



Supreme Court allows Puri Jagannath Rath Yatra, with conditions

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Soldier dies in fresh ceasefire violation by Pakistan along LoC

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Mizoram experiences two earthquakes, many buildings damaged

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Exports down by about 10-12% so far in June, but improving: Goyal

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NEARBY



2,710 fresh cases reported in Tamil Nadu
CHENNAI
It was another all-time high for Tamil Nadu as it reported 2,710 new cases of COVID-19 on Monday. Of this, Chennai accounted for 1,487 cases. Monday's numbers took the State's overall tally past 60,000, while its recovery rate was nearly 55% and mortality rate 1.27%.

TAMIL NADU ► PAGE 2

After Chennai, now lockdown in Madurai

CHENNAI
After Chennai, the State government has announced an intensified lockdown from June 24 to 30 in the Madurai Corporation limits, Paravai town panchayat and village panchayats in Madurai East, Madurai West and Tirupparankundram blocks owing to the rising COVID-19 cases.

TAMIL NADU ► PAGE 2

Opt for aggressive testing, Collectors told

CHENNAI
In view of the spurt in influenza-like illness and severe acute respiratory infection in some districts, Chief Secretary K. Shanmugam on Monday asked all District Collectors to follow a strategy of "aggressive and focused testing" for early detection of COVID-19 cases.

TAMIL NADU ► PAGE 2

Amid military talks, reports of Chinese build-up at Pangong

Corps Commanders meet at Moldo; lake area remains most contentious issue

DINAKAR PERI
NEW DELHI

As the second round of talks at the Corps Commander-level were held on Monday to resolve differences on the disputed India-China boundary, there were reports of a Chinese troop build-up at Pangong Tso in eastern Ladakh. The meeting, which began around 11.30 a.m., continued late into the night.

The first round of Corps Commander talks on June 6 resulted in an important understanding for limited disengagement, but the consensus was breached after Indian troops were attacked on June 15 during the "de-escalation" process, resulting in the death of 20 soldiers, including a Colonel.

Monday's meeting was held at Moldo on the Chinese side opposite Chushul, a defence source said. The Indian side was led by Lieutenant General Harinder Singh, General Officer Commanding of the Leh-based 14 Corps, and the Chinese side by Major General Liu Lin, Commander of the South Xinjiang Military District.

Five locations

The talks are aimed at reducing tensions, continuing the disengagement agreed earlier and restoring the status quo ante prior to May 5 along the Line of Actual Con-



Mountain manoeuvres: An Indian fighter jet flies over a snow-clad range near Leh on Monday. ■ AFP

trol (LAC). On June 6, both sides mutually identified five locations of conflict — Patrolling Point (PP) 14, 15, 17A, North bank of Pangong Tso and Chushul.

Though tensions escalated at Galwan last week, the Pangong Tso area remains the most contentious issue. According to satellite images made available on Twitter by Nathan Ruser, researcher at the Australian Strategic Policy Institute, an independent think tank based in Canberra, China, which has moved up to Finger 4 since the beginning of the stand-off in May, has now undertaken a major build-up between Finger 4 and Finger 8 and also on the ridge lines overlooking Finger 4.

India holds the mountain spurs till Finger 4, while its

claim is till Finger 8. Defence sources had stated that Pangong Tso would take time to resolve and would be taken up at the Corps Commander level.

Spokesperson of China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs Zhao Lijian declined to respond to comments of Union Minister Gen. V.K. Singh (ret.) that China had lost more than 40 soldiers in the Galwan incident.

"I have no information to release on that," Mr. Zhao said in response to questions. China and India were in communication with each other to resolve the situation on the ground through diplomatic and military channels, he added.

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RELATED REPORTS ► PAGE 9

Manmohan cautions PM on remarks

Former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh has urged PM Narendra Modi to be "mindful" of the implications his remarks will have on national security and not allow them to vindicate China's position. Speaking for the first time after the Galwan clashes, he said, "Truth cannot be suppressed by having pliant allies spout comforting but false statements". ► PAGE 9

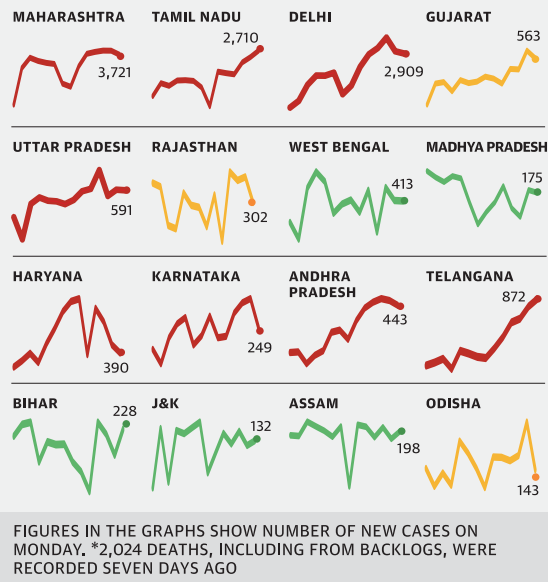
India to attend trilateral meet with China

External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar will take part in the Russia-India-China trilateral on Tuesday, in an indication that New Delhi is prepared to press on with diplomatic moves with Beijing despite the LAC face-off. Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi will also attend. Officials in Moscow and Delhi underlined that "no bilateral issues" would be discussed. ► PAGE 9

Fewer tests

Due to a drastic decrease in the number of samples tested on Sunday, the number of new cases also fell significantly. From 1.9 lakh on Saturday, the total samples tested fell to just over 1.4 lakh on Sunday. After crossing the 15,000 new cases mark in the past two days, the count on Monday came down to 13,363. States are classified based on where the cases are rising (red), dropping (green), or showing a mixed trend (orange).

NEW CASES AND DEATHS IN INDIA	
CASES 13,430	DEATHS 310
7 DAY-CHANGE +23.5%	7 DAY-CHANGE -84.7%*



CBSE to seek SC directive on exams

Board to submit its decision today

PRISCILLA JEBARAJ
SONAM SEHGAL
NEW DELHI

The Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) will inform the Supreme Court of its position on the pending Board examinations on Tuesday, and let the court take a final call on cancellation, according to senior officials at the Human Resource Development Ministry.

The SC is hearing a plea by a group of parents of CBSE students who want the exams to be cancelled because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Last week, the CBSE counsel said the Board was in the process of taking a decision and would apprise the court of it at the next hearing on June 23.

"The matter is in the court. The CBSE will communicate its position to the court in a closed cover, and then the court will decide," a senior official told *The Hindu*.

The CBSE is likely to offer an alternative assessment methodology in lieu of examinations, such as using



The CBSE may fall back on internal assessment scores or average marks of papers already completed. ► P11

internal assessment scores, or the average marks from already completed papers. Another possibility could be to allow students who wish to write the examination and improve their scores, to do so at a later date.

CISCE deadline

Also on Monday, the Bombay High Court extended the deadline for the Council for Indian School Certificate Examinations (CISCE) to declare its alternative methodology to June 25, after which students can make an informed choice on whether to write the exams that begin on July 1.

The CBSE's annual board examinations were suspended mid-way in March, leaving Class 12 students with pending papers. Class 12 students in northeast Delhi have more pending papers, as their exams had been previously disrupted by violence in the area.

CONTINUED ON
► PAGE 8

Udumalpet murder: prime accused acquitted

MOHAMED IMRANULLAH S.
CHENNAI

The Madras High Court on Monday acquitted B. Chinnaasamy, the prime accused in the sensational 2016 Udumalpet Shankar murder case, of all charges and set aside the death sentence awarded to him by a trial court in December 2017.

Mr. Chinnaasamy, who belongs to a Thevar sect, had been accused of hiring contract killers to murder V. Shankar, an engineering student from a Scheduled Caste community, after the latter married his daughter C. Kowsalya.

Justices M. Sathyanarayanan and M. Nirmal Kumar ordered his release forthwith and the return of any amount paid by him as fine.

They also confirmed the acquittal of his wife, C. Annalakshmi, and her brother, P. Pandidurai.

The court also commuted to life imprisonment the death sentences that had been awarded to five of the accused.

It ordered that they should be made to undergo imprisonment for a minimum period of 25 years, without any remission whatsoever.

'FATHER'S ACQUITTAL AN INJUSTICE'
► PAGE 4

Parliament project returned for finer detailing

Delhi Urban Art Commission asks CPWD for details on landscape, parking, day-lighting, ventilation

DAMINI NATH
SIDHARTH RAVI
NEW DELHI

The Centre's proposal to construct a Parliament building in time for Independence Day in 2022 was not approved by the Delhi Urban Art Commission (DUAC) at a meeting earlier in June, according to sources involved in the approval process.

The project, which was cleared by an expert appraisal committee of the Union Environ-



Making way: The new structure will come up on a 10-acre plot near the existing Parliament building. ■ SANDEEP SAXENA

ment and Forests Ministry and the Central Vista Committee in April, was brought before the DUAC on June 5. The panel sent it back, asking the Central Public Works Department

for additional details, the sources said.

In a written response to *The Hindu* on Monday, HCP Design, Planning and Management, the CPWD's consultant for the larger Central Vista redevelopment project that includes the construction of a new Parlia-

ment, said the DUAC had requested for additional data to complete the application.

Formed by an Act of Parliament in 1973, the DUAC is meant to advise the Centre on matters of preservation, development and maintenance of the aesthetic quality of the capital's urban and environmental design.

"At present, the DUAC has requested additional details on provisions for landscape, parking, day-lighting and ventilation. Information on the same is being collated and will be submitted to the DUAC," an HCP statement said.

Asked if the project was still on

schedule, HCP said: "There is no impact on the timelines."

Though the project was considered over 15 days ago, the minutes of the meeting are yet to be uploaded on the DUAC website, which as on Monday evening only showed minutes of meetings that took place till May 29. Minutes of at least two meetings since then, including the one discussing the Parliament project, have not been uploaded yet, unlike the usual practice.

Multiple calls and messages to DUAC secretary Ruby Kaushal on Monday on reasons for the delay were not answered.

CONTINUED
ON ► PAGE 8

ARIEL



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2 TAMIL NADU

With 2,710 new cases, tally past 60,000

1,358 persons discharged; Chennai accounts for 1,487 fresh cases, taking its tally to 42,752

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI

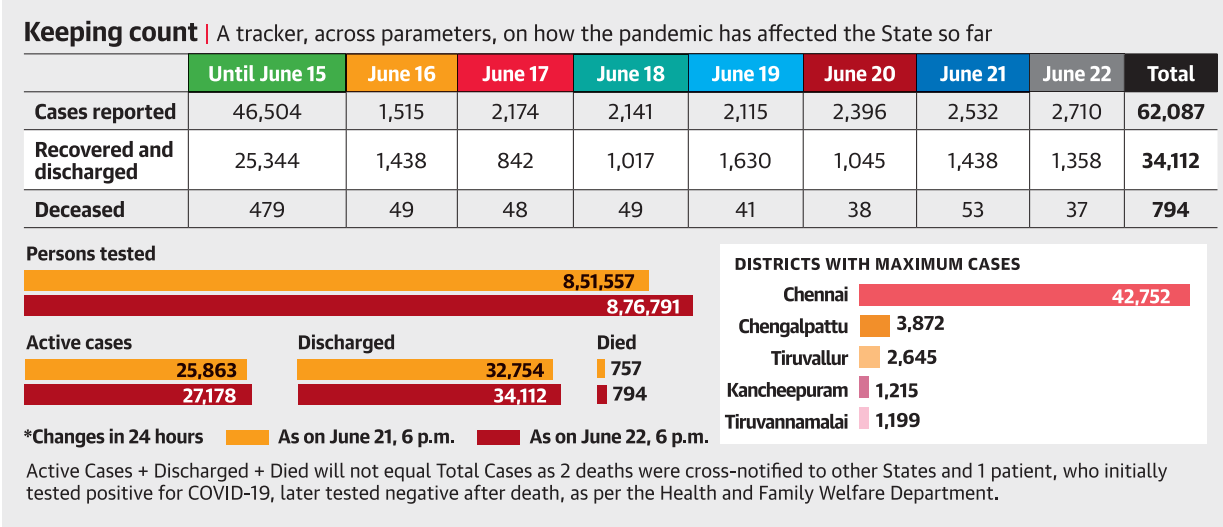
Tamil Nadu on Monday recorded a new high with 2,710 new cases of COVID-19. This took the State's tally past 60,000, while its recovery rate stood at nearly 55%, and mortality rate at 1.27%.

The State's tally stood at 62,087*, of which 27,178 were active cases. Another 1,358 persons were discharged and 37 persons succumbed to the infection. With this, the total number of persons discharged stood at 34,112, while the toll increased to 794.

The spike in cases continued in many districts across the State. In fact, there were new cases in all 37 districts. Of the total 2,652 indigenous cases, 1,165 were from districts other than Chennai. The State capital accounted for 1,487 of the fresh cases, taking its tally to 42,752. Its toll touched 623.

Madurai, that has been witnessing a rise in COVID-19 cases for the past few days, registered a sharp increase with 153 new cases. Tiruvannamalai followed with 130 cases. While Tiruvallur had 120 cases, Chengalpattu recorded 126 cases. There were 50 cases in Cuddalore, 56 in Kancheepuram, 52 in Ranipet, 57 in Thoothukudi and 51 in Tiruchi.

Apart from the indigenous cases, 58 returnees from oth-



er States and abroad also tested positive.

Doubling rate

Health Minister C. Vijayabaskar said that as per an epidemiological survey, the case doubling rate now was 15-16 days. “The doubling time was six to seven days in April and May. This proves that our strategy of aggressive testing, early diagnosis and proper treatment is right, and we are on the right path,” he said.

He pointed out that the lockdown in Chennai was aimed at breaking the chain of transmission. “We are conducting fever camps in Chennai through 253 mobile medical units. A total of 530 camps are being held in a

day, and about 30,000 persons are being screened. This is aimed at slowing down disease transmission,” he said. A total of 14,814 doctors, staff nurses and paramedical personnel were appointed.

COVID-19

Stating that COVID-19 was a “biological calamity”, the Minister said that even the World Health Organisation, the Indian Council of Medical Research, the Union Health Ministry and other global experts were struggling to determine its spread and peak.

He said that convalescent plasma therapy was being

successfully carried out at the Rajiv Gandhi Government General Hospital. The Tamil Nadu Medical Services Corporation had procured life-saving drugs like tocilizumab and remdesivir, that was being distributed to government medical college hospitals in Chennai and other districts, he said.

Tamil Nadu was testing more than many other State in the country like Maharashtra and Rajasthan, he said. The State had so far tested 9,19,204 samples. After testing over 30,000 samples in the last two days, the number of samples tested today stood at 26,592.

Among the 37 fatalities – 30 in government and seven in private hospitals – two

persons were aged 33. A woman with bronchial asthma died at a private hospital due to COVID-19 pneumonia and cardiopulmonary arrest on June 22. A man with systemic hypertension died at the Government Stanley Medical College Hospital due to bronchopneumonia and respiratory arrest.

One more private laboratory – Endocare Diagnostic Centre, K.K. Nagar, Madurai – has been approved for COVID-19 testing. As of now, there are 46 government testing facilities and 41 private laboratories in the State.

“This is inclusive of two deaths cross-notified to other States and one patient who died after testing negative for the infection”

After Chennai, Madurai’s turn for lockdown

Essential services like medical shops, ambulances to function during 7-day period

STAFF REPORTER
MADURAI

Days after a complete lockdown was imposed in Chennai and parts of its surrounding districts, the State government has announced an intensified lockdown from June 24 to 30 in Madurai Corporation limits, Paravai town panchayat and village panchayats in Madurai East, Madurai West and Tirupparankundram blocks, in the wake of the rising number of COVID-19 cases in the district. Only essential services like medical shops, pharmaceutical shops, hearse vehicle services and ambulances will be allowed to function.

On June 28 (Sunday), all shops, including grocery stores, will remain shut in these areas and only milk supply and medical stores/services will be allowed.

A government order, issued on Monday, said that Madurai Collector T.G. Vinay had insisted on restricting movement to contain the spread of COVID-19. The areas under lockdown are

Do aggressive testing, Chief Secretary tells Collectors

‘Test all persons, even those with one or two symptoms’

T. RAMAKRISHNAN
CHENNAI

Taking a dim view of the “spurt” in influenza-like illness (ILI) and severe acute respiratory infection (SARI) cases in some districts, Chief Secretary K. Shanmugam on Monday asked all District Collectors to follow a strategy of “aggressive and focussed testing” for achieving early detection of COVID-19 cases.

Calling upon the Collectors to step up surveillance and conduct fever camps, the Chief Secretary, in a circular, said that in such districts, the “geo-spatial spread” in habitations or streets should be studied to contain emerging clusters effectively by imposing “severe restrictions on movement”. The Collectors should also analyse the source of cases, on a daily basis to work out “appropriate intervention strategies”, the circular said.

Affected streets or habitations with comparatively more ILI cases can be completely screened. “The strategy should be to test all persons with symptoms, without any omission,” Mr. Shanmugam underscored, adding that “persons should be tested even if they have just one or two symptoms” such as fever, cough, sore



The Collectors were also told to analyse the source of cases, on a daily basis, to work out appropriate strategies. ■ R. ASHOK

throat or difficulty in breathing.

If COVID-19 cases are on the rise in slums or other congested areas, “high risk” families can be shifted to quarantine centres. The district administration should focus on “effective contact tracing, containment areas and quarantine management” as key strategies to control the disease, he said.

‘Early detection’

On bringing down the fatality rate, Mr. Shanmugam emphasised the importance of “early detection and early admission to hospitals”. Focussed testing should also cover the elderly and those with co-morbidities “who are at high risk”.

Collectors must “continuously review” the existing health infrastructure in

three verticals – COVID-19 hospitals (for severe cases), health centres (moderate cases) and care centres (mild and asymptomatic cases) – and ramp it up, if necessary. They should also ensure that the number of asymptomatic patients in hospitals is reduced for facilitating the admission of seriously-ill or co-morbid cases.

On the definition of a “containment area”, the Chief Secretary made it clear that it should have “three or more households with positive cases”. There should be “strict perimeter control” with proper supply of essentials through volunteers to the households concerned.

Mandatory wearing of face masks should be ensured and violators should be penalised.

CM has tested negative, says Minister

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI

Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami tested negative for COVID-19 on Monday, according to Health Minister C. Vijayabaskar.

“The government is transparent and is not hiding any information,” he said. Noting that the safety of front line workers was the priority for the government, he said that a small percentage of them had tested positive.

Referring to R. Jayanthi, dean of the Rajiv Gandhi Government General Hospital, who went on medical leave, the Minister said that the dean too had tested positive for COVID-19. “The dean has been working in COVID-19 management for the last three months, knowing that there were chances of being infected. In such circumstances, doctors testing positive isolate themselves, get treated and return to work. Their efforts should be appreciated,” he said.

COVID-19 ambulance fleet increased to 80 in Chennai

The number of trips by these services has seen a rise

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI

The 108 ambulance network has increased its COVID-19 dedicated fleet from 50 to 80 to cater to patients in Greater Chennai Corporation (GCC) limits.

Across the State, the network operates 223 ambulances, exclusively for COVID-19.

“As the COVID-19 case load increased in Chennai, we increased the number of ambulances deployed exclusively for COVID-19 patients to 80. There has also been an increase in the number of trips by these ambulances. Each ambulance now makes six to seven trips a day. On an average, seven patients are transported a day, per ambulance,” said M. Selvakumar, State head of operations, GVK EMRI, that operates the network.

Exclusive call centre

The number of COVID-19-related call flows to the 108’s



Across the State, the network operates 223 ambulances, exclusively for COVID-19. ■ B. VELANKANNI RAJ

Emergency Response Centre also increased, he said, adding: “In a bid to decongest, the Health Department decided to launch an exclusive 24x7 call centre for COVID-19 for GCC areas (044-40067108). The helpline has been receiving 500-600 calls a day. Health inspectors, after pooling details of patients in a particular area, contact the call centre. So, when they call the helpline,

each health inspector will cover at least 30 patients.”

The call centre was launched not just to decongest the call flow, but also to enable timely access to ambulances in Chennai, he added.

Mr. Selvakumar said that all these ambulances had separate manpower, that included ambulance pilots and emergency medical technicians.

June power bill to use previous month’s cycle

Method was followed for April, May too

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI

A large section of domestic consumers of the Tamil Nadu Generation and Distribution Corporation (Tangedco) will be billed as per the previous month cycle (PMC) due to the complete lockdown being imposed from June 19 to 30.

Tangedco has asked its section officials to adopt PMC for low tension and low tension commercial consumers for the second half of June.

Domestic consumers were already directed to pay as per PMC for April and May. Tangedco had also provided a model working sheet for arriving at the average bi-monthly consumption for April and June billing periods and for deducting the PMC payment made in April once the assessors began meter reading from June 1.

A senior Tangedco official, confirming the adoption of PMC for the full lockdown period from June 19 to 30, said that PMC was used for billing in April and May

due to the lockdown. Though door-to-door assessment of electricity meters began on June 1, the announcement of the full lockdown from June 19 had made the electricity board return to PMC for billing. Domestic consumers falling under the June billing cycle will have to pay as per PMC, for the second time.

Model working sheet

The official said that a model working sheet for calculating the billing amount had been issued and this would be used for calculating the electricity charges when meter reading begins in August. As per the model calculator, the assessors would take the meter reading in August and calculate the average units consumed for three bi-monthly periods (six months, from March to August).

Based on the total assessed amounts, the two PMC payments made for April and June would be subtracted and the net payable amount would be arrived at.

Stalin urges CM to follow SC order

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI

DMK president M.K. Stalin on Monday urged Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami to follow directions issued by the three-member bench of the Supreme Court on tackling COVID-19 and save the people of Tamil Nadu from the pandemic.

In a statement in Chennai, he alleged that the Chief Minister had thrown up his hands and “left the responsibility [of tackling COVID-19] to God”.

Recalling the court order for maintaining transparency when it came to prevention and treatment of COVID-19, Mr. Stalin said that the order had come as a solace to the people of Tamil Nadu, who were constantly living in fear. Mr. Palaniswami should now follow the order of the Supreme Court, he added. He said that besides asking the government to fix cameras in hospitals, the court had said that one family member of the patient should be allowed to stay in a separate place in the hospital.

Panic on bus as couple tests positive

They got the result on board

S. PRASAD
CUDDALORE

Panic gripped passengers aboard a bus in Cuddalore district on Monday, as the vehicle was stopped by the authorities to disembark a couple who had tested positive for COVID-19.

The pair, whose swab samples were collected at the Cuddalore Government Hospital two days ago, had boarded a Vadalur-bound Tamil Nadu State Transport Corporation (TNSTC) bus at Panruti, along with around 30 other passengers. When the bus reached Kadampuliyur around 12.15 p.m., the husband received a call from the hospital authorities, who sought to know his whereabouts as his house had been found locked.

On being informed that he was aboard a bus, the authorities asked him to hand over his mobile phone to the conductor and informed him that he and his wife had tested positive for COVID-19. The bus crew was asked to stop the vehicle and wait for a team of health officials, who were on their

The bus crew was asked to stop the vehicle and wait for a team of health officials, who were on their way

way to pick up the couple and get them admitted to the government hospital.

According to an official, the COVID-19-positive man panicked on learning about his test result and screamed. “This created a flutter and spread panic among his co-passengers, who rushed out of the vehicle and ran helter-skelter,” the official said.

At the time, there were around 15 passengers on the bus, as the others had disembarked en route.

The bus driver and conductor also alighted from the vehicle in a hurry. Health officials then took the couple to the hospital in an ambulance.

The bus was taken to a depot after disinfection. Health Department officials are now tracing the passengers who had travelled on the bus for testing.

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI

The Tamil Nadu Generation and Distribution Corporation (Tangedco) on Monday denied the charge of having followed an “arbitrary and unjust” method for calculating power charges to be paid by domestic consumers during the COVID-19 lockdown, when meter readings in individual households could not be recorded by its staff.

Justices R. Subbiah and Krishnan Ramasamy were told that “there were about 1.75 crore domestic consumers of electricity in the State. If every such consumer begins to calculate their bill for energy usage by applying permutations and combinations to suit their convenience, it will be impossible to arrive at any solution”.

The submission was made in reply to a public interest litigation petition filed by advocate M.L. Ravi of Desiya Makkal Katchi.








The litigant had claimed that the methodology adopted by Tangedco would lead to collection of higher charg-



There are about 1.75 crore domestic consumers of electricity in Tamil Nadu.

es from those who generally use less than 500 units of power, bi-monthly, compared to those who use more than that.

However, the counter filed through Additional Advocate General P.H. Arvindh Pandian stated that only a rational approach, common to all, had been adopted. The court was also told that a lockdown to fight COVID-19 was never contemplated and as such there was no exact provision in the Ta-

 Timings		
CHENNAI		
TUESDAY, JUN. 23		
 RISE	05:45	SET 18:38
 RISE	07:26	SET 20:39
WEDNESDAY, JUN. 24		
 RISE	05:45	SET 18:38
 RISE	08:24	SET 21:32
THURSDAY, JUN. 25		
 RISE	05:46	SET 18:39
 RISE	09:23	SET 22:21

Chennai Weather	max	min
Thiruvallur	41	26
Chennai Airport	39	26
Chennai City	38	26

Chennai Airport Today
36°C There will be light rain in the city. The morning will be warm and humid. The sky will mostly remain cloudy.

Chennai Airport Tomorrow
36°C The morning will be cloudy. The sky will be cloudy. A warm night is expected.

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IN BRIEF

Over ₹60 lakh burgled in Perambur


CHENNAI
Unidentified persons broke into an office of a meat wholesaler in Perambur and decamped with ₹61.5 lakh in cash. Police said Munavar Batcha and Mohammed Ajas, the owners, learned about the theft on Sunday. Police are investigating.

Unidentified body found near Ripon Buildings

CHENNAI
An unidentified person was found lying dead on the pavement just opposite the Ripon Buildings on Monday. Construction workers near the scene said he slept on the pavement regularly. His body was sent for post-mortem and police are investigating.

Three held for snatching mobile phones

CHENNAI
Vepery police on Monday arrested P. Dinesh, 28, Thol alias Ajith, 22, and his wife Priya alias Thammu Priya for snatching the mobile phone from S. Joseph near Doveton. Investigation revealed that the trio committed a similar crime in Choolai on Saturday.



THE HINDU

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Can select UPHCs within city limits offer testing?

D. MADHAVAN
CHENNAI
Here are two scenarios, starkly juxtaposed.

One, residents of Mogappair seek the establishment of a COVID-19 testing facility at the Urban Primary Health Centre (UPHC) centre run by Greater Chennai Corporation (GCC) near Veeramamunivar Park. For testing, residents of Mogappair East, Mogappair West, Padi Kuppam and Collector Nagar head to a special government-run health unit near Ambattur taluk office, with some of them having to travel 8 km.

Two, on the outskirts of Chennai, in a couple of areas that come under the Chengalpattu district administration, testing is carried out at two Upgraded-Primary Health Centres (UPHC), one at Poon-di Bazaar in Tambaram; and the other at Medavakkam. At the Medavakkam UPHC, on an average, around 80 residents are said to be undergoing testing every day. The samples are sent to the Kings Institute in Guindy, with residents informed of the results in two days.

The Medavakkam example may give fresh impetus to the question, one that is already being asked by residents from certain parts of Chennai, besides Mogappair: “Why not COVID-19 testing at select UPHCs within GCC limits?

Residents from the extended areas of Corporation, including Ambattur, Manali and Porur seem to be particularly batting for the idea. Residents underline lack of readily available transport – except where

Corporation must keep students’ belongings safe, says university

‘Civic body must ensure travel arrangements to and from the campus’

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI

Anna University’s students affairs and hostel in-charge, P. Hariharan, has written to the residential students of College of Engineering, Guindy, putting the onus of safety of their belongings in the hostel on the Greater Chennai Corporation.

The official, in a reply to students’ mails, said they must ensure that the GCC has made proper and safe arrangements. “You are requested to wait till you hear from the authorities of the Corporation of Chennai. You are advised to act always keeping your health and safety as first priority,” the Dean said.

Mr. Hariharan said the civic body is responsible for the safe transport of the students’ belongings and that the university will not take any responsibility for their travel to and from the campus.

He assured students that their personal belongings, including their academic materials, notes, books from the hostels, “are still in the same way as left” by them. He assured them that the administration understood the



Crisis control: The Corporation asked Anna University to hand over all hostels by June 20 for conversion into COVID-19 Care Centres. ■FILE PHOTO

importance and the value of their personal belongings, which included original mark sheets, certificates, academic materials, innovations, projects and other papers.

Mr. Hariharan explained that the request to vacate the hostel rooms came from the Corporation. The spaces would be re-purposed for quarantine purposes of COVID-19 patients.

“All logistics including reaching out to the students, arranging travel permits, transportation from place of residence to campus and their return transportation together with baggage con-

taining personal belongings is the complete responsibility of the Chennai Corporation in accordance with their commitment to our V-C. Anna University has no role in this exercise,” he wrote.

Proper logistics

Further, “When Corporation officials make contact and ask you to collect your belongings, please ensure they have made all necessary arrangements prior to your departure. In the event the logistic-arrangement is not up to the mark and to your satisfaction, please do not undertake the journey, since your safety and health is most im-

portant to us,” the mail to students said.

The university forwarded a copy of the reply to the Deputy Commissioner of the Corporation “for necessary satisfactory arrangements” as according to the university officials, “This planning on the part of the Authorities of the Corporation of Chennai is very crucial, and binding.”

The Dean, who is also the warden of the hostels, said students could “come in person or depute a guardian or authorise anyone, through whom you can send the room keys.” Students were expected to inform the hostel office of any change in their address and contact details.

The Greater Chennai Corporation’s Commissioner G. Prakash gave an ultimatum to Anna University to vacate and hand over all hostels by June 20 for converting them into COVID-19 Care Centres, citing rules under the Disaster Management Act. Students opposed the move.

The university maintained that it would not trespass into the students’ hostel rooms since that would be an offence.

Cooperative bank disburses ₹187 cr. in gold loans during lockdown

A total of 20,000 city residents benefitted from the scheme

SANJAY VIJAYAKUMAR
CHENNAI

The Tamil Nadu State Apex Co-Operative Bank Limited has so far disbursed ₹187 crore to 20,000 people in Chennai during the lockdown period, under its loan against gold scheme.

“We launched the scheme with a lower interest rate during the lockdown period and a lot of people availed of it to manage their liquidity problems,” a senior bank official said.

Under the scheme, the gold was valued at 10% more than in the usual gold



We launched the scheme with a lower interest rate and people have availed of it to manage their liquidity problems

SENIOR BANK OFFICIAL

schemes, or in other words the gold was valued at ₹3,300 per gram, compared to ₹3,000 per gram in regular schemes. The loan attracts an interest of 6% per annum, when compared to 9.5% in regular schemes. The minimum amount that

Flyers anxious over requirement of e-pass

Social media abuzz with queries seeking clarification



Standing instructions: Airports Authority of India officials said the government told them that passengers just need to keep their ticket or boarding pass handy. ■B. VELANKANNI RAJ

STAFF REPORTER
CHENNAI

Do you need an e-pass to travel to Chennai airport during the lockdown? This question continues to weigh on air passengers’ minds, despite the authorities having clarified that a boarding pass or a ticket will do.

Officials of the Airports Authority of India (AAI) said that the State government had already communicated to them that passengers just need to keep their ticket or boarding pass handy. “Departing passengers don’t require an e-pass from the Tamil Nadu government,” an official said.

Yet, social media platforms are abuzz with queries from passengers residing

in various parts of the city. Swetha S., a resident of Chennai said, “I have to go to the airport to pick up a family friend. The return journey may not be a problem as the passenger will be with me. But I’m worried if I will be asked to show an e-pass while getting to the airport.”

One of the reasons for the prevailing anxiety is that some passengers have been finding it difficult to get a cab. Among them is Nirnoy Nimesh, who tweeted that a private cab company had backed out at the last minute. “I had booked a cab from your website for dropping at Chennai Airport on 20Jun. My pickup time was 1:15 PM and at the last moment I was asked for epass

by your company. And cab didn’t arrive till 2PM, I had to make my own arrangements and travel,” his tweet read.

Taxi drivers said they were facing difficulties while returning from the airport, and that there had been instances where they had been fined. Murugan S. (name changed) said that he had dropped a passenger from Madhavaram at the airport, and while on the way back, he was stopped at Koyambedu. “Though I showed them a copy of the ticket, the authorities refused to let me go. They have taken my vehicle now. The government had said we were allowed to take passengers to the airport. What did I do wrong?” he asked.

Over 17,000 booked for violating ban orders

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI

The police booked 17,865 cases against violators so far for venturing out on roads in violation of prohibitory orders during the current complete lockdown.

Despite this, over 5,000 vehicles were seized from violators roaming the roads on Sunday and Monday.

The State announced a complete lockdown in the city, Tiruvallur, Chengalpattu and Kancheepuram districts from June 19, allowing certain essential services, to prevent spread of COVID-19.

On Sunday, the curbs were tightened further, allowing only medical serv-

es and milk supply. Police have been constantly monitoring the movement of the public by intensifying beat patrol and bike patrol sector-wise in areas with narrow streets.

Police sources said 7,261 cases were booked for flouting rules and roaming in public places without valid reasons on Monday. As many 5,378 vehicles seized from the violators. Altogether 16,043 vehicles were seized since the first day of lockdown.

Likewise, police have booked 7,524 persons for failing to wear masks from Friday and of them, 4,007 were booked on Monday.

IN BRIEF



Converting trains will hurt people: Vaiko
CHENNAI
MDMK chief Vaiko on Monday said the Railway Board's decision to convert 508 passenger trains into express trains across the country, would hurt people and urged it to drop the proposal. In a statement, he said people are suffering from loss of income due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the Railway's move was unnecessary and against democratic principles.

'Take steps to contain spread in other districts'
CHENNAI
Amma Makkal Munnetra Kazhagam (AMMK) founder T.T.V. Dhinakaran on Monday expressed concern over the growing number of COVID-19 infections in districts other than Chennai. Alluding to Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami's statement that "Only God knows when the COVID-19 pandemic will end," Mr Dhinakaran, in a statement, said it would not be fair if the State government evaded its responsibility by "putting the blame" on God.

Methamphetamine seized
CUDDALORE
The Parangipettai police on Sunday night recovered four polythene packets — containing methamphetamine — that washed ashore off the Pudupettai coast. This is the second such seizure in Tamil Nadu in the last few days. According to police sources, following a tip-off from fishermen that some suspicious packets were found along the coast, a police team seized the drug, weighing 2.75 kgs.

Minor fire at Goubert Market
PUDUCHERRY
A minor fire broke out in the Goubert Market on late Monday evening prompting fire service personnel to rush to the spot and douse the fire. Two shops were gutted. No one was injured in the fire, the police said

Father's acquittal an injustice: Kowsalya

She plans to appeal in Supreme Court

STAFF REPORTER
UDHAGAMANDALAM
Reacting to the Madras High Court's verdict acquitting her father in the murder of her husband Shankar, Ms. Kowsalya dubbed it an "injustice". She vowed to appeal in the Supreme Court to overturn the acquittal of her father and the commuting of death sentences of a few other accused in the case.
Addressing reporters near her residence in Coonoor on Monday, Ms. Kowsalya said that though she respected the court, the verdict was an injustice.
"This is not justice for Shankar's life, because if Annalakshmi (her mother) and Chinnasamy are not guilty, then Shankar should have been alive right now and he should have been with me," she said.
"We will not rest till Shankar gets justice, and I will



continue the fight for as long as I am alive," she said.
Ms. Kowsalya also added that she was unable to keep tabs on the progress of the case when it was being heard in the Madras High Court.
"When the case was being heard in the High Court, I could not keep up to date about what was happening in the case, as we could not employ our lawyer to fight the case. So the government lawyer was handling the case," she said.

Failure to prove conspiracy led to acquittal of Kowsalya's father

Prime accused was not present at the murder scene, says High Court

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI
The Madras High Court on Monday acquitted the prime accused B. Chinnasamy from the 2016 Udumalpet Shankar murder case because of prosecution's "failure to prove the charge of criminal conspiracy" by listing out a chain of events that could lead to the inevitable conclusion of guilt, besides establishing each and every circumstance in the chain.
Justices M. Sathyanarayanan and M. Nirmal Kumar pointed out that the prime accused was not present at the scene of occurrence when a gang hacked engineering student V. Shankar, belonging to a Scheduled Caste, to death on March 13, 2016 and also attempted to murder his wife Kowsalya belonging to a Most Backward Community.
The prosecution had to first prove the charge of cri-



minal conspiracy against Mr. Chinnasamy before he could be punished for murdering his son-in-law and attempting to murder his daughter because of the inter-caste marriage. Though it was the prosecution's case that he had hired contract killers, the charge of conspiracy stood disproved, court said.
It pointed out that the police had succeeded in proving only one of the circumstances in the chain and it was related to the fact that the assailants and the prime accused were in contact over phone between February 6, 2016 and March 6, 2016. This circumstance had been

proved through phone call records and by examining the telecommunication officials.
However, none of the other circumstances in the chain were proved, the Bench said and pointed out that testimonies of the owners of a lodge, where the prime accused had reportedly made arrangements for the stay of the assailants, did not in any way advance the case of the prosecution, since they were not able to produce sufficient oral and documentary evidence.
"Therefore, the prosecution was unable to prove that it was A1 who made arrangements for A5 to A8 to stay in the lodge owned by PW (prosecution witness) 14 and PW15," the judges said. They also stated that the evidence of two other witnesses, who claimed to have seen the prime accused conspire along with the assailants,

was "highly doubtful."
Though it was also the prosecution's claim that the prime accused had withdrawn ₹80,000 from a joint bank account held by him and his wife from March 12 and 14, 2016 and of it, ₹50,000 was recovered from two of the assailants, the Bench said, the police had failed to prove that it was none but Mr. Chinnasamy who withdrew the money and paid the assailants.
The judges said that the police had failed to obtain CCTV footage from the ATMs and hence it would be difficult to accept the theory of the police, especially when it was their own case that the prime accused was an agriculturist and also the owner of a tourist cab. As far as the five assailants were concerned, the judges concluded that they were guilty because of their fatal overt acts.

Since Chinnasamy was still in prison, he was ordered to be released forthwith

Tamil alias Stephen Dhanraj and M. Manikandan were also allowed and their life as well as five years of sentences respectively were set aside.
As far as five other assailants P. Jagatheesan (Mr. Chinnasamy's friend), M. Manikandan, P. Selvakumar, P. Kalaitamilvaanan alias Tamil alias Kalai and M. Mathan alias Michael were concerned, the High Court commuted their death sentences to life imprisonment with a mandate that they would remain in jail for a minimum period of 25 years. They were also ordered to be released forthwith.

Protest today

STAFF REPORTER
TIRUPPUR
Condemning the Madras High Court's verdict on Monday that set aside the death penalty for the prime accused in the 2016 Udumalpet Shankar murder case, Tamil Nadu Untouchability Eradication Front (TNUEF) called for a demonstration outside Tiruppur Collectorate on Tuesday.
In a statement, the TNUEF termed the verdict "shocking" and "worrying" as the High Court set aside the December 2017 verdict of trial court that awarded death sentence to six accused, including the prime accused B. Chinnasamy. The anti-caste organisation, affiliated to CPI(M), urged the State government to appeal against the High Court verdict in the Supreme Court "at the earliest with relevant and strong evidences." C. Nandagopal, district secretary of TNUEF, said members from "Periyarist, Marxist and anti-caste organisations" will participate in the protest on Tuesday.

Parties say High Court verdict disappointing

'Blame lies more on the government'

STAFF REPORTER
CHENNAI
Many political parties and activists have expressed disappointment over Madras High Court's judgment on Monday acquitting the prime accused B. Chinnasamy and two others in the honour killing of V. Shankar in Udumalpet in 2016.
Expressing disappointment over the judgment, Viduthalai Chiruthaigal Katchi (VCK) leader Thol. Thirumavalavan blamed the government for not conducting the case properly.
K. Balakrishnan, State secretary, Communist Party of India (Marxist) said that he feared whether the judgment would indirectly embolden the occurrence of more such honour killings in the future. "It is shocking that only the henchmen have been convicted and not Kowsalya's father," he said.

Puthiya Tamilagam party founder K. Krishnasamy said it appeared as if a murder that happened in broad daylight had been rewarded. In a statement on Monday, Dr. Krishnasamy said: "We will organize protests against AIADMK government which has handled this case with ulterior motive and has been responsible for this wrong judgment across Tamil Nadu."
Makkal Needhi Maiam founder Kamal Haasan blamed the State government for the verdict.
"Caste killings are symbols of toxins that have steeped into our society. The State government has a duty to ensure that accused are punished. If the government is incapable of proving its case against A1 (prime accused) in a murder that shook Tamil Nadu, whose fault is it?" he asked on social media.

Justice K. Chandru, retired Judge of Madras High Court, said that while he was extremely disappointed to hear the acquittal, particularly of Chinnasamy, he was yet to go through the judgment in detail to comment further.



V. Shankar
A. Kathir, executive director of Madurai-based non-governmental organisation Evidence, which played a role during the hearing of the case in the lower court in support of Kowsalya, said he was concerned that the judgment may set a wrong precedent.
"If everyone in Kowsalya's family has been acquitted, what was the motive for the henchmen to kill Shankar," he asked.
He, however, expressed confidence that the Supreme Court would convict all the accused. "We are planning to implead in the case," he said.

Wider ramifications
K. Samuel Raj of Tamil Nadu Untouchability Eradication Front said that the judgment would have wider ramifications on the society, which was witnessing an increase in caste-motivated atrocities.
Alleging that the incompetency of the prosecution often resulted in such verdicts, he said that the judgment must also be seen in the context of Tamil Nadu government releasing the convicts in Melavalavu massacre of six Dalits on good conduct last year.
"This shows the message the government wants to send and its intent towards eradicating caste atrocities," he said.
Stating that Tamil Nadu government's announcement that it would go on appeal in the Supreme Court was a relief, Mr. Thirumavalavan urged the government to make sincere efforts to get all the accused convicted.

With rising cases, Puducherry has 137 containment zones

The number of cases increased to 383 in three weeks

RAJESH B NAIR
PUDUCHERRY
With the rising incidence of COVID-19 in the Union Territory, the number of containment zones have increased rapidly in the region.
The number of COVID-19 containment zones have gone up to 137, majority of them during the last three weeks, in Puducherry. The cumulative number of cases which stood at 74 till June 1, increased to 383 as on June 22 in the Union Territory.
The infection, which was earlier restricted to rural pockets and semi urban areas, has now rapidly spread to town in the last three weeks prompting authorities to declare several residential areas as containment zones.
In the last two days, several residential areas under re-



The number of containment zones in Puducherry has gone up following rise in COVID-19 cases. ♦ T. SINGARAVELOU
venue villages Karuvadikuppam, Reddiarapalayam, Thattanchavady and Saram have been declared containment zones.
Movement of people, vehicles and public transport had been restricted in these places with government supplying essential items to those residing in the areas.
"All roads connecting the

containment zones have been guarded by the police with clear entry and exit points. We have contained movement of people within 10 to 50 m of the residence of the person diagnosed with the virus. The rapid spread in the town is a real matter of concern," said a senior official in the Health Department.

Jipmer expands OP services across specialties

Additional telephone lines added

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
PUDUCHERRY
Jipmer has expanded outpatient services across specialties by adding additional telephone lines. The services can be accessed through the following numbers. The numbers will be active for registration on working days, Monday to Friday from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. and Saturday from 9 a.m. to noon.
The speciality and the telephone numbers are as follows:
General Medicine (6384403761 6384403762), General Surgery (6384403763 6384403764), Cardiology (6384400741), Cardiothoracic Surgery (6384400742), Medical and Surgical Gastroenterology (6384400743 6384400744), Nephrology and Urology (6384400745 6384400746), Neurology and Neurosur-

gery (6384400747 6384400748), Stoma - Ostomy Clinic (9787244989), Orthopaedics, and Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation (6384400749 6384400750); Medical Oncology and Radiation Oncology (6384400751 6384400752); Surgical Oncology (9787244996); Obstetrics and Gynaecology (6384400753 6384400754); ENT (6384400756); Ophthalmology (6384400755); Dermatology (6384400757); Neonatology, Paediatrics (6384400759 6384400760); Clinical Immunology (9787245034); Endocrinology (9787245094); Pulmonary Medicine (9787245082); Psychiatry (9787245020 9787245021); Dentistry (9787245024); Plastic Surgery (9787244988) and Paediatric Surgery (9787244983).

Alagiri hits out at State BJP's bank loan initiative

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI
Tamil Nadu Congress Committee president K.S. Alagiri on Monday, lashed out at BJP's Tamil Nadu unit, for its initiative to help people get bank loans, under various schemes instituted by the Centre, and warned of legal action, if it was not stopped.
In a statement, he said the BJP thinks that by doing this they can establish themselves in the State, but this won't succeed. Mr. Alagiri asked if other political par-

ties started similar initiatives, would the banks accept it, and would loans be disbursed? He also said that banks would show bias in disbursing loans, and this might lead to a lot of wrong doings. Mr. Alagiri pointed out that when former Finance Minister P. Chidambaram launched the education loan scheme, it benefited all, and the State unit did not start any initiative like the BJP. He said that the BJP Tamil Nadu unit's action is strongly condemnable.

Parallel meetings at Raj Nivas disturb pandemic work: Minister

'Decisions taken without taking CM, Ministers into confidence'

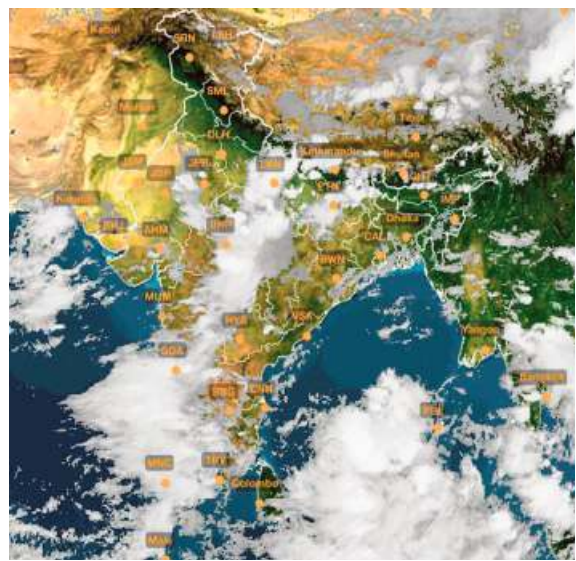
SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
PUDUCHERRY
Health Minister Malladi Krishna Rao on Monday accused Lieutenant Governor Kiran Bedi of "disturbing the team work" of the administration in tackling the COVID-19 pandemic by holding "parallel meetings" with officials at the Raj Nivas.
"By holding parallel meetings and issuing instructions to officers, the L-G is only

disturbing the team work of the officials. Besides, the decisions at these meetings were being taken without taking into confidence the Chief Minister and other Ministers concerned," Mr. Rao said.
Objection for survey
According to the Minister, an objection was also raised against the instructions of Bedi for a survey of PDS be-

neficiaries at a meeting of the State Disaster Management Authority held under the chairmanship of Chief Minister V. Narayanasamy on Sunday.
"The Chief Minister immediately issued an order that no such survey of beneficiaries of PDS and of fishermen families should be conducted during the pandemic," the Health Minister said.

WEATHER WATCH

RAINFALL, TEMPERATURE & AIR QUALITY IN SELECT METROS YESTERDAY



TEMPERATURE DATA: IMD, POLLUTION DATA: CPCB, MAP: INSAT/IMD (TAKEN AT 17.00 HRS)

Forecast for Tuesday: Thunderstorm accompanied by lightning likely at isolated places over Jammu and Kashmir, Ladakh, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Punjab, Haryana, Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Jharkhand and Rayalaseema

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	1.7	34.5	26.2	Kozhikode	74	30.2	23.5
Ahmedabad	...	36.8	27.6	Kurnool	1.8	34.8	26.2
Aizawl	...	26.8	20.0	Lucknow	0.2	35.3	26.5
Allahabad	2.4	35.1	26.9	Madurai	0.1	38.2	27.2
Bengaluru	0.2	28.2	21.0	Mangaluru	35.6	29.7	23.4
Bhopal	8.8	34.7	23.4	Mumbai	0.6	32.8	27.7
Bhubaneswar	...	35.8	26.8	Mysuru	3.2	29.0	21.8
Chandigarh	24	35.0	22.6	New Delhi	43.8	36.7	23.2
Chennai	1.6	38.8	26.1	Patna	...	33.0	27.1
Coimbatore	...	31.2	23.0	Port Blair	19.2	31.4	25.7
Dehradun	...	...	24.5	Puducherry	...	39.8	27.8
Gangtok	23.2	26.0	18.1	Pune	...	31.3	22.2
Goa	12.5	30.0	25.8	Raipur	9.2	31.6	24.5
Guwahati	0.6	30.2	25.9	Ranchi	13.2	29.4	23.0
Hubbali	...	27.0	22.0	Shillong	0.9	24.8	18.9
Hyderabad	...	31.4	25.0	Shimla	...	27.8	19.9
Imphal	9.1	31.6	22.2	Srinagar	...	28.6	14.0
Jaipur	...	39.0	25.8	Thiruvananthapuram	12	31.8	24.5
Kochi	49.8	29.6	23.6	Tiruchi	...	37.0	27.8
Kohima	4.4	24.4	17.8	Vijayawada	40.6	35.5	25.2
Kolkata	35.4	32.9	25.8	Visakhapatnam	...	35.2	28.8

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)

Pollutants in the air you are breathing							Yesterday
CITIES	SO ₂	NO ₂	CO	PM2.5	PM10	CODE	
Ahmedabad	16	20	25	...	33	...	■
Bengaluru	10	22	33	...	...	...	■
Chennai	12	23	97	...	70	...	■
Delhi	...	6	33	104	...	100	■
Hyderabad	28	23	...	7	...	60	■
Kolkata	...	7	...	8	...	21	■
Lucknow	...	4	...	2	42	...	■
Mumbai	52	12	...	17	...	28	■
Pune	...	...	...	...	...	...	■
Visakhapatnam	17	51	...	40	...	52	■

Air Quality Code: ■ Poor ■ Moderate ■ Good (Readings indicate average AQI)
SO₂: Sulphur Dioxide. Short-term exposure can harm the respiratory system, making breathing difficult. It can affect visibility by reacting with other air particles to form haze and stain culturally important objects such as statues and monuments.
NO₂: Nitrogen Dioxide. Aggravates respiratory illness, causes haze to form by reacting with other air particles, causes acid rain, pollutes coastal waters.
CO: Carbon monoxide. High concentration in air reduces oxygen supply to critical organs like the heart and brain. At very high levels, it can cause dizziness, confusion, unconsciousness and even death.
PM2.5 & PM10: Particulate matter pollution can cause irritation of the eyes, nose and throat, coughing, chest tightness and shortness of breath, reduced lung function, irregular heartbeat, asthma attacks, heart attacks and premature death in people with heart or lung disease

BharatNet tender: Centre convenes virtual meet

TANFINET told to extend last date for bids in ₹1,950 crore project

S. VIJAY KUMAR
CHENNAI

The Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) under the Ministry of Commerce and Industry has convened a video-conference meeting on June 23, 2020, to discuss the serious allegations levelled by Arappor Iyakkam, an anti-corruption body, in the ₹1,950 crore BharatNet tender floated by the Tamil Nadu Fibernet Corporation Limited (TANFINET).

Advising the TANFINET to extend the date for submission of bids in the tender, the DPIIT said its Additional Secretary would chair the video-conference to discuss the grievances flagged by Arappor Iyakkam, Chennai, Telecom Equipment and Services Export Promotion Council (TEPC), New Delhi, and Tejas Networks Limited, Bengaluru.

Besides the complainants, the Secretary, Department of Telecommunications, New Delhi, Ad-

ditional Chief Secretary (Information Technology), Government of Tamil Nadu, Chennai, Managing Director, TANFINET, Chennai, were among others who would participate in the virtual meet.

Last month, the DPIIT had calling for an urgent report on the allegations levelled by Arappor Iyakkam. The alleged irregularities pertained to violations in the tender conditions by increasing the turnover, experience and tweaking configuration of routers to suit two specific companies and thereby eliminating competition by the issue of a corrigendum to the tender floated by TANFINET and the IT Department on April 15, 2020. The DPIIT later requested the Additional Chief Secretary to advice TANFINET “not to hasten” the opening of tenders without its clearance.

“Though the Centre restrained the government from finalising and opening tenders pending disposal of the complaint, which al-

so meant that the tenders should be kept open for more bidders to participate, the State violated the advisory by closing options for submissions and removed the tender from the website on June 12, 2020. We flagged the issued with the DPIIT which asked the State authorities to extend the submission dates,” Jayaram Venkatesan, convenor, Arappor Iyakkam, said on Monday.

Action sought

He said Arappor Iyakkam had also sought action against officials responsible for the “arbitrary” and “massive” changes in the tender conditions to favour certain companies. “We have already made out points clear to the DPIIT and the State has also been advised to submit their version before the video-conferencing. The meeting has been convened online in view of the ongoing COVID-19 lockdown conditions,” Mr. Venkatesan said.

‘More rain for north T.N. around June 25-26’

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI

Parts of north Tamil Nadu may experience an increased rainfall activity later this week. A cyclonic circulation expected to develop over the Bay of Bengal is likely to bring rains over north Tamil Nadu, including Chennai, around June 25 and June 26.

According to the Meteorological Department, there is a possibility for scattered rainfall (wherein up to 50% of the weather stations in a region report rain) during June 25 and 26. However, the department predicts largely dry weather over most parts of the State for the next two days.

During the past 24 hours ending 8.30 a.m. on Monday, many



A cyclonic circulation is expected to develop over the Bay of Bengal. ■ M. VEDHAN

weather stations recorded rainfall. Valparai and Solaiyar in Coimbatore district received 6 cm of rain. Several places in Chennai and outskirts too reported thundershowers, including Nungambakkam and Madhavaram. While Tiruvallur and Poo-

namallee recorded 3 cm of rainfall, Perambur received 2 cm. Automatic rain gauges in Ayanavaram, Red Hills, Sriperumbudur and Chennai DGP office too recorded 1 cm of rain.

Officials noted the information provided by the State government, including Perambur and Ayanavaram, were also incorporated in the Meteorological department’s data. N. Puviarasan, director, Area Cyclone Warning Centre, said strong westerlies and convective activity, would bring rain at one or two places over districts along western ghats for the next two days.

Chennai too may get light rains during late evening or nights till Wednesday.

Central ordinance forces State to re-examine contract farming law

A decision may be taken after studying the rules

T. RAMAKRISHNAN
CHENNAI

The Tamil Nadu government, which recently enacted a pioneering law on contract farming, is taking a re-look at the legislation in the wake of an ordinance promulgated by the Central government on the subject.

The State Agriculture Department, which is in the process of getting rules scrutinised by the Law Department for the 2019 Act, is willing to wait for the Central government to come out with rules for its ordinance. Upon studying the Centre’s rules, a decision may be taken as to whether to drop the State law or modify it, an official in the know said.

Incidentally, while it is an established constitutional principle that a Central law on a given subject prevails over a State legislation, the State Law Department has held that the latter – the Agricultural Produce and Livestock Contract Farming and Services (Promotion



Incidentally, the Law Department has held that the State government’s law can still remain in force.

and Facilitation) Act of 2019 – can still remain in force.

As per the opinion rendered by the Law Department subsequent to the Centre’s promulgation of the Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement on Price Assurance and Farm Services Ordinance, the two laws can co-exist. In this case, not only did the State law come into being after obtaining the assent of Presi-

dent Ram Nath Kovind, but it was also studied by the Centre.

Broadly, the State law and the Central ordinance have the same objective – promotion of contract farming. The former, according to the State government, has more agriculturist-friendly provisions than the latter.

Nonetheless, the Agriculture Department has chosen to wait for the Centre to come out with its rules.

Aid distributed to over 6 lakh ration cardholders in Chennai

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI

The State government on Monday distributed cash aid of ₹1,000 to 28.01% of the rice ration cardholders in the five Civil Supplies districts – Chengalpattu, Kancheepuram, North Chennai, South Chennai and Tiruvallur – where a “complete lockdown” is in place to control the spread of COVID-19.

“There are 2,320 ration shops in these districts and they serve 22,62,168 cardholders. On Monday alone, 6,33,548 cardholders were given the money,” sources in the secretariat told *The Hindu*.

“Workers of the rations shops visited directly to the houses of ration cardholders and distributed the money. Since the Chief Minister was very particular about ensuring that the money reached the people in time, officials are paying extra attention to the issue,” said Revenue Minister R.B. Udhayakumar.

Asked about complaints that in some places cardholders were asked to visit the ration shops and physical distancing norms were thrown to the winds, Mr Udhayakumar said when the government received information about this, it immediately directed the officials to follow the direction of the government.

“There are 15 senior officials in-charge of the 15 zones in Chennai and they set things right immediately. The Corporation is also closely monitoring the situation,” he further said.

Mr. Udhayakumar said the objective of the government was to cover all the beneficiaries before the lockdown is lifted.

Asked whether similar financial assistance would be extended to Madurai and other areas where also a week’s “complete lockdown” would take effect from June 24, he said the government order for it was yet to be issued.

HC to await SC decision on quota for OBCs in medical seats

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI

The Madras High Court on Monday adjourned to July 9 a batch of cases filed by many political parties in the State seeking 50% reservation for Other Backward Classes (OBCs) in All India quota medical seats in non-central institutions.

Justices R. Subbiah and Krishnan Ramasamy took the decision since the Centre reported to the court that the Supreme Court was slated to hear a related case (Saloni Kumar versus Director General of Health Services), pending since 2015, on July 8.

Senior counsel P. Wilson, representing the DMK, argued that the Supreme Court had not passed any interim orders in Saloni Kumar’s case, which had also been filed seeking quota for OBCs, and hence there was no legal impediment to reserve seats forthwith.

He pointed out that the Centre had admitted the possibility of providing reservations for OBCs in seats surrendered by the State governments to All India quota



seats but was unnecessarily waiting for the Supreme Court verdict in Saloni Kumar’s case.

He also insisted that 50% of seats should be reserved for OBCs in Tamil Nadu and not just 27% as it was being followed by the Centre. Senior Counsel G. Masilamani and AR.L. Sundaresan, representing PMK and AIADMK respectively, also made similar submissions.

Since the State government too had filed a writ petition seeking 50% reservations for OBCs, Advocate General Vijay Narayan told the court that before 1986, all seats in State government medical colleges were filled up only by local residents of respective States.



Vigilance paramount

States have tackled the virus differently, but they must learn from each other

On June 20, a month after 1,00,000 novel coronavirus cases were reported, India crossed a grim milestone of 4,00,000 cases. If it took 13 days to double to 2,00,000 cases, India added another one lakh cases in 10 days on June 12. From a test positivity rate of 4.6% in mid-May, it is 7.9% as on June 21, reflecting a wider spread in the community, particularly in the hotspots – Mumbai, Delhi, Chennai and Ahmedabad. Mortality, which was initially low, has been steadily increasing. The first death was reported on March 13 and the figure crossed 1,000 only on April 28. But it has taken just three days for each additional 1,000 deaths after the toll touched 4,000 to reach 13,703 deaths as on June 21. The lower mortality figures are a reflection of the low median age (nearly 27 years) of the Indian population, the stage of the pandemic in India, health-seeking behaviour and the health-care system. While the low median age has helped keep mortality low, high prevalence of high-risk factors even among younger people might put them at great risk if infected with the virus. The health-care system in Mumbai, Delhi, Chennai and Ahmedabad, already strained, could witness more deaths if the virus spreads unabated. With India now in the unlock phase, this is the time to be most vigilant.

Kerala, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh have done exceptionally well in containment. If Kerala was fully geared even before the first case was reported, the other two States utilised the early phase of the lockdown to track, test and isolate those infected and trace contacts. Nothing else can explain why Bengaluru has bucked the trend while Delhi, Mumbai and Chennai have become pandemic epicentres. Maharashtra has adopted the correct approach of enhanced testing unimindful of the large number of cases getting reported each day. Aggressive testing enabled Maharashtra to achieve the remarkable feat of containment in Dhavari. In stark contrast, till a few days ago, Delhi had used every trick in the textbook to keep cases and deaths low. That fewer cases are reported from Telangana, West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar raises suspicion about their testing and counting. While many States have reported migrant workers testing positive on arrival, it is inconceivable that Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and West Bengal, which have recorded the most returnees, should not see a spike. Through fever clinics and testing of people with influenza-like illness in certain areas in Chennai that have high spread, Tamil Nadu is making up for lost time. But true containment will remain difficult and will depend on door-to-door surveillance and large-scale testing in these areas. Going by the cases reported, Gujarat seems to be the only place where the virus spreads to a definite number of people every fortnight even when tests are increased incrementally. The only way to contain numbers is by not hiding them.

The lone wolf threat

There is no sure way of preventing isolated terror attacks that require little planning

The knife attack at a park in Reading, a town west of London, which killed three people and injured three others, is yet another reminder of the threat of lone wolf attacks the U.K. is facing. Last November, the British government reduced the official threat level from “severe” to “substantial”, which means attacks could happen but there was no intelligence of an immediate terror strike. Since then, the country has seen three major incidents. In November, Usman Khan, 28, who had been jailed for terror offences, killed two with a knife at the Fishmongers’ Hall, London. In February this year, a 20-year-old was shot dead by police when he launched a knife attack in south London. A 25-year-old Libyan national has been arrested in connection with the latest incident. British media have reported that Khairi Saadallah was on the MI5’s radar. He was investigated as the intelligence community got a report that he was looking to travel abroad to link up with terror outfits. The investigation closed for lack of evidence. But he is now in custody for the Reading attack, which has been declared a terror incident.

Lone wolf attacks, in which extremist individuals translate their beliefs into violent actions, are hard to detect and prevent. In coordinated terror attacks, the chances of competent intelligence agencies detecting the perpetrators are much higher. To their credit, the U.K.’s intelligence wings have foiled dozens of terror attacks since the devastating 2005 London bombings that killed 52 people and injured 700 others. But the U.K., especially London, continued to see low-tech lone attacks, where the attacker either used vehicles to run over people or launched knife attacks. Terrorist organisations had also embraced this tactic to spread violence in countries where coordinated big attacks are impossible. When the territories it controlled in Iraq and Syria started shrinking in the wake of counter-attacks, in 2015 and 2016 the Islamic State urged its supporters first to launch attacks in western cities and then declare allegiance to the ‘Caliph’. In 2017, Khalid Masood, a British citizen, drove a car into pedestrians on the pavement of Westminster Bridge and stabbed a police officer. He killed six people and injured 40 others before being shot by police. Though British authorities had foiled some knife attacks since the 2013 killing of soldier Lee Rigby in southeast London, lone wolf attacks continue to pose a security challenge to the public and the government. In all the last three knife attacks, the attackers were known to the agencies. The government and the security agencies need to adopt a multi-pronged approach towards radicalisation, which is anchored in human intelligence, strong ties with communities and community leaders and deradicalisation programmes.

In anti-racism fight, the Lyndon B. Johnson option

A swift wind is blowing following George Floyd’s death, and in reform, the executive must look to the 36th U.S. President



DIPANKAR GUPTA

Police killing blacks at the slightest pretext, sometimes without pretext, is one of the social constants of the United States. When police officer Derek Chauvin choked George Floyd to death on May 25, in Minnesota, the usual analysts pointed to the usual suspect, namely, racism. So, what is new?

Yes, we all knew that blacks are more likely to be shot than white people by the police. Numbers vary; ProPublica’s 2014 finding says shooting blacks is 21 times higher, while a 2020 report in *The New York Times* points out that it is seven times greater in Minnesota. These numbers are nagging and repetitive. Just as we know where babies come from, racism in the U.S. police is not a revelation either.

Much to be done

George Floyd’s brother, Philonese Floyd, thinks what is new is that “people see it, White people too”. Yet, barely had George Floyd been cremated when another black person, Rayshard Brooks, was killed by the Atlanta police, on June 12. Perhaps Philonese was impressed that in Minneapolis, Denver, Dallas, Houston, Washington DC, California and New York, elected Mayors, citizens and even police officers want chokeholds banned or have got them banned.

That still leaves out a very large area of concern. Banning chokeholds, yes, but what about gunshots? What about random, invasive probes? Thus far, these aspects are loosely worded by police reformists in terms of “de-escalation” of violent confrontations and greater caution to be exercised in “no-knock warrants”.

What about correcting racial bias? Not even a spoonful yet. So, what has changed?

In the meantime, well-meaning white anti-racists are self-flagellating, almost narcissistically. An influential video posting shows a white activist saying, in a confessional mode, that all whites are racists, pure and simple. The only way out for them is to admit, repent and self-demote. This is a variant of the Martin Luther King Jr. model: reason, prayer and goodwill hunting.

LBJ, a man of action

The other variant of anti-racism is the Lyndon B. Johnson (LBJ) option, not LBJ of the Vietnam War, but the person who passed the Civil Rights Act in 1964 (*picture*). While King was a general goodwill hunter, LBJ stalked down his opponents, one by one, on Washington’s Capitol Hill, till he got the Civil Rights Act passed. While in the thick of it, LBJ was asked by well-wishers why he was risking so much, and his reply was: “Well, what the hell’s the Presidency for.”

In the end, the Civil Rights Bill was passed because Johnson would just not give up. He changed gears, pulled levers, heaved load-bearing jacks, did whatever was needed to get the Bill through. U.S. President Barack Obama radiated the hope that he would place further legal impediments, LBJ style, on police brutality, but in the end, he chose the much-travelled road of Martin Luther King Jr.

When Rev. Clementa Pinckney was shot dead by a White supremacist in 2015, Mr. Obama performed, what might be called, the acme of goodwill hunting. He sang, “Amazing Grace.” That’s it. He did not make laws and change procedures that would give racist, bigoted police officers a black eye. Today, following George Floyd’s killing, the time is ripe and ready for an LBJ-like intervention.

Every aspect of police training, recruitment procedures, funding, and accountability needs to be



THE HINDU PHOTO ARCHIVES

transformed.

If we were to take just the well-known inquiries into police brutality since 1990, we find that out of 18 such incidents, in only one has the punishment been commensurate to the crime. In as many as 12 instances, there was no punishment at all; the erring officers just walked home as if from a grocery store. In line with this, the National Registry of Exonerations shows that between 2008-2018, there was a doubling of cases against police action being overturned.

How it is in Europe

It is not as if people in Europe are not racists; the recent Syrian refugee crisis brought that out. Even so, police procedure is impressively more measured and controlled in that continent. This shows up in a number of ways. In 2015 alone, German police, fighting Islamophobes and fascists, fired in all four fatal shots, while the American police killed 400.

Or, across the Channel, take the British example, where its police force used firearms only 51 times between 2003 and 2013. Or, across the pond, Canada has recorded only 12 fatal police shootings between 1999 and 2009. In Japan, the last time a person was shot by the police was in 2012.

This difference between the American and European police in the use of guns is primarily because of better training. In the U.S., police training is, on an average, for 19 weeks, which is unthinkable by European standards. In

Germany, for example, it is at least 130 weeks. In North Carolina, U.S., it takes 1,528 hours for one to be a licensed barber but only 278 hours to be a police officer.

A case for extensive change

A 2015 Report of the U.S. Justice Department concluded that the alarming number of violent incidents in which the police have been involved is because “officers do not receive regular, consistent training on the department’s deadly force policy”.

In 2000, the United States Commission on Civil Rights in its study entitled, “Revisiting Who is Guarding the Guardians?”, advocated intensive diversity training. None of these recommendations has left behind tyre tracks on the ground in terms of actual action. This explains not just racist violence among U.S. police personnel, but also the disregard for previous offences.

Derek Chauvin had 18 past complaints against him; his fellow officer, Tou Thao, had six. Myles Cosgrove, charged with Breonna Taylor’s murder in March 2020, shot seven times at a traffic violator in 2006. In 2005, George Zimmerman, the killer of teenage African-American Trayvon Martin, had also faced multiple assault complaints. This is just a sample.

Interestingly, Cosgrove also won 10 commendations earlier for various achievements. Derek Chauvin is also a much-awarded officer. These are not freak exceptions.

In the famous Rodney King case of 1991, officer Stacey Koon, the ultimate baton bruiser, was earlier awarded “Medal of Honor” and more than 100 other decorations. Garrett Rolfe, who has recently come under scrutiny for the June 12, 2020 killing of Rayshard Brooks, was awarded a silver pin though he had 11 serious allegations against him. There is, therefore, enough to spur anti-racist legislations against racist police violence.

U.S. President Donald Trump may have, inadvertently, come to the aid of anti-race activists and made room for an LBJ mode of internal executive pressure. His widely publicised tweet, “When the looting starts, the shooting starts”, was read as an endorsement of police violence against those demonstrating George Floyd’s killing. It is a rare thing when antipathy to a sitting President partners anti-racist activism.

This fortunate conjuncture of events may not happen again. In 1957, the earlier toothless Civil Rights Act was passed without much discussion for President Dwight D. Eisenhower was still regarded as a credible leader. The situation is very different today for Mr. Trump is facing an angry fall in popularity.

This is much like the 2012-13 anti-rape movement in India which did not represent anti-rape sentiments as much as it did frustrations with the then United Progressive Alliance regime. When that moment was lost, rape returned to India. Activists in the U.S., whether on the streets or in elected office, should seize this opportunity and insist that only major police reforms by executive action would be satisfactory. They are in a happy place, between righteous anger and a failing President.

It is very unlikely that colour will return to Mr. Trump’s election prospects in the near future. In this frame, goodwill hunting, or self-flagellating trending videos can be a distraction. Hearts will change once the law does and this is the time for law makers to change the law and not be satisfied with a Botox job. Over and above, the two presidential contenders should be pressured to put police reform right on top of their to-do list.”

LBJ needs to ride shotgun again.

Dipankar Gupta, an eminent sociologist, was a professor at the School of Social Sciences, Jawaharlal Nehru University

A way out of undelineated borders

In the India-Nepal and India-China tensions, white papers can help in clearing misapprehensions over the boundaries



MUKUL SANWAL

The Galwan face-off should focus minds on resolving, not managing, different perceptions of the northern border, relying first on ‘samadhaan’, as Kautilya suggested.

The root of the misunderstanding between India and Nepal lies in a treaty to end a territorial war to which no map was attached and the negotiators had no idea of the geography of the area, except that devout Hindus on the way to Manasarovar considered the springs at Kalapani, at the base of the Lipulekh pass, as the source of the Kali river.

Historical facts

The Treaty of Sugauli in 1815-16, which ended the Anglo-Nepalese War, stipulated that “the Kali River” would mark Nepal’s western border with the British East India Company. The demarcation undertaken by W.J. Webb later in 1816, covered ‘the entire Byans region both to the east and west of the river, on the ground that it had traditionally been part of Kumaon prior to the 25-year-old occupation by Nepal’. In 1817, Nepal made a ‘representation to the British, claiming that it was entitled to the

areas east of the river. The British Governor-General in Council accepted the demand’, and the villages of Tinkar and Chagru were transferred to Nepal, dividing the Byans area. The drainage of the Kalapani and Lipulekh was considered wholly within British territory, and it was stated that a short way below the springs, the Kali formed the boundary with Nepal.

Nepal later ‘extended a claim to the Kuthi valley further to the west, stating that the Kuthi-Yankti stream, the western branch of the head waters, should be considered the main Kali river’. *The Himalayan Gazetteer* records that the surveyor, W.J. Webb, made known to Bam Shah, the Governor of Doti, who had negotiated the Treaty, ‘that the lesser stream flowing from the Kalapani springs had always been recognised as the main branch of the Kali and had in fact given its name to the river. The British retained the Kuthi Valley’ and the Limpiyadhura Pass.

The first British Resident in Nepal, Edward Gardner, laid this out to the Nepal Durbar, in correspondence (February 4, 1817 to October 10, 1817). The matter was considered settled as only the lowland lying between the Kali and Gorakhpur that were ceded in 1815 were restored to Nepal by the Treaty of 1860.

To establish the boundary, initially, the Deputy Commissioner of Almora would each year travel to the Lipulekh Pass to open trade. The northern boundary of Byans



FILE PHOTO/AP

was stated as the line of water parting between India and ‘Hundes’ in the Settlements of Trail in 1828 and Batten in 1840-41. The first Settlement, under the British government of Beckett between 1863 -1873, measured each cultivated field, reiterated this, and, as *The Himalayan Gazetteer* points out, was used to input local names into the new map prepared by the Survey of India, correcting earlier sketchy maps. The British Government did not shift the British East India Company boundary, as Nepal alleges.

Agreed tri-junction

In 1905, Charles A. Sherring, Deputy Commissioner of Almora, recorded his travels across Lipulekh into Tibet. He camped at Kalapani and noted its half dozen springs and the Nepal boundary at the Tinkar Pass. Trade through Lipulekh, amounting to £26,000 annually, had grown ten-fold since 1816, and was regulated by the British.

The 1954 Trade Agreement between India and China mentions Lipulekh as one of the passes that

could be used for trade and pilgrimage traffic; a police post was established by India at Kalapani in 1956.

The China-Nepal Boundary Treaty, October 5, 1961, in its Article 1 states: “The Chinese-Nepalese boundary line starts from the point where the watershed between the Kali River and the Tinkar River meet the watershed between the tributaries of the Mapchu (Karnali) River on the one hand and the Tinkar River on the other hand.” The China-Nepal Boundary Protocol of January 20, 1963 established permanent boundary markers “as numbered 1 to 79 in serial order from west to east.” The first marker of the Sino-Nepal border is at Tinkar.

The tri-junction, though not delineated, corresponds to the border claimed by India and shown on the British map of 1879, and in subsequent ones, is about 5 km east-southeast of Lipulekh and 20 km from the Limpiyadhura pass.

International law

Principles of international law support the British and India’s claim. Borders are established through political agreements; delimitation gives specific meaning to the verbal description and is considered part of the negotiations and demarcation is the setting up of boundary markers. In the case of Lipulekh and Kalapani, and now Limpiyadhura, the political agreement in 1817 has been acted upon and not open to challenge

now. A treaty has to be interpreted with reference to the circumstances prevailing at the time the treaty was concluded.

In considering the general significance of map evidence, the basis of Nepal’s claim, if that evidence is inconsistent, its value is reduced by any delimitation done at that time and textual interpretation as well as legislative, administrative or judicial assertions of authority over the area. There are also clear legal grounds and reasons for corrections in names in the maps.

The militarisation of this undelineated part of the border has made it imperative for India to respond early to Nepal’s selective reference to certain maps of the British East India Company – first raised in 1997 – with a white paper and discuss giving Byansis in Nepal all facilities, as those villages are cut-off from the rest of Nepal. Equally important is the need for another white paper on Aksai Chin where the border is also not delineated. Resolution is a part of political negotiation and overlapping “patrolling points” are grossly inadequate substitutes for boundary pillars.

Civilisational states should rely on the power of persuasion to settle misapprehensions left over by colonialism based on historical facts and summit diplomacy.

Mukul Sanwal is a former UN diplomat and has served as Deputy Commissioner Almora

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.

Vulnerable group

It is shocking to know 74% of COVID-19 deaths in Bhopal were survivors of the Bhopal gas tragedy in 1984. It was imperative to have kept the gas survivors insulated from the COVID-19 infection as soon as the deadly virus began to surface in India. Besides, it is puzzling why the Bhopal Memorial Hospital and Research Centre (BMHRC) – the dedicated super-speciality hospital for the survivors – was not admitting those survivors with COVID-19 symptoms, causing a delay in their treatment (Inside page, “74% Bhopal COVID-19 deaths were of gas tragedy

survivors,” June 22). This tragic event only shows a lack of anticipation, planning, and, more importantly, compassion and empathy. It is the responsibility of the government to safeguard the well-being of vulnerable populations during the pandemic.

A. VENKATASUBRAMANIAN, Tiruchi, Tamil Nadu

Lessons of 1962

The country’s continuing conundrum (Editorial page, “India’s continuing two-front conundrum”, June 22) made me recollect those days of 1962 when I was a Class 10 student. India’s dismal state of

unpreparedness to counter the Chinese aggression because of political miscalculations by the Prime Minister and the Defence Minister, and the subsequent damage to our national interest is a matter of history. Unfortunately, our policy makers do not appear to have drawn up a long-term plan to correct matters, if one is to go by the recent confrontations and conflicts with China. India has no choice as far as choosing its neighbours is concerned and we have to opt for a win-win relationship with them through diplomacy. War with full preparedness should be the last resort if

our powerful neighbour fails to appreciate our gestures of peace. We cannot afford the luxury of a repetition of the 1962 debacle, which is still painful to recollect at my age.

M.V. NAGAVENDER RAO, Hyderabad

Enough’s enough

Women should be made aware of the fact that they need not suffer in silence when it comes to domestic and gender-based violence (Editorial page, “Fighting a double pandemic”, June 22). In many sections of our society, there exists the notion that for the well-being of the family it is best

if the woman suffers silently under patriarchal norms. The first thing which should be done is to spread awareness among women, especially young girls, that it is not okay if men abuse them. As long as there are

CORRECTIONS & CLARIFICATIONS:

In the story titled “China lost more than 40 soldiers in Galwan, says Minister” (June 21, 2020), the paragraph that quoted the Chinese PLA Western Theatre Command spokesperson has been recast to say: “The Indian Army had stated that there were ‘casualties on both sides.’” Accusing India for the clash, the Chinese PLA Western Theatre Command spokesperson Senior Colonel Zhang Shuili said on Tuesday that it “triggered fierce physical confrontation between the two sides, resulting in casualties” but so far China has not commented on its casualty numbers.”

It is the policy of The Hindu to correct significant errors as soon as possible. Please specify the edition (place of publication), date and page. The Readers’ Editor’s office can be contacted by Telephone: +91-44-28418297/28576300 (11 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday to Friday); Fax: +91-44-28552963; E-mail: readerseditor@thehindu.co.in; Mail: Readers’ Editor, The Hindu, Kastur Buildings, 859 & 860 Anna Salai, Chennai 600 002, India. All communication must carry the full postal address and telephone number. No personal visits. The Terms of Reference for the Readers’ Editor are on www.thehindu.com

Promote people power against COVID-19

It is time to change track from a government-led but people-disconnected strategy of fighting the virus



K. SRINATH REDDY

India has a single time zone by the clock but it exists in many COVID-19 time zones. Cities with large international airports and high inflows of foreign returnees opened the door to COVID-19 and are trying to expel the unwelcome intruder. Other parts of India are trying to protect themselves against the virus which has just managed to get its toe in. These include rural India and much of the eastern and north-eastern regions. So, a pan-India defence is needed, with variations as appropriate to local contexts.

Antibody prevalence

Differences in viral exposure rates were initially observed across the country, from the RT-PCR tests. Since the testing criteria were restricted to specific indications and testing rates were variable, over time and geography, these comparisons were fallible. As reports of many persons testing positive but staying asymptomatic came in from across the world, questions arose as to the extent of virus spread in the general population. The government has just released the results of population surveys, employing antibody tests in different parts of the country. Data presented on 63 of the 83 districts reveal an antibody prevalence of 0.73% in the population. Earlier media reports of 15-30% antibody prevalence in the containment zones of large cities are yet to be corroborated, since data are still being analysed.

Some sections of the media rushed to say that the reported prevalence in the containment zones heralds an imminent arrival of herd immunity in India. The herd immunity threshold (HIT) for this virus is estimated to be at least 70% of the Indian population. Extrapolating from containment zones to the entire country is a mistake, as the district survey shows. Even the prevalence attributed to the containment zones is far from the HIT. Much of the country remains untouched by the virus. This offers an opportunity to immo-



"COVID-19 can be countered only through a unified society effort." Healthcare workers at a medical camp in Dharavi, Mumbai, on June 10. • VIJAY BATE

bilise the virus even as we move out of the lockdown.

It is clear that we need a differentiated approach in our response as we address the varied levels of infection across large cities, smaller towns and rural areas. One challenge is to stall the spread within the urban containment zones. The other is to protect the many parts of the country where the virus has touched very few but can threaten many. Despite the fatigue of national lockdown and the natural urge to get on with life as before, there are many battles yet to be fought before we unfurl the flag of victory like New Zealand or Vietnam.

Changing track

It is time to change track from a government-led but people-disconnected strategy of planning and implementation. As we open up, we need to engage the strengths of our community resources to ensure that the many components of the response, from testing and isolation to enhanced public awareness and personal protection, are successfully delivered at scale. So far, the strengths of voluntary groups and elected local bodies have been inadequately tapped across the country. There are examples of panchayats becoming excellent organisers of local community response in Kerala and Odisha, while Andhra Pradesh has deployed village and ward volunteers for symptom-based syndromic surveillance of rural and urban households and contact tracing. We need to replicate those good practices, and go beyond, as we move ahead. Symptom-based viral nucleic acid

testing with RT-PCR will have limited success if we only depend on sick persons to self-report at hospitals. Stigma and fear of isolation in a crowded hospital impedes or delays self-referral. We need to detect all likely cases, with influenza-like illness and other COVID-19 symptoms, early in their illness and arrange for testing at home. The initial screening can be done by a school-educated community volunteer, without solely depending on the overburdened ASHA. Such volunteers can also become a family's link with the healthcare system for follow-up of mild COVID-19 positive persons who are now being advised to isolate at home. Young volunteers can be equipped with a thermometer and a fingertip pulse oximeter. Each volunteer can visit 50 allotted houses daily, for case detection and follow-up. They should also act as the home isolated person's link with the health system for efficient transfer and hospitalisation if symptoms worsen.

Where will we get such easily trainable, disciplined and community-oriented young persons? The National Service Scheme functions under the Ministry of Youth Affairs. Started in 1969 to commemorate Mahatma Gandhi's birth centenary, the NSS can demonstrate its value as we celebrate the completion of 150 years of his birth. The National Cadet Corps involves college students mentored by the Defence Ministry. These youth groups can be mobilised. Young persons are at very little risk of serious illness even if infected in the line of duty. This applies also to local youth volunteer groups. Elderly

individuals, people with co-morbidities and persons with physical or mental disability will need special attention and customised service, for which the volunteers can be trained by experienced NGO trainers.

Shortages in skilled healthcare providers need to be addressed, especially as there will be periodic attrition due to infection and exhaustion. The government can create a year-long short service commission under the National Health Mission to recruit doctors who have recently graduated and even attract private practitioners whose clinics shut during the lockdown. These temporary measures can lay the foundations for a larger, well-integrated health workforce of the future.

Improving awareness

We need to step up health awareness campaigns, not just through mass media but also through community leaders and local influencers. From women's self-help groups to resident welfare associations, and trade unions to business associations, all social collectives have to be mobilised to educate their members and others. Fright and stigma, which drive the epidemic underground, must be countered while fostering social solidarity that assures collective safety.

Within the hotspots, we need to increase efforts for micro-surveillance to curb spread even as the broader containment efforts aim to douse the infection. Physical distancing is difficult in slums but masks and hand washing can be highly protective. To overcome water shortages, municipalities should arrange water tankers. Each family in a slum can also be provided a bucket of soap solution (water with dissolved soap) for hand cleansing daily. However, all of this requires the active engagement and organisational skills of local community leaders who enjoy the trust of the people.

COVID-19 threatens all of society. It can be countered only through a unified society effort. It is now time to direct people power against the virus. It requires the government to be more welcoming of NGO and volunteer participation and to create a platform for a new model of PPP: People Partnered Public Health.

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

Transparency during a crisis

Proper implementation of the Right to Information Act is more crucial now than ever before



ANJALI BHARDWAJ

Right to Information (RTI) applications seeking information pertaining to the PM CARES Fund have been stonewalled. No information exists on the official website of the Fund regarding the amount collected, names of donors, expenditure incurred, or details of beneficiaries. The trust deed of the fund chaired by the Prime Minister is not available for public scrutiny. Reports suggest that donations of over \$1 billion have been made, including contributions from foreign sources.

Access to information is crucial

This violation of peoples' RTI is particularly concerning given the unprecedented crisis gripping the nation. Relief and welfare programmes funded through public money are the sole lifeline of millions who suddenly lost income-earning opportunities during the lockdown. If the poor and marginalised affected by the public health emergency are to have any hope of obtaining the benefits of government schemes, they must have access to relevant information.

Ironically, however, a corrosive narrative seems to have emerged that public scrutiny of government actions is undesirable during the crisis and citizens must unquestioningly trust the state. This undermines the basic democratic tenet that citizens' participation and oversight is necessary to ensure they are able to access their rights. Without information, peoples' ability to perform that role is eviscerated and corruption thrives.

The RTI Act, 2005, has empowered citizens to access information from public authorities and hold them accountable. During the COVID-19 crisis, proper implementation of the law has assumed greater significance than ever before. It is crucial that information related to implementation of relief measures announced by governments be widely disseminated. For instance, to ensure food security for the needy, Central and State governments have put in place schemes to provide subsidised rations. For effective delivery of foodgrains and other essential commodities, information must be made available in the public domain about the quantity and price of commodities, details of beneficiaries and the list of ration shops along with their stock position. Ground reports have revealed that in the absence of information, it is impossible for intended be-

neficiaries to get their due – ration shopkeepers siphon foodgrains and keep their shops closed on the pretext that they have no stocks.

Greater openness would prevent controversies of the kind exemplified by faulty testing kits and fake ventilators. Following complaints from various States about rapid COVID-19 testing kits imported from China, the Indian Council for Medical Research halted their use. Serious questions arose about the government's decision to order the kits from China, especially in the backdrop of countries like Spain and the Netherlands returning faulty Chinese kits. Numerous instances have been reported of COVID-19-positive patients requiring treatment in intensive care units being shunted from one hospital to another. This could be prevented if hospitals and health centres publicly provide real-time information about availability of beds and other facilities. To ensure easy accessibility to those who need it the most, relevant information must be made available in local languages and widely disseminated. In fact, this is a statutory obligation of public authorities under Section 4 of the RTI Act.

Role of transparency watchdogs

In the current scenario the role of information commissions is crucial. While in the midst of a pandemic it is reasonable to expect delays in processing information requests, public authorities must not be allowed to interpret the crisis as a justification for not complying with the RTI Act. Unfortunately, an assessment of the functioning of the transparency watchdogs revealed that 21 out of 29 commissions in the country did not hold a single hearing during the first three stages of the lockdown. While the Central Information Commission and some State commissions used audio and video conferencing to hear and dispose cases, most commissions did not make provision for hearing even urgent matters.

At a time when incentives for secrecy are great, and the scope for discretionary actions wide, it is critical to create a culture of openness to empower people to participate meaningfully in the decisions that have profound effects on their lives and livelihoods. People must be able to obtain information about how and where their money is being spent in the efforts to combat the pandemic and whether funds are reaching the intended beneficiaries. It is behind the cloak of secrecy that the rights of individuals are most frequently abrogated, corruption thrives and public trust in institutions is eroded.

Anjali Bhardwaj is associated with the National Campaign for Peoples' Right to Information

A case to exempt GST in Central Police Canteens

It will boost the morale of the forces

M.P. NATHANAEL

Union Home Minister Amit Shah announced in early May that only indigenous products will be sold in all Central Police Canteens run by the Central Armed Police Force (CAPF). This is a welcome step in keeping with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's directive to promote indigenously manufactured products, or swadeshi products, in India. As almost all products sold in CAPF canteens are indigenous, detailed instructions on this are awaited from the Home Ministry. The CAPF comprises the Central Reserve Police Force, the Border Security Force, the Central Industrial Security Force, the Indo-Tibetan Border Police, the Sashastra Seema Bal, the Assam Rifles and the National Security Guard.

Clearing proposals

Repeated efforts over the years to get the facilities of the Canteen Stores Department for CAPF personnel proved futile though the items were sold to civilians as part of the Army's civic action programme in the North-east. When Atal Bihari Vajpayee, as Prime Minister, concurred with the Home Ministry's proposal to include the CAPF in the list of beneficiaries of the Canteen Stores Department, the Defence Ministry opposed it and later shelved it. A proposal was subsequently cleared in 2006 by former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh to open Central Police Canteens for the police forces of the country on the lines of the Canteen Stores Department.

The first CEO of the Central Police Canteen, R.K. Singh, visited the Canteen Stores Department headquarters in Mumbai to obtain first-hand knowledge for the gargantuan task of opening Central Police Canteens. Headed by an Additional Director General, the Central Police Canteen purchase Committee registered nearly 200 firms and the project took off in 2007. Run by the CAPFs, the Central Police Canteens are open to serving and retired CAPF and State police personnel and their families all over the country.

With over 119 master canteens

functioning as depots and 1,700 canteens running across the country catering to over 50 lakh family members of 10 lakh serving personnel, the Central Police Canteen boasts of sales of over ₹2,800 crore worth of products annually. Baba Ramdev's Patanjali has already made inroads into these canteens with various products and is expected to expand. The Khadi and Village Industries Commission is also channelising the sale of its products like textiles and uniform accoutrements through these canteens.

Non-exemption of GST on all products sold through canteens has been a sore point among the CAPF personnel. The rates at which the products are sold at present in the canteens are marginally less than the market rates. Exemption of GST will reduce the costs further making the products more easily affordable and lucrative. The government has to pay serious attention to this aspect.

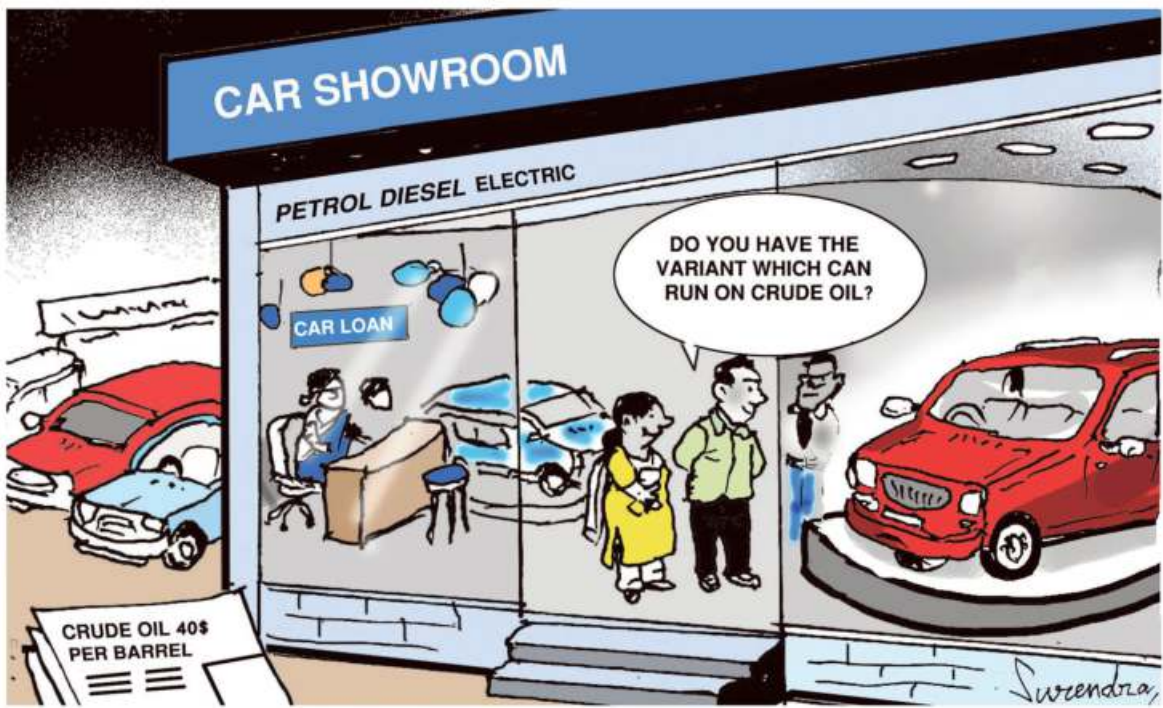
Paying VAT

Before the GST came into effect, certain States had exempted the levy of VAT while many others, including Delhi, were reluctant to extend this benefit. While VAT was exempted for all Canteen Stores Department items, the Central Police Canteens in most States had to continue paying VAT.

The authorities cannot ignore the fact that the CAPF is working in difficult conditions across the country at grave risk to their lives. Not only are these personnel combating terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir, tackling insurgency in the Northeast and fighting the Maoists in left wing extremism-affected areas but are also in the forefront quelling riots, as they did in Delhi and Aligarh recently.

While sale of indigenous products in CAPF canteens is a step in the right direction, the issue of exemption of GST needs to be addressed on priority lest the CAPF personnel feel that they are being given step-motherly treatment despite the arduous duties they carry out in inhospitable terrains and the innumerable sacrifices they make for the nation.

M.P. Nathanael is Inspector General of Police (Retd), Central Reserve Police Force



DATA POINT

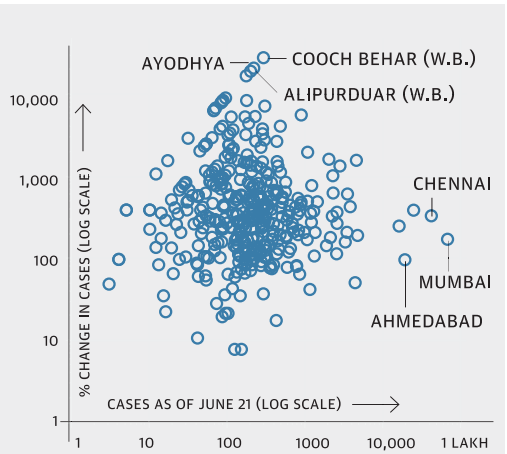
Spreading further

Though urban centers such as Mumbai and Chennai continue to bear the brunt of COVID-19, cases are also rapidly rising in several Tier-II and Tier-III districts. While those districts have a lower disease burden, cases have grown at a much faster pace in the last one month. The increase in deaths has been relatively slower

By The Hindu Data Team

■ NEW TARGETS

The graph plots the number of confirmed cases across districts in select States as of June 21, against the % change in cases compared to a month ago. While Mumbai continues to be the worst affected district, the spread of cases increased exponentially in districts such as Cooch Behar, Alipurduar and Ayodhya. Cooch Behar in West Bengal, which had no cases one month ago, recorded 288 cases as of June 21



■ **CASES** | The table divides the districts into three categories based on the case count on June 21 (new) and a month ago (old). For instance, 28 districts in Gujarat recorded 0-99 cases a month ago, while only 15 districts did so on June 21

State	0-99 cases		500-999		>999 cases	
	Old	New	Old	New	Old	New
A.P.	6	2	1	5	0	2
Gujarat	28	15	1	1	2	3
Haryana	19	7	0	1	0	2
J&K	13	5	0	5	0	0
Karnataka	23	9	0	1	0	3
MP	41	33	1	1	2	2
Maharashtra	19	9	2	4	4	11
T.N.	20	8	2	5	1	5
U.P.	66	23	1	5	0	2
W.B.	18	3	1	2	1	3

■ **DEATHS** | The table divides the districts into three categories based on the no. of deaths as of June 21 (new) and a month ago (old). Thirty districts in Gujarat recorded <9 deaths a month ago, while only 23 did so on June 21

State	0-9 deaths		50-99		>99 deaths	
	Old	New	Old	New	Old	New
A.P.	11	10	0	0	0	0
Gujarat	30	23	1	0	1	2
Haryana	22	19	0	2	0	0
J&K	20	17	0	0	0	0
Karnataka	28	25	0	1	0	0
M.P.	44	40	1	2	1	1
Maharashtra	26	17	1	3	2	7
T.N.	36	32	1	0	0	1
U.P.	73	59	0	2	0	0
W.B.	21	18	0	2	1	1

■ While the number of districts which recorded <100 cases went down drastically, those with >500 cases went up significantly across most States in this one month period

The Hindu.

FROM THE ARCHIVES

FIFTY YEARS AGO JUNE 23, 1970

Sukarno's success and failure

(From an editorial)

For more than two decades, the name of Sukarno was synonymous with that of Indonesia and history will record that it was he who united this group of 3,000 islands into a new Asian nation. Sukarno founded the Indonesian Nationalist Party in 1927 and his powerful demand for independence led the Dutch rulers to exile him for many years. Then came the Japanese conquest and Sukarno accepted their offer to form a puppet government though he did not give up the goal of genuine independence. With the defeat of Japan in 1945, the Dutch re-appeared on the scene and a new movement, strongly supported by India, was launched to force them to transfer power to the Indonesian people. This was achieved in 1950 and Sukarno was unanimously chosen as President. Assisted by outstanding leaders like Sultan Sjahrir, who became Premier, and Vice-President Hatta, it seemed Indonesia would forge ahead on the democratic path. Despite the numerous political parties, parliamentary government seemed to be well established and economic progress was fairly rapid. But the extreme nationalism which had developed a reaction to Dutch colonial rule led the Government into a kind of radicalism for which it was not prepared.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO JUNE 23, 1920

Bolshevism in Russia

(From an editorial)

"Bolshevism - The Dream and the Fact" is the subject of a brochure by Mr. Edmund Candler just issued. It is well written and it its 80 pages contain a weird description of the incredible horrors of anarchy, misrule and tyranny alleged to have been perpetrated in Russia by the agents of Bolshevik dictatorship in the name of liberty, fraternity and equality. The causes for the success of the Red army and the triumph of Lenin and Trotsky over their military and political opponents are gone into in their general aspects and a prediction is heralded that "Bolshevism in the hour of its military triumph is perhaps nearer to collapse than at any time during its struggle to establish itself." The writer also devotes a chapter or two in dealing with the ideal or theory of Bolshevism, the dream which has charmed the Russian masses into falling under the influence of Lenin and in more than one place opines that violence and tyranny are not the real aim and essence of theoretical Bolshevism.

FROM PAGE ONE

Reports of Chinese build-up at Pangong

Separately, in the national capital, the Phase-II of the Army Commanders Conference got under way.

The biannual conference was postponed in April due to the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequently the first

phase was held from May 27 to 29.

“ACC-20 is being conducted on June 22-23 to review the operational situation on both the Northern and Western Fronts,” the Army said on Twitter.

CBSE to seek SC directive on pending exams

The pending examinations had been rescheduled to be held in the first two weeks of July, with CBSE increasing the number of centres from 3,000 to over 13,000 to allow for minimal travel and maximum social distancing.

“In March, we had thought July would be a safe time to hold exams. But the situation has only gotten worse, and it is changing everyday,” said a senior Ministry official, downplaying the chance of further postponement of the examinations, given the uncertainty of the course of the pandemic. Several State governments, including Delhi and Maharashtra, have also communicated their unwillingness to risk the health of students and staff by conducting the examination.

Several State governments, including Delhi and Maharashtra, have also communicated their unwillingness to risk the health of students and staff by conducting the examination.

The HRD Ministry has been hesitant to announce a complete cancellation of board examinations because of the fall-out on professional entrance examinations such as JEE and NEET, needed for admission to engineering and medical courses, which had also been rescheduled for the second half of July.

Already, a section of students has been calling for those examinations to be cancelled as well.

HRD Minister Ramesh Pokhriyal Nishank has been holding consultations with the National Testing Agency, which conducts these entrance exams, as well as with the University Grants Commission and the All In-

dia Council for Technical Education.

With regard to the Class 10 and 12 examinations conducted by the Council for Indian School Certificate Examinations (CISCE), students have been given an option to either write their pending examinations physically or opt for alternative grading.

On Monday, the Bombay High Court extended the deadline for the Council to declare its alternative methodology till June 25, after which students can make an informed choice on whether or not to write the examinations which begin on July 1. Several students have said their schools have already forced them to choose.

The court also directed the Union and State government to apprise the court on their stand on conducting the examinations as per the revised schedule.

A senior HRD Ministry official said it has been made clear that the Centre does not administer the CISCE, which is an autonomous body.

The Bombay High Court is hearing a parent’s petition to cancel the ICSE and ISC examinations, and a number of similar-minded parents have joined the plea.

On Monday, other parents intervened to say some students are willing to write the pending papers, having put in hard work to prepare, and that any decision taken by the State or by the Council to cancel the examinations would be detrimental to their interest. There is a pending proceeding before the SC on the same issue. The matter is scheduled to be heard on June 24.

Parliament plan returned for finer detailing

Sources in the DUAC also said the offices had been shut last week as an employee had tested positive for COVID-19. The office was reopened on Monday after being sanitised.

The proposal of the CPWD, which operates under the Union Housing and Urban Affairs Ministry, is to construct a triangular Parliament building in the 10.5-acre plot adjacent to the existing heritage structure built in the 1920s.

The project is estimated to cost ₹922 crore, according to the CPWD’s applica-

tion for environmental clearance.

While the new Parliament building is the first of the Central Vista revamp projects to get underway, the CPWD has proposed constructing 10 new office buildings for all Ministries along the Central Vista by 2024, new residences for the Prime Minister and Vice-President near South and North Block and a Prime Minister’s Office. The Parliament building as well North and South Blocks are proposed to be re-purposed as museums.

Telangana sees surge, adds 872 cases in a day

Toll in three southern States continues to inch up, 17 die of infection in Telangana, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
BENGALURU

The death toll from COVID-19 in southern States rose by seven in Telangana, and five each in Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh on Monday.

Karnataka reported 249 new cases, pushing up the State tally to 9,399. The overall death toll was 142.

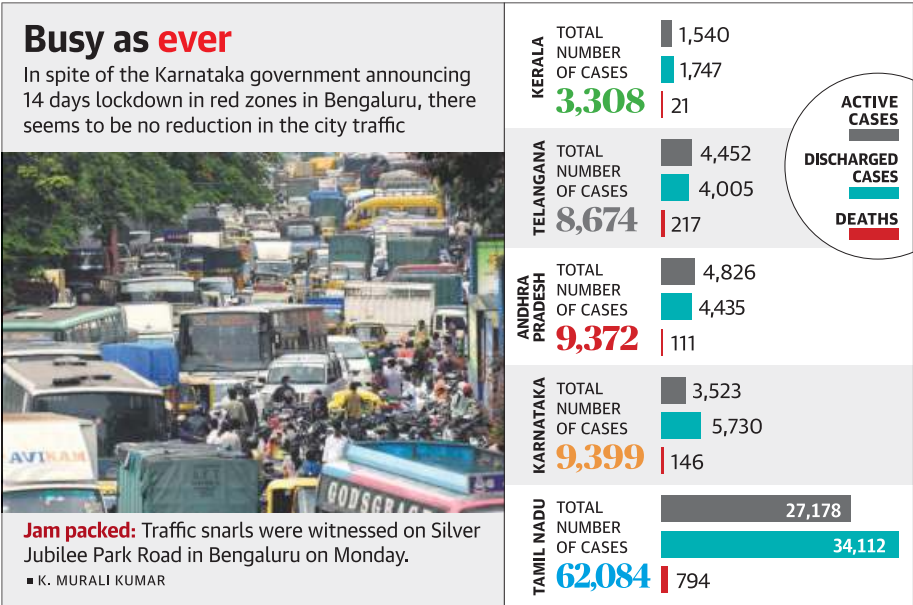
Of 249 cases, 126 were from Bengaluru. An official bulletin said among the 249 cases, 50 were inter-State passengers and 11 international passengers. Mean-



while, 111 patients were discharged on Monday. With 5,730 discharges, the recovery rate in Karnataka stood at 60.96%.

The bulletin said 80 out of the total 3,523 active cases were admitted in the intensive care units of various designated hospitals.

One of the five patients who died did not have any



co-morbidities, while one patient was asymptomatic. Of the five deaths - three were in Bengaluru, one each in Ballari and Ramanagar.

The patient in Ramanagar, aged 90 and asymptomatic died at his residence. Meanwhile, a 60-year-old woman

in Ballari with ILI died in a designated hospital with breathlessness and diabetes. Meanwhile, Karnataka Medical Education Minister Dr. K. Sudhakar’s octogenarian father tested positive for COVID-19 and was admitted to a private hospital.

He is suspected to have contracted the virus at home from domestic help.

Andhra Pradesh, for the third-day consecutive day, reported five deaths taking the toll to 111.

As of Monday, 443 new COVID-19 cases were detect-

Telangana CM hands over relief to Col. Santosh Babu’s family

KCR visits family in Suryapet to condole death of officer

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD

Telangana Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao on Monday visited the Suryapet residence of Col. B. Santosh Babu, slain in the Indo-China border skirmishes, to pay his condolences to the family.

The CM, accompanied by Ministers Jagadish Reddy and V. Prashanth Reddy and Chief Secretary Somesh Kumar, first paid floral tributes to a portrait of Col. Santosh Babu. Later, he spoke to the late Army officer’s wife Santoshi, parents Manjula and Upender, and sister Sruthi, and consoled them.

Mr. Chandrasekhar Rao also interacted with Col. Santosh Babu’s children Abhigna and Anirudh Teja. He hand-



Helping hands: CM K. Chandrasekhar Rao handing over the relief package in Suryapet on Monday. ■SINGAM VENKATARAMANA

ed over a cheque for ₹4 crore to Ms. Santoshi and another cheque for ₹1 crore to the parents of Santosh Babu. He also handed over an appointment letter for a Group I officer’s post to Ms.

Santoshi and a land document for a 711 square yards house site in Banjara Hills to her.

“Santosh Babu sacrificed his life for the security of the nation. His death deeply saddened me,” Mr. Rao said.

Post-surgery, Kerala infant remains critical

She was allegedly assaulted by father

STAFF REPORTER
KOCHI

An infant who suffered serious head injury after being allegedly assaulted by her father underwent surgery at the Kolencherry Medical College on Monday.

The surgical procedure for removing a blood clot from the brain started around 9 a.m. and was completed around 1.30 p.m.

Since then the infant, 54-days-old at the time of the incident, has been moved to the neuro Intensive Care Unit on oxygen support and her condition remains critical, a medical bulletin said. A clear idea of her condition will be known in the next 24

to 48 hours.

The incident in which her father slapped her took place on Thursday night.

Health Minister K.K. Shylaja on Monday said the Department of Women and Child Development would bear the medical expenses.

The Angamaly police have registered a case against the father, Shaiju Thomas, 40, of Kannur. Inspector T.K. Josy said the baby used to sleep through the day and remain awake at night. On the fateful day, when she started crying, Thomas, who was quarrelling with his wife, slapped the baby and threw her on to the bed.

Telangana HC questions Railways’ reluctance to add 1 compartment

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD

Expressing dissatisfaction over the South Central Railway’s (SCR) refusal to attach a compartment to a train for transporting stranded migrant labourers from Hyderabad to Bihar, the Telangana High Court on Monday summoned its Divisional Railway Manager to appear before it. “I will request the DRM of Railways on behalf of migrant workers to attach a single bogie to a Bihar-bound train so that stranded non-local workers can reach their homes,” Chief Justice Raghuvendra Singh Chauhan told SCR counsel Pushpinder Kaur.

During the hearing, peti-



The Bench summoned senior Railway official in a case of transporting migrants.

tioner’s counsel Vasudha Nagaraj said there were only 47 workers from Bihar in a shelter in Secunderabad waiting for transportation to their State. The revenue authorities were ready to

ed, with a tally of 9,372, a Health Department bulletin said. Nearly 3,000 of those were reported in the past week. With 28 more patients recovering, that metric went up to 4,435 cases, but active cases grew. There were 4,826 active patients.

Krishna, Kurnool, Anantapur, West Godavari and Visakhapatnam districts reported one death each.

Anantapur district saw a rapid rise in cases. It reaching 870 with 70 new cases, and the district tally doubled in 10 days. COVID-19 had spread in East Godavari similarly and cases doubled in 11 days to 619 including 64 new ones. They were followed by the Kurnool (60 new cases), West Godavari (54), Kadapa (42), Guntur (34), Chittoor (29), Krishna (15), Prakasam (7), Nellore (6), Vizianagaram (6) and Visakhapatnam (5). Also, 44 persons from other States and seven from other countries tested positive. The State tested 16,704 tests in 24 hours.

Cases in Telangana surged on Monday as 872 more samples tested positive, taking the case total to 8,674. Seven more patients died taking the toll to 217.

State Health Minister Eatala Rajender said tests could be scaled up depending on the situation.

Kerala reported 138 new cases and 88 recoveries on Monday, active cases in hospitals being 1,540.

Except for four cases of local transmission, 134 were imported – people who had returned from abroad and other States. One case of local transmission in a security guard at the Medical College Hospital, Thiruvananthapuram, raised apprehensions of infection from a visitor.

Kamal Nadu Health Department said that in the past two days, 25 persons from Kerala who crossed the border had tested positive for SARS-CoV-2.

(With inputs from Vijayawada, Hyderabad and Thiruvananthapuram bureaus)

Unhappy with IMD, Kerala ropes in private forecasters

No new AWS, near time data streaming is minimal: govt.

JACOB KOSHY
NEW DELHI

For the first time, a State government will be funding private weather companies for alerts and warnings about extreme climate events, moving away from the India Meteorological Department.

An order by Kerala’s Disaster Management Department issued on June 19, and viewed by *The Hindu*, authorises the release of ₹95 lakh to three private companies – Skymet Private Ltd, Earth Networks and IBM Weather Company – to use “ensemble predictions to improve extreme weather alert services in the State”.

The devastating floods of 2019 have heightened concerns about the state of ex-

treme-weather preparedness in Kerala. The order states that these services would be part of a 1 year pilot project.

The government’s decision builds on an earlier order from April 30, where it said it was dissatisfied with the IMD. The Kerala State Disaster Management Authority reviewed the State’s preparedness in terms of weather prediction and the IMD’s preparedness.

The IMD, that order reads, had promised to put up 15 Automatic Weather Stations (AWS) before the monsoon. “Unfortunately no new AWS has come up and the near time data streaming is minimal to nil,” the order said.

A senior official associat-

ed with the IMD told *The Hindu* on condition of anonymity that the Department was unable to accede to the Kerala government’s requirement because of disagreements over the location of the AWS.

Disagreement with State
After cyclone Ockhi of 2017, the IMD, as part of improving the State’s weather warning capabilities, committed to installing 100 AWS. However, these could only be installed as per a pre-defined IMD protocol.

“They wanted us to install them in certain places and we couldn’t do that. Moreover, there are three Doppler Weather Radars and already a strong forecast mechanism in the State,” the official said.

IN BRIEF



Six held with two country rifles in A.P.

CHITTOOR
The Palamaner forest range officials on Friday night nabbed six persons and seized two country-made rifles and a car from their possession. They were allegedly found to be hunting wild animals in the reserve forest at M. Kotur village of Palamaner mandal in Andhra Pradesh. Forest officials said the six accused were remanded after being produced in a local court.

Sailor electrocuted on board INS Rajput

VISAKHAPATNAM
In a tragic incident on board *INS Rajput*, naval sailor Rahul Jangir suffered an electrical shock while on duty at the Visakhapatnam naval base on Sunday evening. Despite first aid on the ship and efforts to revive him at *INHS Kalyani*, he succumbed on Sunday night. The mortal remains of the 19-year-old will be flown to his hometown in Jhunjhunu, Rajasthan, where he will be laid to rest with full military honours. An inquiry has been ordered by the Navy.

J.C. Prabhakar, son remanded till June 26

ANANTAPUR
Former Andhra Pradesh MLA J.C. Prabhakar Reddy and son J.C. Ashmit Reddy were on Monday remanded in judicial custody till June 26, after spending two days in police custody. They are facing charges of selling BS-III vehicles after registering them as BS-IV vehicles by fabricating documents. According to sources, their bail petitions are likely to be submitted to the court.

STAFF REPORTER
PALAKKAD

The announcement of a big-budget film telling the story of Variyamkunnath Kunhamed Haji, a 1921 Malabar Rebellion hero who was shot dead by the British police at Kottakkunnu, Malappuram, has set off a hate campaign against the proposed film and its crew.

Actor Prithviraj announced on Monday that he would portray Variyamkunnath in the film, to be directed by Ashique Abu and Muhsin Parari. The film will be timed to coincide with the centenary of the Malabar Rebellion next year.

Right-wing radicals kicked off a social media campaign soon after.



Prithviraj

They launched a blistering attack on the Prithviraj-Ashique Abu team, describing Ashique Abu as a ‘Muslim terror sponsor’.

Some social media posts threatened the crew that

their film would never be allowed to be shot if they went about portraying Variyamkunnath as a Muslim hero against the British.

Extensive study

“For long, there have been attempts to give a communal colour to the Malabar Rebellion of 1921 by the right-wing radicals. There is nothing new about it. But with the Sangh forces in power, the virulence of their hatred has increased manifold,” Mr. Parari told *The Hindu*.

He said they decided to take up the project after an extensive study of history. “We have examined innumerable documents within and outside the country relating to the 1921 Mapila re-

volt. Our film will be on the basis of recorded history, and not on the basis of the lies that some vested groups spread,” he said.

Mr. Parari said that everyone in society had an important role to play in setting the land’s legacy straight, as the country was undergoing total saffronisation and communal polarisation.

‘Not anti-Hindu’

I.V. Sasi’s film titled *1921* on the Malabar Rebellion was a big hit in 1988. Scripted by T. Damodaran, the ₹120 crore film portrayed Variyamkunnath, among other characters, as a Mapila leader in the fight against the British.

“Variyamkunnath has done many good things. We have enough and more proof to establish that he was not anti-Hindu,” said Mangalam Gopinath, veteran Congress leader, at Manjeri.

“He [Variyamkunnath] stood up against an empire that ruled a quarter of the world,” Mr. Prithviraj said in a social media post on Monday. “Etched out his own country with an army that waged a never before war against the British. Though history was burned and buried, the legend lived on. The legend of a leader, a soldier, a patriot. A film on the man who became the face of the 1921 Malabar revolution.”



KERALA

Why is China praising Modi, asks Rahul

‘PM should pay heed to Manmohan’

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Former Congress president Rahul Gandhi on Monday asked why China was praising Prime Minister Narendra Modi after killing Indian soldiers and “taking away India’s land”.

The Congress took to Twitter and posted a news report published in *The Hindu* that mentioned how Chinese media praised Mr. Modi’s statement at Friday’s all-party meeting and how it would pave the way for de-escalation.

“China killed our soldiers. China took our land. Then, why is China praising Mr. Modi during this conflict,” asked Mr. Gandhi.

In a separate tweet, Mr. Gandhi commented on Dr. Manmohan Singh’s advice to Mr. Modi. “An important advice from the former Prime Minister. I hope the Prime Minister will pay heed to it for the sake of the country,” he said in Hindi.

The Congress also hit back at BJP president J.P. Nadda who accused Dr.



Rahul Gandhi

Singh of presiding over “600 incursions between 2010 and 2013”.

“Dear Sh. Nadda, Pl show the courage to ask Modi Govt about: 1. 2,264 Chinese transgressions since 2015. 2. Martyrdom of 471 jawans & 253 civilians in J&K alone, highest in 30 years. 3. 3,289 ceasefire violations by Pak in 2019 alone, highest in 16 years, up from 583 in 2014,” chief spokesperson Randeep Surjewala said.

“Stop compromising on ‘National Security’ & India’s ‘Territorial Integrity’. This would be the biggest disservice to our Armed Forces & our 20 martyrs.”

Pranab to open online summit for IAS aspirants

Unacademy, in association with *The Hindu*, is organising it

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Unacademy, in association with *The Hindu*, is organising an online summit for civil services aspirants from June 26 to 28.

The idea behind the summit is to motivate aspirants to achieve by giving them an opportunity to interact with people of eminence from the fields of politics, public administration, cinema and sports.

The online summit will be inaugurated by former Presi-



Pranab Mukherjee

dent Pranab Mukherjee on June 26.

The summit will host some of the accomplished speakers in the country – Dr. Shashi Tharoor, MP, on the

Manmohan cautions Modi on statements on national security

Disinformation is no substitute for diplomacy or decisive leadership: former PM

SANDEEP PHUKAN
NEW DELHI

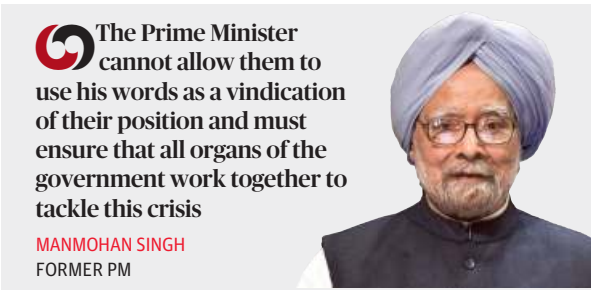
Former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh on Monday asked Prime Minister Narendra Modi to be “mindful” of the implications his statements will have on national security and not allow them to vindicate Chinese position.

Speaking for the first time on the India-China face-off in Ladakh’s Galwan Valley, Dr. Singh said, “Disinformation is no substitute for diplomacy or decisive leadership. And the truth cannot be suppressed by having pliant allies spout comforting but false statements.”

In a statement, he urged all organs of the government to work together to prevent the situation from further escalating.

Dr. Singh lauded the efforts of the Indian Army and the soldiers who lost their lives.

The government must ensure justice for Col. Santosh Babu and the jawans who sa-



crificed their lives protecting the borders. “To do any less would be a historic betrayal of the people’s faith,” he said.

Though Dr. Singh did not mention any specific comment by Mr. Modi, his reference was to the Prime Minister’s statement at the June 19 all-party meeting that “no one was inside Indian territory and no post was occupied by anyone”.

Subsequently, the Prime Minister’s Office clarified that Mr. Modi had specifically talked about the area where Chinese and Indian troops clashed and how, because of the brave act of the



Army, the Chinese attempt was foiled.

Referring to the clashes in the Galwan Valley, Dr. Singh said the government should not allow the supreme sacrifice of the 20 soldiers to go in vain.

‘Historic crossroads’

“At this moment, we stand at historic crossroads. Our government’s decisions and actions will have serious bearings on how the future generations perceive us. Those who lead us bear the weight of a solemn duty. And in our democracy, that responsibility rests with the office of the Prime Minister.

Jaishankar to attend China-Russia trilateral

External Affairs Minister’s presence hints at efforts for a diplomatic solution to the LAC crisis

SUHASINI HAIDAR
NEW DELHI

External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar will take part in the Russia-India-China trilateral on Tuesday, in an indicator that New Delhi is prepared to press on with diplomatic moves with Beijing despite last Monday’s clashes between Indian and Chinese troops at the Line of Actual Control (LAC) that left at least 20 Indian soldiers dead.

The meeting that will be held via videoconference around 1.30 p.m. will include Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi and will be hosted by Russian Foreign Minister

Sergey Lavrov. The three leaders were originally scheduled to meet on March 22 in Sochi, but the annual meeting had to be put off due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The RIC meeting coincides with Defence Minister Rajnath Singh’s visit to Moscow to attend Russia’s Victory Day parade, and for high-level meetings. The Indian and Chinese militaries have both sent contingents for the parade, but officials ruled out a meeting between Mr. Singh and any Chinese official in Moscow.

Officials in Moscow and Delhi have also underlined that “no bilateral issues”



S. Jaishankar

would be discussed during the videoconference. “The three Ministers are expected to discuss the current situation of the pandemic and the challenges of global security, financial stability and RIC cooperation in that context.

BJP president lashes out at former PM

Statement is mere wordplay: Nadda

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

BJP president J.P. Nadda on Monday said former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh’s statement on the Ladakh stand-off was “mere wordplay” and accused the Congress of questioning and demoralising the armed forces.

“Former Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh’s statement is mere wordplay. Sadly, the conduct and actions of top leaders of the Congress party will not make any Indian believe such statements. Remember, this is the same INC that questions and demoralises our armed forces,” he said. The UPA government under Dr. Singh had “presided over 600 incidents of incursions between 2010-2013”, he said.

India “fully trusts and supports” Prime Minister Narendra Modi. “130 crore Indians have seen his administrative experience in some of the most testing times, particularly how he

has always put the well-be-



J.P. Nadda

ing of the nation over and above everything else,” Mr. Nadda said in a series of tweets.

While Dr. Singh “rightly calls for unity” in the face of the crisis at the border, “again strong words on paper fall flat when we see exactly who is vitiating the atmosphere of unity. Hope Dr. Singh is able to prevail upon his own party,” he said. It was the Congress that “helplessly surrendered 43,000 km of Indian territory to the Chinese”, he alleged

“During the UPA years we saw abject strategic and territorial surrender without a fight,” he said.

Left parties slam govt. on fuel price hike

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The five Left parties, in a joint statement, criticised the government for the sharp hike in fuel prices and demanded that the Central Excise Duty be reduced to provide relief to the people.

They said the government had embarked upon the merciless destruction of people’s livelihoods, which have already been severely assaulted both by the pandemic and the “mismanaged nationwide lockdown”.

One lakh vacancies in Central Armed Police Forces

More than 6,000 positions are lying vacant in ITBP

VIJAITA SINGH
NEW DELHI

More than 6,000 positions are lying vacant in the Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP), the primary force deployed along the 3,488 km China border, according to a Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) submission before a Parliamentary panel in January.

In 2014, after the Modi government came to power, the then Home Minister Rajnath Singh on October 23, 2014, announced that 54



Main force: The Indo-Tibetan Border Police is the primary force deployed along the 3,488 km border with China.

new border outposts had been sanctioned along the China border. The new BOPs would have required an additional 12 battalions or approximately 12,000 personnel. Mr. Singh again announced at the ITBP’s

raising day parade in 2017 that 50 new posts had been sanctioned.

A senior government official said the 54 BOPs, meant primarily for Arunachal Pradesh, were yet to come up. However, on October 23 last

year, Minister of State for Home G. Kishan Reddy said that “since (the year) 2014, 23 new BOPs have been constructed” along the China border.

According to a Parliamentary Standing Committee report tabled in the Rajya Sabha on March 3, the sanctioned strength of ITBP is 89,567. As on January 1, the total number of ITBP personnel stood at 83,337, the report said.

Overall, there were a total of 1,03,367, that is, 11% vacancies in the Central Armed Police Forces (CAPF) comprising the ITBP, the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF), the Border Security Force

(BSF), the Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB), the Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) and the Assam Rifles.

In the ITBP, as many as 6,230 positions, or 7% posts, are vacant. ITBP Director General S. S. Deswal told a press conference on October 23 last year that recruitment of 12 posts filling up 842 vacancies had been completed in the last nine months and 7,535 personnel were recruited.

“The recruitments were done mostly against retirements, voluntary retirements and deaths. The force as such has not expanded in all these years,” explained the official.

Himanta hints at ‘architectural change’ to save Manipur govt.

Chief Minister is main hurdle, say disgruntled MLAs

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GUWAHATI/ IMPHAL

Assam Finance and Health Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, who is also the convener of the North East Democratic Alliance (NEDA), said there would be an “architectural change” for resolving the political crisis in Manipur.

NEDA is a Bharatiya Janata Party-fronted forum of major regional parties in the northeast.

Marathon meeting

Mr. Sarma and Meghalaya Chief Minister Conrad K. Sangma had taken a special flight to the Manipur capital Imphal on Sunday and had a marathon discussion with the four National People’s Party (NPP) lawmakers who pulled out of the BJP-led alliance along with five others, including three of BJP, on June 17. This had reduced the Nongthombam Biren Singh government to a minority two days ahead of the Rajya Sabha election. However, the BJP managed to win the sole seat from the State.

Mr. Sangma is the national president of the NPP.

Their discussion with the NPP lawmakers and other key players in the alliance went on for nine hours before they caught the flight back at 10 p.m.

The NPP lawmakers saw them off but returned to the hotel where the Opposition Congress MLAs are camping, raising speculations that the talks had failed.

Byelections likely

Mr. Sarma told mediapersons in Guwahati on Monday, “I think you will see a good result in the next two-three days. After the RS polls, many people were disqualified. Manipur will go for byelections. So basically, the architecture will be a bit different but more or less, we are continuing with the principle of friendship and the spirit of NEDA and NDA,” he said, declining to elaborate.

The NPP’s Manipur unit had earlier said Mr. Biren was making it difficult for their MLAs to remain in the alliance.

The Governor on Monday summoned the Chief Minister to reportedly discuss the political crisis in the context of the Congress demanding a special Assembly session for the trial of strength.

Mizoram quake wrecks buildings, roads

Tremors were also felt across the State, adjoining Manipur and Myanmar; PM promises all help

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GUWAHATI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi assured Mizoram Chief Minister Zoramthanga of all help after an earthquake of magnitude 5.3 damaged several residential buildings, churches and roads in Champhai district of Mizoram on Monday.

The earthquake, whose epicentre was at Zokhawthar on the India-Myanmar border, shook the State at 4.10 a.m. The tremors were felt in other parts of the State and Manipur besides Myanmar.

Third quake in a week
This was the third quake in Mizoram within a week. The State experienced a 4.6-magnitude quake on June 18 followed by another of 5.1 magnitude on June 21 evening.

Mr. Zoramthanga said there were no reports of casualties. “Two earthquakes rocked #Mizoram within a



Devastating blow: Debris inside a damaged building after an earthquake hit Champhai district in Mizoram on Monday. ■PTI

span of 12 hours. Damage assessment undertaken by MLA concerned and district administration. Fortunately, no casualties reported so far. Thanking the Hon’ble Prime Minister and Hon’ble Home Minister for their assurance of support,” he tweeted.

Mr. Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah had called up Mr. Zoramthanga

in the morning and took stock of the situation.

“Spoke to the Chief Minister of Mizoram, Shri @ZoramthangaCM Ji on the situation in the wake of the earthquake there. Assured all possible support from the Centre,” Mr. Modi tweeted.

‘Praying for safety’
“I have spoken to Shri @ZoramthangaCM ji, Chief Minister of Mizoram, to review the situation after the quake. I assured him all possible support from the Central government. Praying for everyone’s safety and well-being,” tweeted Mr. Shah.

District officials said residential houses, church buildings, community halls, historical structures, the immigration checkpoint building at Zokhawthar and a school were partially damaged. Some roads have also developed cracks.

NHRC notice to U.P. after 57 girls infected

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The National Human Rights Commission on Monday issued notices to the Uttar Pradesh government and the police over media reports of 57 girls at a state-run shelter home in Kanpur testing positive for COVID-19.

The NHRC noted that five of the affected girls were pregnant and one HIV-positive.

Negligence cited
“Reportedly, the girls were exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19 for some time but there was delay in taking them to hospital for tests. The commission has observed that the contents of the media report, if true, are enough to *prima facie* believe that the public servants have failed to provide safeguard to the victim girls and, apparently, were negligent in protecting their right to life, liberty and dignity in the custody of the State,” the NHRC said in a statement.

The NHRC issued notices to the Chief Secretary and the Director General of Police, asking for reports, including on the action taken in the matter, within four weeks.

“The State government is expected to order an inquiry into the matter by an independent agency. It is also expected to review the health status of the female inmates lodged in shelter homes across the State and issue suitable directives that such incidents do not recur in future,” the NHRC said.

Help the needy, Rajasthan HC tells FCI

In a plea, two law students said the destitute were not being given enough foodgrains

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
JAIPUR

A Division Bench of the Rajasthan High Court has issued notices to the National Disaster Management Authority and the Food Corporation of India (FCI), asking them to extend the maximum possible benefit to the poor and needy people in the State during the COVID-19 pandemic without waiting for further directions from the court.

Two law students in Rajas-

than had brought to the attention of the High Court, through a public interest litigation petition, the issue of the FCI not providing sufficient quantity of foodgrains to the destitute and the underprivileged.

The students said the number of beneficiaries had increased exponentially after the data collection in 2013.

Petitioners Himakshi Alaria and Harsh Kumar pointed out that migrant labour-

ed on the basis of the 2011 Census and data collection in 2013. But the State government had data showing the number of NFSA beneficiaries to be 5 crore. “This clearly establishes a shortage for 54 lakh beneficiaries,” the petition stated.

The Bench posted the matter for further hearing on July 13, while directing the Centre and its authorities to take urgent action if the assertion of the petitioners was found correct.

For first time since 1565, a Kamakhya festival sans fair

Ambubachi marks annual ‘menstruation’ of the Goddess

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GUWAHATI

Ambubachi, the festival marking the annual ‘menstruation’ of the presiding Goddess, began at the Kamakhya temple on June 22 without mendicants, hermits and devotees for the first time in almost 500 years.

Many places of worship in Assam had opened after the State government went on ‘unlock’ mode from June 3. But the Kamakhya temple administration decided to keep the premises locked in view of the spike in COVID-19 positive cases in the State, primarily Guwahati. The local administration declare 129 localities as containment zones.

Till June 21, Assam had recorded 5,586 positive cases,



No-go area: The Kamakhya temple administration has barred entry of devotees due to COVID-19. ■RITU RAJ KONWAR

with 2,170 of them active, nine dead and three migrated to other States. The rest have been discharged.

“We decided not to risk community transmission of the novel coronavirus by allowing large-scale gathering during Ambubachi Mela, as in previous years. Our priests are conducting the rituals behind locked gates.

Kashmiri art turns to virtual fairs

Over 50,000 workers are unemployed due to the economic slump: KCCI official

PEERZADA ASHIQ
SRINAGAR

In a first, scores of Kashmir Valley artisans and carpet sellers are mulling over participation in virtual or online fairs to tide over the slump in the sales caused by the lockdown imposed to contain the COVID-19 pandemic. Officials said handicrafts and handloom businesses were facing tough challenges in showcasing their products and services to potential buyers.

“Virtual fairs will provide a great opportunity to sell handmade products made by the finest craftsmen from Jammu and Kashmir. Online trade shows seem to be the only viable solution available to both seller and buyer to understand each other’s requirements and keep business going,” a spokesperson of Kashmir’s Handicrafts and Handloom Department



In search of solace: A file photo of Kashmiri women weaving a carpet at a handloom centre in Srinagar. ■NISSAR AHMAD

(HHD) said.

The Kashmir HHD is encouraging exporters and businessmen from J&K to participate in the virtual fairs being organised by the Export Promotion Council for Handicrafts (EPCH) and the Carpet Export Promotion Council (CEPC) in July and August this year.

In 2019-20, J&K exported handicrafts worth ₹935.25

products being offered by exporters from all over the country,” the official said.

The CEPC aims to restart online business in hand-made carpets. “It will be a first-of-its-kind initiative to bridge the gap between markets,” the official said.

‘A good idea’
The Kashmir HHD has assured stakeholders of all support in the two virtual fairs. “It is a good idea. We need to try all platforms to keep the business going,” said Neyaz Ahmad, a carpet seller in Srinagar.

Kashmir Chamber of Commerce and Industry president Sheikh Ashiq said, “Over 50,000 workers in carpet and handicraft industries have no work. Since August 5, 2019 all sectors in J&K have been witnessing a slump. COVID-19 only amplified it.”

Big screen set to reopen after three decades in Srinagar

A multiplex has received the go-ahead to screen films

NISTULA HEBBAR
NEW DELHI

Nearly three decades after almost all cinema halls closed down in Srinagar, a two-storeyed multiplex (within a five-storey commercial complex) has received the go-ahead to screen films this month and is likely to start operations by next March.

Speaking to *The Hindu*, Vijay Dhar of the Taksal group and the owner of the now defunct Broadway cinema hall, said his company had got the NOC (No Objection Certificate) for running a multiplex theatre, and it was an attempt to address the youth of the Valley. “Former Governor Satya Pal Malik had told me that there should be cinemas and entertainment centres for the youth in Srinagar and there was an acute lack of these facilities. It started from there,” he said.

The multiplex is to come up at Sonwar on land owned by Mr. Vijay Dhar and his sons, Vikas and Vishal Dhar.

Mr. Vijay Dhar, a resident of Srinagar, is the son of the legendary D.P. Dhar, who is considered one of the chief architects of India’s intervention in the liberation of Bangladesh. Mr. Vijay Dhar runs the Delhi Public School (DPS) in the city. His family owned Broadway, along with many other cinemas in the city, shut down after threats from terrorists. According to reports, it opened briefly in



Past glory: A view of Neelam Cinema in Srinagar, which ran till the early 2000s, in this file photo. ■NISSAR AHMAD

the mid-1990s but shut down again. Security issues are still key as security forces have been mounting one operation after another to close in on terror groups.

“It is an issue, but more for the government to think about,” said Mr. Vijay Dhar. “I feel that since the 1990s we haven’t done anything to address the youth of J&K. There is a major change in terms of what they are exposed to in the world and what other young people have access to, we must consider that. A short time ago, at DPS, we held music festival ‘Shireen’, inviting 180 schools and the finale was attended by 9,000 people, in a city like Srinagar. So there is definitely a desire for music, cinema, arts and sports,” he said.

On the prospects of the multiplex, he said that prospects of a cinema working again in Srinagar faced the same challenges that theatres did across the world, which was the rise of the streaming channels and OTT platforms. He, however, noted that “there will be a novelty value to the big screen in Srinagar again, so let’s see.”

Security threats and insurgency put paid to cinema theatres in a city, which was the site of many film shoots and a cinema loving public. A polity still grappling with the implications of the dilution of Article 370 and 35A, the return of the cinema hall is a piquant development.

Camps for troops
Many cinema halls in the 1990s had been converted to camps for the paramilitary troops and continue to be so till now. One of the few holdouts was Neelam cinema, a single screen

FAITH Means for salvation

Sastras explain that unless one is rid of all karma, there is no salvation. So, one desirous of salvation has no short cut except to strive to bring about nil balance in his karma account. This appears to be a distant dream since none can refrain from actions and each action, physical or mental, is linked to consequences that have to be faced.

But there is the path of ‘saranagati’ also known as ‘prapatti’ in the Vaishnava tradition that is a sure means to salvation for the Mumukshu. Prapatti is devotion and self surrender to God and depends on the implicit and absolute faith one places in the Lord’s compassionate grace and His boundless protective power, pointed out Sri Asuri Madhavachariar in a discourse. The only merit on the part of the mumukshu is his Maha vishwasa. One may have committed even the most heinous crimes in the past; one may not have led a morally virtuous life. When no individual effort can erase the burden of karma that is always attached to every jivatma, there is hope to get absolved of all sins great or small when one seeks His feet in all humility. The long list of sanchitta karma, along with the prarabdha and agami stands as a formidable hurdle.

But the act of prapatti not only makes him eligible for moksha by releasing him from the effects of sanchitta karma but also takes care of the prarabdha karma that has to be exhausted. This gets cancelled in due course by His grace and His subtle ways of chastisement. As the prapanna continues to lead the rest of his life as ordained by the sastras, such as performance of Nitya and Naimittika karmas etc., he becomes aware of his own inadequacies against the enormity of God’s grace. He strives to become really deserving of the Lord’s grace that has shaped his spiritual life and awareness.

12 WORLD

Brazil COVID-19 toll crosses 50,000

France returns to life by staging music festival, sending children back to school

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
DUBAI

The World Health Organization (WHO) sent out a fresh warning on Monday over the dangers of COVID-19 even as France returned to life by staging an annual music festival and sending millions of children back to school.

In spite of numerous European countries further easing their lockdown restrictions, cases around the world are rising especially in Latin America with Brazil now registering over 50,000 deaths. There are also fears of a second wave with Australians being warned against travelling to Melbourne.

WHO's warning

"The pandemic is still accelerating," WHO's director general Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus told the virtual health forum organised by Dubai in the United Arab Emirates.

Mr. Tedros said the great-



Back to business: Students at a class at the Ziegelau elementary school in Strasbourg, eastern France, on Monday. • AFP

est threat facing the world is not the virus itself, which has now killed over 4,65,000 people and infected nearly nine million worldwide, but "the lack of global solidarity and global leadership".

Brazil is the second worst-affected country behind the United States, another country where political infighting

has prevented a unified policy to handle the virus.

The spread of COVID-19 is accelerating across Latin America, with Mexico, Peru and Chile also hard-hit as death tolls soar and health-care facilities are pushed toward collapse.

Mexico City has delayed reopening markets, restaurants, malls, hotels and places of worship, with the country now recording over 20,000 COVID-19 deaths.

Highlighting the region's woes, Peru passed 8,000 deaths on Sunday despite preparing to reopen shopping malls on Monday.

In Europe, meanwhile, the feel-good factor continues as countries ease their lockdown restrictions. Thousands of French danced and partied well into Monday for an annual music festival, in the first big blow out since the lockdown.

Swimming pools and cinemas also reopened on Monday. Children up to the age of 15 also returned to school as attendance was switched from voluntary to compulsory. Fears remain, however, that the virus, may be on its way back even as countries where infections have ebbed lift their lockdowns to restart battered economies.

Australians were warned Monday to avoid travelling to Melbourne, as the country's second biggest city tightened restrictions over fears of a second wave. Victoria state has recorded more than 110 cases in the past week — many of them in Melbourne — prompting leaders of other regions to warn against visiting the city's six designated virus "hot spots".

U.S. citizen among those killed in U.K. stabbing

3 people died in the lone-wolf attack

REUTERS
READING

The English town of Reading held a minute's silence on Monday for the victims of a stabbing that killed three people including an American in the latest terrorism-linked attack.

Three people were also hospitalised after a man wielding a five-inch knife went on the rampage in a park on Saturday, randomly stabbing people enjoying a sunny, summer evening. A Western security source, speaking on condition of anonymity, said that the suspect was a 25-year-old Libyan called Khairi Saadallah.

The Philadelphia Inquirer said one of the dead was U.S. citizen Joe Ritchie-Bennett, 39, who had lived in Britain for 15 years. U.S. Ambassador Woody Johnson sent condolences to families of victims. "To our great sorrow, this includes an American citizen," he said on Twitter.



A woman paying tribute to the victims in Reading, England, on Monday. • AP

The security source told Reuters that Saadallah had come across the radar of Britain's domestic security agency MI5 last year over intelligence he had aspirations to travel for extremist purposes, although his plans then came to nothing.

The attack was reminiscent of some recent incidents in Britain that authorities also called terrorism.

China to join UN arms trade treaty

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
BEIJING

China will join a global pact to regulate arms sales, with Beijing saying on Monday that it is committed to efforts to "enhance peace and stability" in the world. The Communist Party leadership's top legislative body voted on Saturday to adopt a decision on joining the UN Arms Trade Treaty that is designed to control the flow of weapons into conflict zones. It comes after U.S. President Donald Trump announced plans last year to pull the U.S. out of the agreement — which entered into force in 2014.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian told reporters that joining the treaty was "another important measure for China to support multilateralism". It is among the agreements reached under the Obama administration that Mr. Trump has moved to pull out of.

South Korea battles 'second wave' of coronavirus

REUTERS
SEOUL

Health authorities in South Korea said for the first time on Monday it is in the midst of a "second wave" of novel coronavirus infections focused around its densely populated capital, stemming from a holiday in May.

The Korea Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (KCDC) had previously said South Korea's first wave had never really ended. But on Monday, KCDC director Jeong Eun-kyeong said it had become clear that a holiday weekend in early May

marked the beginning of a new wave of infections focused in the greater Seoul area, which had previously seen few cases. "In the metropolitan area, we believe that the first wave was from March to April as well as February to March," Ms. Jeong said at a regular briefing. "Then we see that the second wave which was triggered by the May holiday has been going on."

At the end of February, South Korea reported a peak of more than 900 cases in a day. An intensive tracking and testing campaign reduced the numbers to single digits by late April. But just as the country announced it would be easing social distancing guidelines in early May, new cases



Invoking the divine: People praying at the Chogyesa temple in South Korea on Monday. • AP

spiked. "We originally predicted that the second wave would emerge in fall or winter," Ms. Jeong said. "Our forecast turned out to be wrong. As long as people have close contact with others, we believe that infections will continue."

As of Sunday, South Korea reported 17 new cases, the first time in nearly a month that daily new cases had dropped below 20. It was a drop from the 48 and 67 cases reported in the previous two days. South Korea has reported a total of 12,438 cases, with 280 deaths.

Ahead of vote, Putin visits army church

REUTERS
MOSCOW

President Vladimir Putin visited a huge new Orthodox Christian cathedral dedicated to the military on Monday as Russia prepares to vote on reforms that could let him stay in power until 2036.

Mr. Putin, 67, addressed hundreds of soldiers to commemorate Russia's remembrance day following a prayer ceremony led by Patriarch Kirill, head of the Orthodox Church, at the Patriot cathedral, which opened earlier this month. "We have gathered here outside the walls of the main cathedral of the Russian



Vladimir Putin at the Resurrection Cathedral, near Moscow. • REUTERS

armed forces to remember the heroes of the past with deep respect," he said.

The lavishly decorated cathedral, some 55 km west of Moscow, had been due to open in May as part of a sequence of events to commemorate 75 years since the Soviet victory in World War Two, but this was delayed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

On Wednesday, Mr. Putin will oversee a military parade across Red Square to commemorate the Soviet victory over Nazi Germany. The following day, Russians will begin casting their ballots in a seven-day vote to approve or reject an array of reforms, including one that could allow Mr. Putin to serve two more terms in the Kremlin instead of stepping down in 2024.

ELSEWHERE



Kim must be laughing at Trump: Bolton

WASHINGTON

Former U.S. National Security Adviser John Bolton said on Sunday that he thinks North Korean leader Kim Jong-un "gets a huge laugh" over President Donald Trump's perception of their relationship. Mr. Bolton spoke to ABC News ahead of the Tuesday release of his tell-all book, which contains many damning allegations against Mr. Trump. • AFP

Indian among 2 new cases in New Zealand

MELBOURNE

An Indian man is among two persons who tested positive for COVID-19 in New Zealand, taking the total number of active COVID-19 cases in the country to nine after having none at all earlier this month, health officials said on Monday. The man in his 30s travelled from India along with his wife. He was staying at a hotel in Auckland. • PTI

India-born Pak. Shia scholar passes away

Talib Jauhari was a poet and philosopher

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
KARACHI

India-born renowned Pakistani Shia scholar and author Talib Jauhari passed away here after a prolonged illness. He was 80.

Mr. Jauhari, who was born on August 27, 1939 in Patna, is survived by his three sons, Dawn News reported on Monday. He migrated to Pakistan along with his father in 1949, two years after the Partition.

Education in Iraq

After obtaining early education from his father, he went to Iraq where he studied religion for 10 years under the renowned Shia scholars of that time.

Mr. Jauhari, who was on a ventilator in the intensive care unit of a private hospital for the past 15 days, breathed his last on Sunday night. His son Riaz Jauhari confirmed his death and said that the body has been shifted to Ancholi Imambarah for the funeral prayers,



Talib Jauhari

The Express Tribune newspaper quoted his son as saying.

Mr. Jauhari was respected among his sect as well as by Sunnis and was a class-fellow of the widely revered scholar Ayatollah Sayyid Ali al-Husayni al-Sistani.

He was also a poet, historian and philosopher and authored many books. Among the awards he received was Pakistan's third-highest civilian honour, Sitara-e-Imtiaz.

Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan has condoled Mr. Jauhari death.

Spying charges are not linked to Huawei executive's arrest: Beijing

China calls Canadian PM Trudeau's remarks 'irresponsible'

ASSOCIATED PRESS
BEIJING

China told Prime Minister Justin Trudeau on Monday to "stop making irresponsible remarks" after he said Beijing's decision to charge two Canadians with spying was linked to his country's arrest of a Chinese tech executive.

The spying charges are "completely different" from the case of Huawei executive Meng Wanzhou, a Foreign Ministry spokesman said. Ms. Meng was arrested on U.S. charges connected to possible violations of trade sanctions on Iran.

Arrest of Canadians

Michael Kovrig and Michael Spavor were detained after Ms. Meng's December 2018 arrest in Vancouver. Charges against them were announced on Friday after a Canadian judge ruled Ms. Meng's extradition case can proceed to its next stage.

Mr. Trudeau, speaking to reporters in Ottawa, said Chinese authorities "directly linked" the cases of Kovrig and Spavor with Ms. Meng. He called on Beijing to end their "arbitrary detention."



Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian in Beijing in April. • REUTERS

"There is no such thing as arbitrary detention," said the Ministry spokesman, Zhao Lijian. "China urges the relevant Canadian leader to earnestly respect the spirit of the rule of law, respect China's judicial sovereignty and stop making irresponsible remarks," Mr. Zhao said.

U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo on Monday called the charges against Kovrig and Spavor "politically motivated and completely groundless." "The United States stands with Canada in calling on Beijing for the immediate release of the two men and rejects the use of these unjustified detentions to coerce Canada," Mr. Pompeo said in a statement.

'Release Meng'

"We strongly urge Canada to correct its mistakes as soon as possible, immediately release Meng Wanzhou and ensure her safe return to home," said Mr. Zhao.

Ms. Meng is living in a mansion she owns in Vancouver, where she reportedly is working on a graduate degree. Kovrig and Spavor are being held at an undisclosed location. China has also sentenced two other Canadians to death and suspended imports of Canadian canola.

Ex-LTTE leader Karuna's claim to be probed

He boasted of 'killing security forces'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
COLOMBO

The Sri Lankan police has ordered a probe into an alleged statement by former Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) deputy leader Karuna Amman, claiming that he had murdered over 2,000 security forces on behalf of the Tamil separatist group, the government said on Monday. The acting police chief Chandana Wickremaratne has directed the Crime Investigation Department to launch an immediate probe into Mr. Amman's statement, according to a press statement issued by the Ministry of Defence.

Speaking at a political rally last week for the upcoming parliamentary elections in the country, Amman alias Vinayagamurthi Muralitharan reportedly said that he had murdered over 2,000 government troops during the LTTE's separatist war which lasted for over three decades.

"When I was a member of



Karuna Amman meeting Sri Lankan Tamils in Colombo in 2011. • REUTERS

the LTTE, I killed some 2,000 to 3,000 Sri Lankan Army personnel in one night at Elephant Pass. I have killed more in Kilinochchi. That is certainly higher than the number of lives the coronavirus has claimed in Sri Lanka," he was quoted as saying in the statement.

He made the statement in response to a comment made by the Chairman of the Karathivu local government body that Karuna Amman is more dangerous than the coronavirus, a report in the *Colombo Page* said on Sunday.

Japan to rename islands disputed with China

Local council votes for the move

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
TOKYO

A local council in southern Japan voted on Monday to rename an area, including islands disputed with China and Taiwan, a move Beijing denounced as illegal and a "serious provocation". The local assembly of Ishigaki city approved a plan to change the name of the area covering the Tokyo-controlled Senkaku Islands — known by Taiwan and China as the Diaoyu — from "Tonoshiro" to "Tonoshiro Senkaku". Local media said another part of Ishigaki is also known as Tonoshiro, and the name change was cast as a bid to avoid confusion.

But the uninhabited islands are at the centre of a festering row between Tokyo and Beijing and the move sparked anger in both Taiwan and mainland China. "The passing of the so-called administration designation bill by Japan is a serious provocation to China's territorial sovereignty," said Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian.

Taiwan says the islands are part of its territory, and also protested the move. "The sovereignty of Diaoyu Islands belongs to our country and any move attempting to alter this fact is invalid," the Foreign Ministry said in a statement.

N. Korea ready to send millions of retaliatory leaflets to the South

They are reflective of the 'wrath and hatred of people from all walks of life' in the country, says Pyongyang

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
SEOUL

North Korea has millions of propaganda leaflets ready to send to the South by an aerial armada of balloons, it said on Monday, heightening its rhetoric against Seoul after blowing up a liaison office.

In recent weeks, Pyongyang has issued a series of vitriolic condemnations of Seoul over anti-North leaflets, which defectors based in the South send across the border — usually attached to balloons or floated in bottles.

Office blown up

The North says it will have nothing more to do with Seoul, and last week blew up a liaison office on its side of the



Sending a message: North Koreans preparing anti-South Korea propaganda leaflets, in an image provided last week. • AP

border that symbolised inter-Korean rapprochement, while threatening to bolster its military presence in and near the Demilitarized Zone. Analysts say Pyongyang

has been conducting a series of staged provocations aimed at forcing concessions from Seoul and Washington with nuclear talks at a standstill. Ostensibly the source of

its anger is the leaflets which it says insult the dignity of its leadership — a reference to leader Kim Jong-un. It is preparing to retaliate with its "largest-ever distribution of leaflets against the enemy", the official Korean Central News Agency reported on Monday. Altogether "12 million leaflets of all kinds reflective of the wrath and hatred of the people from all walks of life" have been produced, it said, and more than 3,000 balloons prepared to send them far to the south.

"The time for retaliatory punishment is drawing near," it said. One of the leaflets shown in the official *Rodong Sinmun* newspaper carried an image of South Korean President Moon Jae-

in drinking from a cup and accused him of having "eaten it all, including the north-south Korea agreement".

Both Koreas used to regularly send leaflets and loudspeaker broadcasts to the other side, but agreed to stop such activities in the Panmunjom Declaration that Mr. Moon and Mr. Kim signed at their first summit in 2018.

Loudspeakers set up

North Korea has begun setting up loudspeakers at multiple locations along the border to broadcast propaganda, the South's Yonhap news agency reported on Monday, citing an official of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

Inter-Korean relations

have been in a deep freeze following the collapse of a summit in Hanoi between Mr. Kim and U.S. President Donald Trump early last year over what the nuclear-armed North would be willing to give up in exchange for a loosening of sanctions.

At times, leaflet dispatches have led to escalation — in October 2014 the North opened fire on an air balloon carrying anti-Pyongyang leaflets, triggering an exchange of shots at the border. But most South Koreans largely ignore leaflets they find sent by the North. The flyers often boast of its military prowess or criticise the U.S. and Southern Presidents, accompanied by offensive images and language.

MARKET WATCH		
	22-06-2020	% CHANGE
Sensex	34,911	0.52
US Dollar	76.03	0.33
Gold	48,811	0.99
Brent oil	42.33	-0.07

NIFTY 50		
	PRICE	CHANGE
Adani Ports	349.60	0.70
Asian Paints	1652.15	29.65
Axis Bank	430.15	13.10
Bajaj Auto	2855.75	181.40
Bajaj Finserv.	6183.55	283.75
Bajaj Finance	2840.30	141.70
Bharti Airtel	581.05	8.55
BPCL	385.15	4.60
Britannia Ind	3421.20	-17.35
Cipla	655.95	19.75
Coal India	143.65	6.40
Dr Reddys Lab	4032.85	27.25
Eicher Motors	17588.95	239.60
GAIL (India)	98.30	-1.20
Grasim Ind	617.60	16.35
HCL Tech	569.60	0.00
HDFC	1819.40	-15.70
HDFC Bank	1028.75	-4.60
Hero MotoCorp	2412.60	56.75
Hindalco	150.10	-0.95
Hind Unilever	2100.80	8.05
ICICI Bank	367.55	3.75
Indusind Bank	489.90	6.25
Bharti Infratel	222.85	4.00
Infosys	703.70	-1.85
Indian OilCorp	88.05	2.75
ITC	185.00	0.95
JSW Steel	197.95	3.65
Kotak Bank	1355.35	52.85
L&T	907.45	9.25
M&M	498.75	-1.30
Maruti Suzuki	5896.00	-1.35
Nestle India Ltd.	16140.80	45.95
NTPC	95.30	2.30
ONGC	84.85	-0.90
PowerGrid Corp	178.60	7.20
Reliance Ind	1746.15	-13.25
State Bank	187.70	3.20
Shree Cement	22017.60	338.65
Sun Pharma	493.20	5.10
Tata Motors	102.65	0.15
Tata Steel	325.70	5.15
TCS	2027.95	-16.65
Tech Mahindra	548.50	9.65
Titan	979.50	3.65
UltraTech Cement	3825.25	-11.10
UPL	446.20	9.30
Vedanta	110.05	4.80
Wipro	218.05	-4.00
Zee Entertainment	177.05	4.10

EXCHANGE RATES		
Indicative direct rates in rupees a unit except yen at 4 p.m. on June 22		
CURRENCY	TT BUY	TT SELL
US Dollar	75.82	76.14
Euro	85.02	85.41
British Pound	94.04	94.44
Japanese Yen (100)	70.91	71.24
Chinese Yuan	10.72	10.76
Swiss Franc	79.77	80.12
Singapore Dollar	54.34	54.58
Canadian Dollar	55.86	56.11
Malaysian Ringgit	17.71	17.80
Australian Dollar	52.16	52.38

Source:Indian Bank



Mahindra unveils Sarpanch tractors
MUMBAI
The Farm Equipment Sector of Mahindra & Mahindra Ltd. has introduced the Sarpanch range of tractors in Maharashtra. The new series offers models spanning multiple HP-points in the 30 HP (22.37kW) to 50 HP (37.28kW) category. Hemant Sikka – president, Farm Equipment Sector, M&M Ltd., said, “The new series is developed to meet the evolving demands of modern farmers by providing extra power, higher back-up torque and modern styling.”

Reliance to hold virtual AGM on July 15
NEW DELHI
After Tata Consultancy Services (TCS), Reliance Industries will hold its first virtual annual general meeting of shareholders on July 15 as public gatherings are not possible in view of the COVID-19 pandemic. In a regulatory filing, RIL said “the 43rd AGM will be held on Wednesday, July 15, 2020 at 2 pm though video conferencing / other audio-visual means.” So far, all the post-IPO AGMs of Reliance have been physical meetings. PTI

AIMO seeks grievance portal for MSMEs
CHENNAI
A consortium of about 25 trade associations coordinated by the All India Manufacturers Organisation (AIMO) have requested the Centre to consider opening two portals – one, for all establishments to upload sundry creditor statements on a quarterly basis, and the other to file complaints against banks, financial institutions and non-banking financial institutions for denial of loans, denial of EMI moratorium and excess charges on interest.

Aurobindo sets eyes on China

Starts filing products from India; work on oral formulations unit underway

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD

Drugmaker Aurobindo Pharma has started filing products from India for the Chinese market even as construction of its oral formulation manufacturing facility in the neighbouring country is underway. “We expect to take the exhibit batches by the second half of FY2021,” MD N. Govindarajan said during an earnings call that took place on June 4, transcripts of which were made available late last week. He was responding to a query on the manufacturing facilities in China and if recent developments between India and China would impact the plans. “Currently, for the Chinese market, we have already started filing products



The firm is keen on supplying products under the tender route in China, where there is a price correction. ■GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCK

from India and the construction of our own oral formulation manufacturing facility is going on,” he said. Besides the plant under construction, the firm has another for which it had entered into a joint venture one and a half years ago. Aurobindo is keen on supplying

products under the tender route in China, where price correction is being witnessed while also looking at private business as well as overtime. Elaborating, Mr. Govindarajan said “the regulation has changed. Preference is there for FDA-approved product

L&T arm, KRB to build modular process plants

Firms eye refinery, petrochem units

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI

L&T Hydrocarbon Engineering (LTHE), a wholly-owned subsidiary of Larsen & Toubro (L&T), has signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with KBR to build modular process plants for refinery and petrochemical projects. Under the agreement, KBR and LTHE will collaborate to develop business opportunities in these sectors, a statement said. LTHE will exclusively bid for KBR’s solid acid alkylation, solvent de-asphalting and catalytic olefins technologies for global projects, with a special emphasis on India, southeast Asia, West

Asia and Africa, according to the statement. Subramanian Sarma, managing director and CEO of LTHE said, “Through this memorandum, LTHE will combine its engineering, modular fabrication facilities and core strength of project management and construction to offer optimised solutions to our customers.” Organised under offshore, onshore, construction services, modular fabrication and AdVENT (Advanced Value Engineering & Technology) verticals, LTHE delivers ‘design-to-build’ engineering and construction solutions across the hydrocarbon spectrum.

INTERVIEW | SUNDEEP SIKKA

‘Equities seem attractive from a two- to three-year perspective’

‘In uncertain times, one can invest via MFs, AIFs, ETFs’

ASHISH RUKHAIYAR
The biggest risk that equities face is that of a rise in CO-VID-19 cases even as economic activity resumes in many countries, said Sundeeep Sikka, ED & CEO, Nippon Life India Asset Management. He said one could invest in equities through mutual funds, AIF and ETF routes, while gold ETFs can act as a hedge given the current uncertainty. Excerpts from an interview:

Do you think the stock markets have reached their bottom or are trading very close to their bottom levels? ■ The short-term direction of the market is difficult to predict as we are amid an anomalistic event. The COVID-19 crisis has come as a shock and while several economies are showing promising signs of recovery, there is a risk of COVID-19 spread as economies open up. We believe equities are attractive from a 2-3 year perspective, but in the near term, are likely to be volatile.

What are the key factors to watch out for in the coming weeks that will dictate market direction? ■ One of the biggest factors is the risk of rise in COVID-19 cases as economic activity resumes in many countries. Further, the aggregate response of global central banks will definitely have a big impact on markets. In general, some countries have already administered aggressive monetary easing steps. The government’s fiscal policy will also be keenly followed by markets.

In the current market, what avenues should a retail investor look at? ■ We believe equities are very attractive from a 2-3 year perspective. Historically, in-



creasing equity allocation when economy is under pressure, has produced superior returns. One can invest in equities through mutual funds, AIF and ETF route. Gold also looks attractive as a hedge in uncertain times and gold ETFs are a suitable way to invest in this asset class. For debt, we believe high grade, short to medium term products are attractive.

Do you think this is a good time for retail investors to invest in debt schemes? ■ A sharp deterioration in business and financing environment, accompanied by some large issuer/group issues and topped recently by a redemption freeze by a fund house has raised some generic but fundamental worries across investor classes on the debt products offered by MFs. But first, more than 80-90% of MF products and/or investments have not been impacted at all by any of the above events. Two, debt funds have generated returns even higher than equity funds across some categories, both in the near and medium term. Third, asset allocation is the largest driver of overall returns in the medium-to-long term and hence debt allocation through MFs always has a place in an investor’s portfolio.

lio, given the edge of transparency, return efficiency and liquidity.

Was the recent episode at Franklin Templeton Mutual Fund an isolated one or do you expect more such events in the near future, given that the lockdown has hit cash flows in most businesses? ■ More than 90% of industry assets are in extremely high-grade securities, with the highest rating. Different events keep happening in capital markets – some of them rarely could also be extreme. As money managers, we are supposed to operate through cycles and reorient our portfolios to reflect potential risk and returns in a dynamic manner. In line with the challenging environment, our board has mandated us to make incremental investments only in securities rated AA and above, in all funds except two, which have a specific credit mandate.

What is your view on Credit Risk funds given that we have seen such funds facing a crisis at regular intervals? ■ In credit funds, we will focus only on those names where cash flow visibility is very high and structures are self-liquidating in nature, particularly in high-yield bonds. This way, we are not at the mercy of balance sheet vagaries and do not have to rely on refinancing. We will also focus on avoiding concentration risk—something we have suffered from both in terms of illiquidity and bigger impact from a credit event.The overall composition of the portfolio will have to undergo a change, maintaining reasonable allocation to high grade bonds to manage liquidity going forward.

and FDA-inspected facility in China. They would get preference in terms of the expedited review. The pricing in the other segments, other than tenders, is also attractive for us to move ahead. But in terms of specifics, we will have more clarity as we get closer to the filing and launch.” Executive chairman of Aurobindo Pharma USA P. V. Ram Prasad Reddy said, “Ultimately, the China plant will be used for China’s requirements. Till that time, we may use [the facility] for China, Europe and U.S.” To queries on the U.S. market, Mr. Govindarajan said the company had filed 55 ANDA (abbreviated new drug applications) with the USFDA during 2019-20 and is expected to file about 50-60 during the current fiscal.

Murugappa cuts debt, capex

Group syncs with changing economic scenario



M.M. Murugappan

ficult economic environment and make the required changes in all elements of operations to ensure sustainable business results,” said M.M. Murugappan, group executive chairman. “Some of our companies and SBUs have managed to buck the industry trends to achieve higher sales and profitability, while some recorded higher profitability

Gold surges, hits highest in over a month

REUTERS

Gold prices climbed 1% on Monday to hit the highest in more than a month, as investors took refuge in the safe-haven metal after an uptick in coronavirus cases roiled hopes for a quick economic recovery. Spot gold was up 1% at \$1,760.55 per ounce at 7.54 p.m. The session high was \$1,762.84, the highest since May 18. Prices were \$4 shy of a 7-1/2 year high of \$1,764.55, hit last month. U.S. gold futures was also 1.3% higher at \$1,776. “There is some flight to safety in gold,” said Bob Haberkorn, senior market strategist at RJO Futures. “Rise in coronavirus cases have led gold to break the \$1,750 level. If we close above \$1,765 today, the \$1,800 level is not very far.”



FDI is welcome, but we have to guard against capital that is opportunistic and not good for India, says Mr. Goyal.

‘Exports improving, down 10-12% in June’

‘Focus is on growth, not handout’

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

India’s exports are showing signs of improvement as the contraction in outbound shipments in June so far has come down to about 10-12% compared with 60% in April, Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal said on Monday. Declining for the third straight month, India’s exports dipped 36.47% in May to \$19.05 billion. “Currently, we are about 10-12% down in June. So, in a sense, we have reached up to 88-90% of the level of exports we had in June 2019 in the current month in the first two weeks. I am awaiting data for third week (of June),” Mr. Goyal said at a CII function. The Minister said the focus was on sustainable growth and not on giving ‘handout’ for exports. He said subsidies were never good for businesses and wouldn’t help domestic exporters in engaging with the world from a position of strength and power. On foreign direct investment, he said, “We have some constraints in multi-brand retail because we have a large part of Indians dependent on small mom-and-pop stores,” he said, ad-

ding that these shops have kept essential supplies available and played a key role during the ongoing coronavirus pandemic. “In insurance, our expectations from insurance companies was much more and deeper, sadly we feel let down. So there are a few sectors where we would like all of you tell us,” he added. The Minister said that the government has to balance security concerns and opening up of the economy. “FDI is welcome, but we certainly have to take precautions that we do not get the wrong type of capital which is opportunistic and which is not really good for the nation,” Mr. Goyal said. The Minister also said that the government was giving special focus to high quality standard products. On reforms by States, he said 15-17 States had executed ‘game-changing’ labour reforms recently and a lot of it would come to the public domain in the next few days. On cash transfers to citizens suggested by many as a short-term measure, he said, “People should understand that India has to use this crisis to prepare ourselves for a sustainable future.”

India can reduce trade deficit with China by \$8.4 bn: study

‘40 sub-sectors have potential to lower import dependency’

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI

India can potentially reduce its trade deficit with China by \$8.4 billion over FY21-22, which is equivalent to 17.3% of the deficit with China and 0.3% of India’s GDP, Acuité Ratings & Research said in a study. This can be achieved by the rationalisation of just a quarter of India’s imports from that country in select sectors where India has well-established manufacturing capabilities, Acuité said. Without any significant additional investments, the domestic manufacturing sector can substitute 25% of the total imports from specified sectors in the first phase, it added. Suman Chowdhury, chief analytical officer, Acuité Rat-



■GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCK

ings & Research, said, “With an import of \$65.1 billion and export of \$16.6 billion, India recorded a trade deficit of \$48.5 billion with China in FY20. While imports from China have moderately declined by 15% since FY18 due to imposition of anti-dumping duties on some products, the dependence of the domestic economy on

Chinese imports remains high with direct contribution to over 30% of India’s aggregate trade deficit.” “Over the past 3 decades, India’s exports to China grew at a CAGR of 30% but its imports expanded at 47%, leading to lower capacity utilisation of domestic players in a few sectors. We can consider certain measures to reduce the dependence gradually which will also have a positive impact on the Indian economy,” he said. He said nearly 40 sub-sectors of India had the potential to lower their import dependency on China. The sectors include chemicals, automotive components, bicycles parts, drug formulations, cosmetics, consumer electronics and leather-based goods.

SBI mobilises 13,212 kg gold through GMS

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

State Bank of India (SBI) has mobilised 13,212 kg of household and institutional gold through the Gold Monetisation Scheme (GMS), according to the bank’s annual report. The country’s largest lender collected as much as 3,973 kg of gold during 2019-20 under the GMS, a programme launched by the government to utilise gold lying idle with individuals as well as trusts. “During FY2020, (the) bank mobilised gold amounting to 3,973 kg, bringing the cumulative mobilisation to 13,212 kg,” SBI said in the report. The government unveiled GMS in 2015 to mobilise idle gold held by households and institutions.

‘Border tensions may deflect India from reforms’

Issue not to impact credit profile: Fitch

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

Fitch Ratings on Monday said the ongoing border tensions with China does not immediately impact India’s credit profile, but may distract the government from implementing reforms. Fitch Ratings director (Sovereign Ratings) Thomas Rookmaaker said the government has announced reforms to improve growth going forward and a strong GDP growth is important to cut down public debt. “The announcement of reforms could lift growth in the medium term and that’s where geo-politics comes in. “The recent situation at the border with China, may be, does not impact the credit profile immediately, but the question is to what ex-



tent will the government be distracted by these kind of developments in delivering reforms,” he said. Last week, 20 Indian army personnel, including a Colonel, were killed in a violent confrontation with Chinese troops in the Galwan Valley in eastern Ladakh, which has seen increased border tensions between the two countries.

Rapid quality testing
According to him, the new platform delivers information on crop monitoring, crop advisory and electronic marketing place for farm inputs, helps in remote sensing for addressing crop stress and with the help of start-ups, does rapid quality testing. These features are integrated in the 4.0 version. Till date, the e-Choupal programme has empowered four million farmers. The company originally planned to empower 10 million farmers by 2030. With some of these reforms and potential advancement of technologies, ITC aims to achieve this goal ahead of its targeted time. “After rolling out several pilots in 2019, e-Choupal is now in a stage to build on pilot and scale up. There are different interventions. ITC e-Choupal 4.0 is more ready for plug and play for many agricultural start-ups to deliver many features,” Mr. Sivakumar observed.

14 SPORT/LIFE

TV PICKS

Premier League: Star Sports 1 & 5S Select 1 (SD & HD), 10.15 p.m. & 12.40 a.m. (Wednesday)
Serie A: Sony Ten 2 & Sony Six (SD & HD), 11 p.m. & 1.10 a.m. (Wednesday)

QUICK SINGLES



Pujara hits the nets with Saurashtra teammates

NEW DELHI
Architects of Saurashtra's maiden Ranji Trophy triumph including Cheteshwar Pujara and skipper Jaydev Unadkat are back at the nets more than three months after they won the title in March. Pujara has been training at his academy, alongside Unadkat, Arpit Vasavada and medium-pacer Prerak Mankad. **PTI**

Pakistan's Shadab, Rauf and Haider test positive

KARACHI
Pakistan cricketers Shadab Khan, Haris Rauf and rookie Haider Ali on Monday tested positive for coronavirus. "The Pakistan Cricket Board has confirmed three players — Haider Ali, Haris Rauf and Shadab Khan — have tested positive for Covid-19," said the PCB in a statement. **PTI**



2020 World Cup is most watched women's event

DUBAI
The International Cricket Council on Monday claimed record viewership of the 2020 Women's T20 World Cup in Australia with the event clocking 1.1 billion views through the governing body's digital channels. An ICC release said, the tournament held in February-March recorded 10 times more views than the previous most successful women's event — the 2017 ODI World Cup. **PTI**

Former shooter Pournima passes away

NEW DELHI
Cancer-stricken former India shooter Pournima Zanane passed away aged 42. She had represented India at multiple ISSF World Cups and Asian and Commonwealth Championships, among other events. **PTI**

Madrid supplants Barca

Merseyside derby ends goalless, delays Liverpool's title push

EURO LEAGUES

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
MADRID

Real Madrid knocked Barcelona off the top of LaLiga by beating Real Sociedad 2-1 on Sunday as Sergio Ramos rolled in another penalty before being forced off due to injury.

Karim Benzema continued his excellent form by adding a second at Anoeta and while Mikel Merino gave Sociedad hope with seven minutes left, Madrid held on to go above Barca on head-to-head as both have 65 points.

Ramos' 20th consecutive spot-kick has made him LaLiga's highest ever scoring defender on 68 goals, overtaking Ronald Koeman.

Liverpool's march towards the Premier League title was delayed as the leader returned to action with a goalless draw against Everton in the 'Merseyside derby', while Chelsea fought back for a 2-1 win at Aston Villa.

Record viewership

Incidentally, the Liverpool-Everton match was the most-watched Premier League game ever on British



Well done, amigo! Karim Benzema is the centre of his Real Madrid teammates' adulation after his strike. **• AFP**

television with an average of five million people across Sky's channels watching the match.

The results: Premier League: Aston Villa 1 (Hause 43) lost to Chelsea 2 (Pulisic 60, Giroud 62); Everton 0 drew with Liverpool 0.

LaLiga: Valencia 2 (Guedes 12,

Rodrigo 35) bt Osasuna 0. Real Sociedad 1 (Merino 83) lost to Real Madrid 2 (Ramos 50-pen, Benzema 70). **Serie A:** Atalanta 4 (Djimshiti 16, Zapata 31, 66, Bourabia 37-og) bt Sassuolo 1 (Bourabia 90+2); Inter Milan 2 (Lukaku 10, Martnez 33) bt Sampdoria 1 (Thorsby 52).

A sense of normalcy through resumption of Serie A: CEO

We are confident of completing the season, says De Siervo

AMITABHA DAS SHARMA
KOLKATA

Resuming after a break of around four months following the coronavirus pandemic, Italy's premier football league Serie A is seeing a big negative economic impact with its clubs suffering a loss of "more than €100 million".

Revealing the crisis, the Serie A CEO Luigi De Siervo said that the resumption of the season is providing hopes to many Italians looking to come out of the scourge.

"The return of Serie A TIM will give the country a sense of normalcy because many fans wanted football to return. In fact millions of fans in Italy watched on TV the Coppa Italia Coca-Cola final.



Luigi De Siervo.

We are very satisfied with our preparation and are excited about the return of the championship.

Safety protocol

"We are also confident about completing the season thanks to a rigid safety protocol made in collaboration

with the Italian Football Federation," said Siervo, replying to questions from *The Hindu* in an e-mail interview.

Siervo hoped that the fans will help the clubs recover the deficit. "The virus has had a negative economic impact on the revenues of our clubs, who collectively are losing than €100 million in revenues from ticket sales because the fans cannot enter the stadium now. We hope that they can soon return to enjoy matches live," he said.

"Being a part of the Association of European Leagues, we are trying to standardise the safety protocols across all European leagues," Siervo added.

(*Serie A is aired live on Sony Ten 2 and Sony Six channels in India*)

A spinner and a gentleman

Didn't know Goel well, but common friends raved about him

PADMAKAR SHIVALKAR

'End of an era' is a cliché, but I just cannot think of anything else to summarise my feelings on the sad demise of Rajinder Goel, a left-arm spinner with guile and a thorough gentleman.

In many ways, with our careers overlapping each other's, I had the privilege of playing with and against him a few times. Unfortunately, we didn't have as much off-the-field camaraderie with each other so I didn't know him as an individual as well as I did some of our contemporaries.

But all those common friends and cricketers would rave about him being one of the gentlest human beings one could come across. And my experience during the limited interactions with him was no different.

Similar and different

We both were fortunate to have been mentored by two of the greatest cricketers in India. While Goel *sahab* had Lala Amarnath monitoring his progress early on, I was fortunate to have bumped into "Vinoobhai" [Vinoob Mankad] at a chance trial at Bombay Gymkhana and that changed my life forever.

But our bowling styles



Recognition: Padmakar Shivalkar and Rajinder Goel with the BCCI Lifetime Achievement awards. **• FILE PHOTOS: K. MURALI KUMAR**

were a little different. While he relied more on dipping the ball in and using flight variation in between, I was more of a spinner who preferred to deceive the batsman in flight.

The commonest aspect of our sojourn was the fact that we both were perhaps born in the wrong era. With Bishan Singh Bedi being a permanent fixture in the national side and the selectors somehow not looking at another left-arm spinner in the team, we both had to be content with an India cap in unofficial Tests.

But as both of us have often said, we were not destined to play international cricket. And a lot of com-

mon friends tell me that the fact that neither of us is bitter about it is yet another common factor between us.

Fitting reward

It was fitting that Goel *sahab* and I were rewarded by the BCCI with the Lifetime Achievement Award on the same day. Since both of us had our families accompanying us, we couldn't really spend a lot of time talking with each other. Still, I could feel the sense of satisfaction on his face that day.

(*As told to Amol Karhadkar*)

(*Padmakar Shivalkar was a left-arm orthodox spinner who took 589 First Class wickets in 124 matches.*)

Goel kept Ranji Trophy alive: Bedi

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

India's cricket fraternity mourned the demise of legendary left-arm spinner Rajinder Goel, who passed away on Sunday, by paying glowing tributes on the social media.

Bishan Singh Bedi said he envied Goel's sense of 'contentment' as the latter was never bitter and accepted his fate [not playing for India] with grace.

"Rajinder Goel was easily the most 'contented' human being I've known. I used to envy his sense of 'contentment' in my moments of turmoil...RIP 'Goely'. You bowled your heart out to keep Ranji Trophy alive...!!," tweeted the spin great.

BCCI president Sourav Ganguly: To have a career that lasts more than 25 years and still be able to perform consistently speaks about



Rajinder Goel. **• THE HINDU ARCHIVES**

his dedication and commitment towards the game. To be able to pick 750 wickets needs years and years of hard work and I salute his efforts.

Sachin Tendulkar: He was

a stalwart of Indian Domestic Cricket picking up more than 600 wickets in the Ranji Trophy.

Ravi Shastri: Master of his craft. Killer line & length in our terrain. Humility personified.

Virat Kohli: We've lost a legend in Rajinder Goel Ji. Him being the highest wicket-taker in the history of Ranji Trophy, speaks volumes about the career he had.

Sanjay Manjrekar: 157 matches, 750 wickets! 59 five wicket hauls & 18 times 10 wickets in a match. Avg — 18.58. That's Bradmanesque in bowling.

V.V.S. Laxman: Deeply saddened by the passing away of Rajinder Goel, the highest wicket-taker in the history of Ranji Trophy.

Shikhar Dhawan: Rest in peace Rajinder Goel Sir. God bless your soul.

Aditi learning to be ambidextrous

UTHRA GANESAN
NEW DELHI

She has been busy hitting balls on to the curtains and off a roll-on mat on her terrace but the big challenge for Aditi Ashok in the last three months has been trying to master the art of being ambidextrous.

The lone Indian on the LPGA Tour at the moment has been home for the longest period in over a decade and while it has not been easy, Aditi is now looking forward to finally getting back onto the golf course. She has already walked out at the BGC in Bangalore thrice since the lockdown eased but admitted it wasn't anything like before.

"It's nothing close to how much time I usually spend, maximum 3-4 hours so far, but still it's better to feel the greens than hitting balls on the terrace. Of course there are precautions and protocols in place — checking tem-



Aditi Ashok. **• FILE PHOTO**

peratures, mask on, walking through a disinfectant passage, no touching anything including scorecards and flagsticks and no hitting balls, only play on the golf course. But social distance is easy, you are not in a crowd anyway in golf," Aditi told *The Hindu*.

The forced break has given her time to catch up on non-golfing stuff. "I am baking a bit, used to earlier but I

have got better at whatever little I make. I have also started learning how to write with my left hand, it's good for engaging both sides of your brain. There have been a bunch of books on my to-read list that I have got through and of course there are movies, so it's been ok," she explained.

Uncertainty

The most difficult part, as for most professional sportspersons, has been the uncertainty.

"Usually when I am practising or working on fitness or golf, I know when I am going to play next, which tournament and how much time I have left going into it.

"Now, even though there are tournaments on schedule, nothing is actually confirmed till it happens so you don't know why or for what you are working. That has been a little difficult to deal with," she admitted.

Mithali returns to the nets, feels fresh

India's ODI skipper says the break has not upset her rhythm much

V.V. SUBRAHMANYAM
HYDERABAD

She is back, and so are the smiles, in the company of best friend and fellow cricketer Nooshin Al Khadeer.

After a near three-month break, Indian women's cricket ODI captain Mithali Raj started practice at the St. John's Coaching Foundation here.

Struggled a lot

"I struggled a lot during lockdown even though it helped me to work on my fitness, working on small things on which otherwise I couldn't have spent enough time during a busy season," Mithali, who practised under the watchful eyes of her coach R.S.R. Murthy and mentor K. John Manoj, told *The Hindu* on Monday.

"There is some freshness to the game, too, after the



The smile is back: Mithali in a happy mood at the St. John's Coaching Foundation on Monday. **• V.V. SUBRAHMANYAM**

long break though the buzz is missing in this academy as there is no one around," she said.

The 37-year-old Mithali said that though she trained just about twice a week, she was ensuring that she enhanced her skills.

"When I resumed train-

sions," she explained. "Maybe I have to work a bit more on my endurance levels," she added.

"So, when I reflect on re-

suming training, I never felt that I was coming back after such a long layoff.

"Feeling 70% okay, which is better than being about 20% ready for the game," she said with a smile.

"I think this is the best way to get back into the groove," she added.

Biggest event

"Next February's ODI World Cup in New Zealand should be the biggest event for all of us if the scheduled series in England this September is cancelled because of COVID-19.

"Thankfully, New Zealand is the safest place right now and I am sincerely looking forward to it," Mithali said.

SHORT TAKES



Hamilton marches in London BLM protest

LONDON
Formula One World champion Lewis Hamilton marched in the latest anti-racism protest here on Sunday, describing the experience as "really moving". "I was proud to be out there acknowledging and supporting the Black Lives Matter movement, and my black heritage," said the 35-year-old Hamilton, the only black driver in F1. **AFP**



Coric and Dimitrov test positive for COVID-19

PARIS
Borna Coric announced on Monday he had tested positive for coronavirus after playing in an exhibition tournament in Croatia featuring World No. 1 Novak Djokovic. On Sunday, Grigor Dimitrov, said he had also tested positive after pulling out of the exhibition event. Coric had beaten Dimitrov in the second leg of the Adria Tour in Zadar on Saturday. The final between Djokovic and Andrey Rublev was cancelled as a precaution.



Mendonca triumphs in Balaton Chess Festival

KOZHIKODE
Top seed Leo Luke Mendonca has won the Balaton Chess Festival tournament (open section) in Hungary with a round to spare. The 14-year-old won eight out of his nine games and drew the other one to finish with 8.5 points.

Simpson makes it an extra special Father's Day

SOUTH CAROLINA
Webb Simpson birdied three of his final four holes to pip Abraham Ancer by a stroke and win the PGA Tour's RBC Heritage here on Sunday. The 34-year-old father of five made sure it was an extra special Father's Day by recording his seventh career win after his bogey-free 64 saw him finish on 262. **REUTERS**

Another loss for Harikrishna

RAKESH RAO
NEW DELHI

P. Harikrishna suffered his fourth loss, second to Group 'A' leader Vladimir Artemiev, and slipped closer to elimination after six rounds of \$150,000 Ches-sable Masters on Monday. **The results: Group A: Sixth round:** P. Harikrishna (1.5) lost to Vladislav Artemiev (Rus, 4.5); Magnus Carlsen (Nor, 3.5) bt Hikaru Nakamura (USA, 2.5); Alexander Grischuk (Rus, 2.5) drew with Daniil Dubov (Rus, 3.5).

Group B: Fifth round: Fabiano Caruana (USA, 2.5) lost to Anish Giri (Ned, 3); Ian Nepomniachtchi (Rus, 2.5) drew with Maxim Vachier-Lagrave (Fra, 3); Ding Liren (Chn, 2.5) drew with Teimour Radjabov (Aze, 1.5); **Fourth:** Lagrave drew with Liren; Giri drew with Nepomniachtchi; Radjabov lost to Caruana; **Third:** Lagrave bt Caruana; Nepomniachtchi drew with Liren; Giri drew with Radjabov.

DRI busts syndicate smuggling exotic macaws from Bangladesh

The cargo intercepted at Kolkata airport contained 22 exotic birds kept in cramped cages

DEVESH K. PANDEY
NEW DELHI

The Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI) has busted a wildlife smuggling syndicate with the arrest of two persons and seizure of a consignment of exotic macaws which had been smuggled from Bangladesh to Kolkata and was on its way to Bengaluru.

The joint operation was carried out in coordination

with the Wildlife Crime Control Bureau (WCCB) and the Customs Department at the Kolkata airport. The DRI officials intercepted the consignment at the airport's cargo area on Sunday morning.

"The cargo contained 22 exotic birds kept in cramped cages, which had been smuggled in through the Bongaon area of Indo-Bangla border," said the agency.

The exotic birds, handed

over to the zoological garden in Kolkata, were identified as Hyacinth macaw, Pesquet's parrot, Severe macaw and Hahn's macaw.

Zoonotic disease concern

The DRI said the possibility of spread of zoonotic diseases on account of smuggling in such exotic species was increasingly becoming a global concern against the backdrop of COVID-19.

"The seized macaws are protected under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), with Hyacinth macaw being accorded the highest protection," said the DRI.

Vulnerable

West Bengal and northeast India are vulnerable to cross-border wildlife smuggling because of their proximity to

the Bangladesh and Myanmar borders, and to Thailand.

Over the recent years, the DRI has seized a range of endangered species, including black-and-white ruffed lemur, hoolock gibbons, palm civets and Indian star tortoises; and exotic birds like rosellas, nanday conures, peach-fronted conures, grass parakeets and maroon-tailed conures. Syndicates smug-

gling macaws, pygmy falcons, mandarin ducks, kookaburras (kingfishers), java sparrows, star finches, Gouldian finches, cockatiels and aracariss have also been busted.

Another major concern has been the smuggling of tusks and ivory products. About 65.33kg of elephant tusks, tiger teeth and ivory articles have been seized in six recent cases.



Fredd: Two of the smuggled birds that were rescued on Sunday. **• SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT**