we can to work with other agencies and other countries to try to make that happen."

When asked if labs should be able to profit from a product seen as a "global public good" for the world's more than seven billion inhabitants, Collins is equivocal. "I don't think they should make a windfall, that's for sure," he said.

"I do think you have to be clear that companies are going to be spending billions of dollars to produce these vaccines, and you can't expect that they should simply absorb that," he explained.

"There has to be some reasonable compensation but they should not be in a circumstance where this turns into a big boost to their bottom line."

The U.S. has been pushing back against China on other

'Border disputes a reminder of the threat posed by China'

U.S. continues to see provocations by Beijing, says top official

SIRIRAM LAKSHMAN

The U.S.'s top diplomat for South and Central Asia, Alice Wells, called the recent tensions between India and China along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) a reminder of the "threat" posed by China. Her comments come at a time when the U.S.-China relationship, already strained due to trade disputes, has further deteriorated over U.S. accusations of China's mismanagement of the coronavirus pandemic.



Alice Wells, U.S. top envoy for South and Central Asia. ■ AFP

fronts as well. China's global infrastructure projects under the Belt Road Initiative (BRI) are a case in point.

In response to the controversy between the ruling Nepal Congress Party and the opposition Nepal Communist Party over the U.S.'s grant assistance of \$500 million via its Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC), Ms. Wells said the controversy was "disturbing" and expressed confidence that Nepal wasn't being dictated to by China. Nepal's Parliament will need to ratify the MCC grant before it can take effect. The assistance has been seen as an alternative to China's BRI, which Nepal has signed on to.

"The fact that this grant assistance – not a loan – and the potential of this grant assistance has become a political football is disturbing," Ms. Wells said.

Trade deal with India

On the prospects of India and the U.S. reaching a limited trade deal – the two countries had hoped to conclude it in time for Mr. Trump's visit to India in February – Ms. Wells said the

momentum was "very much present" and the countries were working towards a deal but she could not predict when a deal would be concluded by the end of this year. She said there were concerns that India still remained a "quite protected market that can be difficult and sometimes not provide a level-playing field for foreign companies."

"I think what we should focus on, again, is this post-pandemic environment, when countries are looking at a little bit of de-globalisation and on-shoring of more of the critical production... at the same time that that's taking place, I think there's a very vigorous effort to diversify supply chains."

Adopting more open and welcoming policies and reducing tariffs would help India make use of an opportunity, Ms. Wells said, highlighting the critically important role that India would play in the treatment and health of the world, with its vaccine, pharmaceutical and generic drug production.

Ms. Wells is due to retire from a decades-long diplomatic career at the end of this month.

Joe Biden wins primary in Oregon

ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON

Former Vice President Joe Biden won Oregon's Democratic presidential primary, outpacing Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders and Massachusetts Senator Elizabeth Warren, who both suspended their campaigns earlier in the year.

President Donald Trump, who was unopposed, won the Oregon GOP presidential contest.

In the Republican Senate primary, Jo Rae Perkins won. Mr. Perkins will face Democratic incumbent Senator Jeff Merkley.

The mail-in primary was complicated by the coronavirus pandemic, as election workers kept social distancing in county offices while staffing levels were down. Election workers handled ballots with protective equipment.

Committed to deal with U.S.: Taliban

Its leader urges America 'not to waste' the opportunity to end war in Afghanistan

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

KABUL

The leader of the Taliban said on Wednesday that militants were committed to a landmark deal with the U.S., despite being accused of carrying out thousands of attacks in Afghanistan since it was signed.

In a rare message released ahead of the end of the Islamic holy month of Ramzan next week, Haibatullah Akhundzada urged Washington "not to waste" the opportunity offered by the deal to end America's longest war.

"The Islamic Emirate is committed to the agreement... and urges the other side to honour its own commitments and not allow this critical opportunity to go waste," Akhundzada said in a statement, using the name the Taliban called Afghanistan when they were in power.

Akhundzada is a hardline religious scholar and a former head of the Taliban courts



U.S. President Donald Trump's administration has made it a priority to end the war in Afghanistan, and in a bid to pull out foreign forces U.S. officials have been pushing the Taliban and government leaders to hold peace talks.

Under the U.S. accord the Taliban pledged to stop attacking cities and foreign troops, but militants have continued to target Afghan

forces in the provinces.

Emboldened Taliban

Analysts say the Taliban have been emboldened by the deal, and Afghan government officials have reported more than 3,800 attacks since it was signed, killing 420 civilians and wounding 906.

The U.S. official who brokered the deal with the Taliban said last week the militants had kept up their end of the bargain – even if recent violence violated the spirit of it.

"The Taliban have implemented their agreement not to attack the coalition forces," said Zalmay Khalilzad, the U.S. Special Representative to Afghanistan.

His remarks came after a horrific attack against a maternity hospital in Kabul that left dozens dead – including mothers and infants.

Important for India to be 'close' to Taliban, says U.S.

SUHASINI HAIDAR

NEW DELHI

Hindu during a briefing. Defending the U.S.-Taliban deal signed in February, Ms. Wells, who has worked closely with U.S. special envoy on Afghanistan reconciliation Zalmay Khalilzad, said that the agreement was in line with U.S. President Donald Trump's "South Asia Strategy" announced in 2017, which included four core principles: the push for a solution in Afghanistan "via a political dialogue and not on the battlefield", troops pullout decided by the situation on the ground, the condition that Pakistan would take action against militant groups on its soil, and India would remain an "important" player on development assistance.

She also said the U.S. had built "solid cooperation" with Pakistan on bringing the Taliban to the table for talks, and on action against terror groups.

Abbas says Israel's annexation plan has derailed Oslo accord

'PLO, Palestine state are absolved of all deals with Israel, U.S.'

DAVID M. HALBFINGER
ADAM RASGON

JERUSALEM

Raising the stakes over Israel's drive to annex land the Palestinians have long claimed, President Mahmoud Abbas of the Palestinian Authority on Tuesday angrily declared it free of its commitments under the Oslo peace process, including security understandings that have protected Israelis and preserved the authority's political hold over the occupied West Bank.

For a change, several senior Palestinian officials insisted, Mr. Abbas was not making a mere threat.

The Palestine Liberation Organization and the State of Palestine are absolved, as



clude all security agreements.

Mr. Abbas said his move was a response to the new Israeli government's push to annex large portions of the West Bank.

In the recent Israeli election, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu campaigned for right-wing support on a promise to extend Israeli sovereignty over the Jordan Valley and Jewish settlements totalling about 30% of the territory.

Mr. Abbas argued that Israel had "annulled the Oslo agreement" and the ensuing pacts that built upon it. Mr. Abbas, however, did not set out a timetable or mechanisms for withdrawing from the agreements.

Cambridge varsity goes online till 2021

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

LONDON

Cambridge University will have no face-to-face lectures until summer 2021 at the earliest in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, a spokesman said on Wednesday.

It is the first U.K. university to set out its plans for the academic year starting in September.

"The university is constantly adapting to changing advice as it emerges during the pandemic," the university said.

"Given that it is likely that social distancing will continue to be required, the university has decided there will be no face-to-face lectures during the next academic year."

Lectures would continue to be available online.

Israel was behind a cyberattack on May 9 that disrupted operations at a major port in Iran, according to high-ranking intelligence officials and experts in West Asia who are kept informed of covert Israeli actions in the region.

The attack on the computer systems at the Shahid Rajaei port in the strategically important Strait of Hormuz was limited in scope, creating traffic jams of delivery trucks and some delays in shipments but causing no substantial or lasting damage.

Israel and Iran have recently been engaged in an exchange of attempted and successful cyberattacks, and the purpose of Israel's relatively small-scale effort at the port, according to intelligence officials, was to send a message to Tehran: Don't target Israeli infrastructure.

Officials in Israel initially decided the country should not retaliate for the attack on the water system, according to the intelligence sources, because its effect would have been minor even if it had succeeded.

The hacking of the port's computers came in direct response, those experts familiar with the decision-making process said, to a failed Iranian cyberattack on an Israeli water facility last month.

Tit-for-tat move: An Israeli flag placed near Mount Bental in the Israeli-annexed Golan Heights, in this file photo ■ AFP

But when the story of the attempted attack was published in Israeli media, government officials, led by Naftali Bennett in his last days as Defence Minister, thought Israel should react in the same token by targeting Iranian civilian infrastructure and then leaking that story to international news media.

Israel's responsibility for the cyberattack on the port was first reported by *The Washington Post*.

The incident that prompted the Israeli attack on the port happened April 24, when a pump at a municipal water system in the Sharon region of central Israel stopped working. The facility's computer system resumed pump operation in a short time but also recorded the occurrence as an exceptional event. The attack and its quality were described by an intelligence official as "miserable." ■ NY TIMES

MARKET WATCH

	20-05-2020	% CHANGE
Sensex	30,819	2.06
US Dollar	75.80	-0.19
Brent oil	36.32	4.18

NIFTY 50

	PRICE	CHANGE
Adani Ports	323.75	4.55
Asian Paints	1500.05	-3.90
Axis Bank	362.50	8.00
Bajaj Auto	2557.75	48.45
Bajaj Finance	4702.05	166.60
Bajaj Finserv	2042.80	77.85
Bharti Airtel	594.05	-4.75
BPCL	308.90	15.60
Britannia Ind	3127.85	23.85
Cipla	620.65	25.70
Coal India	123.25	-0.35
Dr Reddy's Lab	3910.20	210.60
Eicher Motors	13675.10	708.90
GAIL (India)	86.25	4.40
Grasim Ind	536.85	25.00
HCL Tech	526.75	8.50
HDFC	1627.00	87.15
HDFC Bank	857.10	26.45
Hero MotoCorp	2023.60	-49.90
Hindalco	120.80	3.50
Hind Unilever	1990.85	15.30
ICICI Bank	305.65	5.35
IndusInd Bank	357.30	-10.50
Bharti Infratech	200.85	-17.90
Infosys	669.55	0.95
Indian Oil Corp	74.10	2.05
ITC	175.75	5.00
JSW Steel	171.05	1.75
Kotak Bank	1160.10	29.65
L&T	835.00	38.65
MSM	405.05	22.15
Maruti Suzuki	4891.95	86.65
Nestle India Ltd.	16303.40	153.10
NTPC	92.90	1.85
ONGC	78.00	0.85
PowerGrid Corp	158.45	0.40
Reliance Ind	1433.70	24.80
State Bank	153.40	0.60
Shree Cement	19411.65	1070.90
Sun Pharma	455.75	14.05
Tata Motors	83.45	1.65
Tata Steel	283.20	11.20
TCS	1953.60	4.95
Tech Mahindra	519.20	6.60
Titan	848.70	21.90
UltraTech Cement	3528.50	90.35
UPL	356.55	16.90
Vedanta	88.55	-1.45
Wipro	184.95	0.55
Zee Entertainment	153.55	3.30

EXCHANGE RATES

CURRENCY	TT BUY	TT SELL
US Dollar	75.60	75.92
Euro	82.69	83.07
British Pound	92.66	93.09
Japanese Yen (100)	70.16	70.48
Chinese Yuan	10.64	10.69
Swiss Franc	78.16	78.50
Singapore Dollar	53.38	53.61
Canadian Dollar	54.30	54.54
Malaysian Ringgit	17.36	17.45
Australian Dollar	49.62	49.84

Source: Indian Bank

+ Insecticide ban: agrochem firms to be hit

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

MUMBAI The government has issued a draft order proposing a ban on import, manufacturing, sale, transport and distribution of 27 insecticides, a move that is likely to impact agro chemicals firms.

These insecticides may have a material impact on the revenues of agrochemical companies like Coromandel International, PI Industries, Dhanuka Agri-tech, Rallies India and UPL. The government has given 45 days to raise objections on the said draft.

After 45 days and notification in the official gazette, state governments will have to enforce the same.

Dr. Reddy's Q4 net surges 71% on generics business

Pharma firm declares 500% dividend

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

HYDERABAD Pharma major Dr. Reddy's Laboratories Ltd. has reported a more than 71% increase in consolidated net profit, as per Indian Accounting Standards, for the quarter ended March on the back of improved showing in the key global generics business, a turnaround in Europe market and new launches in North America.

The net profit stood at ₹781.1 crore against ₹455.4 crore in the corresponding period of the previous fiscal. Total income increased almost 10% to ₹4,522.5 crore. Total revenue from operations was more than 10% higher at ₹4,448.9 crore.

The sales was the highest for any quarter thus far, said chief financial officer Sammen Chakraborty, who, along with co-chairman and managing director G.V. Prasad and COO Erez Israeli ad-

Cabinet approves ₹3 lakh crore funding for MSMEs

NCGTC to guarantee credit to MSMEs; ₹3,110 crore foodgrain subsidy for migrant workers among other schemes to receive approval

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

MUMBAI/NEW DELHI

The Union Cabinet on Monday approved additional funding of up to ₹3 lakh crore to micro, small and medium enterprises (MSME) that was announced by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman last week as part of the ₹20 lakh crore economic package.

Under the scheme, 100% guarantee coverage will be provided by National Credit Guarantee Trustee Company Limited (NCGTC) to eligible MSMEs and interested borrowers of the MUDRA scheme, in the form of a Guaranteed Emergency Credit Line (GECL) facility, the government said.

The tenure of loan under this scheme will be four years with a moratorium period of one year on the principal amount. No guarantee fee will be charged by



Interest rates for loans extended by banks will be capped at 9.25% and those by NBFCs at 14%. ■ AP

NCGTC. Interest rates on loans extended by banks and financial institutions will be capped at 9.25%, and 14% for those extended by non-banking financial companies (NBFCs). The scheme would be applicable to all loans sanctioned under GECL till October 31, or till an amount of ₹3 lakh crore is sanc-

tioned, whichever is earlier.

"For this purpose, a corpus of ₹41,600 crore shall be provided by the Government of India, spread over the current and the next three financial years," the government said.

"All MSME borrower accounts with outstanding credit of up to ₹25 crore as on

February 29, 2020, which was less than or equal to 60 days past due as on that date, i.e., regular, SMA 0 and SMA 1 accounts, and with an annual turnover of up to ₹100 crore, would be eligible for GECL funding under the Scheme," the government said.

Bankers unimpressed

However, bankers said that since the government is not giving a direct guarantee, this may not solve the 'risk averse' issue that the lenders are facing.

"It is like the CGTMSE [Credit Guarantee Fund Trust for Micro and Small Enterprises] scheme. The claims will not be settled unconditionally. Questions will be asked... they may like to see the loan appraisal process once a claim is made when the borrower defaults," an official from a pu-

blic sector bank said.

Since the scheme is not directly guaranteed by the government, banks still have to attach a risk weight of 20% for the loans. And, if the claim is not settled, banks have to make provision in line with the age of default. The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs also approved the adoption of a new methodology for the auction of coal and lignite blocks on a revenue-sharing basis.

The government would probably issue a letter of comfort and based on that this corporation will issue guarantees and then when guarantees devolve, that is when banks will make a claim, which is likely in the next two to three financial years; so defaults will happen [over] a period of time.

And, the budgetary impact will be spread over a period of time," the chief executive of a government-owned bank said.

Among other proposals approved by the Cabinet on Wednesday was a subsidy of almost ₹3,110 crore for distribution of extra foodgrains to about eight crore migrant workers and their families.

The Cabinet also approved a new centrally-sponsored scheme to support micro food processing units at an outlay of ₹10,000 crore, the expenditure being shared by the Centre and the States on a 60:40 basis.

The scheme will be implemented over a five-year period and will benefit about two lakh self-help groups, farmer producer organisations and other small units through a credit-linked subsidy, providing money for working capital and tools, a marketing grant, skills training and technical upgrade.

It also approved the Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana, a scheme announced

in the 2020 Budget, to develop the fisheries sector over a five-year period.

Of the total investment of ₹20,050 crore, the Centre will spend ₹9,407 crore, the States ₹4,880 crore while beneficiaries themselves will have to invest about ₹5,763 crore.

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs also approved the adoption of a new methodology for the auction of coal and lignite blocks on a revenue-sharing basis. The tenure of coking coal linkage was increased to 30 years.

It will also permit commercial exploitation of coalbed methane in the mining lease area. Rebates in revenue share payments will be given in the event of an early production of coal from the mine. Further rebates will be offered for gasification of coal to encourage environment-friendly actions.

Cabinet okays NBFC liquidity plan

Scheme is a non-starter, says industry body FIDC

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

MUMBAI

The Union Cabinet on Monday approved a ₹30,000-crore special liquidity scheme for non-banking finance companies (NBFCs) and housing finance companies aimed at improving the cash position of these entities.

A special purpose vehicle (SPV) would be set up by a public sector bank to manage a Stressed Asset Fund (SAF) whose special securities would be guaranteed by the Government of India and purchased by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) only, the government said.

The proceeds of sale of such securities would be

used by the SPV to acquire short-term debt of NBFCs/HFCs. The scheme will be administered by the Department of Financial Services, which will issue the detailed guidelines.

"The SPV would issue securities as per requirement subject to the total amount of securities outstanding not exceeding ₹30,000 crore to be extended by the amount required as per the need," a statement by the government said.

"The securities issued by the SPV would be purchased by the RBI and the proceeds thereof, would be used by the SPV to acquire the debt of at least investment grade of short duration (residual

maturity of up to three months) of eligible NBFCs / HFCs," it added.

Raman Aggarwal, co-chairman, FIDC, the industry body of NBFCs, termed the scheme a non-starter due to the short tenure of the funds.

"The details of the special liquidity scheme has come as a disappointment," he said.

"The funds will be made available for a tenor of up to three months while a majority of the lending done is for a tenure of 2-3 years."

"In order to prevent any asset-liability mismatch, the expectation was for a tenure of three years," said Mr. Aggarwal.

against the fund house.

"Investors are likely to approach the high court as well as the Ministry of Finance, in addition to requesting SEBI to ensure their interests [were protected]," said Sumit Agrawal, partner, Regstreet Law Advisors and a former SEBI official.

"Miffed with what a Franklin Templeton global executive said, SEBI issued an advisory, which is neither here nor there in law, as it is neither a circular nor a specific order under section 11/1B which SEBI uses frequently."

"While this unusual advisory is well-intended for investors, it creates more questions than answers. One does not know the implication or consequences of it. There is no procedure or timeline provided; it does not

assuage investors' concern on the redemption value. It is unclear if SEBI is overseeing internal processes of FT and steps forward," added Mr. Agrawal. On May 7, the regulator issued a statement advising Franklin Templeton MF to focus on returning investor money while stressing the point that regulations were not responsible for the closure of the schemes.

"Investors can write to SEBI asking [for] action against Franklin Templeton Mutual Fund," said Anil Choudhary, partner, Finsec Law Advisors.

"After that, if they feel the regulator is not taking proper action and they feel aggrieved, they can move the high court, [which] can direct SEBI to investigate the matter in a time-bound manner," he added.

"As with the April instalment, the devolution of taxes has been calculated on the basis of tax receipts projected in Budget 2020-21 and not according to actuals, which have been much lower due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and lockdown."

Protect revenue

"

Government of India's prime objective has been protecting States' revenues & meeting

their liquidity requirements in their fight against #COVID19 global pandemic," said a Finance Ministry tweet, announcing the fund release.

On Tuesday, the Centre also released ₹5,005 crore to States as the first instalment of a Finance Commission grant for smaller cities.

grant 'in advance' to 28 States, pending the finalisation of operational guidelines. The funds are to be passed on directly to urban local bodies within 10 days, without any deduction by State Finance departments.

In case of a delay beyond 10 days, States will have to pay interest.

These are untied grants, meaning the funds can be used by local bodies for any location-specific needs, but cannot be used to pay salaries or other establishment expenditure.

Franklin Templeton investors mull action

Options for investors include moving the high court, SEBI and even approaching the SEC



Balaji fears for bowlers with ban on use of saliva

Says he is against legalising ball tampering and feels that a 'trial and error' method should be followed in handling the ball

S. DINAKAR
CHENNAI

Cricket has favoured batsmen since inception. And in the COVID-19 era, where natural body fluids, including saliva, will not be allowed to shine the ball with, the bowlers are likely to be marginalised even more.

Now there are calls for 'ball-tampering' to be legalised to restore a semblance of balance between the bat and the ball.

A feeling of *deja vu* is unavoidable considering the uproar Sandpapergate involving two of Australia's biggest names, Steve Smith and David Warner, caused not too long ago.

Former India paceman and Chennai Super Kings bowling coach L. Balaji fears for the bowlers in these times.

Polished and shiny

Balaji said to *The Hindu*, "From a young age, bowlers are trained to use sweat and



Trade secrets: L. Balaji reveals that Wasim Akram told him that when the ball started swinging, the Pakistani pacers never allowed the fielders to touch a part of the sphere. ■ FILE PHOTO

saliva on the ball to keep one side polished, shiny and lighter while the other side gradually becomes heavier."

Balaji, among the heroes of India's historic Test series triumph in Pakistan in

2004, elaborated, "In fact, the entire team 'works' on the ball to 'maintain' it. And the use of sweat and saliva is mandatory and legal."

The lanky former paceman observed, "For the pa-

cement to achieve conventional and reverse swing, or seam movement, and even for the spinners to get the ball to drift, the weight of the ball and how one side is maintained is vital."

He added, "Once the ball is looked after, factors such as crosswind, headwind, bowling with the breeze and the cloud cover play a part."

Fascinating conversation

Balaji recalled a fascinating conversation with Pakistani legend Wasim Akram on the subject.

"Akram told me once the ball started doing something, the Pakistani pacemen would not even allow the fielders to touch a part of the ball with their palm."

He elaborated, "Akram revealed the palm would be very sweaty and would make one side very heavy, disturbing the delicate balance needed for reverse swing."

As it is

Balaji said, "You see, the ball only swings conventionally and reverses for a few overs and at that point, when the sphere reaches that state, you have to leave the ball as

it is to inflict maximum damage during those phases."

He added, "The heavy and sweaty palm would alter that delicate balance. It's a science where the weight of the ball is crucial."

What are the options before the cricketing world now? Balaji is against legalising ball tampering.

"When you start tampering, where would you draw the line? How can you say so much tampering is legal and after that it is illegal?"

The ICC has also not allowed external substances such as Vaseline to shine the ball. There have been cases when the ball has swung excessively with Vaseline.

Balaji said, "We have to go by trial and error method. Perhaps a substance such as a sanitiser with which you clean tables and other surfaces can be tried on the ball. But I am not sure."

These are unprecedented times and the answers are complicated.

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IN BRIEF

Holding alleges CWI of misuse of BCCI donation

LONDON

Fast bowling great Michael Holding has alleged misuse of half a million US dollars that BCCI donated to Cricket West Indies for the benefit of its former players, besides raising serious questions on the financial management of the game's governing body in the island nations. On a YouTube show, Holding displayed the audit report of Pannell Kerr Foster (PKF) on cricket



governance in the Caribbean and raised several red flags. PTI

Carlsen in joint lead with three others

NEW DELHI

World champion Magnus Carlsen, Hikaru Nakamura, Wesley So and Sergey Karjakin shared with lead with three points after four rounds of the \$150,000 Lindores Abbey Rapid Challenge on Tuesday. **The results:** **Fourth round:** Magnus Carlsen (Nor, 3) drew with Hikaru Nakamura (USA, 3); Sergey Karjakin (Rus, 3) bt Jan-Krzysztof Duda (Pol, 1); Alexander Grischuk (Rus, 2)



Gaurav Bidhuri.

drew with Wesley So (USA, 3); Levon Aronian (Arm, 2) drew with Ding Liren (Chn, 2.5); Alireza Firouzja (FIDE, 1) drew with Yu Yangyi (Chn, 1.5); Daniil Dubov (Rus, 1) drew with Wei Yi (Chn, 1).

Third round: Liren drew with Carlsen; Nakamura bt Firouzja; Yangyi bt Dubov; Wei lost to So; Duda drew with So; Aronian drew with Grischuk.

Second round: Carlsen bt Aronian; Karjakin bt Yangyi; So bt Wei; Grischuk bt Duda; Dubov drew with Nakamura; Firouzja drew with Liren.

Intl. hockey only after vaccine is found: FIH

LAUSANNE

International hockey will restart only after a vaccine is developed for COVID-19, FIH said in a statement. It revealed a five-stage process: carefully managed training, regional competitions, travel between neighbouring nations, trans-continental tournaments and a return to competition after a vaccine is found. PTI



Ashwin begins training

CHENNAI

After nearly two months, R. Ashwin had his first taste of training on Wednesday after the government allowed the opening of stadiums. The India off-spinner, who trained at the Lalaji Omega International School, shared a short video on social media where he is seen bowling off a few steps.

Neuer extends stay at Bayern Munich

BERLIN

Germany goalkeeper Manuel Neuer signed a new deal with Bayern Munich on Wednesday, tying him to the club until 2023. AFP

Athletes and hockey players in quarantine

Cook at SAI Bengaluru dies of cardiac arrest, tests COVID positive

STAN RAYAN
KOCHE

Just when they were about to resume training, after receiving the green signal from the Ministry of Home Affairs and Sports Ministry, athletes and hockey players preparing for next year's Tokyo Olympics suffered a fresh blow after a cook employed with the Sports Authority of India's South Centre in Bengaluru passed away.

The senior cook, who had not been coming to the SAI campus after the lockdown began but had attended a meeting there on May 15, had died of cardiac arrest in a hospital on Monday. His sample had tested positive for COVID-19 on Tuesday.

The SAI confirmed, through a note, that the meeting was attended by 16 members at the auditorium near the administrative block and that social distancing norms were fol-

"The SAI administration is doing its best to handle the issue at hand and there is no reason to panic," the note quoted Batra as saying.

"The athletes did not attend that meeting but two or three from the administrative staff had gone for that. They have been quarantined and we too from Tuesday," said Jinson Johnson, Asian Games 1500m champion, from the Bengaluru centre on Wednesday.

About six race walkers and distance runners Gopi and I are here. We also have the Indian men's and women's hockey teams here".

Bidhuri dons role of motivational speaker

Y.B. SARANGI
KOLKATA

The motivational speaker in him is guiding top boxer Gaurav Bidhuri as he prepares to compete against five world class boxers in the qualifiers to make the grade for the Olympics in the 57kg category.

Bidhuri, who won a bronze in the 2017 World championship and has donned the role of a motivational speaker during the lockdown for students of IIT-

Hyderabad and Vellore Institute of Technology, believes he can prove his worth.

On same platform

"I never got to compete in the selection trials even though the people concerned said five of us are almost equal. Since the pandemic has put everyone on the same platform, I see a chance for myself," the 27-year-old told *The Hindu*.

Bidhuri, who has an attacking style, is working on

his foot movement and balance to gain more stability in the ring.

He has a pragmatic approach, though. "Even if I don't realise my Olympic dream, I will remain happy. It's not the end of the world.

"What's the point if you win an Olympic medal and still cannot be happy in life!

"Boxing is one aspect of my life. I also want to pursue motivational speaking skills and inspire people," said Bidhuri.

Iniyian's initiative an example for everyone: Kramnik

The Indian GM played 271 opponents over 74 hours to raise funds



Iniyian and Kramnik.

■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

CHESS

RAKESH RAO
NEW DELHI

Former World champion Vladimir Kramnik hailed Grandmaster P. Iniyian for his stupendous fund-raising effort to fight the COVID-19 pandemic.

Kramnik, in a video message, praised the 17-year-old.

"I thank Iniyian for his efforts. It doesn't actually matter how much money you manage to raise. I think it's a

very good initiative and a very important example for everyone," said Kramnik.

Between May 15 and 18, Iniyian's online 'chess marathon' generated more than ₹1.20 lakh. Incredibly, the youngster played 271 opponents spread over 74 hours.

Similar event

"We organised a similar charity event in Russia and managed to collect quite a serious amount of money for various hospitals," said

Kramnik. "With the pandemic all over the world, it is also a harsh but very useful reminder to all of us of some core values which we, in my opinion, forgot a bit, lately: that we are all human beings, we are all one unit in this world and we should be trying to be less individualistic.

"Maybe, we should pay less attention to consumption and try to help each other, especially in these difficult times."

High GST has adversely impacted horse racing: TAI

With revenues declining since 2017, the governing body has sought a rate-revision

VINAYAK M. ZODGE
MUMBAI

Horse racing is considered one among the best-regulated sports in the country. The horse industry with its agricultural-connect, supports over 5000 steeds stabled at various centres and over 20,000 livestock accommodated in 50 breeding farms.

The industry consumes feed and fodder produce of over ₹200 crore and in addition, left-over straw is used for bedding of horses. More than 3,50,000 families earn their livelihood through this industry.

The sport is governed under the auspices of six turf clubs in Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, West Bengal, and Delhi. Together they form an

umbrella body called the Turf Authorities of India (TAI), which promotes the sport.

It may be recalled that the Supreme Court, in a landmark ruling in 1996, had declared horse racing as a "Game of Skill and not a Game of Chance."

To arrest this fall, the TAI has constantly urged the Centre to levy the applicable GST on only the commissions/earnings of the respective clubs.

The Wagering and Betting Act empowers the various clubs to facilitate legal betting on racing.

The high GST has driven betting into illegal channels, leading to a steep fall in the collections (*see graphic*).

Zavaray Poonawalla, chairman of TAI, said: "I remain positive that we will succeed although a lot of hard work and time will be needed to take our efforts to its logical end."

James Anderson, Stuart Broad and Ben Stokes were due to resume training at their respective local county grounds on Wednesday.

Leander Paes was impressed by Shiny's suggestion of first having a cup of water to check the reality of a sudden feeling of hunger.

Pointing out how even simple food like fermented rice contained rich nutrients, Shiny said that it was important to know all the options and choose sensibly.

Talking about food allergies and intolerance, Shiny

said that "once the diet is

customised, there will be

marked improvement in

sharpness of mind, quick-

ness in decision making,

better recovery, improvement in muscle mass, etc."

Shiny Surendran.

taking during off-season, pre-

competition and injury-reha-

bilitation periods.

Advises athletes to choose their dietary options sensibly

KAMESH SRINIVASAN
NEW DELHI

As the most famous vegans

in world sport, Virat Kohli

and Novak Djokovic have the

power to drive millions

around the world onto their

path.

But nutritionist Shiny Su-

rendran warned athletes that

blindly following their her-

oes, completely avoiding ani-

mals, may not be a good idea

— especially if they don't in-

clude adequate alternate nu-

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