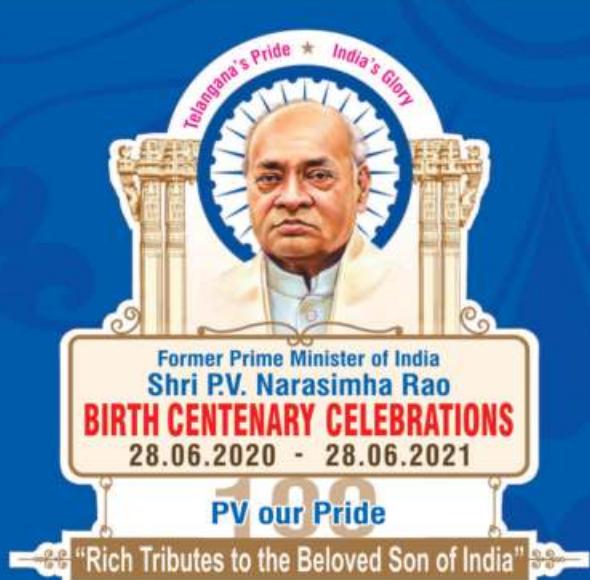


on Sunday

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Shri K Chandrashekhar Rao

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28.6.2020 to 28.6.2021

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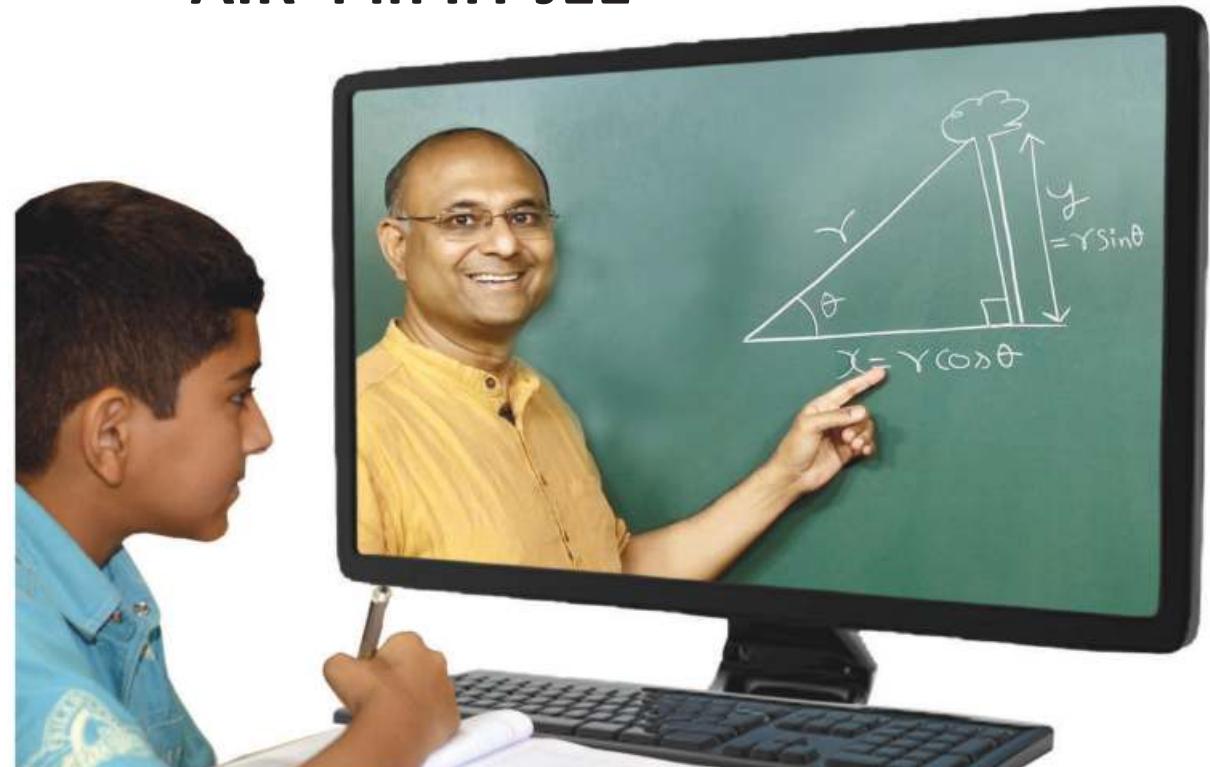
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NEARBY



Tamil Nadu reports 3,713 new COVID-19 cases

CHENNAI
Tamil Nadu continued to witness a spike in COVID-19 cases, with the State on Saturday reporting 3,713 cases and 68 fatalities, pushing the infection count to 78,335 and death toll to 1,025. Chennai reported the most number of cases (1,939) followed by Chengalpattu (248), Madurai (217) and Tiruvallur (146).

TAMIL NADU ▶ PAGE 2

Positivity rate more than 20% in Chennai
CHENNAI
The positivity rate in Tamil Nadu, or the number of samples that test positive among total samples, is between 1% and 20%, with the higher percentile in high incidence centres such as Chennai, at 23.2%. The capital was followed by Chengalpattu (18.1%) and Tiruvallur (17.3%).

TAMIL NADU ▶ PAGE 2

CLASSIFIEDS ▶ PAGE 5
MAGAZINE ▶ 8 PAGES

8 States account for over 85% active COVID-19 cases in India

87% deaths too occurred in these States; 15 Central teams deployed to help them

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Eight States, including Delhi, Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu, account for 85.5% of active COVID-19 cases across the country, the Health Ministry said on Saturday.

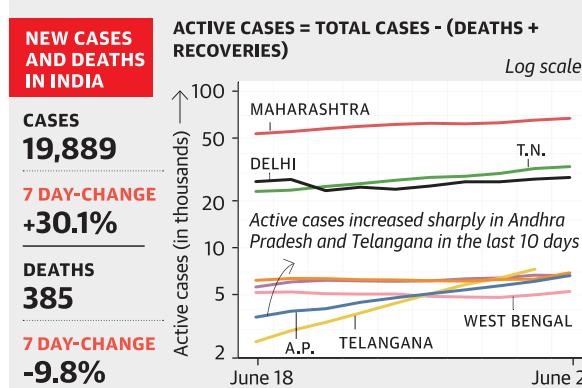
The spread of the pandemic was reviewed at the 17th meeting of the high-level Group of Ministers (GoM) on COVID-19 held under the chairmanship of Health Minister Harsh Vardhan.

The GoM was briefed about the recovery, mortality and doubling rates, the increased testing capacity and the strengthened healthcare infrastructure. "It was mentioned that Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Delhi, Telangana, Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh and West Bengal contribute 85.5% of active caseload and 87% of total deaths in India," the Ministry said in a statement.

Fifteen Central teams of public health experts, epidemiologists, clinicians and an officer of the rank of Joint Se-

Recurring highs

As many as, 19,889 new COVID-19 cases were recorded on Saturday, in the highest single-day spike in India. The graph looks at the progression of active cases across eight States: Delhi —, Maharashtra —, Tamil Nadu —, W.B. —, Telangana —, Andhra Pradesh —, Gujarat — and U.P. —.



cretary have been deployed to provide support to the States. Another team was visiting Gujarat, Maharashtra and Telangana to strengthen the efforts to manage the disease.

In his presentation, K. Shivaaji, chairman of the Empo-

wered Group-10, said the stipulated redress time for COVID-19 grievances was brought down from the usual 60 days for normal public grievances to three days. The national dashboard for COVID-19 was launched on April 1. From March 30 to



Testing on wheels: Parents help their child give a swab test on a mobile COVID-19 testing van in Vijayawada on Saturday ■ V.RAJU

June 24, the Empowered Group disposed of 93.84% of the 77,307 grievances received by the Central Ministries and 63.11% of the 53,130 grievances pertaining to the State governments, he said.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

Three calls that cut short the dreams of three families

Kin of martyred soldiers bereft in Punjab, Bihar, Bengal

VIKAS VASUDEVA
AMARNATH TEWARY
ANUJ KUMAR
TOLAWAL/CHAKFATEH/MEERUT

Sepoy Gurbinder Singh was engaged a few months ago, Sepoy Jai Kishor Singh's parents were looking for a match for him and Havildar Bipul Roy had been married for nine years. The three men died in the clashes in the Galwan Valley on June 15 – and with them, the dreams of three families across India.

Two days after the clashes, around 6.30 in the morning, a phone call from his unit informed the family of 22-year-old Sepoy Gurbinder Singh's death. "Nothing has been same in the family since then. I couldn't believe my ears. Now everything is over," Gurbinder's elder brother, Gurpreet, told *The Hindu* at Tolawal village in Punjab's Sangrur district.

"Gurbinder used to send us around ₹20,000 monthly, which helped meet our expenses. We earn a meagre amount from farming on a



Stunned silence: Sepoy Gurbinder Singh's father Labh Singh, third from right, with other family members. ■ VIKAS VASUDEVA

jointly owned piece of land. The State government has promised a job for one member of the family, besides monetary compensation of ₹50 lakh. It's our only hope

SPECIAL

for us now to live a dignified life," said Mr. Gurpreet.

"The money from Gurbinder's salary helped us to start construction of our house, which is yet to be completed," he added.

Sitting on the floor of their unfinished house, Gurbinder's father, Labh Singh,

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

Can't reopen schools now

STAFF REPORTER

NAMAKKAL
Minister for School Education K.A. Sengottaiyan on Saturday said that a decision on reopening schools would be taken later, after holding discussions with all stakeholders.

Sri Lanka's foreign reserves, already in peril due to economic troubles and last year's Easter Sunday terror attacks, are being further drained after the pandemic, as its main earners – exports (tea and garments), labour remittances and tourism sectors – are all badly hit.

Sri Lanka is scheduled to repay \$2.9 billion of its total external debt this year.

SRI LANKA TURNS TO CHINA ▶ PAGE 10

Centre asks TANFINET to scrap ₹1,950-crore BharatNet tender

Bidding conditions were restrictive and discriminatory'

S. VIJAY KUMAR
CHENNAI
The Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) under the Ministry of Commerce and Industry has asked the Tamil Nadu Fibrenet Corporation Limited (TANFINET) to immediately scrap the ₹1,950-crore BharatNet tender.

In a communication to the Tamil Nadu Chief Secretary, the DPIIT said the bidding conditions were 'restrictive'

and 'discriminatory' in nature, and that the TANFINET should float fresh tenders with 'non-restrictive' qualification criteria.

The Department of Telecommunications, the nodal Ministry, should direct the TANFINET on the corrective action to be taken regarding the immediate cancellation of the tender, the DPIIT said and called for an urgent report on the action taken.

The decision follows a videoconference convened on June 23, 2020, by the Additional Secretary, DPIIT, to enquire into allegations of irregularities and non-com-

pliance with the Public Procurement (Preference to Make in India) Order, 2017, in the multi-crore tender.

The allegations were made by Arappor Iyakkam, Chennai, the Telecom Equipment and Services Export Promotion Council (TEPC), New Delhi, and Tejas Networks Limited, Bengaluru.

Arappor Iyakkam had earlier complained to the Chief Minister, the Chief Secretary, Secretary of DoT, the Central Vigilance Commission, the DPIIT and others about "massive tender changes" in BharatNet tenders to favour specific companies.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 6

Colombo plea for debt freeze hangs fire

No decision four months on despite a personal request to Modi from Mahinda

SUHASINI HAIDAR
MEERA SRINIVASAN
NEW DELHI / COLOMBO

Sri Lanka's request to India for a postponement of its debt repayment amid the current economic crisis is "under consideration", say officials, though no decision has been taken, more than four months after the request was made personally by Sri Lankan Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa to Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

On Saturday, Mr. Rajapaksa "renewed calls for international monetary organisations to provide debt relief for developing countries" during an interaction with United Nations officials, the

Prime Minister's office said, repeating earlier appeals to all its debt partners, including India.

\$960 million debt

According to officials in Delhi and Colombo, the two sides have been discussing holding the loan repayment on the total \$960 million that Sri Lanka owes India, as well as two separate Sri Lankan requests for a currency swap facility.

Ministry of External Affairs officials say they have now proposed a virtual meeting between Delhi and Colombo on the issue, to take talks further, but did not explain why the request has not been cleared thus far.

"The Sri Lankan side hasn't yet responded on

when to do the talks," an Indian official told *The Hindu*.

Last week, President Gotabaya Rajapaksa told a group of European Union ambassadors that the country needs "new investments instead of further debt" and

asked for a deferment on loans.

In March and April as the coronavirus pandemic spread, he had called on international donor agencies to do the same.

Sri Lanka's foreign reserves, already in peril due to economic troubles and last year's Easter Sunday terror attacks, are being further drained after the pandemic, as its main earners – exports (tea and garments), labour remittances and tourism sectors – are all badly hit.

Sri Lanka is scheduled to repay \$2.9 billion of its total external debt this year.

SRI LANKA TURNS TO CHINA ▶ PAGE 10

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T.N. records 3,713 fresh cases; death toll crosses 1,000-mark

Overall tally of infections reaches 78,335; 89 returnees test positive

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

	Until June 20	June 21	June 22	June 23	June 24	June 25	June 26	June 27	Total
Cases reported	56,845	2,532	2,710	2,516	2,865	3,509	3,645	3,713	78,335
Recovered and discharged	31,316	1,438	1,358	1,227	2,424	2,236	1,358	2,737	44,094
Deceased	704	53	37	39	33	45	46	68	1,025

Persons tested		*CHANGES IN 24 HOURS		Districts with maximum cases					
		9,92,991		Chennai 51,699					
		10,25,059		Chennai 51,699					
Active cases	32,305	Discharged	41,357	Died	957	As on June 26, 6 p.m.	As on June 27, 6 p.m.	MAXIMUM POSITIVITY RATE RECOMMENDED BY NIE	
	33,213		44,094		1,025				

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

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI

For the third consecutive day, Tamil Nadu reported 3,000-plus coronavirus disease (COVID-19) cases, while the toll went past 1,000 with 68 more fatalities on Saturday.

A total of 3,713 persons tested positive for COVID-19, taking the overall tally of cases to 78,335*. With another 2,737 persons discharged, the total number of persons discharged increased to 44,094, while active cases stood at 33,213.

COVID-19

year-old man died at the Government Rajaji Hospital due to acute respiratory distress syndrome and COVID-19 pneumonia.

The death of a 63-year-old woman at Government Rajaji Hospital, Madurai on June 17 due to acute respiratory distress syndrome and COVID-19 pneumonia was declared in the bulletin on Saturday. There were two patients who were declared brought dead – a 65-year-

old man and a 42-year-old man – at the Government Royapettah Hospital. Their swabs returned positive for COVID-19.

With this, the total number of deaths in Chennai rose to 776, followed by 75 in Chengalpattu and 58 in Tiruvallur.

New cases

Of the 3,624 indigenous cases reported in the State, 1,939 were in Chennai. Cases continued to soar in Chengalpattu and Madurai that reported 248 and 217 cases respectively. There were 146 cases in Tiruvallur, 118 in Vellore, 110 in Tiruvannamalai, 98 in Kanchipuram, 96 in Ranipet and 93 in Ramanathapuram.

Eighty-nine persons who returned from abroad and other States tested positive for the infection. This included 40 persons from Karnataka and 11 from Kerala.

On Saturday, the total number of individuals tested crossed 10 lakh. Till

date, 10,25,059 individuals have been tested in the State, with 32,068 of them having been tested in the last 24 hours. A total of 34,805 samples were tested during the last 24 hours, taking the total number of samples tested so far to 10,77,454.

The State government, through the Tamil Nadu Medical Services Corporation, has issued procurement orders for 1,200 vials of Tocilizumab, 42,500 vials of Remdesivir and 1,00,000 vials of Enoxaparin for the treatment of COVID-19 patients. Till date, the State has received supply of 1,000 vials of Tocilizumab, 1,100 vials of Remdesivir and 1,00,000 vials of Enoxaparin, while the remaining supply is expected to reach T.N. in two days. The drugs were distributed to districts, a press release said.

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

Free masks plan to initially cover urban areas

Every PDS beneficiary will get two masks

T. RAMAKRISHNAN CHENNAI

The project involving the provision of two face masks, free, to every beneficiary under the public distribution system (PDS) has undergone certain changes.

Originally, the idea was to supply a total of 13.48 crore reusable cloth masks, two per PDS beneficiary, as enumerated in 2.08 crore ration cards. Now, the plan is to initially cover the people in urban areas of the State, barring Chennai.

Administrative convenience is said to have caused the change.

Two crore residents liv-



Two crore residents living in 14 municipal corporations, 121 municipalities and 528 town panchayats will be covered.

ing in 14 municipal corporations, 121 municipalities and 528 town panchayats will be covered. As a result, the number of required masks has gone down to 4 crore, for the time being.

After the authorities floated the tender earlier this month, as many as 46

firms had responded. They have provided samples that are being tested by the South India Textile Research Association (SITRA), Coimbatore. The association's report is likely to be submitted to the authority on Monday. Price bids will be opened by Wednesday.

On the basis of the rate contract, the project will be awarded.

This means that those matching the rate of the lowest bidder (L1) will also bag the contract, said a senior official in charge of the project.

Delinking city

As far as Chennai is concerned, the government has decided to delink the city from the scope of the project, as a similar project is under implementation here, focussing on slum dwellers.

Since the middle of May, the local body has supplied about 44.5 lakh masks to slum dwellers, two per person, said another official.

The remaining 5.5 lakh persons will also be covered soon.

Measures that might have possibly worked are the increased testing of symptomatic persons in all areas, focusing attention on those with symptoms and contacts of patients and high-risk groups, it is time to ask if the infectivity rate is on a downward swing," he said.

"At one point, the positivity rate in Chennai was about 35%. This seems to have dropped," said P. Kuganathan, former Chennai Corporation health officer. "In fact, since then, despite increased testing, which is also focused among symptomatic patients and high-risk groups, it is time to ask if the infectivity rate is on a downward swing," he told reporters.

The Health Secretary said that "aimless testing" was not being done. "The testing principle followed by Tamil Nadu is that of getting 100% coverage in containment areas by conducting fever camps. We want to bring in people from the affected areas to the fever camps."

The panel of medical experts had advised that 10,000 samples should be tested every day in Chennai, and we have reached that range," he said.

"We are also testing persons who do not have symptoms but wish to be tested. Not just in Chennai, we are organising fever camps and testing people wherever there is an impact of the infection, such as in districts like Madurai, Cuddalore, Villupuram and Tiruvannamalai," he added.

Preventing transmission

The aim is to prevent deaths due to COVID-19, he stressed. "The Chief Mi-

TNCC chief condoles partyman's death



SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI

Tamil Nadu Congress Committee (TNCC) president K.S. Alagiri on Saturday condoled the death of D. Rajendran, the vice-president of the party's South Chennai unit, who had contracted COVID-19.

Mr. Alagiri said he had worked hard for the party's development. "It is a great loss for the party," he said and expressed his condolences to the bereaved family.

CM, leaders condole cameraman's death

₹5 lakh solatium announced for family of deceased

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI

Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami condole the death of E. Velmurugan, a cameraman with a private television channel, who died of COVID-19 and announced a solatium of ₹5 lakh.

In a statement, Mr. Palaniswami said that as announced earlier, a solatium of ₹5 lakh would be granted from the Chief Minister's Public Relief Fund (CMRPF) to the bereaved family and the media fraternity.

I urge my media and journalist friends, who are a bridge between the government and the general public, to exercise caution while gathering news," Mr. Palaniswami said.

AIADMK coordinator and Deputy Chief Minister

nurse as well. She is involved in serving the people on a daily basis. Since she is in temporary employment, I appeal to the State government to make her employment status permanent," he said.

Mr. Thirumavalavan said that journalists also should be included among 'essential workers', along with doctors, nurses and sanitation workers.

"The Chief Minister has already announced ₹50 lakh as solatium for families of essential workers who die due to COVID-19. This should be extended to journalists as well. His body should be laid to rest with State honours," he said.

PMK founder S. Ramadoss urged journalists to be 'doubly' careful while they go about their work. "Velmurugan's wife is a

Positivity rate highest in Chennai

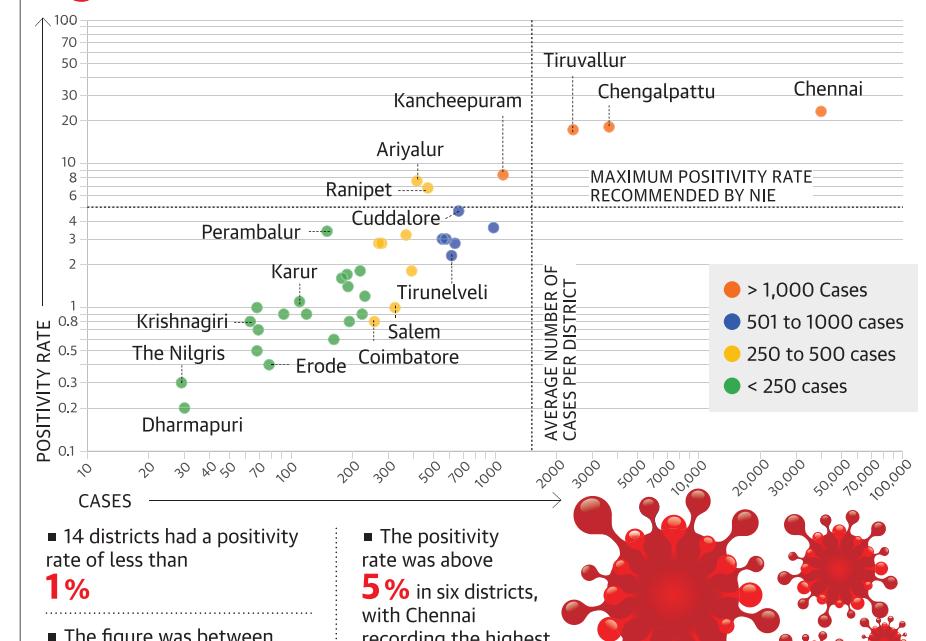
'Increased testing of symptomatic patients may have cut infectivity rate'

PON VASANTH B.A. RAMYA KANNAN CHENNAI

Tamil Nadu's positivity rate, or the number of samples that test positive among the total figure, is between below 1% and 20%, with the higher percentile in high-incidence centres such as Chennai, at 23.2%. Data analysed by scientists at the National Institute of Epidemiology (a unit of the Indian Council of Medical Research), shared on Twitter on Saturday, showed that the highest positivity rate went just over 20% in the State.

Positive signs

The district-wise figures on the number of samples tested, made available by the Health and Family Welfare Department on June 20, show that a majority of the districts in T.N. had a testing to positivity rate of less than 5%



The testing figures provided on June 20 were based on the samples uploaded by individual labs to the ICMR portal. This did not include all the samples tested as on date as there were delays in uploading data, according to the Health and Family Welfare Department. It was compared against the total cases in each district on June 20.

This methodology is effective in preventing transmission."

The Health Department is ramping up medical infrastructure, he said. The number of COVID-19 care centres in districts and the number of beds in private hospitals is being increased. The National Institute of Ageing will be ready in a day or two, while beds are being increased in the Government Hospital for Thoracic Medicine, he said.



J. RADHKRISHNAN

The positivity rate will be high due to focused testing, while the aim is to reduce case fatality, Health Secretary J. Radhakrishnan said on Saturday.

"The doubling rate has reduced to an extent. Considering the daily increase in COVID-19 cases, be it 3,000 at the State-level or around 1,900 at the city-level, the positivity rate will be high when we undertake focused testing," he told reporters.

The Health Secretary said that "aimless testing" was not being done. "The testing principle followed by Tamil Nadu is that of getting 100% coverage in containment areas by conducting fever camps. We want to bring in people from the affected areas to the fever camps."

The panel of medical experts had advised that 10,000 samples should be tested every day in Chennai, and we have reached that range," he said.

"By conducting door-to-door surveillance and fever camps, we are taking testing facilities closer to the people, instead of asking them to visit hospitals. According to medical experts, if we identify patients through such means, and isolate and treat them, they can recover in 10-11 days. Even now, 75%-80% persons are asymptomatic. When such people do not get tested and go around, it leads to disease transmission. So

Hospitals are like hotspots, he said, adding: "Hospitals should be cleaned regularly, and we are providing vitamin and zinc tablets to specialists, postgraduate medical students, CRRIs, paramedical staff and other workers. Frontline workers should protect themselves. There are problems of depression too. They can contact the State health helpline at 104."

CBSE students, teachers heave a sigh of relief

They welcome cancellation of pending board exams, assessment method

S. POORVAJA CHENNAI

After a long wait, students and teachers of CBSE schools in the State have finally got some clarity on pending board exams.

On Friday, the Supreme Court accepted a proposal put forth by the CBSE, under which students of Classes 10 and 12 will be assessed for the cancelled exams by taking an average of their best performance in the papers they have already taken.

"While we are upset about having missed out on a high-scoring subject, it would have been tough for us to begin preparing for board exams again, alongside our entrance exam preparations," he said. In Tamil Nadu, Plus 2 students from State board schools had already finished their public exams in March.

score high marks in, so we are a bit disappointed that it got cancelled," said V. Sudarsana, a Class 12 student. However, she said that the announcement had also brought a sense of relief to many who had been anxiously waiting to know what was in store since March. "While the CBSE has informed the Supreme Court that the remaining exams, which were scheduled to be held from July 1 to 15, had been cancelled.

In Tamil Nadu, a majority of Class 12 students were scheduled to take the Business Studies and Computer Science papers before schools shut down in March. "Business Studies is a subject that we generally

Total lockdown in city today

Exception only for milk supply, medical services; police seek cooperation

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

CHENNAI

There will be a complete lockdown on Sunday with all grocery shops and vegetable outlets closed. Milk supply and medical services will not be interrupted.

A 12-day 'complete lockdown' is being implemented in Chennai and adjoining districts from June 19 till June 30 but grocery shops, vegetable outlets, medical stores, hospitals and restaurants are allowed to function.

In the intervening Sundays – June 21 and June 28 – a complete lockdown is being implemented during which all shops have to be



Forced holiday: The usually busy Pondy Bazaar is nearly deserted on the eve of the total lockdown in Chennai, on Saturday. ■ K. PICHUMANI

closed. City Police Commissioner A.K. Viswanathan said, "The conditions and restrictions on Sunday will be similar to that of the lockdown last Sunday. We appeal to the public not to come out

of their homes unnecessarily and not to move on the roads without any reason." Police said movement will be allowed only in case of medical emergency. From June 19, City Police booked 56,



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Face masks purchased as per Centre's norms, says Corporation Commissioner

Prakash says price was fixed at ₹16 a piece on March 24 in a gazette notification

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

CHENNAI

The Greater Chennai Corporation had procured face masks by following the special gazette notification of the Government of India under the Essential Commodities Act, 1955, which fixed the price at ₹16 a piece, Commissioner G. Prakash said on Saturday.

Responding to reports of corruption in the procurement, Mr. Prakash told presspersons that the price had risen during the initial days of the lockdown, but came down with more manufacturers stepping in later.

He said that after the Director of Public Health on February 14 proposed ₹7, the Centre had fixed the price at ₹10 a mask on March 10 in a



Priority for safety: Greater Chennai Corporation staff distributing face masks to city's residents. ■ K. PICHUMANI

gazette notification. As the demand had been rising across the country, the price was revised to ₹16 a piece on March 24. The Corporation had followed the gazette notification in the purchase and

the payment for the same had been made, he said.

He said the Corporation had distributed 45 lakh cotton reusable masks, procured at ₹15.75 a piece, to slum dwellers. Each of the

26 lakh slum dwellers had been given two masks each, free of cost. The civic body procured 50 lakh masks for slum dwellers.

In addition to cotton masks, the demand for surgical masks for workers was estimated at 45,000 a day. Conservancy workers, door-to-door survey workers, doctors and nurses were given masks free of cost during the pandemic.

The civic body had asked all workers to wear face mask during the COVID-19 containment activities. However, more than 345 workers tested positive for SARS CoV-2 infection in the Corporation limits. "Spending increases during a pandemic. Safety is our priority," Mr. Prakash added.

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- Jairam Ramesh,
Economist and MP



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- Armstrong Pame, IAS
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- D Roopa Moudgil,
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Inspector General of Police, Railways,
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"Dwayne Johnson said, 'Be the hardest worker in the room.' And I subscribe to that. There can be no substitute to hard work; no matter what your area of work or what your goal."

- Rajkummar Rao,
Actor



"It is not that the initial idealism of an IAS officer fades. But realism does step in and one learns what is possible and what is not. You learn to pick your battles and work smart."

- Prasanth Nair, IAS
MD - KSINC, MD -
KIIDC

minded focus and pure love for my craft," he said. "I had no plan B and I never took my craft light-heartedly," he reiterated.

Persistence is the key factor that even Nishant Jain, IAS officer of the 2015 batch, stressed upon. "It is what got me through my journey. I cleared my exam on the third attempt and secured the 13th rank. Through it all, I didn't let failure bog me down. Yes, I was disheartened, but I didn't give up," he said.

Mrunal Patel, academic director-UPSC CSE, Unacademy, during his special class guided students through a comprehensive strategy to crack the exam.

"Given the past trends of UPSC Prelims General Studies paper, you should be spending about 50% of your time studying theory from books, and 50% of the time learning about current affairs."

He added that when choosing one's optionals, it should be done on the basis of interest and not what seems to be trending.

"It accounts for 500 marks, and has to be done thoroughly. So, choose something you are interested in, don't just follow a herd mentality."

The first half of Day 2 saw leading economist and MP Jairam Ramesh take to the platform, to address the topic Indian Economy vs Global Pandemic. "The entire economy has gone for a toss due to the COVID-19 pandemic; mind you the GDP growth had been decelerating for

about six quarters before this. According to experts, the fiscal year 2020-21 is a write off and the economy could go into the negative too. However, recovery can be expected in 2021-2022," said Ramesh, adding, "The economy will recover based on three factors: people's consumption, investments, and how much we will be able to export to the global market. Unfortunately, the reports on the recovery of the world market are not so good. We will have to focus on driving up Indian consumption and increasing investments by the Government and private parties to help revive the economy."

Jairam Ramesh also laid emphasis on the need for the Government and the people to work on treating the environment better. "The outcome of this pandemic is that we, as a nation, have to relook at public health, which is seriously lacking, and work towards protecting the environment."

The Unacademy Summit is on till today. Tune in for sessions by Prof. DP Agrawal, Dr. Shashi Tharoor, Sanjukta Parashar, IPS, Dr. Chhavi Rajawat and more: <https://unacademy.com/upscsummit2020>



Scan to register

and the evolution of the civil services in the last few years. "From being instruments of perpetuation of status quo, the civil services was envisaged as implementational agents of mammoth socio-economic and political transformation."

Given the highly competitive nature of the exam, the one thing

that holds aspirants in good stead is their will to succeed, and knowing why they want to pursue a dream. Highlighting the need to have a strong will in what is otherwise a long and arduous journey was Armstrong Pame, IAS, who is widely credited for building the People's Road – connecting Manipur to Nagaland and Assam. "If I can do anything to bring about even a small change,

you know where you want to be and why, finding the way to get there isn't the toughest job. The tough part is knowing why. For me that reason was crystal clear: I've seen people in my district struggle for basic amenities since I was a child and I have come up the hard way myself. If I can do anything to bring about even a small change,

then it is worth it," he said about his Civil Services journey.

The way forward is through proper planning and persistence as Tina Dabi and Rajkummar Rao highlighted. According to Dabi, an IAS officer, a UPSC aspirant needs to plan everything down to the last detail when it comes to preparing for the exam. "What it took was a single-

Lockdown slows down reservoir work

The ₹60-cr. project in Orathur can harness about 1.35 tmcft. of water; likely to be completed next year

K. LAKSHMI
CHENNAI

A portion of the work to create another reservoir in Orathur near Padappai to meet Chennai's growing drinking water needs and prevent flooding is in progress.

Although it is slated to be completed this year-end, labour shortage during the lockdown pushed the deadline to next year.

About 30% of the work on the ₹60-crore project had been completed so far. The reservoir would be formed across the Orathur tributary of the Adyar and also by linking two waterbodies in Orathur and Arambakkam.

Officials of the Water Resources Department said as there were no major waterbodies near the tributaries, flood water often drained into the sea and inundated the southern suburbs.

The project was chalked out as part of the flood mitigation measures and on simi-

GWe are waiting for the process of land acquisition to be completed for about 100 acres

OFFICIAL OF THE WATER RESOURCES DEPARTMENT

lar lines of the Thervoy Kandigai-Kannankottai project.

Work on regulators

Spread over 763 acres, the reservoir would store up to 1.35 tmcft of water when filled twice a year.

"We have completed 50% of the work to construct regulators with five shutters for a width of 8 metres. We are managing the work with 50% of the workforce because of the lockdown," said an official.

Of the 3,200-metre-long bund to be formed for a height of three metres, the department is working on a space of 1,400 metres.

"We are waiting for the process of land acquisition to be completed for about 100 acres. Instead of compensation, the landowners will be given government lands located downstream in exchange. Work to build the bund in the remaining portion will be taken up after the process," the official said.

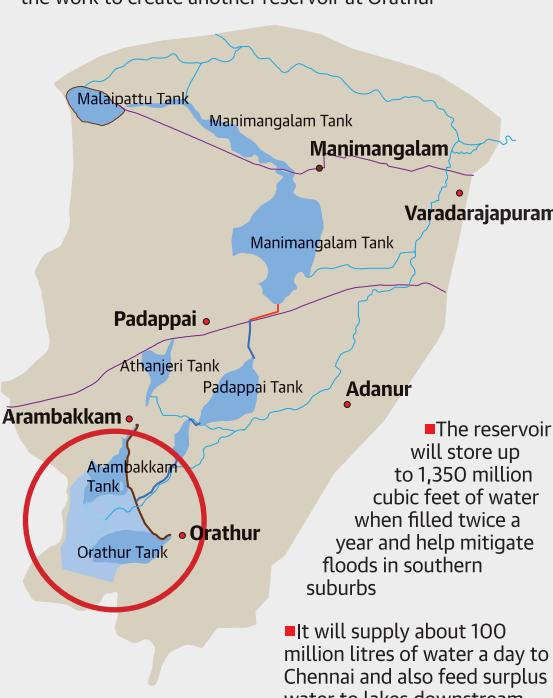
Besides storing floodwater in the reservoir, the surplus water estimated about 150 mcf would be transferred to Padappai, Manimangalam and Ammanabakam lakes through inter-basin transfer channels.

Water could be transferred even during this monsoon as work had been completed, the officials added.

Once completed, nearly 12 lakh people could be provided with drinking water from the project.

A 25-km-long pipeline would carry 100 million litres of water daily to Chembarambakkam water treatment plant. Work was expected to be completed in June next year, officials said.

One more water source
Water Resources Department has so far completed 30% of the work to create another reservoir at Orathur



Power bills shock consumers

Tangedco claims calculations are done in a transparent manner

R. SRIKANTH
CHENNAI

Hundreds of domestic consumers, whose electricity meters were assessed in June before the complete lockdown was imposed on June 19, are shocked after receiving the electricity bill. The bills were issued for domestic consumers for the two bi-monthly cycles of April and June.

The lockdown, which was announced in the State from March 24, was partially relaxed for a brief period from June 1. However, due to the spike in the COVID-19 cases in the city and three neighbouring districts, complete lockdown was enforced from June 19. During the partial relaxation of lockdown, Tangedco asked its officials to take up door-to-door meter reading in the city. Prior to this, Tangedco had announced that domestic consumers should pay the previous month cycle (PMC) bill for March, April, May and June. It had issued a model bill calculator based on the regulations of Tamil Nadu Electricity Regulatory Commission (TNERC) whereby the average units consumed for the two bi-monthly cycles (for four months) would be calculated and based on the electricity tariff, the amount would be worked out.

M. Somasundaram, a consumer activist in Tondiarpet, said Tangedco had failed the domestic consumers in not taking door-to-door meter reading. He said it should have been carried out even during the lockdown. He pointed out the economic hardships the consumers faced when an accumulated electricity bill

Model worksheet for electricity bill

The following is the illustration that Tangedco has worked out as meter reading was not taken up because of COVID-19 pandemic and lockdown:

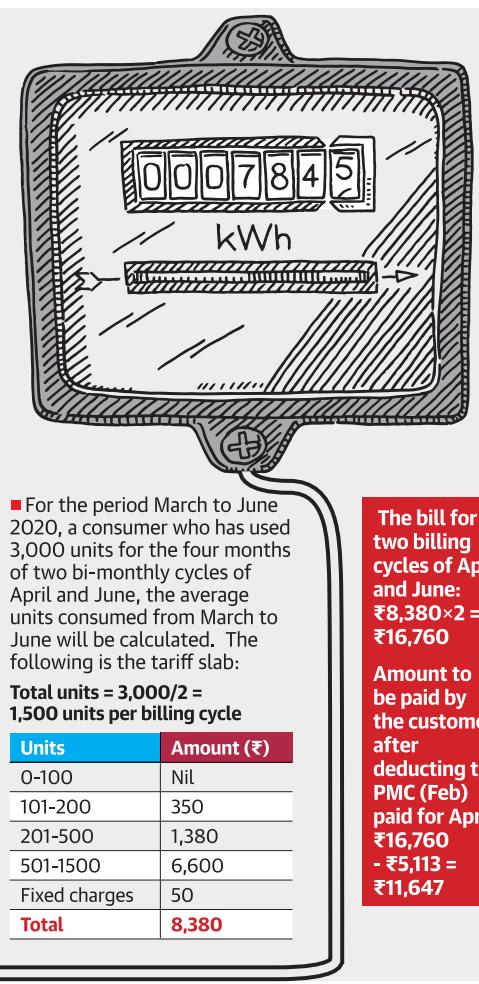
FOR CONSUMERS USING MORE THAN 500 UNITS

Units	Amount (₹)
0-100	Nil
101-200	350 ($\text{₹}3.50 \text{ per unit}$)
201-500	1,380 ($\text{₹}4.60 \text{ per unit}$)
501-1,000	3,300 ($\text{₹}6.60 \text{ per unit}$)
Fixed charges	50
Total	5,080

FOR CONSUMERS USING LESS THAN 500 UNITS

Units	Amount (₹)
0-100	Nil
101-200	200 ($\text{₹}2 \text{ per unit}$)
201-500	900 ($\text{₹}3 \text{ per unit}$)
Fixed charges	30
Total	1,130

As most of the consumers have used more than 500 units, the model worksheet is as follows: February electricity bill for 505 units = ₹5,113



has to be paid for two or three bi-monthly cycles at one go.

Vasanthkumar, a resident of Nungambakkam, was shocked when he received a bill for ₹34,384 despite paying ₹15,442 in April. His bill statement was confusing as it showed the assessment was for June 2020 and the units consumed being 8,010. He was billed ₹49,726 and the amount to be paid was ₹34,384.

A senior electricity official, responding to this complaint, said the consumer's

average consumption in the same bi-monthly period of April and June last year was 2,560 units and 3,330 units. Whereas this year as meter reading was not taken from March, the consumer's total meter reading for the two bi-monthly reading of four months from March to June was 8,010 units, which is not abnormal considering the lockdown announced from March 24.

His bill for 8,010 units worked out to ₹49,826 and after deducting the previous month cycle amount paid for April of ₹15,442, the net payable amount was ₹34,384.

Most of the domestic consumers' main complaint was the lack of any details of the number of units consumed, the calculation of the bill for four months, and the net amount to be paid after deducting the PMC.

Regarding this complaint of the absence of any details in the electricity bill, a senior official said it is not possible to send detailed statement, as there are lakhs of consumers in the city alone.

IG empanelled for Central deputation

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI

The Appointments Committee of the Cabinet has approved empanelment of A. Arun, a 1998-batch IPS officer and Additional Commissioner of Police (Traffic), to hold Inspector-General of Police posts on central deputation.

Mr. Arun, serving as Additional Commissioner of Police (Traffic) in Chennai, is among the four IPS officers of different State cadre whose names were approved by the ACC on June 12.

Timings CHENNAI

SUNDAY, JUN. 28		
RISE	05:46	SET 18:39
RISE 12:11 SET 00:00		
MONDAY, JUN. 29		
RISE	05:47	SET 18:39
RISE	13:07	SET 00:36
TUESDAY, JUN. 30		
RISE	05:47	SET 18:39
RISE	14:03	SET 01:21

Chennai Weather max min
Thiruvallur 39 27
Chennai Airport 36 28
Chennai City 36 29

Chennai Airport Today
35°C The sky will remain cloudy over the area. A warm night is expected.

Chennai Airport Tomorrow
35°C Squally winds are expected on the day. The sky will remain cloudy over the area.

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THE HINDU

Air Surcharge as applicable:
New Delhi - Rs. 15/-;
Port Blair - Rs. 15/-

166 COVID-19 patients undergo dialysis at RGGH facility

Most patients were referred from hospitals around Chennai

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI

Setting up a dedicated dialysis facility for end stage renal disease patients who tested positive for SARS CoV-2 infection, the Rajiv Gandhi Government General Hospital (RGGH) has so far handled 166 patients since March-end. A majority of them were referred from hospitals in and around Chennai.

N. Gopalakrishnan, director of Institute of Nephrology, RGGH, and his team set up a COVID-19 dialysis unit with 10 stations after they started to receive patients who tested positive for the infection.

"So far, 166 patients known to have chronic kidney disease, who were on regular dialysis and tested positive for COVID-19, underwent dialysis at RGGH and were discharged after recovering from COVID-19," E. Theranirajan, dean of RGGH, said.

End stage renal disease patients required haemodialysis at least twice a week with each session lasting four hours. Being one of the main dialysis centres in the government sector, RGGH conducted 2,000 to 2,200 dialysis sessions every month during normal times.

"COVID-19 can affect the kidneys too. A small set of persons with normal renal



Rising to the occasion: The Institute of Nephrology, Rajiv Gandhi Government General Hospital, has a COVID-19 dialysis unit with 10 stations. ■ K. PICHUMANI

function could experience renal dysfunction. Those who are already suffering from end stage kidney disease and on maintenance haemodialysis are at high risk for COVID-19 as they have to come out of their homes twice or thrice a week for dialysis. Many of them have comorbidities such as diabetes, high blood pressure and cardiac ailments making them vulnerable to infection. They are exposed to the environment including that of the hospital," Dr. Gopalakrishnan said.

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"COVID-19 can affect the kidneys too. A small set of persons with normal renal

function could experience renal dysfunction. Those who are already suffering from end stage kidney disease and on maintenance haemodialysis are at high risk for COVID-19 as they have to come out of their homes twice or thrice a week for dialysis. Many of them have comorbidities such as diabetes, high blood pressure and cardiac ailments making them vulnerable to infection. They are exposed to the environment including that of the hospital," Dr. Gopalakrishnan said.

Among the 166 patients, 108 were men. The mean duration of their hospitalisation was 10 days. Except for 15 patients, others made a smooth recovery, doctors said. The unit had separate staff posted on rotation.

Webinar on career counselling on July 1

topic will be "Engineering in an AI-enabled World: What will it take to survive automation?"

D.K. Aswal, Director, Council of Scientific and Industrial Research – National Physical Laboratory (CSIR-NPL); Sanjeev Sancheti, Vice-Chancellor, SRMIST; and Damodar Acharya, former Director of IIT-Kharagpur and former Chairman of All India Council for Technical Education;

The first webinar of the series is scheduled on July 1 from 3 p.m. to 5 p.m. The



will be the speakers. Students and other interested persons can register by visiting the link https://bit.ly/2Yv23li or scan the QR code here.

WESTERN RAILWAY-RAJKOT

FOB CONSTRUCTION & PASSENGER LIFT WORK

E -Tender Notice No.: Dy.CECR-JT-SUNR-RJT-32-R1, Dy. Chief Engineer (Construction), Western Railway, Rajkot for and on behalf of President of Union of India invites E-Tender for the following work: Name Of Work With Its Location: Construction of Foot over Bridges with stairs, ramps and provision of Passenger Lift at Chamraj, Than, Wankarani, City, Amarsar, Kankot, Sindhavada, Khonara, Bileshwar and Rajkot Station in connection with Surendranagar-Rajkot Doubling Project. Approximate cost of the work: ₹ 28,68,05,527,67/- EMD: ₹ 15,84,100/- Completion Period: 12 (Twelve) Months Date & Time for submission of bid and Opening of bid: Submission: 24.07.2020 upto 15:00 hrs, Opening: 24.07.2020 at 15:30 hrs. Website particulars notice board location where complete details of tender can be seen & address of the office: Website: www.reps.gov.in Office of the Dy. Chief Engineer (Construction), Western Railway, Kothi Compound, Rajkot.

JT-28

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SOUTH EAST CENTRAL RAILWAY

TENDER NOTICE FOR SUPPLY OF STORES ITEMS

Sr. No.: 1: E-TENDER No.: SECR-BOLT2020 , Date: 24.06.2020, Work: Manufacture and Supply of HTS Bolts and nut. Tender Value: ₹ 35,31,460/- . Earnest Money Deposit: ₹ 7,100/-.

Sr. No.: 2: E-TENDER No.: SECR-TSSW0320 , Date: 24.06.2020, Work: Manufacture and Supply of 60 Kg in 16 Over Riding Curve Switches. Tender Value: ₹ 25,70,04/- . Earnest Money Deposit: ₹ 5,200/-.

Submission of Tender: Upto 15:00 hours on 22.07.

Concerns expressed over Centre's proposal to decriminalise cheque bounce cases

SANJAY VIJAYAKUMAR

CHENNAI

A section of the business community and experts have expressed concern over the Union Finance Ministry's proposal to decriminalise cheque bounce cases under Section 138 of the Negotiable Instruments Act, 1881, and make it a civil offence.

"The Ministry has sought comments, and we have opposed the move. We want the existing system to continue. Cheques have a value only because there was criminal liability," said N. Jegatheesan, president, The Tamil Nadu Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Madurai.

If the cases go to civil court, it will take at least 20 years for a case to get settled and it would not work for the trade and business community, he added.

Section 138 was introduced as a criminal offence only in 1989 by way of an amendment to the Negotiable Instruments Act, 1881. The intent was crystal clear in making such offences criminal in nature," Anant Merathia, a Chennai-based cor-

porate lawyer said. "The criminality factor made people act responsibly while issuing cheques. While the government has taken steps to speed up settling cheque

bounce cases through Lok Adalats, making it into a civil offence goes against the interest of the consumers," T. Sadagopan, a consumer activist said.

thehinduads.com

THE HINDU MATRIMONIAL

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TAMIL MUSLIM: MBBS, PG Groom wanted for MBBS MD bride.29yrs, working in TN Govt. from well settled family. Phone:948624038; baysimmooh@gmail.com

HINDU DVK, 27/175, MBBS,MD/IInd yr, MMC, seeks Doctor Groom from decent family. Phone no. 9655849289

Doctor M.B.B.S., M.S.(O.G) Fair, Good looking 28yrs 162 cm SC, AD girl working in Govt service. Father Doctor, Hindu. Mother Christian CSI Director, own Hospital, seeks M.D., M.S. D.M., M.C.H Hindu/Christian Groom. Caste no bar, Contact no: 9788557566

VANEELA CHETTIAR DOCTOR 26/ 158cm MS (ENT) Pandy, Doctor parents. Seeking handsome (DM/MS) doctor clean habit groom. Ct 9847479499

HINDU DVK Pallan MD Paediatrician fair good looking girl 28/ 158 cm seek alliance from MD / MS doctors from same caste. Ct. 8075228968

NAIR GIRL MBBS MD II YR 29 159 CM, seeks PG Doctor/Professional, PhD, Contact: 9847523244 email: rsakumari.gd@gmail.com

HINDU MUDALIAR 28/160 fair good looking MS Doctor girl seeks well set led MS, MD fair good looking Doctor groom. Ct: 9842667635

SC,AD 26/MBBS, MS(OG) Own Hospital (100 Beds) Seeks Doctors/ Civil Services 9884300680

ENGLISH

HINDU VELLALA (Nanjil Pillai) B.E, M.Sc, Bangalore, 24/ 154 cm, Uthradam girl seeks equally qualified Govt/ MNC, educated family (Nanjil / Siva Pillai). boy, csajith760@gmail.com

HINDU FAIR BEAUTIFUL Catholic girl 35/ 5'4" SAS Programmer MNC, Bangalore. Seeks well educated boy.

IAS / ALLIED SERVICES

AN AFFLUENT Bengali family, with own house & car in South Kolkata, seeks Doctor/ IAS/ IPS/ Industrialist/similarly placed grooms, within 36 yrs from Elite, liberal, progressive minded families, for their only offspring, 30 year (looks much younger), preparing for Civil Services, 52', very fair, slim, beautiful, highly glamourous, deeply intellectual, congenital educated, MA in English (1st Class, C.U.). Both parents Rtd Crtl Gvt. Officers/Caste,community, religion NO BAR. 9007452249

HINDI

FAIR BEAUTIFUL Catholic girl 35/ 5'4" SAS Programmer MNC, Bangalore. Seeks well educated boy.

MALAYALAM

SHALINI RAVIKUMAR BA MSc Architectural conservation University of Edinburgh 26 / 167cm Iyer Tiruvadhirai Koushika, Gothram , Looking for any Professionals , Smart, Good-looking , Educated & well placed person who can be a dependable and caring partner to our daughter. Preference: Kerala Iyer. People who find her profile suitable , Alliance , Employed Settled in Chennai / With Clean Habits from Same Community. Contact: 9841182514

HINDU Paraiar, 27, B.Tech, Govt. Bank Clerk seeking Groom from same caste, Govt / Bank, Madurai Base. Contact: 9944239266

Wanted Mudaliar Groom below 42 years for tall Good looking Mudaliar Girl age 38 years widow, no issues pls contact:9959444402 TIME 9 AM TO 2PM / 6PM TO 10PM

HINDU SOZIHYA VELLALAR 36 / 160cm MBBS (Govt Divorcee) (No Child) Seeks BBS, BDS, PG Suitable Groom (No Child) good family. Contact: No: 95007 66577

✓ NAGARATHAR/CASTE NO Bar, Divorced, No Children, 35, 162 cms, Good Looking, B.E, Working as Software Analyst, Lives in Chennai, Father is a Businessman, Family financially well off, Looking for a Like minded, well settled Family. Any Profession, Age less than 40 . Contact : 94888-1097, 99408-91439, 82208-41737

SAIVA VELLALA girl, 28/165 cms, based at Trivandrum, looking for educated match around 31 yrs. Preferably settled abroad. Sub seek Nair. Ok. Contact: 9947736774, 9947007703

CHRISTIAN TELC AD Girl 25yrs/ 165cm MBBS good looking seeks Doctor Groom. Ct: 9578815447.

ROMAN CATHOLIC Sozhiya Vellala Tamil Girl 44/158 MBBA / Wheatish, Good Looking, Never Married, Employed in Bangalore. Earning Handicrafts. Seeks suitable Bridegroom. Caste No Bar. Willing to Relocate, Ct Clement: 9840022828 between 7pm & 10pm

HINDU SC DKV daughter of Teacher- Advocate Thiruvananthapuram clear horoscope 25/150 BE, MBA, ME Final Coimbatore seeks suitable groom for First marriage below 30 years must be a Govt Servant Hindu Devindra Kumar, sekarjanani@gmail.com

AGAMUDAIYAR 45 MSc IT in Chennai seeks Groom (1st Marriage) from OBC Mob- 9445612997

HINDU SC DKV daughter of Teacher- Advocate Thiruvananthapuram clear horoscope 25/150 BE, MBA, ME Final Coimbatore seeks suitable groom for First marriage below 30 years must be a Govt Servant Hindu Devindra Kumar, sekarjanani@gmail.com

MUDALIAR 27, 183 cms, Businessman, From a reputed Institute, Lives in Thanjavur, Father is a Businessman, Looking for a likeminded and well educated match from the same community. Contact: 6366448346

MUDALIYAR (SUPREME Elite) 25/B, Tech, Own Textile Mills, Paper Mills Etc, Rich Family seeks simple bride of Hindu-Vegetarian family. Ct: 080-23454636 / 9008011844 avinash99@gmail.com

CHETTIAR AVITAM 25/170, BE, SWE, Chennai, 7.5pls. Seeks Equally qualified Fair Groom. Ct:7010117051

HINDU SC 31/168 BE/MS/MBA US selected. Working HB Visa seeks US working Groom CNB. Ct.94444 71466

Age 35, Wheatish Complexion, 168cm, Phd alliance invited from PG/Ph.D. Boys from any christian denomination. contact: 9597203813. Not bureau.

TAMIL CSI Christian Yadava girl 25 / 160cm Fair AE PWD seeks Educator Govt. Working Groom. Contact: 9244317205, 9443368939.

PROPOSAL INVITED for a boy well educated, from parents of very well to do for a girl, fair, beautiful, God fearing Post graduate in finance, aged 30, CSI Nadar, Father is a very well to do educated Industrialist in Chennai. Contact: 984029090

HINDU BRIDE 39, BSc, Smart, Working, 1st Marriage Annanagar Chennai seeks suitable groom Ct: 73389 61490

CHETTIAR SUPREME Elite 25/B, Tech, Own Textile Mills, Paper Mills Etc, Rich Family seeks simple bride of Hindu-Vegetarian family. Ct: 080-23454636 / 9008011844 avinash99@gmail.com

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HINDU SC 31/168 BE/MS/MBA US selected. Working HB Visa seeks US working Groom CNB. Ct.94444 71466

HINDU NADAR Tamil girl, Trivandrum, 22/152, Trikette, doing M.Tech seeking alliance, 9400770333. Not bureau.

Required Test Karunegaran Doctor Groom for 23 yrs Chennai Doctor Girl, baski1661@yahoo.co.in

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86681-48103

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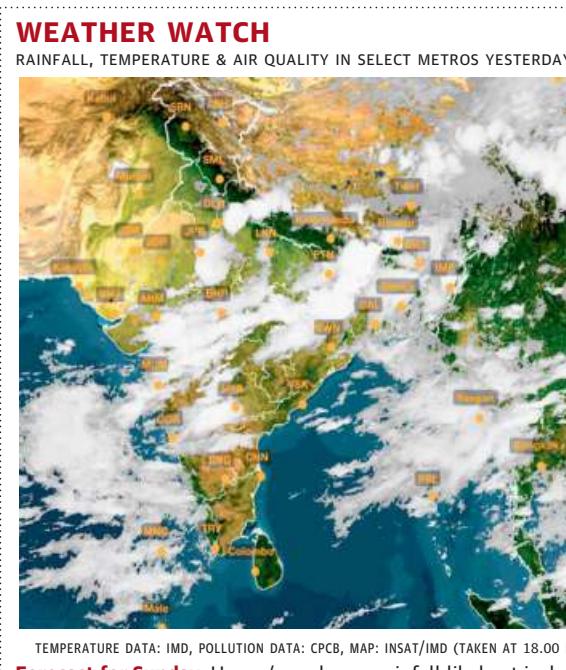
GENERAL

M/S. STANADYNE INDIA PVT. LTD., REQUIRE FRESHER FOR LEADING (US) MNC IN

THIRUVALLUR

2019 & 2020 Batch

<div data-bbox="143 1256 234 12



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

Forecast for Sunday: Heavy/very heavy rainfall likely at isolated places over West Bengal, Sikkim, Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand, Odisha, Madhya Pradesh, coastal Andhra Pradesh, Rayalseema, coastal Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Puducherry, Kerala and Andaman & Nicobar Islands

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	—	33.4	27.7	Kozhikode	68.8...26...	24.2	22.0
Ahmedabad	—	38.2	29.0	Kurnool	0.3...36.0...	26.5	22.0
Aizawl	8	24.6	18.7	Lucknow	0.2...33.1...	25.6	22.0
Allahabad	—	34.6	25.9	Madurai	—...38.2...	26.1	22.0
Bengaluru	—	29.0	21.0	Mangaluru	17.2...31.1...	24.0	22.0
Bhopal	—	34.1	23.0	Mumbai	1.6...33.4...	26.8	22.0
Bhubaneswar	1	37.2	26.4	Mysuru	—...30.9...	22.0	20.1
Chandigarh	—	37.4	28.2	Patna	—...39.8...	28.2	22.0
Chennai	—	36.1	28.7	Pond Blair	33.6...35.0...	25.6	22.0
Coimbatore	—	33.2	24.0	Puducherry	0.4...31.3...	25.6	22.0
Dehradun	—	34.5	25.9	Pune	—...33.3...	23.6	22.0
Gangtok	15.7	20.6	18.2	Raipur	—...33.8...	27.0	22.0
Goa	—	31.8	25.8	Ranchi	20.6...31.0...	23.6	22.0
Guwahati	36	27.5	23.2	Shillong	167.6...18.9...	17.5	22.0
Hubballi	—	29.0	22.0	Shimla	—...29.4...	20.1	22.0
Hyderabad	—	36.3	26.5	Srinagar	—...29.9...	15.8	22.0
Imphal	1.2	30.5	22.6	Tiruchi	13.6...37.9...	23.1	22.0
Jaipur	—	40.1	28.3	Vijayawada	2.7...37.2...	26.9	22.0
Kochi	52.4	29.0	23.4	Visakhapatnam	0.2...33.7...	24.9	22.0
Kohima	9.4	25.2	17.2				
Kolkata	—	34.4	28.2				

Pollutants in the air you are breathing
Yesterday

In observation made at 4.00 p.m., Ballabgarh, Haryana recorded overall air quality index (AQI) score of 217 indicating an unhealthy level of pollution.

Contrast, Kozhikode, Kerala recorded a healthy AQI score of 24.

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. Aggravated 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

Chief Minister blames Bedi for agitation launched by fishermen

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
PUDUCHERRY**

Chief Minister V. Narayanasamy on Saturday said his government was seriously contemplating legal action against Lt. Governor Kiran Bedi for flouting the orders of Madras High Court.

In an audio message to media, the Chief Minister said the court while disposing of the appeal, had vested the power for day-to-day administration with the Chief Minister and Ministers.

The court had observed that the decisions taken by

the Council of Ministers were binding on the Chief Secretary and Secretaries. The Lt. Governor was bound to give accord to the decisions taken by the Cabinet.

In case of "serious" differences of opinion, the Lt. Governor could refer the subject to the President.

The Lt. Governor has no independent authority to overrule the decision of the Council of Ministers, take unilateral decisions and give directions to officials.

"I myself have written several letters asking her not to

interfere in the day-to-day administration of the elected government. She has not bothered to listen. We are taking steps to initiate legal proceedings against her," the Chief Minister said.

Blaming the Lt. Governor for the agitation launched by

the fishermen on Friday, the Chief Minister said Ms. Bedi failed to give her consent to disburse financial assistance to fishermen during ban period. For several years, the government had been extending financial assistance to fishermen for their livelihood loss during the ban period. Last year too, the assistance was given, he said.

When the file pertaining to the subject was referred to the Lt. Governor, Ms. Bedi returned the proposal asking government to conduct a survey to weed out fishermen drawing elderly pension and other benefits from the beneficiary list, the Chief Minister said.

Puducherry govt. contemplating legal action against L-G, says Narayanasamy

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
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Blaming the Lt. Governor for the agitation launched by

'Many start-ups have come forward in space sector but no big corporates yet'

Privatisation will increase India's share in global market: ISRO chief

**STAFF REPORTER
CHENNAI**

While many start-ups have already shown interest to participate in the space sector that has now been opened up for private players, big corporates are yet to come forward, said the K. Sivan, chairman of the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) and Secretary of the Department of Space.

Interacting with media personnel from Chennai through video-conferencing on Indian National Space Promotion and Authorisation Centre (IN-SPACE), the body created to enable the participation of private players, he said that a majority of start-ups have shown interest in space applications. Highlighting that the roughly \$350 billion global

space market is comprised of around 2% in launch vehicles, 5% satellites, 45% in space applications and 48% in ground equipment, he said, "There is a lot of revenue in space applications and ground equipment. Launch vehicles and satellites have less revenue and are technically complex."

However, since launch vehicles and satellites were needed to better participate in the other two sectors, he said he expected the private sector's participation in all these sectors.

Pointing out that the private sector was already contributing in a significant manner through the supply chain to ISRO, Mr. Sivan said that even for the ongoing Gaganyaan mission, ISRO has invited participation from private players for the new technologies that will have to be developed.

He stressed that the opening up of space to the private sector was necessary to improve India's share in the \$350 billion global space market, which is presently stuck at around 3%. He said that ISRO will be able to focus more on advanced technology development, indigenisation of technologies, and capacity building.

Armed Reserve by Superintendent of Police M. Sree Abhinav on Friday following an enquiry. The police team had claimed to have seized four packets of Methamphetamine, a 'psycho stimulant', weighing 2.75 kg that was washed ashore off the Pudupet coast on Sunday.

The trio – Sub-Inspector Anandan and Grade I constable Bhagyaraj attached to Parangipettai police station and SSI Ramkumar, attached to the special branch, were earlier transferred to the

Custodial deaths: Govt. gave ₹25 lakh because it is at fault, says Stalin

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI**

DMK president M.K. Stalin on Saturday said if the State government failed to conduct a proper investigation into the custodial death of Jayaraj and Bennicks of Sathankulam, his party would approach the court seeking a CBI investigation.

"What is the logic behind Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami's argument that they died of breathing problems even before the post-mortem report is prepared," he tweeted.

Mr. Stalin said the government released ₹25 lakh as solatium to the family because it was at fault. "Will the government give similar amount if they were natural deaths? The government should arrest those who converted Sattankulam police station as hunting grounds under murder charges," he said.

Meanwhile, CPI (M) general secretary Sitaram Yechury on Saturday demanded a 'high level enquiry' into police custodial deaths of P. Jayaraj and J. Bennix.

In a statement, Mr. Y-



chury said that he strongly condemned the deaths and demanded a high-level enquiry into the events that unfolded leading up to the deaths.

He demanded that the concerned police personnel must be booked under IPC Section 302. Mr. Yechury also urged the State government to provide employment to one person in the family along with monetary compensation.

"State government must provide ₹1 crore compensation to the family," he said. The deaths have triggered a wave of protest across India on social media.

Advocates forum condemns deaths

'Torture in custody unacceptable'

**LEGAL CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI**

The Tamil Nadu Senior Advocates' Forum, comprising 130 designated Senior Counsel practising in the Madras HC and condemned the custodial death.

The forum's convenor P.S. Raman said a majority of its members were in favour of passing a strongly worded resolution and hence it read: "The death of Mr. Jayaraj and his son Mr. Bennicks in Sattankulam, in the custody of the police, has shocked the conscience of all. Torture in custody is unacceptable in any civilised society governed by the

rule of law. The Magistrate who remanded them to judicial custody, the duty doctor who issued fitness certificate as well as the jailor have wholly failed in their duties and contributed to the tragedy.

Lack of respect
"We strongly condemn the incident, which demonstrates lack of respect for the rule of law and leads to failing public confidence in administration in these trying times. We call for justice to be done by swift meaningful steps in accordance with law and bring the guilty to book."

Three policemen suspended in Villupuram over seizure of drug

Privatisation will increase India's share in global market: ISRO chief



ISRO chairman K. Sivan

fresh tender in compliance with the guidelines of the Union government.

The BharatNet tender was a Central government-funded scheme and an ambitious project of Tamil Nadu Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami to provide high-speed internet connectivity to 12,542 villages across the State. The project was aimed at providing internet services to rural masses, including 65 lakh students who were given free laptops by successive AIADMK governments

since 2011. It would only be apt for the government to have control of internet connectivity in future, when education, healthcare and other essential services would be provided via online platforms, the Minister told *The Hindu* on Saturday.

Issues in BharatNet project first surfaced when senior IAS officer Dr Santosh Babu as IT Secretary sent his Voluntary Retirement from Service apparently not willing to make changes in the tender conditions.

Armed Reserve by Superintendent of Police M. Sree Abhinav on Friday following an enquiry. The police team had claimed to have seized four packets of Methamphetamine, a 'psycho stimulant', weighing 2.75 kg that was washed ashore off the Pudupet coast on Sunday.

The trio – Sub-Inspector Anandan and Grade I constable Bhagyaraj attached to Parangipettai police station and SSI Ramkumar, attached to the special branch, were earlier transferred to the

miliar consignment was seized off Mamallapuram in Kancheepuram district, the police personnel had reportedly failed to inform their seniors of the seizure.

The team had recovered eight packets of the drug and kept it in front of the station premises. The team announced the seizure only after a similar consignment was seized off Mamallapuram. All the three policemen were found guilty of not keeping senior officials in the loop over the seizure following an enquiry.

Crystal form
The drug was found in crystal form in packets bearing the name of a Chinese tea brand. Though the seizure was said to be made on March 14, much before a si-

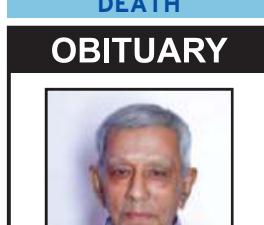
OBITUARY & REMEMBRANCE

DEATH



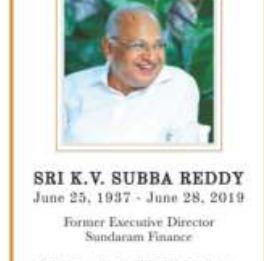
Smt. PADMA THIAGARAJAN
W/O Late Shri. T.R. Thiagarajan
Aged 94 years
Passed away peacefully on 27th June 2020
Mourned by Sons and Daughters - in-Law
Ananthanarayanan T - Vilaya
Balasubramanian T - Vidya
Gopalakrishnan T - Vasanthi
And Grand Children and Great Grand Children
Address
Sriniketan, 1 Raj Street,
Mandaveli, Chennai - 600 028
Due to Lockdown Conditions, your Condolences by
WhatsApp or SMS will be helpful

DEATH



With profound grief, we inform the sad demise of
Shri. K. Venguswamy
on 26th June 2020
in Mumbai
In grief – Swamys, family & friends
Mobile: +919820298834

DEATH ANNIVERSARIES



Mrs. Jayashree Ramanathan
Mahal
Wife of
Mr.M.V.Ramanathan
(Ex English Electrical)
Passed away in Chennai
on Friday, June 26, 2020
Deeply mourned by family
Ph: 044-22272639,
9840765924

SAD DEMISE

Prison record indicates father and son were tortured in custody

Sub-jail register notes visible signs of injuries on both Sattankulam victims

S. VIJAY KUMAR
CHENNAI

An entry believed to have been made in the Kovilpatti sub-jail at the time of admitting remand prisoners P. Jayaraj, 58, and his son J. Bennicks, 31, on June 20, 2020, suggests that the father-son duo was tortured before being brought to prison.

Going by a prison record accessed by *The Hindu* on Saturday, both victims had multiple bruises in the gluteal region, and bleeding injuries. Bennicks had injuries on his wrists and legs which were visibly swollen. Jayaraj informed the prison officials

that he was suffering from high blood pressure and diabetes.

The Sattankulam police picked up Jayaraj and his son after a heated argument over closure of their shops during the lockdown. They were taken to the police station and booked on charges of disobedience to order duly promulgated by public servant, preventing a public servant from discharging duties by using criminal force and also negligent act that was likely to spread infection of disease dangerous to life.

They were produced in a magistrate court and re-

manded in judicial custody. The police took them to the sub-jail where the visible bodily injuries were entered in the register. Jayaraj and Bennicks reported health issues after which prison officials first called in a doctor and then shifted them to the Government Hospital where they died.

The incident sparked instant protests from traders, human rights activists and political parties who accused the police of high-handedness and demanded that a case be registered against those responsible for the excesses. The Madurai Bench

of the Madras High Court, that took *suo moto* cognisance of the incident, has ordered a court-monitored investigation into the case.

According to sources in the Prison Department, a judicial magistrate visited the sub-jail in Kovilpatti and took statements from officials who were on duty when Jayaraj and his son were brought by the police. The Magistrate also recorded the statements from inmates who had knowledge about the sequence of events in the prison till the two remand prisoners were taken to the Government Hospital.

Travelling alone in flight, T.N. man returns to grieve his wife's death

He arrives from Singapore via Kolkata, where others deboarded

SUNITHA SEKAR
CHENNAI

On Friday night, when the flight from Singapore landed at Chennai airport, immigration, health and Airports Authority of India (AAI) may have geared up to handle over a hundred passengers.

At quarter to 10, only one passenger, 49-year-old K. Koothan, quietly walked out of the aerobridge.

His flight, which departed from Singapore to Chennai via Kolkata, had over 100 Indian nationals but after the stopover in Kolkata, everyone but Mr. Koothan deboarded.

He travelled alone back home, grieving and coming to terms with the death of

his beloved wife, 35-year-old Vasuki, who passed away due to a heart attack a few days ago.

"The emptiness seemed more pronounced than ever. But I have to pick myself up for my three children who have lost their mother. That was my sole thought during the entire flight," said Mr. Koothan, who has been working as a mason in Singapore for nearly two decades now.

He would save money and travel only once a year to see his wife and children. This time, too, he planned to make a trip soon after the lockdown. But fate had other plans.

"I couldn't make it to the

funeral. But after that, some of my friends there helped me and I somehow managed to get a ticket to come home," he said.

After landing, he is now in quarantine at a government facility in Melakottiyur. He has told his children that as soon as he tests negative, he would rush home to see them.

"There is a faint hope lingering and that's because of my children. I have to take care of them. It is something everyone should now think of – to keep themselves and their family safe. Family takes precedence over everything else," said Mr. Koothan, who has decided to not go back to Singapore.

Special trains cancelled from June 29

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI

The Southern Railway has cancelled the seven special trains which were being operated within the State.

The special trains would be cancelled from June 29 to July 15. However the special superfast train from New Delhi to Dr. MGR Chennai Central Station would still be operated.

A press release issued by the Southern Railway said the seven special trains, including Tiruchi-Chengalpatt-Tiruchi, Madurai-Villupuram-Madurai and Coimbatore-Katpadi-Coimbatore, would be cancelled.

Full refund would be given for those who made advance reservations.

Online courses are necessary, but no replacement for classrooms: teachers

The switch to e-learning during the lockdown has garnered a mixed reaction

R. SUJATHA
CHENNAI

If colleges were to go for online programmes then it would not be for the first time that students would be exposed to them. For several years now, the State's Technical Education Department has been developing video lessons.

Hundreds of e-lectures on technical subjects besides Physics, Chemistry and Mathematics have been uploaded on YouTube in the past few years. These bilingual video lectures, where teachers use both Tamil and English, explain the concepts in conversational everyday language. Subject teachers have developed as many as 200 lectures on various engineering topics. Ac-



Poor connectivity is one of the irritants in conducting online classes. ■FILE PHOTO

deemed universities began the process immediately. Private engineering colleges also started offering online courses. A Chennai-based deemed university offered its engineering students three sessions each day.

Poor connectivity
G. Sakthivel, a student of the engineering college at the university, said with the 2GB data plan on his phone he could not access every class. Also, the internet connectivity was poor at his house in Tiruverkadu.

"I have to go to the terrace to connect," he said and added that he spent most of his time at a cousin's house, whose family had a good internet connection.

Teachers too have largely

accepted the new norm of online classes, though they believed it was no replacement for face-to-face lessons. "In the beginning there may be unwillingness but once they understand the internet, using IT-based pedagogy, you can use the electronic facilities such as e-mail, social networking sites and even Skype. Students are participating in online quiz programmes already. It is the right time to launch online programmes," said M. Selvaraj, former Principal of Guru Nanak College, who was now heading a twinning programme with Pondicherry University.

Teachers such as T. Veeramani believe there was potential but wondered how to keep students engaged.

Postgraduates of KMC help feed the homeless

They prepare extra food and distribute it themselves

SERENA JOSEPHINE M.
CHENNAI

Amid the lockdown and increasing COVID-19 cases, a group of postgraduate students of Government Kilpauk Medical College (KMC)

Hospital have taken time out to share a meal with the homeless.

Since the city came under a 12-day complete lockdown last week, the PG students have been pooling money to cook extra food at their hostel mess and are distributing breakfast for 50 homeless persons.

For the past four days, we have been taking 40 to 50 parcels and distributing the meal to persons living on the roads

and streets in and around Kilpauk," said Somumurthy Nagarajan, a third-year post-graduate student of KMC.

"

"On normal days, they may get help from passers-by and get food as shops will be open. But this may be difficult during the lockdown. We will continue to do this till June 30," he added.

Depending on their duty schedule, they take turns distributing the meals.

Tumour removed from infant in Pudukkottai hospital

STAFF REPORTER
PUDUKKOTTAI

A newborn baby born with a benign vascular tumour known as congenital hemangioma was operated on successfully at the Pudukkottai Medical College Hospital.

The baby has recuperated well and will be discharged from the hospital on Monday, doctors said.

Born to a couple hailing from Ramanathapuram on June 8 at the Government Hospital Aranthangi, the baby had a swelling of blood vessels over the right knee. On June 10, she was referred to Pudukkottai Medical College Hospital.

A multidisciplinary team comprising of a radiologist, a paediatrician and a plastic surgeon, and led by

Dean A.L. Meenakshi Sundaram, was formed to treat the baby. The team operated on the child on June 20 and the tumour was removed in the procedure, which lasted three hours.

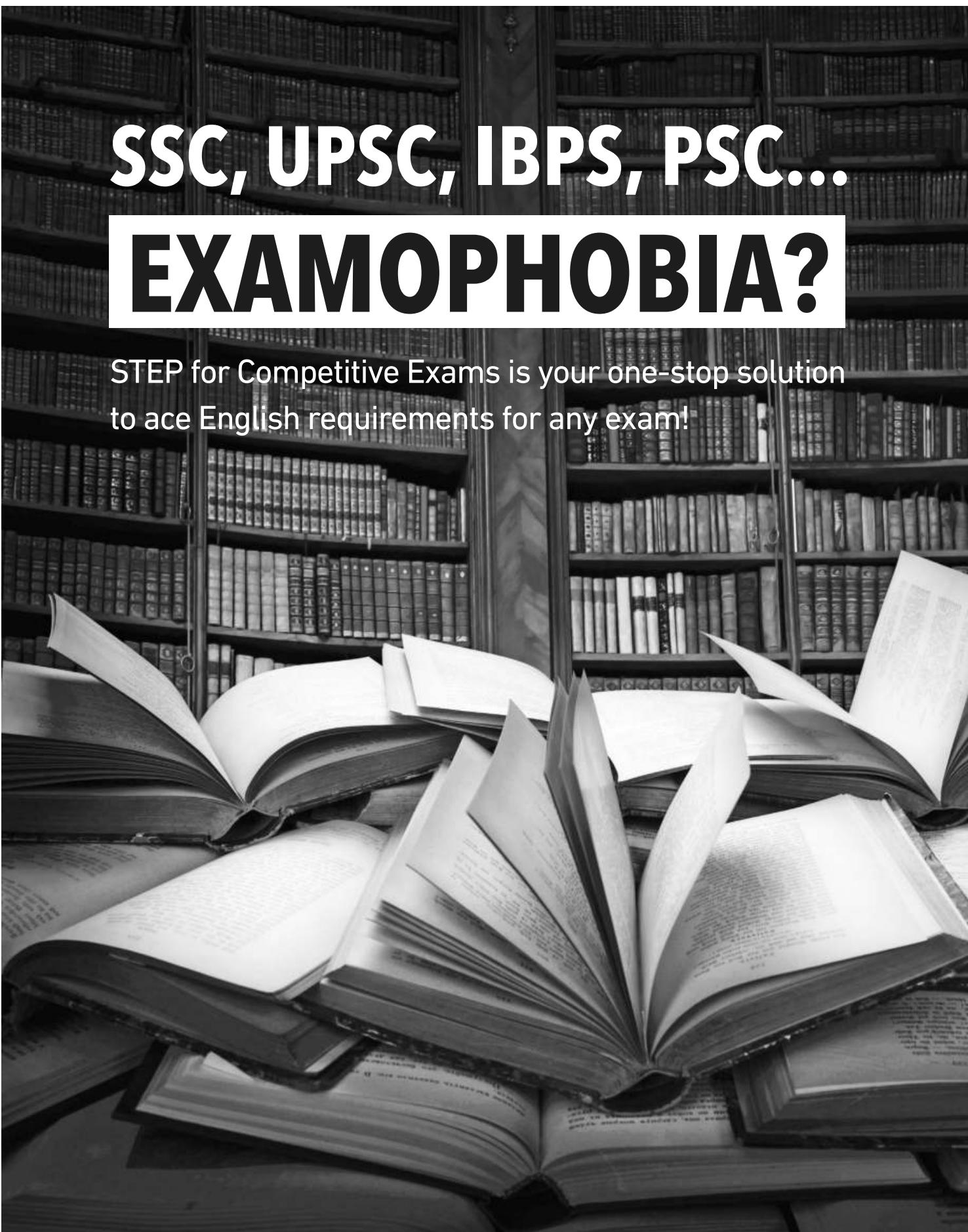
"This congenital hemangioma occurs more commonly in females," he said. During surgery 50 ml of blood was transfused for the baby.

done. Dr. Meenakshi Sundaram said the swelling was in the right knee, and moving the leg would have caused pain. If an injury occurs, the patient may bleed profusely.

"This congenital hemangioma occurs more commonly in females," he said. During surgery 50 ml of blood was transfused for the baby.

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FROM PAGE ONE

8 States account for 85% active COVID-19 cases

Balram Bhragava, Director-General, Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), gave a detailed presentation on the testing strategy. The samples tested in the past 24 hours had increased to 2,20,479, taking the total number of samples tested so far to 79,96,707.

1,026 diagnostic labs
India now has 1,026 diagnostic laboratories, including 741 in the government sector and 285 in the private sector. "The GoM was also informed about the medical infrastructure in the country, and currently there is an

availability of 1,039 dedicated COVID hospitals with 17,275 isolation beds, 22,940 ICU beds and 77,268 oxygen-supported beds; 2,398 dedicated COVID health centres with 1,39,483 isolation beds, 11,539 ICU beds and 51,321 oxygen-supported beds have also been operationalised. Moreover, 8,958 COVID care centres with 8,10,621 beds are now available... The Centre has also provided 185.18 lakh N95 masks and 116.74 lakh personal protective equipment to the States/Union Territories/Central institutions," the Ministry said.

3 calls that cut short the dreams of three families

In Chakfateh village of Bihar's Vaishali district, Rajkapoor Singh, father of Sepoy Jai Kishor Singh, said he received the news of his son's death from someone named "Pandeyji".

"First, he told me Jai Kishor was injured in a fight with the enemy but after an hour, his second call broke the news that my son had become a martyr," Rajkapoor Singh, a marginal farmer, said.

Raj Kapoor has four sons. Jai Kishor's older brother, Nand Kishor, too, is in the Army and currently posted in Sikkim. His two younger brothers – Kaushal and Shivam Kumar – are still in school but both want to join the Army.

"He [Jai Kishor] used to tell me that he would take care of all my hardships. Now, he himself has gone," his mother Manju Devi says, but follows it with a cry of "Jai Hind! Jai Bharat!"

On June 22, Deputy Chief Minister Sushil Modi visited the family and gave them a cheque of ₹36 lakh but Jai Kishor's parents also want his statutorily to be installed in the village school playground and near their home beside a pond. "The pond, too, should be named after my son," demanded Manju Devi.

Fond father
Rumpa Roy, Havildar Bipul Roy's wife, knew something was amiss on the night of June 16 when a call came from Ladakh and an officer asked her to give the phone to somebody around her.

She gave the phone to Nikhil Arora, her landlord's son.

Nikhil and his mother Renu Arora deflected Ms Roy's queries and told her it was a call to check their address. "We wanted the night to pass," recalled Ms Arora. "My abiding image of Bipulji is of him taking his daughter to school on his motor-cycle," she told *The Hindu*.

"It was his simplicity and helpful nature that pulled me towards him," said Ms. Roy as she talked over the phone about their seven-year courtship before they tied the knot in 2011.

It was the same helpful nature that made him the



Rumpa Roy, wife of Havildar Bipul Roy, and daughter Tamanna.

darling of Bindpara village, a tiny hamlet on the foothills of the Himalayas in the Alipurduar district of West Bengal. When the Havildar's body reached home, the villagers decided to keep their kitchens shut for a day as a mark of respect.

After spending two years in Meerut, when the Havildar with the Corps of Signals was posted to Ladakh in 2019, he shifted his wife and seven-year-old daughter Tamanna to rented premises in Kundan Kunj colony on Rohta Road in Meerut.

An Education Department official said that the student from Hassan was allowed to write the exam along with other students, but in isolation, as he had no symptoms

"He wanted a good education for her daughter," said Rumpa. "With only one gate, he felt the society would be safe for us," she recalled. The last time they talked over the phone was on June 9. "It was a usual conversation about our well-being during the lockdown. He was asking about the preparations for Tamanna's birthday on June 27."

Army personnel, she said, were always ready for the supreme sacrifice. "Family members are prepared for long periods of separation, but not like this," she said, with a catch in her voice.

Though Havildar's Roy's father has some land and his younger brother has a job, Ms Roy said it was the older son who was the main breadwinner. "The State government has given ₹15 lakhs to the family and a job for a family member, for which I have submitted my bio-data," said Ms Roy.

A post-graduate in Bangla, she is keen on taking up a job. "His dream was to have a house in the city and a good education for Tamanna. I would like to fulfill it," she said.

It was the same helpful nature that made him the

2 students test COVID-19 positive amid SSLC exam

Infection worries students in Karnataka

KARNATAKA BUREAU

Around 39 Class X students in the middle of their board exams are worried not just about their academic performance but also over contracting the coronavirus infection. They are the primary and secondary contacts of two of their peers – one from Arkalgud taluk in Hassan district and the other from Laxmeshwar, Gadag district – who tested positive after the exams began on Thursday.

An Education Department official said that the student from Hassan was allowed to write the exam along with other students, but in isolation, as he had no symptoms



Temperature check: A student being examined before entering the exam centre in Bengaluru. ■ V. SREENIVASA MURTHY

of the infection. "Thermal screening was done as he reached the examination centre. His body temperature was normal. However, he got to know about his test result later," he said.

When asked why he was not asked to sit in a separate room at the outset, as his throat swab was collected for

a laboratory test after he had suffered from dengue, Hassan Deputy Commissioner only repeated that he had no symptoms. However, he added that he would look into it to see if there is a case of negligence.

While the student from Hassan, who tested positive on Saturday, will not write

the examinations that are to follow, the health of 18 other students in the same classroom is being monitored and their swabs have been sent for testing.

Decision awaited

Primary and Secondary Education Minister S. Suresh Kumar said that a decision on whether the other students will be allowed to write the remaining exams will be taken after health experts submit a report. The entire examination centre has been sanitised.

However, students in Laxmeshwar, Gadag district, who wrote the paper with the classmate who tested positive on June 25, have been asked to appear for the supplementary examination, said Mr. Suresh Kumar. This, even though it is not known if they

have contracted COVID-19. All these students stay together in a residential facility. Two students who are primary contacts and 19 students who are secondary contacts have been quarantined.

In another incident, an official who was on SSLC examination duty in Pavagada, Tumakuru, tested positive on Thursday.

Following this, all the invigilators at the centre have been asked to undergo quarantine.

Sources in the examination centre said that the official did not come in contact with the students and had only visited the designated school on Thursday. However, he attended examination duty on June 22 even though his sample was sent for testing on June 22.

One dies, four affected in ammonia gas leak in Nandyal

Pipeline blast said to have caused leak

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
KURNOOOL

One person died on the spot and four others were affected by an ammonia gas leak from a pipeline at SPY Agro Industries Limited at Nandyal in Kurnool district of Andhra Pradesh on Saturday.

Fire tenders controlled the gas leak after struggling for three hours.

The deceased was identified as Srinivasa Rao, 50, manager of the factory. The four other workers who inhaled the gas were safe, Collector G. Veerapandian said. They were identified as Thimma Reddy, Tirumala, Ravi and Adinarayana.

The incident took place between 9.45 a.m. and 10 a.m. when they were restart-



Fire Department personnel after controlling the gas leak at the SPY Agro Industries at Nandyal. ■ U. SUBRAMANYAM

ing the factory after maintenance. Immediately all the persons working on the factory premises were evacuated.

The Collector said the fire-fighting personnel were controlling the leak and there was no need for panic.

The gas came out due to a blast in a high-pressure pipeline, and it was controlled immediately. There was no

danger to others, he said, urging the people in the vicinity to remain indoors and wash their face and eyes with cold water if they felt any irritation.

Mr. Veerapandian said the manager could not rush out of the factory after inhaling the gas, while the others managed to come out and were safe.

Constitution is the guiding light, says Modi

Open to varied spiritual influences: PM

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
THIRUVALLA

The Union government does not discriminate on the basis of faith, gender, caste, creed, or language, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has said.

"We are guided by the desire to empower 130 crore Indians and our guiding light is the Constitution of India. We will produce locally and buy local products. This will light the lamp of prosperity in many homes," Mr. Modi said. He was inaugurating the 90th birthday celebrations of Joseph Mar Thoma, Mar Thoma Metropolitan, at the Alexander Mar Thoma auditorium in Tiruvalla through a video-conference from Delhi on Saturday.

"India has always been open to spiritual influences from many sources," the PM said. The Church, which

had played a role in India's freedom struggle, had strived for national integration and had opposed the Emergency. "The Holy Bible talks extensively about togetherness," he added.

On the fight against COVID-19, India, with a growing recovery rate, was placed much better than many countries because of the nationwide lockdown, the subsequent government initiatives, and the people-driven fight against the pandemic, the PM said. Deaths due to the SARS-CoV-2 coronavirus in India was below 12 per million, compared to 574 per million in Italy. The figures in the U.S., the U.K., Spain, and France too were higher than those in India, he added.

The Prime Minister said the Centre had taken decisions based on feedback from people on the ground.

Variyamkunnam scriptwriter steps down

Ramees had drawn ire over his old FB posts of extremist, misogynistic nature

STAFF REPORTER
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM



Aashiq Abu

film. Mr. Ramees has made it clear that he is temporarily withdrawing from the project.

"I personally do not agree with Ramees's political stand. Probably, he will disagree with mine too. Discussions on Variyamkunnam

have been progressing with another director for some years. I came to know about Ramees hardly three-four months ago as someone who has been part of the research and discussions from an earlier stage. Following the allegations levelled against him, an explanation was sought, and he had publicly apologised on Facebook over some of these allegations," said Mr. Abu in his Facebook post.

Mr. Ramees's Facebook posts from five to six years ago became viral soon after the film was announced. While some of these revealed extreme Islamic views, some others

were misogynistic. He later deleted most of these old posts and posted an apology for his misogynistic posts.

On Saturday, in another Facebook post, he said he had already apologised for some of the allegations in which he felt he was wrong. The rest of the allegations are either posts taken out of context or misinterpretations.

"I am capable of proving that these allegations are wrong. However, these allegations, which concern only me, have affected the entire film crew. Hence, I am temporarily withdrawing from the project until I prove my innocence," he said.

ANIL KUMAR SASTRY
MANGALURU

With uncertainty over large public celebrations for Ganesh festival in August, idol makers, who have begun work, are scaling down the size of the idols. Amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, Ganeshotsav samitis are contemplating ways to adapt to the new situation. Hitherto, Ganesh idols of various sizes up to 15-20 ft tall were being installed during Ganeshotsav celebrations in the coastal region and elsewhere. Idol makers this time have, however, got orders for idols of 5 ft or below.

Likewise, public celebra-

tions used to have a host of cultural programmes invol-

grammes nor distribution of prasad, he said.

Going with the tide, idol makers too have restricted the height of the idols. Ramachandra Rao, a retired bank manager who has joined his brother Prabhakar Rao in the family tradition of making idols, said they have orders for around 230 idols this time. Mr. Rao said the maximum height this time would be 4.5 ft.

Another idol maker in the

city, Vinayak Shet, said the height of idols he is making vary from 6 inches to 4.5 ft. About 5-6 idol makers in Mangaluru prepare around 600 idols and this time everyone has reduced the size, he said.



Finishing touches: Prabhakar Rao making Ganesh idols at Mannagudda in Mangaluru on Saturday. ■ H.S. MANJUNATH

ing the rich traditions of the region and the State. COVID-19 has changed the entire gamut of Ganeshotsav celebrations, said Jagadish Shenava, one of the organisa-

tors of Ganeshotsav Public celebrations would be limited to installation of idols not more than 5-ft-tall and performing poojas. There would be neither cultural pro-

Community spread is on, says Karnataka official

No let-up in mortality; Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka both report 11 deaths, spike in cases; Kerala tracking 15 community cases

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
BENGALURU

The increasing number of cases indicates that community transmission has begun, said C.N. Manjunath, director of Sri Jayadeva Institute of Cardiovascular Sciences, and nodal officer for labs and testing in Karnataka's COVID-19 task force, on Saturday.

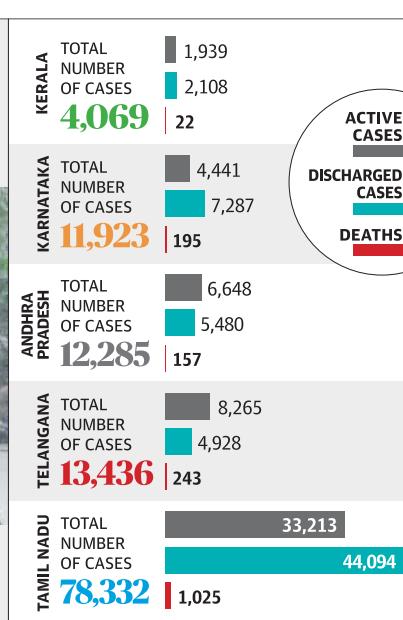
Karnataka recorded 11 deaths taking the toll to 191 on Saturday. "This is the beginning of

Policing amid pandemic

Police personnel are facing the risk of infection as they are aggressively involved in fighting COVID-19. The graphs show the spread of the pandemic in the southern States



Frontline warrior: Police personnel being sanitised after taking out a route march to spread awareness among traders in Bengaluru. ■ V. SREENIVASA MURTHY



from other countries.

With the arrival of more flights bringing expatriates home, the COVID-19 cases in Kerala showed a steady increase.

On Saturday new cases touched 195. Total number of patients under treatment in districts was close to 2,000 and with 102 more recoveries, active cases were 1,939.

Over 90% cases were imported but the rise in case numbers through local transmission in the community was worrying. Of 195 new cases, all except 15 cases were imported.

The 15 community-acquired cases had no apparent epidemiological link. Malappuram accounted for 10 of these, Kollam two, Ernakulam, Thrissur and Kannur the remaining three cases.

(With inputs from Vijayawada and Thiruvananthapuram bureaus)

IN BRIEF



Former A.P. Minister grilled for the third day

GUNTUR
The three-day police custody of former Andhra Pradesh Minister K. Atchannaiaudai, who is facing charges in the ESI scandal, ended on Saturday. For the third consecutive day, ACB sleuths grilled him in the presence of advocates on the purchases made for hospitals.

Will contest
CWC election,
says Sanjay Jha

SANDEEP PHUKAN
NEW DELHI

In a sign of taking on the Congress establishment, Sanjay Jha, who was removed as a Congress spokesperson last week, on Saturday declared himself as a candidate for a position in the Congress Working Committee (CWC), the party's highest decision-making body, if elections were held to the CWC.

Mr. Jha, who changed his Twitter bio to "sacked as National Spokesperson for writing India needs a reawakened and revitalized Congress", has once again stirred the leadership debate within the party.

"As and when there are elections (hopefully soon) to the Congress Working Committee (CWC), I am throwing my hat in the ring," he tweeted. "As a hard-core Nehruvian, am committed to rebuilding the party to take on the formidable machine and efficient might of the BJP," he added.



J.P. Nadda

The Gandhi family should answer for their sins, says Nadda

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The BJP on Saturday continued its attack on the Congress and the Gandhi family over the alleged links between the Rajiv Gandhi Foundation (RGF) and China, with party president J.P. Nadda saying they had sacrificed the national interest by accepting donations from the foreign power.

At a press conference here, Mr. Nadda posed 10 questions to Congress president Sonia Gandhi about the foundation's working. "The Gandhi family should answer for their sins," he said.

Mr. Nadda had this week raised the issue of the RGF accepting donations from the Chinese Embassy, to which former Finance Minister P. Chidambaram responded by asking would Prime Minister Narendra Modi assure the country that China would vacate Indian territory if the RGF returned

ment. "India's trade deficit with China was allowed to increase from an almost negligible \$1 billion in 2003-04 to as much as \$36.2 billion in 2013-14. Why did the Congress weaken the economic position?"

He alleged that funds had been 'diverted' from the Prime Minister's National Relief Fund to the RGF from 2005 to 2008, and the company founded by Congress leader Rameshwar Thakur had been appointed the auditor of the PMNRF. Mr. Nadda also hit out at former PM Manmohan Singh, saying he had allocated ₹100 crore to the private charitable trust when he was Finance Minister in 1991. "Since then, it has regularly received donations from the government of India Ministries. Yet, the RGF refuses to be audited by the Comptroller and Auditor-General or even come under the Right to Information Act. Why," he asked.

the ₹20-lakh donation.

Mr. Nadda said China had donated to the foundation every year from 2005 to 2009 and donations from the "tax haven" of Luxembourg were made from 2006 to 2009.

"Why did the Rajiv Gandhi Foundation, headed by Sonia Gandhi, accept money from the Chinese government and Chinese Embassy? Isn't it a shame, sacrificing national interest by accepting money from foreign powers for personal trusts," he asked. He raised concern over the UPA government's "haste" with regard to the East Asia Free Trade Agree-

Cong. releases travel list of BJP leaders

Party says many ruling party leaders had been to China on invitation

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Congress on Saturday said the BJP president has made making sensational claims his favourite pastime after J.P. Nadda launched a fresh offensive against the Congress and the Gandhi family.

In a statement, Congress chief spokesperson Randeep Surjewala gave a detailed account of the visit of BJP leaders to China at the invitation of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) when the BJP was in the opposition.

"Why did the then BJP president Nitin Gadkari go to China on a five-day visit on January 19, 2011, at the invitation of the CCP? Why did former BJP president Amit Shah send a delegation of MPs/MLAs in November 2014 to China for a week-long study in the Party School of the CCP? Why did Narendra Modi visit China on four occasions as Gujarat Chief Minister and on five occasions as Prime Minister, besides hosting the Chinese Premier on three occasions

in India? Isn't he the only Prime Minister to have had 18 meetings with the Chinese Premier in six years," Mr. Surjewala asked.

He also dared the RSS and the Vivekananda Foundation to make public the list of all their donors, including foreign sources. "Will the BJP disclose the source of funding, amounts received, the names of donors (including of Chinese origin) for Overseas Friends of BJP (OF-BJP)? How much amount has been received by OF-BJP from Overseas Friends of BJP-China and Hong Kong and when? What is the connection of Shri Rajkumar Raina Sabnani alias Raju Sabnani to OF-BJP," he asked.

Fund in 2005 was for tsunami relief work in Andaman & Nicobar? And that every rupee was spent for the purpose and accounted for?" Mr. Chidambaram wrote on Twitter.

"Suppose RGF returns the Rs. 20 lakh, will PM Modi assure the country that China will vacate its transgression and restore status quo ante? Mr. Nadda, come to terms with reality, don't live in the past that is distorted by your half-truths," he said.

'Diplomatic failure'

Prime Minister Narendra

Modi should publicly condemn China for brazen intrusions into Indian territory

and his government should take "strong and quick action" to resolve the LAC issue, the Congress said on Saturday.

"BJP President Mr. Nadda specialises in speaking half-truths. My colleague Ranadeep Surjewala exposed his half-truths yesterday. Why is the BJP hiding the fact that the Rs. 20 lakh received by RGF from PM National Relief

Fund is standing with India now.

India snubs Pak. offer to reopen Kartarpur

'It is creating a mirage of goodwill'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

India on Saturday said Pakistan's proposal for reopening the Kartarpur Corridor to mark the death anniversary of Ranjit Singh was a "mirage of goodwill".

India's ambiguous response came after Pakistan Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi offered access to the Kartarpur gurdwara for Indian pilgrims on the death anniversary of the early 19th century ruler of Punjab.

COVID-19 curbs

"Cross-border travel has been temporarily suspended as part of measures to prevent and contain the spread of coronavirus. Further view would be taken in consultation with health authorities and other stakeholders concerned," said an informed source, who said Pakistan was "trying to create a mirage of goodwill by proposing to resume Kartarpur corridor".

Pakistan has not built the bridge on their side across the flood plains of the Ravi river despite having committed to it in the bilateral agreement. With the advent of the monsoon, it would need to be evaluated whether pilgrim movement is possible through the corridor in a safe and secure manner," the source said.

The Kartarpur Corridor was inaugurated by Prime Minister Imran Khan in the presence of Indian dignitaries on November 9 last year to mark the 550th birth anniversary of Guru Nanak, the founder of the Sikh faith. The gurdwara at Kartarpur is sacred to pilgrims as it is believed that the guru spent a considerable part of his life at this place.

Locusts swarm parts of capital

They flew towards Delhi from Kherki Daula toll plaza in two groups

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GURUGRAM/DELHI

Swarms of locusts hit the Millennium City on Saturday around noon while headed to Delhi in two separate groups. The State Agriculture Department on Friday asked the residents to keep the windows and doors of their houses shut.

Atmaram Godara, Deputy Director, Agriculture, Gurugram, told *The Hindu* that the locusts flew towards Delhi from over the Kherki Daula toll plaza in two groups.

The large number of locusts had flown from Mahendragarh on Friday evening and settled in a couple of villages in Rewari, 50 km from here.

Mr. Godara said the swarm was around five km long and eight km wide and divided into four groups before it hit Gurugram. While two groups flew towards Delhi from over Gurugram, one each went to Nuh and Jhajjar. However, the swarms that flew towards Delhi and Jhajjar went to Faridabad and Nuh due to a change in



Looming large: A swarm of locusts in Gurugram on Sunday. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

wind direction.

Jitender Kumar, Deputy Commissioner, Jhajjar, said officials had taken steps to prevent any damage to the crops.

Origin in Rajasthan

The Union Agriculture Ministry said the locust swarms hitting Delhi, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh had originated from Jhunjhunu in Rajasthan. Control teams were deployed to eliminate the loc-

usts in Jhunjhunu on Friday morning, but by evening, the remaining locusts had regrouped and reached Rewari in Haryana, said an official statement.

Despite overnight control operations, the swarm then divided into three groups on Saturday, "one of which moved towards Gurugram, and from there to Faridabad and onwards to Uttar Pradesh. Another swarm moved towards Dwarka in Delhi,

Yashwant Sinha's front to contest Bihar election

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
PATNA

Former Union Minister Yashwant Sinha on Saturday announced that his upcoming political front would be contesting the Bihar Assembly election "strongly for a better Bihar".

"We want to become an epicentre of power in Bihar and future will decide whether we will be a third front or first front, but we will strongly contest the upcoming Assembly elections in the State," Mr. Sinha said, while addressing pressper-

sons at a hotel in Patna.

Former MPs Arun Kumar, Devendra Yadav and former Bihar Ministers and leaders such as Nagmani, Narendra Singh and Renu Kushwaha, along with others, were present with Mr. Sinha.

"At present, we all are here but many more leaders are in touch and will come with us with a 'Better Bihar' motto," Mr. Sinha added, while promising that he would meet media persons every week with a fact-sheet of the Nitish Kumar government.

3 Khalistan supporters arrested in Delhi

They were planning targeted killings'

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The Delhi Police, on Saturday, arrested three alleged supporters of the Khalistan separatist movement, and said the accused were planning to execute targeted killings in various northern States.

Deputy Commissioner of Police (Special Cell) Sanjeev Kumar Yadav said the accused have been identified as Mohinder Pal Singh, 29, a

resident of Delhi, Gurjeet Singh, 41 from Punjab and Lovepreet, 21, from Haryana.

Three pistols and seven live cartridges were recovered from the men. The police claimed the accused disclosed their links with Khalistan Liberation Force leaders and revealed plans to commit target killings on instructions from Khalistanis sponsored by Pakistan ISI.

Though Prasar Bharati is one of the biggest subscribers of PTI, it does not have any other stake in the news agency.

The state broadcaster said it had supported the news agency by paying a "huge" annual fee running into crores for years.

It also accused the agency of being rigid on the issue of rationalisation of the subscription fee.

from there to Daulatabad, Gurugram, Faridabad, and this swarm has also entered Uttar Pradesh. The third group was seen in Palwal, Haryana, and has also moved towards Uttar Pradesh," said the statement.

Control teams have been moved from Rajasthan to Haryana and Uttar Pradesh to help track and control the swarms, along with officials of the Central Locust Warning Organisation.

GOVERNMENT OF HIMACHAL PRADESH HIMACHAL PRADESH STATE ROADS TRANSFORMATION PROJECT (HPSRTP)

Request for Expression of Interest-cum-Request for Proposal/ Request for Expression of Interest Proposal

Name of Project: Himachal Pradesh State Roads Transformation Project (HPSRTP)

Loan No./Credit No.90664N

Date: June 26, 2020

The Chief Engineer-cum-Project Director, State Roads Project, HPRIDC, Nirman Bhawan, Nigam Vihar Shimla-171002, Himachal Pradesh India invites the Request for Expression of Interest-cum-Request for Proposals/Request for Expression of Interest from national consultants for the consultancy services as detailed in the table below-

Sr. No.	Description of the Consultancy Services	Date of availability of Detailed Request for Expression of Interest-cum-Request for Proposals/ Request for Expression of Interest Proposal Document on HPRIDC web site	Last date/ time for submission of Proposals
1.	Selection of Consultant (NGO) for support to implementation of Resettlement Action Plan (RAP) for Tranche-I Roads under HPSRTP (Approx. 90 km.)	June 27, 2020 (Request for Expression of Interest Proposal document)	July 14, 2020
2.	Selection of Biodev/ Wildlife Expert for World Bank Funded Himachal Pradesh State Roads Transformation Program (HPSRTP)	June 27, 2020 (Request for Expression of Interest-cum-Request for Proposal document)	July 25, 2020

Note:- Any further addendum/Corrigendum to this Request for Expression of Interest-cum-Request for Proposals/Request for Expression of Interest Proposal Documents shall be available to all interesting firms on official web site of HPRIDC under <http://himachalservices.nic.in/hpridc/HPSRTP.html>.

Chief Engineer-cum-Project Director, State Roads Project, HPRIDC, Nirman Bhawan, Nigam Vihar, Shimla-171002, Himachal Pradesh, India. Tel: +91-177-26276063; Facsimile: +91-177-26276062; E-mail: pdrsp-hp@nic.in



JALANDHAR SMART CITY LIMITED

Sco-47, Near PUDA Complex, Jalandhar 144001, Punjab

Tel: 0181-4154686 - 91-62843-91570

E-mail: smartcityjalandhar@gmail.com

NOTICE INVITING TENDER (NIT), NATIONAL COMPETITIVE BID (NCB)

BID REFERENCE NO: 35 A/JSC/2020-21

REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL (RFP)

"Selection Of Agency For Development Customization, Implementation And Support For Digital Library Solution At Guru Nanak Dev Library, Jalandhar Under Smart City Mission-2nd Call"

Jalandhar Smart City Limited (JSCL) invites online unconditional bids through e-procurement portal <http://eproc.punjab.gov.in> from eligible bidders under National Competitive Bidding (NCB) with Single Stage-two envelopes bidding procedure for the following works:

Sr. No.	Name of work	Estimated Cost(Rs.)	Earnest Money (Rs.)	Tender Fee(Rs.)	Period of completion
1.	Selection of Agency for Supply, Development Customization, Implementation and Support for Digital Library Solution At Guru Nanak Dev Library, Jalandhar Under Smart City Mission.	1,15,56,661/- (One Crore Fifteen Lakhs Fifty Six Thousand Five Hundred Thirty One Only)	2,31,131/- (Two Lakhs Thirty One Thousand Two Hundred Thirty One Only)	10,000/- plus GST	40 (Forty Months)

Important dates of the RFP are as below:

Availability of Tender Online	Last Date & Time for Online Submission of Bids	Date & Time of Opening of Tender
From 29.06.2020 1000 hrs	To 13.07.2020 1700 hrs	Technical Bid 14.07.2020 1100 hrs To be intimated later

- In case of any queries, the bidders can submit the queries online on smartcityjalandhar@gmail.com before 5th July 2020.
- Detailed NIT & Bid Documents can be seen at the website <http://eproc.punjab.gov.in> and may be downloaded free of cost from <http://eproc.punjab.gov.in>.
- Any subsequent addendum/corrigendum shall be published only at the website <http://eproc.punjab.gov.in>.

'Russia secretly helped Afghan militants kill coalition troops'

U.S. intel agencies say a Russian spy unit offered bounties to Islamist militants

CHARLIE SAVAGE
ERIC SCHMITT
WASHINGTON

American intelligence officials have concluded that a Russian military intelligence unit secretly offered bounties to Taliban-linked militants for killing coalition forces in Afghanistan – including targeting American troops – amid the peace talks to end the long-running war there, according to officials briefed on the matter.

The U.S. concluded months ago that the Russian unit, which has been linked to assassination attempts and other covert operations in Europe intended to destabilise the West or take revenge on turncoats, had covertly offered rewards for successful attacks last year.

Islamist militants, or armed criminal elements closely associated with them, are believed to have collected some bounty money, the officials said. Twenty Americans were killed in combat in Afghanistan in 2019, but it was not clear which killings were under suspicion.

The intelligence finding was briefed to President Donald Trump, and the White House's National Security Council discussed the problem at an inter-agency meeting in late March, the officials said. Officials developed a menu of potential options – starting with making a diplomatic complaint to Moscow and a demand that it stop, along with an escalating series of sanctions and other possible responses, but the White House has yet to authorise any step, the officials said.

An operation to incentivise



Shrinking footprint: American troops at Camp Shorabak in Helmand province, Afghanistan, last year. ■ NYT

ise the killing of American and other NATO troops would be a significant and provocative escalation of what American and Afghan officials have said is Russian support for the Taliban, and it would be the first time the Russian spy unit was known to have orchestrated attacks on Western troops.

Hybrid war

Any involvement with the Taliban that resulted in the deaths of American troops would also be a huge escalation of Russia's so-called hybrid war against the U.S., a strategy of destabilising adversaries through a combination of such tactics as cyberattacks, the spread of fake news, and covert and deniable military operations.

The Kremlin had not been made aware of the accusations, said Dmitry Peskov, press secretary for President Vladimir Putin of Russia. "If someone makes them, we'll

pose sanctions on Russia when he signed it into law after Congress passed it by veto-proof majorities. And he has repeatedly made statements that undermined the NATO alliance as a bulwark against Russian aggression in Europe.

The officials spoke on the condition of anonymity to describe the delicate intelligence and internal deliberations. They said the intelligence has been treated as a closely held secret, but the administration expanded briefings about it this week – including sharing information about it with the British government, whose forces are among those said to have been targeted.

The intelligence assessment is said to be based at least in part on interrogations of captured Afghan militants and criminals. The officials did not describe the mechanics of the Russian operation, such as how targets were picked or how money changed hands.

It is also not clear whether Russian operatives had deployed inside Afghanistan or met with their Taliban counterparts elsewhere. The revelations came into focus inside the Trump administration at a delicate time. Although officials collected the intelligence earlier in the year, the interagency meeting at the White House took place as the COVID-19 pandemic was becoming a crisis and parts of the country were shutting down. Moreover, as Mr. Trump seeks reelection in November, he wants to strike a peace deal with the Taliban to end the Afghanistan war. ■ NY TIMES

Mr. Trump's order follows a wave of civil unrest across America triggered by the killing of unarmed African American George Floyd. In some cities, protesters have pulled down or vandalised statues and memorials of historical figures – such as Confederate leaders – who defended slavery.

U.S. court orders release of 124 migrant children from detention

2 of the 3 prisons have confirmed COVID-19 cases: Judge

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
LOS ANGELES

A court in Los Angeles has ordered the release of more than 100 children held in U.S. family immigration detention because of the risk they could catch COVID-19 in the facilities.

Two of the country's three family detention centres have confirmed cases of the infection, district judge Dolly Gee said in her Friday ruling.

The facilities risked spilling into a massive health crisis despite efforts by the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agency to lower the number of migrants in its custody, she added. "The (Family Residential Centres) are 'on fire' and there is no more time for half measures," Judge Gee



Asylum seeker children at a shelter in Tijuana, near the U.S.-Mexico border. ■ AFP

wrote. Her ruling noted 124 children were currently in ICE detention facilities and ordered them released by July 17, either with their parents or into the custody of "suitable sponsors" with parental consent.

President Donald Trump campaigned on cracking

down on illegal migration, and has pressured Mexico into deploying troops along its southern border to stop the migrants.

A Trump administration "zero tolerance" policy launched in 2018 saw thousands of children separated from their parents at the border, a tactic apparently meant to frighten the families, before the government backed down.

Last week the U.S. Supreme Court rejected the Trump administration's cancellation of a programme protecting 7,00,000 "Dreamers" – undocumented migrants brought to the United States as children.

More than 2,500 people in ICE custody have confirmed COVID-19 infections, CNN reported on Friday.

"TikTok grandma" to work for Biden

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
NEW YORK

An American woman who helped turn a Donald Trump rally into a fiasco has been hired by a grassroots organisation campaigning for the election of presidential challenger Joe Biden. Mary Jo Laupp has been dubbed "TikTok grandma" since earning fame for her impassioned social media call for opponents of Mr. Trump to book out his campaign appearance in Tulsa, Oklahoma.

The result was a poorly-attended speech in a stadium filled to less than a third of its capacity.

The Iowa resident works in the music department of a high school and earlier participated in the unsuccessful Democratic campaign of Pete Buttigieg, a former Indiana Mayor.

Trump signs order to protect monuments

It calls for strict penalties for those found guilty of desecrating such places

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
WASHINGTON

U.S. President Donald Trump on Friday signed an executive order pledging to enforce prosecution for protesters who vandalise public memorials, as he announced he was skipping a weekend at his New Jersey golf resort to ensure "LAW & ORDER" in Washington.



The pull of history: People demonstrating for and against the removal of a memorial in Washington on Friday. ■ AFP

"I just had the privilege of signing a very strong Executive Order protecting American Monuments, Memorials, and Statues – and combating recent Criminal Violence,"

tweeted Mr. Trump. "Long prison terms for these lawless acts against our Great Country!"

In Washington, protesters have pulled down a statue of

Confederate general Albert Pike, while others this week were unsuccessful in their attack on a statue of President Andrew Jackson, a slave owner, near the White House.

Those who have pulled down or defaced monuments "seek nothing more than to destroy anything that honours our past and to erase from the public mind any suggestion that our past may be worth honoring," the White House said.

The order calls for "enforcement of laws that carry firm penalties of incarceration for those found guilty of desecrating public monuments" – without announcing any new regulations.

U.S. records 45,242 new cases

Texas, Florida close bars, reimpose curbs after record surge

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
REUTERS
HOUSTON

America's top infectious diseases expert has warned the United States is facing a "serious problem" from a resurgent COVID-19 as the illness puts the brakes on reopening two of the country's largest states. Texas and Florida closed bars and reimposed other curbs on Friday as the number of infections in the U.S. hit a single-day record with increases in 16 states, mostly in the south and west.

Also, on Saturday, the Hong Kong police department on Saturday denied permission for an annual march in the former British colony on July 1 to mark the anniversary of the city's 1997 return to China, the organiser and the police said in separate statements.



A parking lot in Los Angeles, California, near a COVID-19 testing centre. ■ AFP

corded another 1,140 deaths and Argentina toughened a lockdown in the capital Buenos Aires.

Reopening EU border

In Europe countries wrangled over plans to partially reopen the EU border.

"We are facing a serious problem in certain areas,"

leading U.S. immunologist Anthony Fauci said at the first briefing in two months by the White House's Co

navirus Task Force. "The only way we're going to end it is by ending it together," he said of the outbreak.

European diplomats said they planned to exclude the U.S. from travel to the continent when the bloc's external frontier reopens on July 1. EU envoys have argued on drawing up criteria and sources said a meeting on Friday ended with a tentative list of about 18 countries free to travel. With nations around the world at different stages on the outbreak curve, agreeing on "travel corridors" has proved tricky.

The WHO on Friday called for another \$27.9 billion in donations to speed up the development and production of tests, vaccines and other treatments, part of its ACT accelerator plan to pool resources.

S. China Sea rights should be rooted in UN treaty: ASEAN

Bloc strengthens assertions vis-a-vis China's claims

ASSOCIATED PRESS
MANILA

Southeast Asian leaders said a 1982 UN oceans treaty should be the basis of sovereign rights and entitlements in the South China Sea, in one of their strongest remarks opposing China's claim to virtually the entire disputed waters on historical grounds.

The leaders of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations took the position in a statement issued by Vietnam on Saturday on behalf of the 10-nation bloc. ASEAN leaders held their annual summit by video on Friday, with the COVID-19 pandemic and the long-raging territorial disputes high on the agenda. "We reaffirmed that



Vietnamese Prime Minister Nguyen Xuan Phuc speaking at the summit on Friday. ■ AP

the 1982 UNCLOS is the basis for determining maritime entitlements, sovereign rights, jurisdiction and legitimate interests over maritime zones," the ASEAN statement said.

The leaders were referring to the United Nations Convention on the Law of

U.S. imposes visa curbs on Chinese officials

However, it does not name them

REUTERS
WASHINGTON/HONG KONG

U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said on Friday Washington was imposing visa restrictions on Chinese officials responsible for restricting freedoms in Hong Kong, but he did not name any of those targeted. The move comes ahead of a three-day meeting of China's Parliament from Sunday expected to enact new national security legislation for Hong Kong that has alarmed foreign governments and democracy activists.

The U.S. visa restrictions apply to "current and former" Chinese Communist Party officials "believed to be responsible for, or complicit in, undermining Hong Kong's high degree of autonomy," Mr. Pompeo said, without naming them.



A protest outside the U.S. Consulate in Hong Kong on Friday. ■ AFP

Also, on Saturday, the Hong Kong police department on Saturday denied permission for an annual march in the former British colony on July 1 to mark the anniversary of the city's 1997 return to China, the organiser and the police said in separate statements.

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On its site, even as Twitter has attached fact checks and warnings to the same content on its service. Mark Zuckerberg, Facebook's chief executive, has said that he believes in supporting free speech and that posts from political leaders should not be policed because they are in the public's interest to view and read. But critics have said Mr. Zuckerberg is simply allowing inaccurate or inflammatory posts from Mr. Trump to remain unaltered.

Facebook said it would attach labels to all posts across its network that discuss the subject of voting, in a move intended to hamper any disenfranchisement of voters in the November election. The labels will direct users to accurate voting information, the company said.

Facebook to add labels to contextualise some posts

This comes after the company faced pull-out by advertisers over its hate speech policies



The Facebook campus in Menlo Park, California, U.S. ■ NYT

an important political figure, such as President Donald Trump, will get a label saying it was deemed "newsworthy" enough to remain, the company said. Facebook has been trying to deal with its role in spreading disinformation and divisive content. The Silicon Valley company has been under fire for allowing inaccurate or inflammatory posts from Mr. Trump to remain unaltered.

on its site, even as Twitter has attached fact checks and warnings to the same content on its service. Mark Zuckerberg, Facebook's chief executive, has said that he believes in supporting free speech and that posts from political leaders should not be policed because they are in the public's interest to view and read. But critics have said Mr. Zuckerberg is simply allowing inaccurate or inflammatory posts from Mr. Trump to remain unaltered.

the maker of Levi's and Dockers clothing. On Thursday, Verizon also said it was pausing its advertising on Facebook.

Warning by advertisers

In recent weeks, Facebook has faced increasing opposition to its position on hateful speech from one of its most important constituents: advertisers, which generate the bulk of its \$70.7 billion in annual revenue. Brands like Eddie Bauer, Ben & Jerry's and Magnolia Pictures have announced that they will cease buying advertising on Facebook until it reconsiders its stance.

On Friday, more companies said they would pull back from advertising on Facebook because of hateful speech remaining on the site. They included Unilever, the British-Dutch maker of consumer goods and one of Facebook's largest advertisers; Coca-Cola, which is another big advertiser on social media; and Levi Strauss,

for posts on voting, the company said it would attach links to what Facebook calls its "voter information center," an initiative it has pushed in recent weeks to provide users with more data on elections. ■ NY TIMES

U.K. must accept weaker economic ties with EU

Merkel hardens tone on future relations

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
FRANKFURT AM MAIN

Britain will have to "accept the consequences" of having weaker economic ties with the European Union (EU) because of Brexit, German Chancellor Angela Merkel said on Saturday. Ms. Merkel hardened the tone from Berlin as Germany and its EU partners strive to draw up an agreement on future relations between Brussels and London after Britain's departure.

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson wants to be able to define the scope of those relations but "thereafter he will of course have to accept the consequences – that is, an economy less tightly linked" with its neighbours, Ms. Merkel said in an interview with the Europa newspaper alliance.

After leaving the EU, Britain and Brussels have been



working on establishing new trade links to come into force once a post-exit transition period expires at year's end. Germany is meanwhile to take over the EU's rotating presidency for six months from July 1. "We must get away from the idea that it is we who define what the United Kingdom may wish," indicated Ms. Merkel. "The United Kingdom defines and we, as the EU27, make an appropriate response," said Ms. Merkel.

ELSEWHERE



Michael Martin named
Ireland's coalition PM
DUBLIN

Ireland's Parliament picked veteran Opposition leader Michael Martin as Prime Minister on Saturday to head a coalition. Under a pact, Mr. Martin is expected to step aside half way through the five-year term to allow outgoing Prime Minister Leo Varadkar to return to the post. ■ REUTERS

Mahathir backs new candidate for PM

Former Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad has thrown his support behind the Chief Minister of the Borneon State of Sabah as candidate to lead the country. Mr. Mahathir said supporters and allies had unanimously agreed at a meeting on Thursday to nominate Shafee Apdal as next Prime Minister. ■ REUTERS

CM

MC-CHE

Ashok Leyland to focus on exports, e-buses

Commercial vehicle major to unveil next generation light truck platform Phoenix in September

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI

Ashok Leyland Ltd. (ALL), the Hindu Group's flagship company, will give more thrust to exports and electric buses, expanding its light commercial vehicle (LCV) portfolio and introducing its next generation light truck platform Phoenix in September, a top official said.

"We have an unshakable vision of being one among the top global commercial vehicle players through differentiated products and solutions," said Vipin Sondhi, MD and CEO. "That vision remains unchanged. Therefore, we have to expand beyond the geographies of the country. We have a presence in the Middle East and some parts of Africa. We are going to intensify it," Mr. Sondhi added.

"Over a five-year period, international operations will be a focus area. This, we will enable through left-hand drive (LHD) and right-hand drive (RHD). Phoenix is



Ashok Leyland's electric buses are plying in Chennai and Ahmedabad, said Vipin Sondhi.

M. KARUNAKARAN

both. The AVTR, a modular truck platform, is also design-protected to do LHD as well. We are preparing ourselves to gear up for an empathetic assessment of international operations. We had virtual meetings with major dealerships in SAARC, Middle East and African countries. We will strengthen our operations as we go," Mr. Sondhi said.

On the electric bus, he said it was plying in Ahmedabad and Chennai. ALL would keep the e-bus programme

alive by working on technologies. Over a five-year period, it would bolster its expansion into international markets.

While predicting that the forthcoming quarters would augur well for ALL, he said: "We have the right products and an engaged and motivated dealership network with a strong supplier base. What we have to ensure is that we come out strongly in quarter four so that we spring forward in FY22."

Mr. Sondhi expects demand for trucks to rise once the government relaxes lockdown restrictions.

Private family matter

Asked about the litigation between the Hinduja brothers and its potential impact on ALL's operations, he said: "As far as businesses are concerned, these are managed professionally. At Ashok Leyland, we have seven independent directors on our board. The matter is a private family matter, which is

being addressed by the family."

On the import of components or spares from China, he said ALL was not really dependent on China.

Gopal Mahadevan, chief financial officer, said that while the company had planned a capital expenditure of ₹1,317 crore last year, actual spending was scaled down to ₹1,227 crore.

During the current fiscal, ALL had almost completed its major capital expenditure, which included the Phoenix and BS VI initiatives.

Some amount would be invested in residual capacity this year. The exact numbers would be divulged in the second quarter, Mr. Mahadevan said.

ALL also expects more defence business from the government, he added.

Mr. Mahadevan said that ALL had net debt of ₹2,050 crore as of March 31, 2020. The company had no plans for raising fresh capital, the CFO added.

Carlyle to buy 20% Piramal Pharma stake

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI

The Carlyle Group's CA Clover Intermediate II Investments has agreed to buy a 20% stake in Piramal Pharma Ltd., a wholly owned subsidiary of Piramal Enterprises Ltd. (PEL), for \$490 million (₹3,700 crore).

Based on milestone achievements, Piramal Pharma will be paid an additional \$70 million. The transaction is expected to close in 2020.

The transaction values PEL's pharma business at an enterprise value of \$2,775 million with an upside component of up to \$360 million depending on the company's FY21 performance.

The pharma business would be hived off as a separate company and listed.

The funds infusion would provide a "war chest" for the next phase of strategy, PEL Chairman Ajay Piramal said.

IRDAI frames COVID-19 health cover norms

Sets July 10 for insurers to unveil policy

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD

A standard, indemnity-based health insurance cover for COVID-19 or a policy reimbursing the cost of the treatment, up to the sum insured, including on home-care and AYUSH treatment, will be offered by all health insurers on or before July 10. The product, to be called Corona Kavach Policy, followed by the name of the insurance company, will be an individual health policy, with an option to cover the family members. The minimum sum insured will be ₹50,000 and the maximum limit ₹5 lakh.

Healthcare workers will get 5% discount on the premium. The tenure will be three-and-a-half months, six-and-a-half months, and nine-and-a-half months, including the waiting period. The mode of premium payment is single and no geographic location/zone-

based pricing is allowed. The cost of treatment towards any co-morbid condition, including pre-existing comorbid conditions, along with the treatment for COVID-19, will have to be covered by the policy, according to IRDAI.

Under the base cover, COVID-19 hospitalisation expenses will be covered, including PPE kit. Expenses on hospitalisation for a minimum of 24 hours as also those related to ICU/ICCU expenses will be admissible. IRDAI also urged all insurers, including life insurers, to offer by July 10, an individual COVID-19-specific standard benefit-based health policy under which a lump-sum benefit equal to 100% of the sum insured will be payable on "positive diagnosis of COVID, requiring hospitalisation for a minimum continuous period of 72 hours." On payment of 100% sum insured, the policy will get terminated.

RBI extends borrowing time for banks

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MUMBAI

Amid the ongoing economic woes created by the coronavirus pandemic, the RBI has decided to extend the enhanced borrowing facility provided to banks to meet liquidity shortages, till September 30.

The RBI, as a temporary measure, had increased the borrowing limit of scheduled banks under the marginal standing facility (MSF) scheme from 2% to 3% of their Net Demand and Time Liabilities (NDTL) with effect from March 27, 2020. Under the MSF, banks can borrow overnight funds at their discretion by dipping into the Statutory Liquidity Ratio (SLR). This relaxation, which was granted till June 30, 2020, has now been extended till September 30.

"On a review, it has now been decided to extend this enhanced limit till September 30, 2020," the RBI said in a circular.

Azim Premji, wife move SC over 'mischievous' complaint

Plaint alleges corruption in 3 firms' merger with Group entity

KRISHNADAS RAJAGOPAL
NEW DELHI

Azim H. Premji, former chairman and managing director of Wipro, and his wife have moved the Supreme Court against the Karnataka High Court's refusal to quash a trial court summons based on a "mischievous" private complaint alleging breach of trust and corruption in the merger of three companies with an Azim Premji Group company.

The petition, filed through advocate Mahesh Agarwal, said Napean, Regal and Vidya are private companies and have been promoted, owned and controlled by the Azim Premji Group since their inception in 1974. It submitted that Hasham, the company with which the three were merged in 2015, is also part of the Azim Premji Group.

"The only assets of each of these companies are the shares held in other two



Azim Premji

the companies were interlocked after 1980.

Mr. Premji said the three companies were united in accordance with the Companies Act.

The High Court had sanctioned the Scheme of Amalgamation after all procedures were followed, including notice to the Regional Director of the Ministry of Corporate Affairs and the Official Liquidator. Neither the trial court nor the High Court conducted any inquiry or asked for the Scheme of Amalgamation to be placed on record.

The "malafide" criminal complaints filed by India Awake for Transparency in 2017 said the three companies "belonged to nobody and therefore belonged to the government". Mr. Premji said the accusation was mischievous.

Mr. Premji said the complaints were motivated by personal vendetta.

More than 90% of sellers back: Flipkart

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

Walmart-owned Flipkart on Saturday said it has enabled more than 90% of its sellers to resume business on the platform since April. The e-commerce major noted that it had seen a 125% increase in new sellers signing up on the platform in comparison to its existing seller base for a period of April-June 2020.

The impact of the pandemic has urged businesses across the country to rethink their usual mode of operating and identify newer ways to function. Local MSMEs across the nation have realised the true value of e-commerce that enables them to stay connected with millions of customers," Flipkart said in a statement.

U.P., Maharashtra, West Bengal and Tamil Nadu were the top states where local MSMEs had shown maximum interest in taking their businesses online.

TII to reduce dependence on auto sector

N. ANAND
CHENNAI

Tube Investments of India Ltd., the flagship company of Murugappa Group, is planning to reduce its dependency on the auto sector as it affects topline growth due to its cyclical nature, said a top executive.

"Over a three-to-five-year time-frame, there is a lot of opportunity for TII in the present mix of business and some of the businesses that we intend to get TII into in the future," managing director A. Vellayan Subbiah said. "Growth will have to come from both organic and potentially inorganic means over that time period," he added.

In a communication to shareholders, he said: "We are focusing on the set of businesses that should hopefully reduce our dependence on the auto sector as its cyclicity affects performance year-to-year in terms of topline growth," he added.

TI is a leading manufacturer of products for major industries such as automotive, railway, construction, mining and agriculture.

Mr. Subbiah said TI would focus on three streams of opportunities – growth in existing product portfolio driven by new opportunities in scooters and the shift to BS-VI norms, innovative product lines for new markets, and growth from large diameter tubular products.

INTERVIEW | HARKIRAT SINGH

'Online is the future though India is still a touch-and-feel market'

With COVID-19, markets will be less crowded, says Aero Club's MD

N. ANAND

naturally led to deferment of plans as well as investments. We have a certain revision of strategies that we plan to put into action slowly and steadily to regain the momentum we are anticipating for our brand in this year, as much as possible.

Any pay cuts or layoffs in the offing?

Every business has its own cyclical ups and down and we are proud to sail through; the situation is very tricky and beyond anyone's control at this moment in time. Our team is our backbone and we have always supported them whatever may be the scenario and thus things like layoffs have not been on the cards. However, we have revised the number of working hours of our staff corresponding to the work load. As that picks up in line with the governmental policies, things will start coming back to normal.

You had been laying

thrust on online. What portion of your income comes from that?

Online is the future and that has been learnt and understood in the last 5-7 years of

the online boom that the world has seen. It's comfortable to receive the products of your choice at your home at a desired time slot, though India is still a touch-and-feel market. While online has been growing, over 80% of our revenues are still from our offline model. However, with COVID-19, things are expected to change since markets will be less crowded. Retail therapy is almost inevitable and thus, online buying is expected to grow further especially till the pandemic is controlled.

How about your expansion plans?

Over the years, Woodland has been consistent in steadily expanding its footprint in the domestic as well as international markets though things suddenly changed with COVID-19. While lockdown is being re-

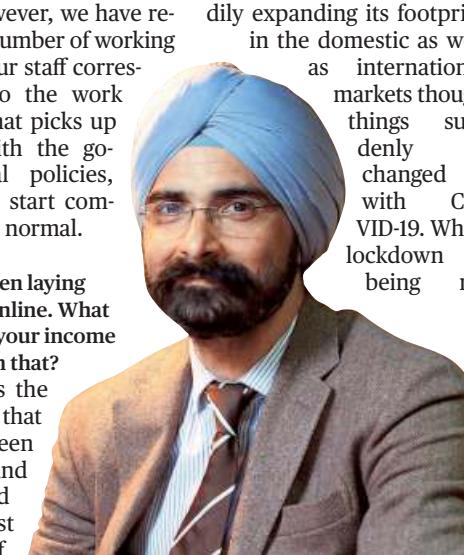
lieved and a few markets are opening, we intend to gain momentum in due course. This year will be more to consolidate and to regain momentum before we realign our expansion plans.

What has been the revenue for FY20 and what is expected in FY21?

We closed FY20 with almost ₹1,300 crore against ₹1,250 crore for FY19 when all of a sudden COVID-19 struck, halting the entire world. We are confident that the businesses will regain momentum in the next 2-3 months (of course depending on how early we are able to control/eradicate COVID-19) and we can probably expect a growth journey of 10-15%. About 60% of FY19's turnover came from footwear and the remaining from apparel and accessories.

How long do you expect it will take for the market to rebound?

It is difficult to clearly state this. As sentiments become more positive, we are all expecting it to regain momentum soon. As you already know, online sales have begun and certain retail outlets too have started operations, so hopefully soon we should start seeing a good response amid the new normal era.



Infosys's resilience will help it tide over pandemic: Nilekani

No big hit as 60% of U.S. workforce visa-independent: CEO

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
BENGALURU

Infosys is confident that the significant investments made to make the company more resilient and agile would help it overcome the fallout from the global economic crisis triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic, Chairman Nandan Nilekani told shareholders on Saturday.

During the current fiscal, ALL had almost completed its major capital expenditure, which included the Phoenix and BS VI initiatives.

Combining the scale, brand,

and relationships of a large company with the speed, responsiveness, and agility of a start-up, we are confident of tiding through this global crisis," asserted Mr. Nilekani.

These investments have positioned us very well and this is demonstrated in the way we are responding to the COVID-19 pandemic. Combining the scale, brand, and relationships of a large company with the speed, responsiveness, and agility of a start-up, we are confident of tiding through this global crisis," asserted Mr. Nilekani.

Observing that clients were dealing with several challenges, Mr. Nilekani said retailers had been hit hard in the non-grocery, apparel, lifestyle and fashion sections. Travel and hospitality had also greatly slumped.

In its effort to help clients cope, Infosys had been building more flexible supply chains to urgently enhance e-commerce offerings and supporting new models



Nandan Nilekani

of employee experience "to accelerate recovery and resilience".

The Board recommended a final dividend of ₹9.5 per share, Mr. Nilekani said.

Some negative impact

In the near term, Infosys expects "some overall negative impact" from the disruptions caused by the pandemic, CEO and MD Salil Parekh told shareholders. "But in the medium to long term, we see opportunities for clients as they fast-track their digital transformation journey and consolidation of vendors."

He also allayed fears over the Trump administration's visa curbs. "We have over 60% of our employees who are independent of any visa situation," Mr. Parekh said.

The IT firm said that it had enabled 93% of its more than 2.4 lakh employees, across 46 countries, to work from home in just a few weeks.

Azim Premji, wife move SC over 'mischievous' complaint

Plaint alleges corruption in 3 firms' merger with Group entity

KRISHNADAS RAJAGOPAL
NEW DELHI

Azim H. Premji, former chairman and managing director of Wipro, and his wife have moved the Supreme Court against the Karnataka High Court's refusal to quash a trial court summons based on a "mischievous" private complaint alleging breach of trust and corruption in the merger of three companies with an Azim Premji Group company.

The petition, filed through advocate Mahesh Agarwal, said Napean, Regal and Vidya are private companies and have been promoted, owned and controlled by the Azim Premji Group since their inception in 1974. It submitted that Hasham, the company with which the three were merged in 2015, is also part of the Azim Premji Group.

"The only assets of each of these companies are the shares held in other two

companies and the shareholding in Wipro Ltd. (an Azim Premji Group company) – even these assets were transferred by the Azim Premji Group to the company from time to time. No other investment has been made by any other third person in the said companies," the petitioners said.

The petitioners were directors in the three companies until the date of merger. The control and management of Napean, Regal and Vidya remained with Mr. Premji, though the shares of

the companies were interlocked after 1980.

Mr. Premji said the three companies were united in accordance with the Companies Act.

The High Court had sanctioned the Scheme of Amalgamation after all procedures were followed, including notice to the Regional Director of the Ministry of Corporate Affairs and the Official Liquidator. Neither the trial court nor the High Court conducted any inquiry or asked for the Scheme of Amalgamation to be placed on record.

The "malafide" criminal complaints filed by India Awake for Transparency in 2017 said the three companies "belonged to nobody and therefore belonged to the government". Mr. Premji said the accusation was mischievous.

SNAPSHOTS



Dolphin peers

Dolphins are known to use a technique called shelling to capture prey. In this process, they trap small fish into empty shells. A new study published in *Current Biology* shows that they learn such tool-use from their peers - members of their own generation - and not just from their mothers as was believed earlier. The finding has implications for how dolphins adapt to changing environments.



Warm beginning

A new study published in *Nature Geoscience* suggests that dwarf planet Pluto and other large objects in the Kuiper belt may have started off with liquid oceans which slowly froze over time. The plate tectonics of Pluto and hence its surface features would be different if it initially had a "cold start" or a "hot start". Images of Pluto's surface will help decide between these scenarios.

Novel coronavirus infection might trigger type-1 diabetes

In type-1 diabetes, the body's immune system destroys the beta cells that produce insulin

R. PRASAD

Diabetes poses one of the key risk factors for developing severe COVID-19, and chances of dying are elevated in people with diabetes. Now, there is growing evidence that novel coronavirus might actually be triggering diabetes in some people who have so far remained free of it. These patients typically develop type-1 diabetes. The virus seems to be causing diabetes spontaneously in people.

These patients typically develop type-1 diabetes, which is caused when the body's immune system plays rogue and begins to attack and destroy the beta cells, which produce the hormone insulin in the pancreas. With the destruction of beta cells, the amount of insulin produced is reduced, and hence, the ability of the body to control blood sugar is compromised leading to type-1 diabetes.

The 2002 SARS coronavirus, too, caused acute-onset diabetes in patients. Like the 2002 SARS coronavirus, the SARS-CoV-2 virus, too, binds to ACE2 receptors that are found on many organs involved in controlling blood sugar, including the liver and pancreatic beta cells, and subsequently infects the cells in the organs.

Two-way relationship

In a letter published in *The New England Journal of Medicine*, the researchers write: "There is a bidirectional relationship between COVID-19



Growing evidence: The novel coronavirus might actually be triggering diabetes in some people who have so far remained free of it. ■ GETTY IMAGES

and diabetes. On the one hand, diabetes is associated with an increased risk of severe COVID-19. On the other hand, new-onset diabetes and severe metabolic complications of preexisting diabetes... have been observed in patients with COVID-19."

Permanent or transient

However, more evidence is needed to conclusively prove that COVID-19 indeed causes type-1 diabetes. It is also not clear if the acute-onset diabetes in COVID-19 patients will be permanent or transient. The is no clarity whether people who are borderline type-2 develop the disease.

The COVID-19 patients who develop

diabetes have extremely high levels of blood sugar and ketones. When there is insufficient insulin produced, breaking down the sugar present in the blood is compromised leading to high levels of sugar. At the same time, the body begins to turn to alternative sources of fuel, which in this case are ketones. A study found 42 of 658 patients presented with ketosis on admission. Patients with ketosis were younger (median age 47). Ketosis increased the length of hospital stay and mortality, the researchers found.

Using human pluripotent stem cells, researchers grew miniature liver and pancreas and found that both the organs were permissive to SARS-CoV-2

infection. In particular, they found the pancreatic beta cells were infected by coronavirus. ACE2 is expressed in human adult alpha and beta cells. While the beta cells produce insulin which reduces the sugar level in the blood, the alpha cells produce glucagon, which increases the blood sugar. A fine balance between the two helps maintain the blood sugar level.

Tested in mice

The researchers transplanted the miniature pancreatic endocrine cells produced using human stem cells into mice. Two months later, they examined the xenografted pancreas and found ACE2 receptors on beta and alpha cells. When the mice were infected with coronavirus, they found the beta cells were infected by the virus. Thus the virus is capable of damaging the cells that control blood sugar thus triggering acute-onset of type-1 diabetes.

According to *Nature News*, a global database to collect information on people with COVID-19 and high blood-sugar levels who previously do not have a history of elevated blood sugar levels has been initiated. "The researchers hope to use the cases to understand whether SARS-CoV-2 can induce type 1 diabetes or a new form of the disease," *Nature News* says. Researchers want to use the database to understand if the acute-onset diabetes is permanent and people who are borderline type-2 develop the disease.



Digital resource: A digital chest x-ray could be deployed along with AI-based tools for both TB and COVID-19 detection. ■ GETTY IMAGES

TB during COVID-19

Public TB services must be resumed to find missed patients

SHIBU VIJAYAN & MADHUKAR PAI

India has the highest burden of tuberculosis (TB) in the world. Even as the government was pushing to end TB by 2025, the COVID-19 pandemic has caused a massive disruption in TB services. TB case notifications across India have dropped by over 50% since March, with an estimated 3,00,000 missed case notifications (until May 30). This is worrisome, since undiagnosed TB can worsen patient outcomes and increase transmission in the community.

As the lockdown ends, we will see a big surge in people seeking care with TB and COVID-19 symptoms. However, people will struggle to get care because the public sector is still dealing with the pandemic, while the private sector is not functioning at normal capacity or is reluctant to manage people with fever and cough.

To find the missed TB patients, we will need to find ways to rapidly resume public TB services, integrate TB and Covid-19 testing and be creative about engaging the private health sector to augment public TB services.

It is critical for the National TB Elimination Programme to resume routine TB services, which include diagnostic services, such as microscopy and rapid molecular testing, as well as drug-susceptibility testing.

Dual testing

Since fever and cough are symptoms of both TB and COVID-19, simultaneous screening and testing can be encouraged. Thankfully, India has access to three existing technologies that permit dual testing for both infections.

The first is the digital chest x-ray (CXR), which could be deployed along with artificial intelligence (AI) based tools for both TB and COVID-19. AI-based algorithms are now available that obviate the need for trained radiologists to read the x-rays. If a CXR is suggestive for TB on the AI algorithm, then a confirmatory test such as GeneXpert can be done to confirm TB and also detect drug-resistance. One such AI-enabled screening tool is called qXR, developed by Qure.ai, an Indian company. Several studies show accuracy that is comparable or better than human radiologists.

The screening tool, qXR, has now added the capability of detecting signs of COVID-19 from the x-rays images. It is being deployed in some sites in Mumbai with promising preliminary results. It is important to validate the use of qXR for simultaneous screening for both diseases for wider use.

Based on an estimated 3,00,000 missed cases during the national lockdown, around 10,50,000 CXR (assuming 70% of these are pulmonary TB cases and 5 CXRs are needed to detect one patient with pulmonary TB) will be required for detecting TB cases. This is an overwhelming figure for any health system especially during a pandemic. However, a dynamic partnership with 80,000 licensed diagnostic radiology facilities will help combat this.

CXR screening will require confirmatory testing for both diseases, and molecular testing is the most accurate and rapid option. There are two technologies already in use in India that could be leveraged for simultaneous testing of sputum samples for both infections.

One is called GeneXpert. India has over 1,100 of these systems in use. A large number of private labs, too, have this technology. On this platform, TB can be detected using a cartridge called Xpert MTB/RIF and COVID-19 by using the Xpress SARS-CoV2 cartridge.

The second molecular platform is called TrueLab, developed by an Indian company - Molbio Diagnostics. This technology is already being used in some states and in private labs to test for TB using a chip called Truenat MTB. Molbio now has a chip called Truenat Beta CoV that can be used for COVID-19. This chip, along with Xpress SARS-CoV2 cartridge, has been approved by ICMR for emergency use for COVID-19 testing.

Typically, TB testing requires sputum sample. Now, SARS-CoV-2 testing is done using nasopharyngeal swabs, but there is no reason why sputum samples cannot be used, since sputum is generated deeper in the lungs. However, it is important to validate both test molecular platforms for simultaneous testing using the same sputum sample.

All hands on the deck

To detect the missed thousands of TB patients, we need to leverage our best technologies and find ways to integrate testing for both respiratory infections. We need to integrate our public and private health sectors. India needs all hands on the deck, to battle an existing as well as a new killer disease.

With most TB patients seeking diagnosis and treatment in the private sector, the integration of the private sector in the TB care cascade has shown good results. This is evident in the success of the Private Provider Interface Agency (PPIA) model launched in Mumbai by the Government of India, WHO and PATH and the subsequent large scale, pan-India version of it called the JEET (Joint Effort for Elimination of Tuberculosis) project. We need to use the lessons from public-private partnerships in TB to address the growing challenge of providing adequate care for COVID-19.

Shibu Vijayan is a physician and Global TB Technical Director at PATH, Mumbai, India.

Madhukar Pai is a physician and Director of the McGill International TB Centre, Montreal, Canada.

Black hole merges with unusual compact object

This could be the lightest black hole or heaviest neutron star

SHUBASHREE DESIKAN



Puzzling merger: The mass of the primary was about 23.2 solar mass and the secondary was about 2.6 solar mass. ■ ALEX ANDRIK

Sun's mass, having radiated away 0.2 solar masses.

This is unusual on many counts. For one thing, the mass ratio was approximately 1:9. This is the largest disparity in masses that has been observed till now between members of the coalescing pair. While at 23.2 solar masses, the primary is clearly a black hole, the calculated mass of the secondary object puts it in a dubious spot. It is too light to be a black hole and too heavy to be a neutron star, as far as observations go.

"Theoretically, both the maximum mass of neutron star and minimum mass of a black hole will depend on the complex physics at the core of a neutron star, details of supernova explosion a star undergoes at the end of its stellar evolution and so on," says K. G. Arun from Chennai Mathematical Institute, one of the authors of the paper, in an email to *The Hindu*. "Further, the current observational uncertainties cannot confirm or rule out whether there is a 'mass gap' between the maximum mass of the neutron star and the minimum mass of a black hole."

Topic of discussion

There is not much information about the lighter object except for the mass. "Due to the mass asymmetry, it becomes very difficult to detect any signatures of neutron star 'tides' which could have given us insights about the star. So one may be able to invoke exotic possibilities," says Prof. Arun. "It is going to be a very active topic of discussion in the astrophysics community in the coming days," he adds.

Inference from signal

Looking at the signal waveform, it appeared that the primary object in this merger had a mass of about 23.2 times that of the Sun and the smaller, secondary object had a mass of about 2.6 times the solar mass. The pair joined to form a large black hole of mass 25.6 times the

Chennai Mathematical Institute, one of the authors of the paper, in an email to *The Hindu*. "Further, the current observational uncertainties cannot confirm or rule out whether there is a 'mass gap' between the maximum mass of the neutron star and the minimum mass of a black hole."

Study on shells

By studying microscopic zooplankton called foraminifera, the team had published a paper in 2019 which first found evidence from the past of an Indian Ocean El Niño. Foraminifera build a calcium carbonate shell, and studying these can tell us about the properties of the water. The team measured multiple individual shells of foraminifera from ocean sediment cores and reconstructed the sea

When the Indian Ocean's ancient climate patterns return

Formations like the El Niño of the Pacific Ocean could emerge

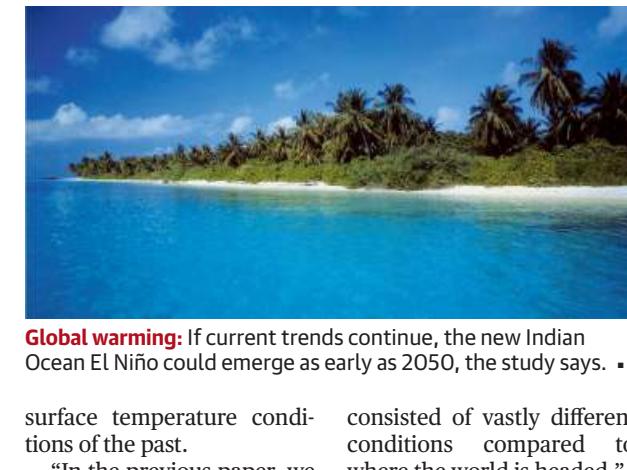
ASWATHI PACHA

About 19,000-21,000 years ago, ice-sheets covered North America and Eurasia, and sea-levels were much lower. This period, the peak of ice age conditions, is called the Last Glacial Maximum. Researchers analysed simulations of this past climate and predicted that the ongoing climate change could reawaken an ancient climate pattern of the Indian Ocean.

They find that this could be similar to the El Niño phenomenon of the Pacific Ocean bringing more frequent and devastating floods and drought to several densely populated countries around the Indian Ocean region. If current warming trends continue, this new Indian Ocean El Niño could emerge as early as 2050. The results were published in *Science Advances*.

Lessons to learn

He explains that there are many lessons to be learnt from this cooler period about our warmer future, "even though the Last Glacial Maximum



Global warming: If current trends continue, the new Indian Ocean El Niño could emerge as early as 2050, the study says. ■

surface temperature conditions of the past.

"In the previous paper, we argued for the existence of an 'Indian Ocean El Niño' during the Last Glacial Maximum. We suggest that the Indian Ocean has the capacity to harbour much larger climate variability than observed during the last few decades or a century," writes co-author Kaustubh Thirumalai, from the Department of Geosciences at the University of Arizona in an email to *The Hindu*. "In this paper, we argue that this climate variability in the Indian Ocean can arise under increased greenhouse gas forcing of global climate change."

Vital

He explains that there are many lessons to be learnt from this cooler period about our warmer future, "even though the Last Glacial Maximum

consisted of vastly different conditions compared to where the world is headed."

Prof. Thirumalai adds: "As it is, under present-day conditions, changes in the Indian Ocean Dipole and the El Niño-Southern Oscillation strongly affect Indian Monsoon variability from year to year. If the hypothesised 'equatorial mode' emerges in the near future, it will pose another source of uncertainty in rainfall prediction and will likely amplify swings in monsoon rainfall."

The paper adds that it could bring more frequent droughts to East Africa and southern India and increased rainfall over Indonesia. The team warns that further work is needed to accurately assess this new mode, particularly under lower-emission scenarios and taking into account past climatic states other than the Last Glacial Maximum.

To wear or not to wear a mask: a public health message disaster

R. PRASAD

If there is a single message delivered by leading institutions that can be considered as a disaster in public health messaging especially during a pandemic, then it is the advice to people not to wear a face mask. Especially during a pandemic, any non-pharmaceutical measure that cuts the transmission risk even by only a small percentage should have still been encouraged.

If acute shortage of masks for healthcare workers was the reason why the U.S. Surgeon General did not want the public to use a mask, the lack of community spread in the U.S. prompted the Centre for Disease Control (CDC) to discourage people from wearing it. For the World Health Organization, it was the lack of scientific evidence that masks can prevent coronavirus

spread which prompted it to dissuade people from wearing a mask.

MESSAGES URGING PEOPLE NOT TO WEAR A MASK STARTED IN EARLY FEBRUARY WHEN THE CDC DIRECTOR ROBERT R. REDFIELD IN A TWEET ON FEBRUARY 5 SAID: "CDC DOES NOT CURRENTLY RECOMMEND THE USE OF FACE-MASKS TO HELP PREVENT NOVEL CORONAVIRUS. 2019nCoV IS NOT SPREADING IN COMMUNITIES IN THE US..."

CDC and WHO

On February 28, CDC tweeted: "CDC does not currently recommend the use of face-masks to help prevent novel coronavirus. 2019nCoV is not spreading in communities in the US..."

TAKE EVERYDAY PREVENTIVE ACTIONS... TO HELP SLOW THE SPREAD OF ILLNESS"

FOR THE 29TH, THE VERY NEXT DAY AFTER CDC'S TWEET, THE U.S. SURGEON GENERAL DR. JEROME ADAMS WEIGHED IN ON



Vital: Measures to cut the spread even minimally should have been encouraged. ■ GETTY IMAGES

Unscientific approach

A paper published on June 11 in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences (PNAS)* tried to overcompensate by espousing the goodness of mask wearing through a completely unscientific approach.

WHILE THE WORLD MEDIA AMPLIFIED THE ADVANTAGES OF WEARING A MASK AS PROJECTED BY THE PAPER, SCIENTISTS WERE TEARING UP THE STUDY. NOW, 35 SCIENTISTS HAVE WRITTEN

TEN TO THE JOURNAL DEMANDING THE PAPER TO BE RETRACTED.

THE STUDY HAD SUPPOSEDLY ANALYSED THE EFFECTS OF MITIGATION MEASURES IN WUHAN, ITALY AND NEW YORK CITY. BESIDES A FEW FACTUALLY WRONG DATA AND ASSUMPTIONS USED TO SUPPORT THEIR WORK, THE PAPER HAS "SERIOUS METHODOLOGICAL ERRORS".

FROM THE FACT THAT ITALY MADE FACE-MASK COMPULSORY ON APRIL 6 AND NEW YORK CITY ON APRIL 17, THE AUTHORS CONCLUDE THAT IT REDUCED THE NUMBER OF CASES BY OVER 78,000 BETWEEN APRIL 6 AND MAY 9 IN ITALY AND OVER 66,000 IN NEW YORK CITY FROM APRIL 17 TO MAY 9.

Call for retraction

THE SCIENTISTS CALLING FOR THE RETRACTION SAY THAT THE AUTHORS HAVE NOT factored in the "lag

BETWEEN CHANGES IN DISEASE TRANSMISSION AND CHANGES IN REPORTED CASE COUNTS". WITH THE INCUBATION PERIOD LASTING

FIVE-SEVEN DAYS, AND AT TIMES UP TO 14 DAYS, AND ANOTHER FIVE TO 10 DAYS FOR SYMPTOMS TO SHOW UP AND TESTING TO BE CARRIED OUT, THE EFFECT OF MASK IN REDUCING CASES IS EXTREMELY DIFFICULT TO TEASE OUT. THE SCIENTISTS ALSO SAY ONLY SIMPLE LINEAR REGRESSION MODELS HAVE BEEN USED AND NO "MEASURES OF STATISTICAL UNCERTAINTY ARE MEASURED OR PRESENTED". THIS BECOMES PARTICULARLY EGREGIOUS AS THE ANALYSIS IS BASED ON ONLY THREE REGIONS.



M.CHE-CHE



A picture by Topical Press Agency/Getty Images, captioned September 26, 1925: "Moplah prisoners go to trial at Calicut on the Malabar Coast in India's south-western state of Kerala, charged with agitation against British rule in India." ■ GETTY IMAGES/WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

1921 and the Malabar Rebellion

Why is there a controversy in Kerala over a new film project on the protagonist of an uprising against the British?

MOHAMED NAZEEF

The story so far: Malayalam film director Aashiq Abu, on June 22, announced a new film project, 'Varyamkunnath Kunhamed Haji', the main protagonist of the Malabar Rebellion of 1921 who was executed by the British. Soon, three more directors, Ibrahim Vengara, P.T. Kunju Muhammed and Ali Akbar, announced their own films on the same historic figure. The announcement of Abu, a Left supporter, sparked a controversy, with Sangh Parivar outfits calling on actor Prithviraj Sukumaran, who is playing the role of Haji, not to accept the role in the film, 'Varyamkunnath'. Akbar, a supporter of the Sangh Parivar, has declared that he will portray the 'real face' of the rebellion. A historical event that occurred a century ago suddenly seems to have acquired contemporary relevance.

Why has Aashiq Abu's film project announced led to protests?

Unlike in 1988 when the late I.V. Sasi directed '1921', a Malayalam movie based on the rebellion, political and communal polarisation in Kerala today has led to protests on social media. Amid criticism of Sangh Parivar leaders and attacks in the social media, Prithviraj wrote on his Facebook page that Haji "stood up against an empire that ruled a quarter of the world". The Hindu Aikya Vedi announced a year-long campaign to counter attempts to "glorify" Haji and other leaders who it said were responsible for atrocities against Hindus in southern parts of the erstwhile Malabar district of Kerala.

Why does the rebellion still stoke passions?

The Malabar Rebellion (also called the Mappila or Moplah Rebellion by the British) broke out in the southern taluks of Malabar in August 1921. By the time the government troops captured Haji in January 1922, the rebellion had fizzled out. It largely took the shape of guerrilla-type attacks on *janmis* (feudal landlords, who were mostly upper caste Hindus) and the police and troops.

Mappilas had been among the victims of oppressive agrarian relations protected by the British. But the political mobilisation of Muslims in the region in the aftermath of the launch of the Khilafat agitation and Gandhi's non-cooperation struggle served as an opportunity for an extremist section to invoke a religious

idiom to express their suffering, while working for a change in the oppressive system of administration. There were excesses on both sides – rebels and government troops. Incidents of murder, looting and forced conversion led many to discredit the uprising as a manifestation of religious bigotry. Moderate Khilafat leaders lamented that the rebellion had alienated the Hindu sympathy.

How did Kunhamed Haji emerge as the leader? Haji, who was one of the three most important rebel leaders, was the face of the rebellion. British officers viewed him as the "most murderous". Born in 1866 in a family with relatives involved in one of the Mappila "outbreaks" or "outrages" in the 19th century, he was familiar with the commemoration of *shaheeds* (martyrs) who fought against the tyranny of landlords and their helpers, mostly upper caste Hindus in the region. There were several such outbreaks in the region during the 19th and early 20th centuries. The main actors of the outbreaks were individuals on suicide missions. The Khilafat movement launched in 1919 provided a fresh stimulus to the grievances of Mappilas. Now their sense of local injustice was sought to be linked with the pan-Islamic sentiments created in the aftermath of the collapse of the Ottoman Empire that rendered the Ottoman caliphate irrelevant. Haji was among those in the Malabar region inspired by the zeal of the agitation. During the rebellion, he led many attacks on individuals, including Muslims, who had been loyal to the British. Some contemporary accounts, however, deny that he favoured conversion of Hindus.

What was the impact of the protests? The rebellion of Mappilas inspired by religious ideology and a conception of an alternative system of administration – a Khilafat government – dealt a blow to the nationalist movement in Malabar. The fanaticism of rebels, foregrounded by the British, fostered communal rift and enmity towards the Congress.

The exaggerated accounts of the rebellion engendered a counter campaign in other parts of the country against 'fanaticism' of Muslims. That said, the traumatic experience of the uprising also persuaded educated sections of the Muslim community in Malabar to chalk out ways to save the community from what they saw as a pathetic situation. The community's stagnation was attributed to religious orthodoxy and ignorance. The thrust of the post-rebellion Muslim reform movement in Malabar was a rigorous campaign against orthodoxy.

How will the U.S. visa ban impact India?

Why was the White House proclamation made? Will the Trump administration's move affect the IT services industry adversely?

NARAYAN LAKSHMAN

The story so far: On June 22, the White House made a proclamation halting the processing and issuance of non-immigrant work visas of several types, with the stated aim of this sweeping policy being to stop foreign workers snagging American jobs, especially at a time of deep economic distress brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic. The order by the Donald Trump administration includes the H-1B visa for skilled workers, a large proportion of which goes to Indian nationals, dependents of the H-1B who are seeking the H4 visa, the H-2B visa issued to seasonal workers in the landscaping and hospitality industries, the L-1 visa for intra-company transfers and their dependents on the L-2 visa, and the J-1 visa for students on work-study summer programmes and related occupations. The important questions on this latest policy shift by Mr. Trump on immigration relate to whether it will muddy the waters of the U.S.-India relationship by adversely impacting Indian IT services exported to the U.S., and whether it has the potential to shore up the flagging U.S. economy and open up more jobs for U.S. persons, or whether it will fail in that goal and yet yield dividends in terms of campaign strategy for the U.S. presidential election on November 3, 2020.

Why is the Trump administration tightening the screws on its immigration policy?

It had earlier instituted a ban on visitors from certain Muslim-majority countries and periodically engaged in rhetoric on building a wall to stop undocumented workers from entering the U.S. from across its southern border. On April 21, the White House announced a 60-day halt in legal migration – effectively a ban on "green card" issuance. The gaping hole in this policy was the fact that the number of jobs purportedly saved from immigrants for U.S. persons was relatively small compared to the number of jobs going to foreign nationals who enter the U.S. on non-immigrant visas. Unemployment claims filed since the novel coronavirus pandemic hit the U.S. economy in March have crossed 40 million. Analysts argued that out of the million or so green cards that the U.S. issues annually, approximately only 358,000 would likely be impacted by the pause in immigration processing.

It appears that the Trump administration has been seized of this fallacy in its immigration policy in this regard, and the proclamation of June 22 is likely to have been a remedial measure to bring non-immigrant work visas under the purview of the ban. The reasoning offered by the White House is that the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has "significantly disrupted Americans' livelihoods", to the extent that the overall unemployment rate in the country nearly quadrupled between February and May 2020 to a little over 13%.

To what extent is the motive behind the visa ban political?

Despite the stated reasoning for the work visa ban, which is to protect U.S. persons from loss of livelihoods to foreign nationals, it is still unclear that tangible economic benefits of this sort can be achieved at this juncture. The reason is that the latest restrictions do not apply to visa-holders who are already within the U.S., or those who are outside the country and have already been issued valid visas. Given that the ban will remain in force until the end of the 2020 calendar year, this implies that U.S. firms or others with U.S. operations who rely on skilled foreign nationals working in the U.S. will be unable to make new hires as long as the ban stands. How many firms are likely to do any hiring at this economically depressed time? How many will do so before the end of the calendar year?



If we assume, as we safely can, that the answer is "negligibly few", then it is hard to see the Trump White House's policy as anything other than a campaign tactic.

What further policies do we expect on the visa ban?

If indeed these moves have been made keeping in mind the imperatives of the 2020 Republican presidential campaign, then that would be signalled by Mr. Trump seeking, in the months ahead, to build political capital in the name of the "America First" mantra – a foregone conclusion given his outspokenness on the subject to date.

The proclamation supplies hints on the likely tenor of this policy plank of Mr. Trump's administration. It noted that between February and April of 2020, "more than 20 million U.S. workers lost their jobs in key industries where employers are currently requesting H-1B and L workers to fill positions", noting that similar or higher numbers could be found in the other visa categories included in the proclamation.

Yet, in the first instance, it is not his Democratic rival in the election, former Vice-President Joe Biden, who will play spoiler to Mr. Trump's visa ban plans. It is the backlash from America Inc., the employers of likely millions of non-immigrant foreign workers, from Wall Street to Silicon Valley, that could bring his dreams crashing to the ground, and fast.

Google CEO Sundar Pichai wasted little time in responding to Mr. Trump's latest visa proclamation tweeting, "Immigration has contributed immensely to America's economic success, making it a global leader in tech, and also Google the company it is today. Disappointed by today's proclamation – we'll continue to stand with immigrants and work to expand opportunity for all."

Elon Musk, SpaceX founder and Tesla CEO, and Apple CEO Tim Cook, posted similar messages on social media.

As more captains of industry chime in, the momentum of lobbying behind closed doors, and lawsuits filed by civil liberties groups, to either get the ban revoked or to

strengthen Mr. Biden's hand will likely build up fast. Corporate America, already hit by the economic downturn since the pandemic struck, can hardly afford to accept even more losses as the President undermines the base of their work force.

Will Indian corporations be hit?

The prospects of Indian IT majors building up their order books as they limp back through an economic recovery in India are, in the interim, likely to be seriously undermined by this move. What is more, this may come at a crucial inflection point for the Indian economy, even as restrictions on the movement of people and goods slowly lift after India passes its peak viral case numbers, thus leading to a knock-on effect from IT to other sectors.

India's IT services exports to the U.S., which depend significantly on the H-1B visa, have been an important constituent element of bilateral economic trade. U.S. imports of services from India were an estimated \$29.6 billion in 2018, 4.9% more than in 2017, and 134% greater than 2008 levels, according to the U.S. Trade Representative. The major services exports from India to the U.S. are in the telecommunications, computer and information services, research and development, and travel sectors.

Until now, the U.S. issued 85,000 H-1B visas annually, of which 20,000 went to graduate students and 65,000 to private sector applicants, and Indian nationals would garner approximately 70% of these. Now the Migration Policy Institute has been cited predicting that up to 219,000 workers would be blocked as a result of Mr. Trump's proclamation.

What is the Indian government saying?

Its response has so far been muted, limited to highlighting the importance of highly-skilled Indian professionals to imparting a competitive edge to the U.S. economy.

Nevertheless, that the high-skilled non-immigrant visa ban is a double-edged sword is amply demonstrated by the fact that the unemployment rate in the "Professional and Business Services" super-sector, which includes IT services, unemployment actually dropped between April and May 2020, and there remained almost 950,000 job openings in this sector nationwide despite the sharp hike in overall unemployment filings.

If there is one assumption of the Trump administration's immigration policies that is most likely to fail, it is that there are sufficient numbers of U.S. persons with the requisite skill set to perform the jobs that Mr. Trump is "protecting" for them.

Why is there a stress on randomised controlled trials?

What due process must be followed in the appraisal of any drug, especially those for COVID-19?

RAMYA KANNAN

The story so far: On June 23, the claim by Patanjali Ayurved [Haridwar, Uttarakhand] that its preparations, 'Coronil' and 'Swasari', would cure COVID-19 in only seven days, was met with robust disbelief in some quarters, even as it hogged media space soon after the announcement. Ramdev, the yoga guru, and who is associated with the company, claimed that a randomised controlled trial (RCT) among COVID-19 positive patients had proved favourable results. The government, through the Ministry of AYUSH (Ayurveda, Yoga & Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha and Homoeopathy) responding a short while later, told the company to stop advertising the drug as a cure for COVID-19, pointing out that it would attract provisions of Drugs and Magic Remedies (Objectionable Advertisements) Act, 1954.

What has the government said?

The Ministry, in a statement (<https://bit.ly/2Zgbfco>), said the details of the study were not known to it and it has asked Patanjali Ayurved "to provide at the earliest details of the name and composition of the medicines being claimed for COVID treatment; site(s)/hospital(s), where the research study was conducted for COVID-19; protocol, sample size, Institutional Ethics Committee clearance, CTRI registration and results data of the study (ies) and stop advertising/publicizing such claims till the issue is duly examined". The Ministry has also "requested the State Licensing Authority of the Uttarakhand government to provide copies of the licence and product approval details of the Ayurvedic medicines being claimed for the treatment of COVID-19".

It is learnt from media reports on the yet-to-be published RCT conducted on behalf of the company, that 100 patients who had tested positive were given the medicine (five dropped out midway). The clinical trial tested the drug on 45 people and another 50 were given a placebo. The claim was that 69% (31 persons) of those on the drug tested negative on the third day, and 25 of those on the placebo arm of the trial had also tested negative.

What is the place of RCTs place in clinical trials? As per definition, a randomised controlled trial, or RCT, is a study in which people are allocated at random, entirely by chance, to receive one of several clinical interventions. One of these interventions is the standard of comparison or control. The control may be standard practice/treatment options, a placebo (a drug without an active substance, or a 'sugar pill'), or no intervention at all. The idea is to measure and compare the outcomes against the



control after the participants receive the treatment.

Prof. Madhukar Pai, director, McGill Global Health Programs, McGill University, Canada, teaching an online course on epidemiology for journalists with Suno India

portal, explains that RCTs are based on multiple factors, including type of interventions being evaluated, and number of participants. In single-blind trials, the participants, or the investigators do not know who is assigned what; in double-blind trials, both participants and investigators do not know; and triple and quadruple-blind trials, where three or four of the relevant groups are not aware of the treatment assignment.

Is an RCT a good tool to employ during the throes of an epidemic? Why do we need RCTs?

"No other design can get us close to the 'counterfactual' comparison we need to see if an intervention is causally linked to a particular outcome," says Prof. Pai.

Nancy Cartwright, writing in one of the Springer journals, in October 2009 (<https://rdcu.be/b5hb>), argues that RCTs are widely taken as the gold standard for establishing causal conclusions.

S.P. Kalantri, professor of medicine, Mahatma Gandhi Institute of Medical Sciences, Sevagram, Maharashtra, answers this question with a resounding yes. He says, "We need studies that get data that we can trust." This means, clear and robust evidence about benefits and

risks. A good RCT (for COVID-19) should enrol enough numbers, define clinical endpoints, including mortality and morbidity, also whether intubation was needed and days of stay in hospital. He adds: The hurry, hype and marketing for drugs (Ayurveda and Favipiravir) even before results were published were 'just not science'.

"The priority is to have safe, efficacious drugs that can be used in the real world setting," he explains. "We get the best evidence from an RCT, while other strategies have huge limitations. The problem with simple descriptive studies, for instance, is that there are no comparisons."

In well-designed RCTs, researchers, after random assignment of participants, assess whether randomisation was done sufficiently to eliminate the influence of confounding factors, and avoid selection bias. Researchers follow the groups over days, weeks, years and observe major clinical end points. In the end, all other things being equal, it will be possible to measure what benefit a particular group X got, in comparison to Y group. It is possible to estimate if there were any differences between the two groups, say, in mortality, and if this was because of strategic effect of the cause, or due to pure chance. RCTs remove the impact of chance in cause and effect relationships, says Dr. Kalantri.

But ethically, an RCT can only be employed when researchers think/hope that the interventions will offer benefits. Participants can be enrolled in a randomised controlled trial that is expected to leave them better off. The Dexamethasone study where mortality was reduced by a third, is a classic example here.

The Solidarity and RECOVERY (or Randomised Evaluation of COVID-19 thERapy) trials are examples of large-scale RCTs done with multiple partners at many locations, bang in the middle of an epidemic. They have already been instrumental in setting the standard of care – for instance, hydroxychloroquine was hyped up as a drug but studies conclusively proved no ameliorative effect in using it. The Remdesivir study, on the other hand, showed some improvement in reducing intensive care unit stay, while there was no great impact on mortality, says Dr. Kalantri.

What is the future?

Strident science should be the basis of any interventions in therapeutics or vaccination, experts emphasise. The over 200 projects in the pipeline, listed in the Clinical Trials Registry of India, might produce results over time, but as in the case of Patanjali Ayurved, the regulator's immediate and scientific response to unpublished claims will be essential, they urge.



ILLUSTRATIONS: R RAJESH

FATF

On the warpath against terror financing

The Paris-based organisation, with 39 member-countries, regularly reviews the conduct of nations in stopping terror-related transactions worldwide

SUHASINI HAIDAR

In Focus

■ FATF reviews countries and either clears them or places them on its 'grey' or 'black' list

■ At present, only Iran and North Korea are on the blacklist

■ Eighteen countries, including Pakistan, Syria, Yemen, Iceland, Jamaica and Mauritius, are on the grey list

In October 2001, in the wake of the 9/11 terror attacks in the U.S., the plenary session of a little-known global organisation based in Paris working on money laundering and white collar crimes, the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), met in Washington DC to discuss a radical shift in its goals. It was already very clear to U.S. investigators that the attacks pointed to a terror network around the world from Germany to Karachi, Dubai to London and Kabul, and each thread had to be tracked down through a financial transaction made. More importantly, if the world were to actually fight "global terror", it would need to not only "follow the money" trail but also hold countries that allowed

terrorists safe haven and financial assistance to account.

"The FATF, the leading international body in the global fight against money laundering, will provide its expertise and energy to the related battle against the financing of terrorism," said Ms. Clarie Lo, then President of FATF, announcing the shift. The FATF plenary then adopted an eight-point amendment to its charter that added Combating the Financing of Terrorism (CFT) to its tasks on Anti-Money Laundering (AML/CFT).

On September 28, 2001, the UN Security Council had also passed a new resolution (UNSC 1373), which added to a previous 1999 resolution (UNSC 1267), which barred links to any group or individual connected to the Taliban or al-Qaeda. The lists that the UNSC

then approved, of hundreds of designated terrorists, soon became one of the important tasks for the FATF, and the reason it is frequently in the news, including most recently this week, when it held its quarterly plenary session to discuss the listings of several countries on its radar, including Pakistan.

Technical prism

The FATF is not a part of the UN system, but it functions out of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development headquarters in Paris, since it was started in 1989 after a decision by members of the G-7 and the European Commission. The FATF runs differently from other multilateral agencies, as its primary focus is on reviewing all actions through a "technical" not a

political prism, and frowns upon countries bringing bilateral issues to the forum.

It is not an enforcement agency itself, but a task force composed of 39 member governments who fund the FATF and agree on its mandate. This means that FATF depends on voluntary implementation of its reports by member countries. Also, meetings of the group are carried out behind closed doors, and deliberations are not publicised. In the past, the FATF has penalised countries that have disclosed the contents of its meetings.

Decisions are made by the grouping on a consensus basis, as they conduct reviews of countries on AML/CFT parameters (called "Mutual evaluations"), and then either clear them, or use a "colour coded" reference for them, placing countries in the "increased monitoring" category or the "grey list", or the "high risk jurisdictions" or "call for action" category, as the "blacklist" is formally known.

At present, only Iran and North Korea are on the blacklist, while 18 countries, including Pakistan, Syria, Yemen, Iceland, Jamaica and Mauritius, are on the grey list.

India became an observer in the grouping in 2006, and was inducted as a full member in 2010. It has faced three rounds

of mutual evaluations and cleared them, and faces the fourth round next year. However, it is Pakistan's performance at the FATF that most often makes news, as Pakistan has been kept on the group's radar since 2008, with one stint on the grey list from 2012-2015, and another beginning June 2018. Presently, it has until October 2019 to show that it is making progress on the FATF's report, that gave it a gruelling

Pakistan has been kept on the group's radar since 2008, with one stint on the 'grey list', or the high-risk jurisdictions category, from 2012 to 2015, and another beginning June 2018

27-point action plan to fulfil, or face a blacklisting, which means severe financial restrictions, a downgrading by credit agencies, and most significantly, possible loan cuts by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. Although the Pakistani government, which has sent ministerial-level delegations to each meeting of the FATF to

ensure it is let off penalties, says it has now cleared 14 of the 27 points on the list, and has "partially" fulfilled

11 of the remaining 16, it is still being held strongly to account by the FATF statements,

including one particularly stern statement in 2019 that said, "All deadlines given to Pakistan to check terror-funding ended; it failed to complete its action plan in line with agreed timeline."

What is significant is that while Pakistan has clearly disregarded warnings from India, the U.S. and other countries to crack down on a number of cross-border terror groups that exist on its soil (such as Lashkar-e-Toiba (LeT), Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM), Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), the Taliban, al-Qaeda, Haqqani network, etc), it remains eager to avoid the FATF strictures. Government officials in Delhi say the difference is heartening, given India's long and sometimes lone battle over the past few decades in holding Pakistan to account for cross-border terror activities, including in Jammu and Kashmir, the IC-814 hijacking, 2008 Mumbai attacks, the Pathankot airbase attack in 2015, Uri Army base in 2016, and many others.

As a result, in the last few years, while Pakistan has been on the FATF's watch list, governments in Islamabad have gone to some length to demonstrate their compliance with the FATF demands: changing terror laws to include all UN Security Council-designated individuals and organisations, to show progress in the prosecution of leaders of LeT and JeM, including the re-arrest of Mumbai attacks mastermind Hafiz Saeed last year, as well as tightening all banking mechanisms to show that it has frozen funding to all these groups.

India's persistence
Clearly much of it is lip-service, and much more remains to be done, but New Delhi, which sends a team comprising offi-

cials from the Ministry of External Affairs, the Ministry of Home Affairs and the Finance Ministry to assist with the Indian delegation in Paris during FATF sessions, has some reason to persist with its efforts in bringing evidence it has on Pakistan's terror links to the world body.

"Unlike others, the FATF follows a principle of ostracism against members who don't comply with its strictures. The impact is amplified if the global banking system then scales up its diligence of each transaction flowing in and out of the jurisdiction named," explained an official aware of the FATF's workings. "It works despite the fact that none of this is based on any law or covenant."

Decision making

Officials say that the decisions are taken by consensus in the 39-member group, where any three members can exercise a "veto" on an action, has ensured that the FATF doesn't at present suffer from the same polarisation that has virtually paralysed the UNSC. While there are differences between the two main blocs at the UNSC – the U.S., the U.K., France, and Russia, China – at the FATF as well, the entire group's view is made to count.

This is not to mean the organisation isn't affected by geopolitical trends.

The U.S. and other countries have been able to ensure that Iran and North Korea remain on the FATF blacklist, while others are able to avoid the tag as they are able to enlist the political support of enough other countries like China, Russia and Turkey.

With the U.S. striking a deal with the Taliban this year, and efforts to take it off the UN listing, the global body may change the focus of its reviews in jurisdictions that have engaged with the Taliban in the past. It also remains to be seen how the FATF responds to new-age challenges to the global counter-terror and anti-money laundering regime: including bitcoins and cyber currencies, illegal trafficking of wildlife as a source of funding, use of artificial intelligence in terror attacks and biowarfare as part of the wider challenge of the coronavirus pandemic.

For India, however, its focus at the FATF on countering cross-border terror will be a priority for the foreseeable future.

NPP

At the centre of a political storm

The party rocked the BJP-led govt. in Manipur, only to return to the front later

RAHUL KARMAKAR

The rise of many regional parties in northeast India, mostly sired by agitations or insurgency, has been quite meteoric. The Assam Gana Parishad won 67 of Assam's 126 Assembly seats in the State election two months after its birth on October 14, 1985, and four months after some of its founders – as student leaders – signed the Assam Accord to end a violent six-year agitation seeking to throw "illegal immigrants" out. Less than a year later, the Mizo National Front metamorphosed from a 25-year-old extremist group into a political party to hold the reins of Mizoram without contesting any election. The All India United Democratic Front headed by perfume baron Maulana Badruddin Ajmal had no real chances of forming a government, but it changed the narrative around "minority politics" by winning 10 seats in the 2006 Assam assembly election, less than six months after its formation.

The 'national' party
The National People's Party (NPP), which rocked the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)-led Manipur government by briefly withdrawing its support, took its time to make a mark in politics. One of the reasons could be its 'national' outlook. Unlike the others, the NPP did not want to be bound by geography with former Lok Sabha Speaker



Purno Agitok Sangma, a leader familiar to the country beyond the northeast, at the helm. Besides, the NPP under him had no regional trigger. It had at its core a national issue – opposition to Sonia Gandhi's stewardship of the Congress – relayed from his days in the Nationalist Congress Party and the Trinamool Congress.

But the NPP, in its original form, had a very local ambition when it was registered by L. Ibomcha in Manipur a decade before Meghalaya-based Sangma had officially launched the party in January 2013. The party got a new lease of life by winning three out of five seats it contested for the 60-member Manipur Assembly in 2007, but it had limited clout in areas dominated by the Kuki-Zomi ethnic group. Its candidates bit the dust in the 2012 State election.

The NPP reached a milestone in June 2019 when the Election Commission of India

recognised it as a national party. The recognition was based on the condition that it was registered in at least four States, all in the northeast.

Manipur's was the first alliance governments the NPP formed with the BJP in the northeast. Differences soon cropped up between Chief Minister Nongthombam Biren, the BJP's catch from the Congress, and the four NPP legislators, particularly former Director-General of Police Yunnan Joykumar. It culminated with their pulling out of the government on June 17 along with five others, including three of the BJP. The NPP also had issues in Nagaland, where its two MLAs withdrew support from the BJP-Nationalist Democratic Progressive Party (NDPP) alliance in 2018 only to merge with the NDPP in 2019. It was the other way round in Meghalaya; the two BJP legislators there temporarily had issues with alliance leader NPP.

The return of its four MLAs to the alliance government in Manipur has made both the NPP and the BJP heave a sigh of relief, although the latter has run into problems with the Naga People's Front, another regional ally. Both parties know they need each other as well as 11 regional members of the BJP-led North East Democratic Alliance to keep the only other national party and common enemy – the Congress – out of the northeast.

KAUSALYA

The woman who lived

The anti-caste activist vows to continue the legal battle against her parents

P.V. SRIVIDYA

March 13, 2016. It was a lazy Sunday afternoon, until a CCTV footage of an unknown couple hacked by mercenaries in broad daylight in the town of Udumalpet in Tiruppur district started to make the rounds. Soon, it would emerge as a spine-chilling case of "honour" killing carried out by the family of a Caste Hindu girl for marrying a Dalit man. The victims Shankar, and his wife of 10 months, Kausalya, were in a pool of blood. While Shankar died on the spot, Ms. Kausalya survived. Udumalpet killing would become the first case from Tamil Nadu to make it to the National Crime Records Bureau's crime listed as an 'honour' killing that year.

In December 2017, a Tiruppur sessions Court handed down a landmark judgement that came down on the blight of murder in the name of honour by sentencing the main accused Chinna Samay, father of Ms. Kausalya, along with five others to death. Two others were given double life terms and a five-year term, respectively. Ms. Kausalya's mother Annalakshmi and three others were acquitted.

However, on June 22, the Madras High Court overturned the sessions court verdict and acquitted Chinna Samay and two others. The death sentences of the hired killers was commuted to 25 years in jail. The High Court had faulted the Prosecution



for failing to prove conspiracy.

Ms. Kausalya, from the Thevar community, had met Shankar when they were in college. Their friendship blossomed into love by the time Shankar was in final year. When her family got wind of their friendship, they prepared to marry her off, forcing the couple to elope in 2015. The tranquillity of her 10-month-long marriage to Shankar was punctuated by kidnap attempts, threats, unsolicited visits by her family members and culminating in the killing of Shankar in March 2016. That summer Sunday afternoon, Ms. Kausalya had taken Shankar to the store to buy him a shirt for his college annual day the following day.

In the earliest testimony in 2016, Ms. Kausalya recorded the rabid caste pride that ran in her family. Her mother's first query was, "what was his caste?" and "how it was blasphemous to

bear the seed of a Dalit man". In the four years since, from a victim of a caste-hate killing, Ms. Kausalya reinvented herself into an activist pledged to subvert caste supremacy. She founded a foundation in Shankar's name to teach neighbourhood children, read up on Ambedkar and Periyar, gave speeches, learnt the art form of *parai*, once condemned a profane art form; found love and married a *parai* artist, incidentally a caste Hindu, in a self-respect ceremony.

Vile criticism
This last act of hers subjected her to vile criticism. Of this, she would ask, "how was this patriarchy different from the caste Hindu patriarchy that dictated who I should marry?" It was something as basic as wanting someone to care for you, when you're sick." On June 22 morning, Ms. Kausalya had called Shankar's father Velusamy, whom she calls

Appa (father), and sobbed over the phone over the High Court's acquittal of her father Chinna Samay. The verdict also increased her resolve to make it her life's mission to secure justice for Shankar.

After Monday's verdict that exonerated the family's role in the killing, A. Kathir, executive director at Evidence, an organisation that works with victims of caste-hate crimes, who had led Ms. Kausalya's legal fight, remembers late Justice Krishna Iyer's observations on the guiding principle of courts in rendering justice. "Krishna Iyer said court has a conscience and it will always know the facts. In some cases, victims will have a disadvantage, and the accused an advantage. But the courts will have to prod through that advantage enjoyed by the accused and walk that extra mile to mitigate the disadvantage of the victim to consciously render justice."

"I haven't fought for any case like this. There are Thevar Facebook pages that crowdsourced funds for the accused," said Mr. Kathir, who had a bounty on his head in Usilampatti after the sessions court verdict in 2017. While the High Court said the prosecution could not prove conspiracy, the question flagged by Ms. Kausalya and Mr. Kathir was what was the motive for the hired killers to kill. "I will continue to fight till Shankar gets justice," Ms. Kausalya said after the verdict.

TV PICKS

Premier League: SS Select 1 (SD & HD), 8.45 p.m.**FA Cup:** Sony Ten 2 (SD & HD), 5.30 p.m., 8.30 p.m. & 11 p.m.**Serie A:** Sony Ten 1 & 3 (SD & HD), 11 p.m.; Sony Six (SD & HD), 8.40 p.m., 11 p.m.; Sony Ten 2 (SD & HD), 1.15 a.m. (Monday)**PGA Tour:** Eurosport (SD & HD), 12.30 a.m. (Monday)

IN BRIEF



Reds fans slammed for 'unacceptable' behaviour

LONDON

Liverpool, on Saturday, criticised some of its own fans for "wholly unacceptable" behaviour after they crowded parts of the city, ignoring coronavirus social distance guidelines, to celebrate the team's first championship in 30 years. In a statement with Merseyside Police and Liverpool City Council, the club said. "Our city is still in a public health crisis and this behaviour is wholly unacceptable," read the statement. **AFP**

Six of the 10 players test negative again: PCB

KARACHI

Pakistan will leave for its tour of England on Sunday with 20 players and 11 support staff, the PCB said on Saturday, even as six out of the 10 COVID-19-infected cricketers returned negative when tested a second time. Out of the 10 players and one official, who had earlier tested positive, Fakhar Zaman, Mohammad Hasnain, Mohammad Hafeez, Mohammad Rizwan, Shadab Khan and Wahab Riaz have tested negative. Players who have again tested positive are Haider Ali, Haris Rauf, Kashif Bhatti and Imran Khan, along with masseur Malang Ali.



Travelers: Mickelson leads; two more pull out

CROMWELL (US)
Five-time Major champion Phil Mickelson, playing his first tournament since turning 50 this month, shot a 7-under 63 in the Travelers Championship to take a one-stroke lead on Friday. Two more players withdrew because of the coronavirus — Denny McCarthy for a positive test, and Bud Cauley, who tested negative, but decided to pull out after playing alongside McCarthy on Thursday. First-round leader Mackenzie Hughes (68) dropped to a second-place tie with Will Gordon. **AP**

NBA, NBPA announce plan for July 30 restart

NEW YORK
The National Basketball Association (NBA) and the National Basketball Players Association (NBPA) on Friday announced that they have finalised a "comprehensive plan" for a July 30 restart to the 2019-20 season. The season will resume with 22 teams and no fans. **ANI**

Chickens were first domesticated in southwestern China

Study contradicts the earlier claim that they were reared in northern China and Indus Valley

SHIV SAHAY SINGH
KOLKATA

A recent study by scientists has revealed new details about the earliest domestication of chicken. The DNA sequencing of 863 genomes has showed the first domestication of chicken occurred in southwestern China, northern Thailand and Myanmar.

A collaborated study, which involved sequencing of genomes from all four species of the genus *Gallus*, five sub-species of Red Jungle Fowl and various domestic chicken breeds collected worldwide, revealed single domestication from Red Jungle Fowl sub-species *Gallus gallus spadiceus*.

The study also demonstrated that all five Red Jungle Fowl sub-species were genetically differentiated from

Barcelona drops points

Aspas' brilliant free-kick negates Suarez's efforts



On a high: Barcelona's Luis Suarez celebrates scoring his second goal against Celta Vigo.

• GETTY IMAGES

EURO LEAGUES

AGENCIES

MADRID

A brilliant free-kick by captain Iago Aspas ensured that host Celta Vigo walked away with a draw that could potentially damage champion Barcelona's La Liga defence.

Twice the visiting Catalan team had gone up with goals from Luis Suarez only for Celta to bounce back.

The results: Premier League: Aston Villa 0 lost to Wolves 1 (Dendoncker 62).**La Liga:** Celta Vigo 2 (Smolov 50, Aspas 88) drew with Barcelona 2 (Luis Suarez 20, 67); Athletic Bilbao 3 (Raul Garcia 16-pen, Sancto 24, Villalibre 90) bt Real Mallorca 1 (Budimir 70-pen).**Bundesliga:** Dortmund 0 lost to Hoffenheim 4 (Kramaric 8, 30, 48, 50-pen); Leverkusen 1 (Volland 2) bt Mainz 0; M'Gladbach 2 (Hoffmann 7, Embolo 78) bt Hertha Berlin 1 (Ibisevic 90+1); Wolfsburg 0 lost to Bayern Munich 4 (Coman 4, Cuisance 37, Lewandowski 72-pen, Muller 79); Eintracht Frankfurt 3 (Rode 9, Silva 33, Dost 52) bt Paderborn 2

(Draeger 55, Michel 75); Werder Bremen 6 (Osako 22, 58, Rashica 27, Fuekkrug 29, Klaassen 55, Sargent 68) bt Cologne 1 (Drexler 62).

Freiburg 4 (Waldschmidt 20, 57, Schmid 38, Hoeler 48) bt Schalke 0; Augsburg 1 (Vargas 71) lost to RB Leipzig 2 (Werner 28, 80).

Union Berlin 3 (Ujah 26, Gentner 54, Abdullahi 90) bt Fortuna Dusseldorf 0.

Friday: La Liga: Sevilla 1 (Ocampos 83-pen) drew with Real Valladolid 1 (Olivas 25).**Serie A:** Juventus 4 (Dybala 53, Ronaldo 62-pen, Higuain 83, De Ligt 85) bt Lecce 0.

Every cricketer wants IPL this year: Bhuvneshwar

India seamer hopes ICC will solve the saliva issue; Mary Kom stresses on fitness

P.K. AJITH KUMAR
KOZHIKODE

Bhuvneshwar Kumar wants to play at the IPL this year and believes every cricketer – even those from other countries – wants to.

"The IPL must happen," India's premier swing bowler said on Friday. "The tournament is important for both cricketing and financial reasons."

He was speaking at a webinar organised jointly by GainAccess Sports & Entertainment and Sportz Power.

Bhuvneshwar, who has 236 international wickets, said he hadn't expected the situation to be as bad as it turned out to be, following the coronavirus outbreak.

"After the first ODI against South Africa (which was washed out at Dharamshala



Bhuvneshwar Kumar



M.C. Mary Kom

on March 12), we were scheduled to play the second match at Lucknow, but the entire series was abandoned," he said.

"I was coming back to the Indian team after a gap of four months, following an injury. I had then thought it (the problem created by the virus) would be soon over."

It didn't, unfortunately.

One potential problem the coronavirus created specifically for swing bowlers like him was the ICC's ban of using saliva on the ball.

"I hope the ICC comes up with some artificial way by which we can shine the ball," he said. "You need to do it when you bowl in swinging conditions in (places like

England. Even the spinners need it."

M.C. Mary Kom, the six-time World boxing champion, was also part of the panel. She stressed on the need to be completely fit, even during the lockdown.

"I train every day," she said. "I keep myself fit though I don't have all the equipment to train at home."

Correct decision

Mary said the decision to postpone the Olympics to next year was the correct one. She will be aiming to win her second Olympic medal in Tokyo.

She said women's boxing had come a long way in India. "I was the only one in London," she said. "Now four have qualified for Tokyo."

The other quarterfinals, featuring Russians Ian Nepomniachtchi and Vladislav Artemiev also ended in a draw after 56 moves.

Other results (quarterfinals):

After Game Four: Ding Liren (Chn) bt Hikaru Nakamura (USA) 2.5-1.5.**After Game Seven:** Anish Giri (Ned) drew with Alexander Grischuk (Rus) 3.5-3.5 (Giri declared the winner after the drawn Armageddon game).

working on that basis, while for Ashish we'll have to see where the national team is going to train for us to be able to take a call."

With Ashish, initially the focus will be on rehab from the slight injury he picked up at the (Olympic) qualifiers.

"We'll have to discuss his strategy with the National coaching team (Santiago Nieva and C.A. Kuttappa), see what they have planned for him. Speaking of Vikas, since his focus will be on the professional circuit, we will be

It's been an emotional journey: Robertson

We showed our 100 per cent every single game, says Liverpool's left-back

SHYAM VASUDEVAN
CHENNAI"Not many things bug me, but if there's one thing that does, it's the idea that my story is a football fairytale," thus wrote Andy Robertson for *The Players Tribune* last year, two days before Liverpool's Champions League triumph.

His arrival at Anfield in 2017, however, most definitely sparked a fairytale for the club as Robertson has now added the Premier League title to his glorious list of achievements



Andy Robertson. ■ GETTY IMAGES

glish top division, in 1990, was under Kenny Dalglish, a Scot.

"We've had to wait a long time. The three months of lockdown was long for everyone, but for us to be so close to something that the club hasn't achieved in 30 years, it was extra-long for us and our fans.

Extra special

"And we managed to do it on my mum's birthday, so that's probably extra special for me," the defender said in an interaction with the broadcaster.

The belief stemmed from the fact that Liverpool had won most of its titles with a Scot in its ranks. The last time Liverpool won the En-

drop points, but we did not.

"We've come from behind, we scored so many late goals – the best team never gives up. We showed our 100 per cent every single game," he said.

"It's an emotional journey for us to win the Premier League for this club.

Desperate to win

"We were so desperate to win it last season and this season luckily, we've run away with it. We are the Premier League champion, that's something I will never get bored of saying."

Watch the Premier League live on Star Sports Select and Disney+ Hotstar VIP.



Brendan Rodgers. ■ REUTERS

Liverpool displayed amazing consistency: Rodgers

AMITABHA DAS SHARMA
KOLKATA

Former Liverpool FC manager Brendan Rodgers was happy with the "amazing" style with which the Reds realised their "holy grail" by winning the Premier League title.

Congratulating the side for its dominant performance, Rodgers, who handed over the coaching duties of Liverpool to Jurgen Klopp in 2015, said the title was "well-deserved" for a team

that maintained a fantastic level of consistency through the season. "For Liverpool it has really been the Holy Grail. And I sensed it first hand as the manager as I could feel the expectations of the huge fan-base that Liverpool has worldwide," he said in an interview on the Sony TV show *Pit Stop*.

"I am absolutely delighted. They (Liverpool) thoroughly deserved the title."

AICS appeals to Rijiju

RAKESH RAO
NEW DELHI

The All India Council of Sports (AICS) president Vijay Kumar Malhotra has appealed to Sports Minister Kiren Rijiju to call an urgent meeting of all stakeholders to end the impasse following the non-renewal of affiliation of 54 National Sports Federations (NSFs).

In a letter to the Sports Minister, Mr. Malhotra pointed out, the decision to withdraw recognition of NSFs would "badly affect the preparation and training of sports persons of all Olympic sports in India as Sports Ministry grants funding and permissions only to recognised NSFs for national camps and international tournaments".

He further said: "The ongoing COVID pandemic has affected the sports training and preparation as all sports activities were on standstill

for the last four months, but once the sports resume and preparation of the Olympics gets underway, the present stand-off could delay administrative decisions and that in turn, can hamper the training of athletes."

Mr. Malhotra, 88, the former president of Archery Association of India (AAI) and a former acting president of the Indian Olympic Association (IOA), requested the Minister to "appoint the Attorney General/Solicitor General to represent the case and immediately appeal in the High Court and Supreme Court to annul the High Court directive to withdraw the recognition of practically all sports federations of the country."

He made a plea for a meeting of the Minister with the members of the IOA, NSFs and AICS to sort out the matter.

Simms has boxer-specific training plans ready

Vikas and Ashish to work under him at IIS in Vijayanagar, Karnataka

Y.B. SARANGI
KOLKATA

Boxing coach Roland Simms has prepared specific training plans for Olympics-bound boxers Vikas Krishan and Ashish Kumar.

The two are now in quarantine before joining the Inspire Institute of Sport (IIS) camp at Vijayanagar, Karnataka.

According to Simms, former World championships bronze medallist Vikas, who switched back from professional boxing to try his luck in



Roland Simms. ■ FILE PHOTO

and make sure that his professional style of boxing complements his amateur style," Simms said in an interaction with *The Hindu*.

With Ashish, initially the focus will be on rehab from the slight injury he picked up at the (Olympic) qualifiers.

"We'll have to discuss his strategy with the National coaching team (Santiago Nieva and C.A. Kuttappa), see what they have planned for him. Speaking of Vikas, since his focus will be on the professional circuit, we will be

working on that basis, while for Ashish we'll have to see where the national team is going to train for us to be able to take a call."

Regular classroom

On the training sessions for different levels of boxers at the IIS, Simms said: "We have the regular classroom (theory) sessions after which we do conditioning and then individual technical training like the basic fundamentals of punching, footwork and defense."

each other approximately 50,000 years ago (much earlier than domestication), corresponding to their geographic ranges and taxonomic classifications.

"Our study suggests that domestic chickens were initially derived from the Red Jungle Fowl sub-species *Gallus gallus spadiceus* whose present-day distribution is predominantly in southwestern China, northern Thailand and Myanmar," said the paper, '863 genomes reveal the origin and domestication of chicken', which was published in *Cell Research*, an international journal.

The research assumes significance as despite the substantial role played by chickens in human societies across the world, both the geographic and temporal origins of their domestication remain controversial," Dr. Thakur said. Scientists



Jungle Fowl.

across the world contributed to the study in which DNA from indigenous village chicken, four species of wild jungle fowl and domesticated chicken were collected and analysed.

Dr. Thakur said Wang Ming-Shan of the University of California, Professor Wu Dong Dong of the Chinese Academy of Sciences and Professor Han Jianlin of the International Livestock Research Institute, Nairobi, Kenya, contributed to the study done over several years.

The question of domestication of chickens has intrigued scientists for centuries. Charles Darwin postulated that chickens were domesticated around 4,000 B.C. from a single ancestor, Red Jungle Fowl in the Indus Valley. An impor-

tant study published earlier from Uppsala University claimed the Grey Jungle Fowl had contributed to chicken domestication.

"Our study provides novel insights into the evolutionary history of domestic chickens," Dr. Thakur said.

He said the study showed that following their domestication, chickens were translocated across South-east and South Asia where they interbred with Red Jungle Fowl sub-species and other jungle fowl species.

ZSI Director Kailash Chandra said the efforts by Dr. Thakur and other scientists in unveiling the mystery over chicken domestic