



Manmohan Singh and
Praveen Chakravarty on
reviving the economy
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Centre seeks three
more months to
frame CAA rules
page 9



NEARBY



961 new cases in Delhi,
tally reaches 1,37,667

NEW DELHI
The Capital on Sunday recorded 961 new COVID-19 cases, taking the total to 1,37,667. Also, 15 more deaths were recorded in the past 24 hours, pushing the toll to 4,004, said a government health bulletin. The total number of recoveries stands at 1,23,317.

CITY ▶ PAGE 3

Hard drive seized from Hany Babu's house: wife

NEW DELHI
The NIA on Sunday seized a hard disk, two pen drives, some receipts and an account book of GN Saibaba Defence Committee from the house of Hany Babu, DU professor who was recently arrested in the Elgar Parishad case, said his wife Jenny Rowena.

CITY ▶ PAGE 2

Assam decides to unlock as positivity rate declines

GUWAHATI
The Assam government on Sunday announced a slew of lockdown relaxations, as an experiment for 12 days, in view of the decline in the COVID-19 positivity rate. This follows the decision on reopening schools and colleges from September 1 if the Centre gives the go-ahead.

NORTH & EAST ▶ PAGE 4

EDUCATION PLUS ▶ PAGE 11

Pakistanis behind 'Chinese' info war on border stand-off

Handles with Chinese names, Mandarin content traced to earlier avatars in Urdu

ANANTH KRISHNAN
CHENNAI

Many of the 'Chinese' accounts that mushroomed on social media this summer and spread false information about the border clash with India have been traced to Pakistan, in what is believed to be a coordinated disinformation campaign aimed at India.

The India-China border tensions starting in May, and culminating in the June 15 clash in the Galwan Valley, sparked a first-of-its-kind information war on social media, where Indian and Chinese accounts on Twitter, Facebook and YouTube traded images and videos in an effort to both capture the narrative and the attention of the media.

The disinformation flowed both ways. But what was unknown to consumers of the posts by 'Chinese' social media users is that many of the accounts that posed as China-based users were actually Pakistani accounts. Twitter is banned in China, although it can be accessed using virtual private networks.

An analysis of some of the most active 'Chinese' accounts on the border clash on Twitter found that these accounts previously had different profile names and



Web of lies
A look at how
Pakistani Twitter
accounts turned
'Chinese'

How they were detected?

The changed avatars were detected because some of these accounts, which have tens of thousands of followers, were previously being tracked

handle names. Some of these accounts even had user bios that were earlier in Urdu, before morphing overnight into Mandarin.

One such account, 'xiuying637', was earlier run as 'hinaarbi2', before it began tweeting information related to the Chinese military and the border clash. The account has been suspended, but only belatedly.

These accounts have used a loophole on Twitter that allows users to not only change their profile names, but their Twitter handles as well. Their changed avatars were detected because some of these accounts, which have tens of thousands of followers, were previously being tracked.

One account, with a pro-

- The users exploited a Twitter loophole which allowed them to change profile names, account handles
- They used stock profile photos of Chinese soldiers to look authentic
- 'Chinese' accounts which were active after the LAC clash previously had different names
- The accounts had bios in Urdu, which were later changed to Mandarin

How they were detected?

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file name in Chinese characters, Zeping, and handle 'sa-waxpx', that tweeted on the border previously tweeted in Urdu. Its tweets are now unavailable. Another account, 'Yasfixi', had a Chinese name and tweeted in Chinese characters, posting information about the border clash, but was traced to Pakistan.

These accounts have shared false information about casualties from the clash, unrelated images of injured soldiers, and videos of troops' confrontations that were from previous border incidents. Tweeting in Mandarin and using Chinese names gave the posts a sense of credibility.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

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CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

India, China hold talks

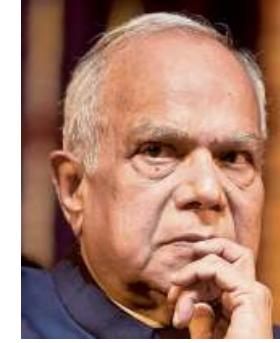
India and China on Sunday held the fifth round of Corps Commanders talks at Moldo on the Chinese side to take forward the stalled process of disengagement at the Line of Actual Control. The Corps Commanders had earlier held talks on June 6, 22, 30 and July 14 to de-escalate from the build-up areas in the Galwan Valley, Gogra-Hot Springs and the Finger areas along the Pangong Tso. ▶ PAGE 9

Scanner on institutions

Close on the heels of dropping Mandarin from the National Education Policy, the Ministry of Education has decided to put higher education institutes that offer Chinese language training courses under the scanner as well. It is looking closely at universities that have in the past held links with the official Chinese language training department "Hanban". ▶ PAGE 9

Amit Shah tests positive, admitted to hospital

T.N. Governor also infected; U.P. Minister dies of COVID-19



Cause for concern: (From left) Union Home Minister Amit Shah, Tamil Nadu Governor Banwarilal Purohit and Uttar Pradesh Cabinet Minister Kamla Rani Varun.

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Union Home Minister Amit Shah

Shah tested positive for COVID-19 and requested all those who had come in contact with him in the past few days to isolate themselves and get tested.

Mr. Shah's positive report

came on a day when Uttar

Pradesh Cabinet Minister Kamla Rani Varun died from coronavirus infection, and Tamil Nadu Governor Banwarilal Purohit and U.P.

State BJP president Swatantra Dev Singh also tested

positive for COVID-19.

Mr. Shah, admitted to the

private Medanta Hospital in Gurugram, said he got himself tested after seeing "early symptoms" of the disease.

"Though I am feeling okay,

am being admitted to the

function on medical advice," he

Home Minister said in a

tweet in Hindi.

An official stated that as

per protocol, all close contacts

were to be tested if a

Union Minister tested positive.

Home Secretary Ajay

Bhalla, who had been meeting Mr. Shah, was tested and found COVID negative.

West Bengal and Delhi

Chief Ministers Mamata Banerjee and Arvind Kejriwal

respectively as well as Congress leader Rahul Gandhi

wished Mr. Shah a speedy recovery.

In Chennai, the Kauvery

Hospital said Governor Purohit was asymptomatic and clinically stable. He has been advised home isolation with medical monitoring.

In Lucknow, Ms. Varun,

62, who held the technical

education portfolio, died

during treatment at a Lucknow hospital.

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On a slippery track: Shop owners await customers at Gokulpuri Tyre Market, renamed as Jamiat Tyre Market; (below) Kallu Kabadi, a shop owner, showing the photograph of his burnt shop.

• SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

Trying to find traction

JATIN ANAND
NEW DELHI

Five months after it was nearly razed to the ground by rioters, the renovated Gokulpuri Tyre Market is struggling to get back on its feet. Small, mostly Muslim-owned shops at the market were vandalised, looted and set ablaze episodically for three consecutive days during the riots in February.

The owners said they were struggling to ensure that shops, which once boasted daily turnover of lakhs of rupees, could just open from one day to the next. Some shopkeepers had to sell jewellery set aside for their children's marriage to afford renovations. Others had to sell their destroyed stock as scrap.

Compensation claims

Most of the compensation claims filed with the government are yet to be honoured.

Huddled around a team of representatives from the district administration to find out the status of their compensation claim, shopkeepers alleged that only five individuals had been disbursed money in as many months.

District Magistrate (North East) Shashi Kaushal remained unavailable for comment on alleged delays in the disbursement of compensation and assessment of damage al-

leged by shopkeepers, despite repeated attempts by *The Hindu*.

Of the total 224 shops in the market, an estimated 97 were either reduced to ashes or partially burnt. The other workshops were vandalised and looted. "What the fire could not consume, the looters did," said the shopkeepers.

"I am on the street now after losing stock worth ₹30 lakh-₹35 lakh," said Mehmood Khan, affectionately called Kallu Kabari by the locals. "All I have now is stock worth ₹5 lakh, purchased after selling family jewellery meant for my children," he said, adding that he barely escaped being lynched during the riots.

The market was relocated from Meena Bazar in Old Delhi in 2001. It deals in everything from tyres for vehicles of all makes and sizes, to accessories, tools, CNG kits and even merchandise for bikers. Most of the shops have a vehicle-repair corner as well.

A stone's throw from the Gokulpuri metro station, the market was among the first locations targeted by mobs when communal violence broke out on the evening of February 23. The market was repeatedly attacked till tensions simmered on February 25 midnight.

Mr. Khan said rioters started vandalising and setting shops on fire around 7 p.m. on February 23. Fearing imminent attack, the shopkeepers had fled to safety around 5.30 p.m. He added that his shop was still standing when he came back to check on it around 10 a.m. the next day. But the good fortune was not to last.

"Someone called and told me to get out quickly as the rioters were coming back. I saw 20-25 people

pile with swords and bombs on two-wheelers shouting slogans. My shop was the first to be targeted that day. It was a heap of rubble the next time I visited," he said, as he displayed a set of pictures to prove his claim.

The lockdown to contain COVID-19 has also affected business as supply of fresh stock is hard to come by and customers are afraid to visit the market, despite renovation and change in name.

Renovation efforts

The market has been renamed Jamiat Tyre Market to acknowledge the efforts of humanitarian organisation Jamiat Ulma-i-Hind in rebuilding.

Maulana Hakimuddin Qasmi, secretary of Jamiat Ulma-i-Hind, said the organisation took over renovation efforts with the support of shopkeepers who decided to take matters into their own hands.

Work started on February 26 and the market was reopened on July 24. "What happened here was not the destruction of property of individuals but of the nation's property. It is very important to rebuild homes, but if someone is left without employment such a home cannot survive," he said.

One of the affected shopkeepers was Naim Ahmed Khan, who over the past 18 years had built up his establishment into one of the most lucrative and "fanciest" shops in the market, dealing in everything from accessories for superbikes to CNG components.

"The rioters looted my shop and then set it on fire on February 24. I had to sell two truckloads of scrap – rummaged from ransacked remains – in order to renovate and open the shop again. My sons are sitting idle as there are no customers. I never thought I

would see a time in my life when even arranging daily bread would be a struggle. I filed for compensation with the Delhi government on March 3 but nothing has happened so far. The only addition to my life has been piles of paper work," he said.

"I had built the shop through sheer hard work.. Life as I knew it has gone down the drain along with the ashes of my stock," he rued, adding: "Stock worth ₹40 lakh was either looted or destroyed. There has been no business since the market reopened. I used to sell parts valued between ₹20,000 and ₹25,000 all over north India. These days I sell accessories, some of which I rent for display, for as little as ₹150 to survive. Five months ago, I used to sell biker jackets that cost between ₹7,000 and ₹20,000."

Dull business

Sameer Khan, another shopkeeper, said business was almost non-existent and customers were avoiding visits to the market. "Even if customers come, there is lack of fresh stock since supply has been affected due to the lockdown. Whatever the shops had got destroyed. Innumerable families survive on business from this market. There are 5-6 people employed at each shop. Where will they go if things continue like this?" he asked.

Market's president Mohammad Rashid, however, expressed hope. "Not too long ago, we could not bring ourselves to even entertain the thought of our businesses becoming operational again; but it gradually happened. Slowly, but steadily, business is improving. Hopefully, customers too will return to the market in large numbers like before," he said.

Film producer arrested for alleged fraud schemes

He cheated many promising high returns

STAFF REPORTER NEW DELHI

Delhi Police has arrested a film producer from Chandigarh for allegedly duping several people of crores by trapping them into his investment schemes on the pretext of fetching high returns, officials said on Sunday.

The accused Chanderkant Sharma (41), who co-owns CineMirchi Production, has produced two movies – 'The Great Indian Casino', which was released last year, and 'Lust Wala Love' – which is yet to be released, they said.

A probe was initiated against Sharma by the Economic Offence Wing (EOW) of Delhi Police as it received at least 88 complaints against him.

The complainants alleged that they were trapped into a collective investment scheme floated by Sharma through his company M/s Cinemirchi Productions Private Limited. He lured them to invest in entertainment sector and other undefined projects, promising them returns of more than 70%, the police said.

A case was registered against Sharma under various sections of the IPC, the police said.

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DR. O.P. MISHRA
Joint Commissioner of Police (EOW)

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Hard drives, account book seized from Hany Babu's house, says wife

She alleges storage devices were taken without giving her a copy, fears tampering

STAFF REPORTER NEW DELHI

The National Investigating Agency (NIA) on Sunday seized a hard disk, two pen drives, some receipts and an account book of the GN Baba Defence Committee from the house of Hany Babu, Delhi University professor who was recently arrested in the Elgar Parishad case, according to his wife Jenny Rowena.

'Called a friend'
Ms. Rowena, who teaches in the English Department of Miranda House, said around 12 officials visited their house at 7.30 a.m. As she was staying with her daughter, Ms. Rowena did not let the officials in till they could call a friend over.

She said "because they don't have anything right now" despite interrogating him continuously, the investigating agencies were trying



DU professor Hany Babu, who was arrested in the Elgar Parishad case, has a bail hearing on August 4. • FILE PHOTO

to find some evidence before Mr. Babu's bail hearing on August 4.

Apart from the accounts book, receipts related to the committee and bookings at the Press Club of India were also seized, she said.

"They came for specific items," she added.

While Ms. Rowena was not aware of the contents of the hard disks, she said she demanded a clone of the devi-

ces as she was worried about them being tampered with, but was not given the same.

'Bizarre probe'

"They have done it [tamper] before, when they added a folder on his hard disk... Why would Babu put a folder of incriminating evidence on his hard disk?" she said, adding that the investigation was "becoming more and more bizarre".

The union added that both Mr. Babu and his wife are known for "their commitment to the cause of the anti-caste struggle, social justice and have actively taken up the matter of denial of OBC seats in DU through RTIs and social mobilisation, forcing the authorities to uphold the letter and spirit of constitutional provisions".

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BSF jawan,
two smugglers
arrested

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHANDIGARH

The Punjab police on Sunday said they have busted another Pakistan-backed cross border drugs and weapons smuggling racket, with the arrest of two smugglers and yet another BSF constable, posted along the Pakistan border in Tarn Taran district.

DGP Dinkar Gupta said the Jalandhar rural police, which unearthed the racket, had recovered a .30 bore pistol (made in China), along with five live rounds and ₹24.50 lakh as drug money, from the three – identified as Surmail Singh, Gurjant Singh and BSF constable Rajendra Prashad.

The smugglers revealed that they were working for a man who was closely linked with Pakistan-based smugglers for smuggling of heroin and weapons, Mr. Gupta said.

Assam decides to unlock as virus positivity rate declines

Relaxation follows decision to reopen educational institutions from September 1

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GUWAHATI



Himanta Biswa Sarma
• FILE PHOTO.

The Assam government on Sunday announced a slew of lockdown relaxations but as an experiment for 12 days in view of the decline in the COVID-19 positivity rate.

This follows the decision on reopening schools and colleges from September 1 if the situation improves and the Centre gives the go-ahead.

An order issued by the State government, effective from 7 p.m. on Sunday, said the permitted activities would be allowed till 7 p.m. on August 14. The State might open up further from August 15 if the infection rate does not get worse. State lockdown, however, will remain on Saturdays and Sundays until decided otherwise.



Himanta Biswa Sarma
• FILE PHOTO.

have been allowed to function for five days a week with adherence to social distancing. The government has also allowed inter-district movement of people but only on Mondays and Tuesdays.

Offices, banks to open
All government offices, banks, insurance companies, etc., have been allowed to operate with 100% workforce except pregnant women subject to buses ferrying the staff. Non-contact sports too have been allowed in open space on the condition of maintaining social distancing.

"The decisions were made after due consideration of the situation and the latest directives issued by the Union Ministry of Home Affairs," a government spokesperson said.

However, cinema halls, swimming pools, parks, theatres, bars, auditoriums, assembly halls and similar places of public gathering and social, political, sports, entertainment, academic, religious functions and other large congregations shall remain prohibited.

Assam has so far recorded 41,726 COVID-19 cases, including 101 deaths. There are currently 10,180 active cases. Health Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said Assam's mortality rate of 0.24% is the lowest in the country and the recovery rate of 75% is the fourth best.

He lauded police personnel for donating plasma at a camp on Saturday. Officials said 67 personnel had turned up but 43 were found eligible after the screening.

Lessons not learnt from earlier Assam oil well blowouts: WII

Impact study at Baghjan flags leaching of oil in water and soil

RAHUL KARMAKAR
GUWAHATI

The Wildlife Institute of India (WII) has slammed a petroleum exploration major for not learning any lesson from two earlier oil well blowouts in Assam during the past 15 years and taking steps to restore the environment.

The observation was in the context of the May 27 blowout at Baghjan natural gas well number 5, one of 23 that Oil India Limited (OIL) operates near the Dibrugarh-Saikhowa National Park in eastern Assam's Tinsukia district. The well burst into flames, yet to be doused, on June 9.

The Dehradun-based WII

was one of the agencies engaged to carry out the blowout impact study from May 29 to July 7. It submitted a 178-page report to the government on July 15, flagging the poor management of oil spills from wells and emergency response readiness and effectiveness during major accidents.

Major damage

"The oil well spill due to blowout at Baghjan has destroyed 60-70 hectares around the site, which includes crop fields, grasslands and swamps. The oil spread out not only on land but also dispersed into the surrounding rivers and wetlands," the report said.

"There is a leakage of hazardous and toxic chemicals... There is a substantial decline in the biodiversity of the area, resulting in an unsuitable habitat for aquatic and terrestrial life, which is clearly visible in the mortalities observed. Humans in this area are also impacted," it said.

The WII report cited two earlier blowouts – at Dikom and Naharkatia-Deohal – to underscore the damage done to water and soil due to leaching of oil. But in Assam, "The entire focus seems to be on closure of well and no restorative process is put in place for remediation of the effect of oil in the terrestrial or aquatic system", it said.

SIDHARTH YADAV
BHOPAL

"They came for men and women but not us," lamented Devi Singh, 30, from the Mangalwara gharana [family] of Bhopal's transgender community. Sitting at a haveli in the old city, she pines to return to work soon – collecting donations door-to-door – but for the lockdown, as no relief has reached them so far.

Vehicular traffic, marriages, religious festivals and birthdays – social gatherings now restricted in view of COVID-19 – brought the only income for Ms. Singh, head of a household nurturing 17 transgender persons dependent on collections from the once-bustling New Market. "The crowd is our earning but the pandemic has stolen that away," said Ms. Singh, bidding

time singing bhajans at the haveli.

Around 500 members of the Mangalwara and Budhwara gharanas here, with no formal employment and already battling discrimination and stigma, are awaiting the easing of movement restrictions and businesses to get back on track for donors to be charitable.

"The economy is floundering under the lockdown, so how can people think of giving to us?" asked Ms. Singh. "But even if gurus have to stay hungry, chelon ko bhookha nahi rehne denge. [We may starve but we will not let our disciples go hungry]." The meals, now chapatis with chutney, are two-time instead of three a day earlier. Initially,

the gharanas distributed food items in slums, not knowing the lockdown would persist this long, draining their savings.

Each transgender household among the gharanas, with areas divided for collection, earlier made ₹20-50,000 a month. But marriages are small scale now, birthdays a closed affair. "Our yearly peak collection time during the monsoon is going by," said Tamanna Jaan, 41, head of a 15-member household dependent on the Khajuri area.

Even the yearly procession called 'Bhujariya', which invites more than 1,500 transgender persons from across the country days after rakshabandhan, will be smaller this year.

"It's a yearly ritual to invite

rain that began centuries ago on the insistence of local rulers. To keep the tradition alive, we will organise it this year too but with precautions," said Shilpa Tiwari Nair, 50, head of a 35-member household under whom BHEL and Ashoka Garden areas fall.

Different traditions

Those belonging to the Mangalwara gharana claim their tradition to dancers in royal courts while the Budhwara gharana derives its heritage from medieval court harems. Bhopal, in its uniqueness, is the only city to be a home to both, claim the members.

"Though homosexuality was decriminalised two years ago, the ghosts of the archaic law, declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Court, still haunt us," said Ms. Singh.

Relief eludes the transgender gharanas of Bhopal

Their income from social functions and festivities has dried up due to the COVID-19 restrictions



Transgender members of the Mangalwara gharana in Bhopal. • SIDHARTH YADAV

792 new virus cases reported in Punjab

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHANDIGARH

Punjab recorded 792 new COVID-19 cases on Sunday and reported 18 more deaths, taking the toll in the State to 423, according to an

official statement.

The major chunk of new cases, 147 and 100, were reported from Ludhiana and Patiala districts respectively. The Health Department said the active cases were 5,964

and 11,466 patients have so far recovered.

In Haryana, 761 new cases and five deaths were reported on Sunday, taking the total number of cases to 36,519 in the State.

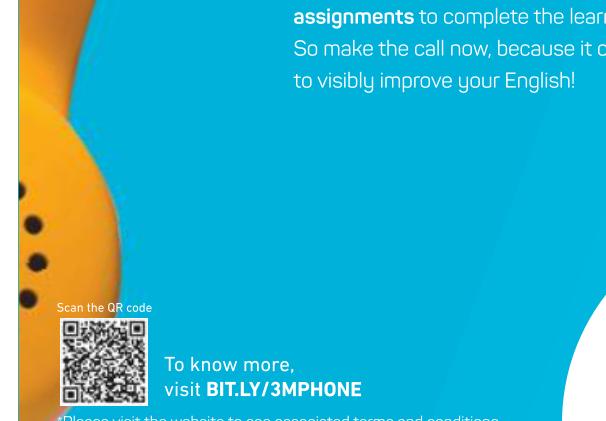
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U.P. govt. recommends CBI probe into kidnap-murder of technician

Police allowed accused to escape with ransom, alleges family

OMAR RASHID
LUCKNOW

The Uttar Pradesh government on Sunday recommended a CBI inquiry into the kidnapping and murder of a Kanpur lab technician whose family had accused the police of allegedly allowing the kidnappers to escape with a ransom of ₹30 lakh.

Sanjeet had gone missing on June 23 following which an FIR was lodged under charges of kidnapping on June 26. The first ransom call was received on June 29, said police.

Sanjeet's family had alleged that he was kidnapped in June, following which they were asked to arrange a ransom of ₹30 lakh and hand it over to the kidnappers. The family claimed they threw a bag containing the cash on a road from the top of a flyover as instructed in the presence of police force who could not prevent the kidnappers from escaping with the bag and also failed to get Sanjeet back.

"The State government has decided to recommend a CBI inquiry into the incident in Barra Kanpur on the request of the family," a government spokesperson said.

On July 24, an IPS officer was among 11 police personnel suspended for negligence. It was found that lab technician Sanjeet Yadav had been killed and his body dumped into a river in June.

Five persons, including a woman, were arrested on charges of kidnapping and murder, police said. The ac-

cused were known to him and two of them worked with him at a previous lab.

Sanjeet had gone missing on June 23 following which an FIR was lodged under charges of kidnapping on June 26. The first ransom call was received on June 29, said police.

Sanjeet's family had alleged that he was kidnapped in June, following which they were asked to arrange a ransom of ₹30 lakh and hand it over to the kidnappers. The family claimed they threw a bag containing the cash on a road from the top of a flyover as instructed in the presence of police force who could not prevent the kidnappers from escaping with the bag and also failed to get Sanjeet back.

The accused persons had confessed to the police that Sanjeet was murdered on June 26 or 27 by them along

with other friends and they dumped the body in the Panjnad river, the district police chief said last month.

The accused were identified by the police as Gyanendra Yadav, Kuldeep Goswami, Neelu Singh, Ramji Shukla and Preeti Sharma.

On June 22, Kuldeep called Sanjeet and he had barely crossed 500 metres on his motorcycle from his workplace that the four men took him in a car saying they were going for Gyanendra's birthday party.

The accused and Sanjeet started drinking alcohol in the car but the victim's drink was laced with a sedative. He was taken to a rented apartment in an unconscious state.

On June 26, Sanjeet tried to escape, and the next day the accused strangled him as they feared getting caught, police said.

Rescued child labourers clear Class 10 exam with flying colours

They will now step into the next level of higher studies

SATYASUNDAR BARIK
BHUBANESWAR

In a few months from now, Jitendra Naik will step into college to pursue his higher studies, which is something he could not have dreamt of six years ago when he was doing the dishes in a hotel as a child labourer in Odisha's Mayurbhanj district.

Like Jitendra, his schoolmate Ajay Kumar Patra too cleared this year's matriculation examination with flying colours. He was rescued while working as a daily wagger around 2014.

Along with them, ten other

students, mostly tribals and rescued from child labour, have cleared the exam.

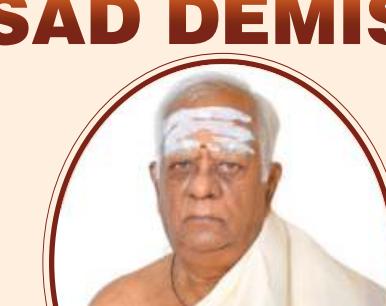
Under normal circumstances, their milestones would have called for a big celebration, given the difficult circumstances they overcame. However, the news received a rather muted reception due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

"I don't dream big. My next challenge is to complete the college. I have requested my relatives to give financial assistance to help me climb the next ladder of education," said Jitendra. Ajay, however,

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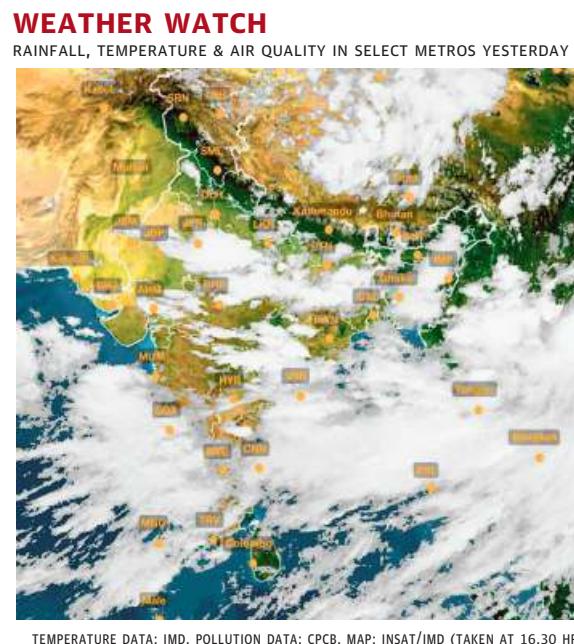
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TEMPERATURE DATA: IMD; POLLUTION DATA: CPCB, MAP: INSAT/MD (TAKEN AT 16.30 HRS)

Forecast for Monday: Heavy/very heavy rainfall likely at a few/ isolated places over Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram, Tripura, Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Odisha, Madhya Pradesh, central Maharashtra, Marathwada, Vidarbha, Konkan & Goa, Telangana, coastal Karnataka, Kerala and Andaman & Nicobar Islands

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala33.2	28.6	24.4	Kozhikode	16.6...	29.0...	24.4
Ahmedabad37.0	27.4	24.3	Kurnool33.3...	24.3	
Aizawl	7	35.9	20.9	Lucknow	0.4...	34.6...	27.2
Allahabad	15.8	34.8	26.8	Madurai	0.5...	36.4...	26.0
Bengaluru27.8	20.8	22.4	Mangaluru	82.5...	27.0...	22.4
Bhopal34.5	25.8	24.2	Mumbai	0.2...	33.5...	26.2
Bhubaneswar	5.6	36.2	26.2	Mysuru	10...	28.0...	20.8
Chandigarh	31.6	34.5	25.8	Patna	6.7...	37.0...	26.2
Chennai35.1	26.8	24.3	Pond Blair	43.4...	27.9...	23.6
Coimbatore	0.9	30.6	21.9	Puducherry	22.4...	34.6...	24.7
Dehradun32.4	24.2	22.3	Pune	0.1...	32.8...	22.3
Gangtok	0.3	25.6	18.6	Raipur35.0...	25.5	
Goa	6.8	29.4	25.0	Ranchi32.8...	24.6	
Guwahati35.9	26.5	24.7	Shillong	31.2...	25.6...	18.5
Hubballi25.0	22.0	21.9	Shimla	0.4...	27.6...	18.9
Hyderabad	24.2	33.6	23.8	Srinagar33.0...	16.2	
Imphal	1.9	32.0	23.5	Thiruvananthapuram	8.3...	29.1...	23.3
Jaipur37.4	25.8	24.7	Tiruchi34.8...	26.1	
Kochi	37	27.6	23.8	Vijayawada36.2...	27.8	
Kohima27.2	18.8	17.8	Visakhapatnam34.8...	27.8	
Kolkata	2	35.9	28.8	(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)			

Pollutants in the air you are breathing

CITIES	SO ₂	NO _x	CO	PM2.5	PM10	CODE
Ahmedabad	24	.31	.44	.37	.71	...
Bengaluru38	.29	.63	—	...	■■■■■
Chennai	3	.13	.61	.63	—	■■■■■
Delhi	17	.31	.104	.35	—	■■■■■
Hyderabad	.6	.53	.17	.13	.16	■■■■■
Kolkata	11	.21	.11	.51	.58	■■■■■
Lucknow	.8	.12	.55	.44	.104	■■■■■
Mumbai	60	.15	.2	.16	.16	■■■■■
Pune	16	.6	.51	.15	.16	■■■■■
Visakhapatnam	13	.29	.19	.34	.54	■■■■■

Yesterday

In observation made at 4.00 p.m., Nanded, Gulbarga recorded overall AQI score of 208 indicating an unhealthy level of pollution. In contrast, Aizawl, Mizoram recorded a healthy AQI score of 11.

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.

NO_x: 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

Maharashtra tally crosses 4.40 lakh with 9,509 cases

State records 260 more deaths; 9,926 patients recover



Providing utmost care: Healthcare workers conduct door-to-door screening at a housing society in Mankurd on Sunday. ■ EMMANUEL YOGINI

SHOUMOJIT BANERJEE

PUNE

Maharashtra recorded 9,509 new COVID-19 cases on Sunday, taking its total case tally to 4,41,228. The State also reported 260 deaths, pushing its death toll to 15,576.

Mumbai recorded 1,105 new cases, raising its case load to 1,16,436, of which 21,394 are active cases. With 49 more deaths, the city's death toll has risen to 6,447.

The total recoveries in the State has climbed to 2,76,809, with 9,926 patients being discharged, while the number of active cases has dipped to 1,48,573, said State Health Department officials.

"The State's case fatality rate has marginally dipped to 3.53%, while its recovery rate has risen to 62.74%," said State Surveillance Officer Dr. Pradeep Awate.

Pune district reported a surge of over 2,500 cases and 51 fatalities as its tally

and toll rose to 94,911 and 2,226 respectively. The district administration, however, said the number of active cases was less than 29,000.

In the Mumbai Metropolitan Region, Thane district reported 16 deaths to take its toll to 1,078. With 499 new cases, the district's case tally to 1,16,436, of which 21,394 are active cases. With 15 deaths taking the area's cumulative death toll to 310, while 208 new cases took the total case tally to 12,441.

Kalyan-Dombivli reported 12 fatalities, pushing its death count to 456, while 402 cases took its case load to 23,347. Navi Mumbai recorded 400 new cases, taking its total cases to 17,819. Eight deaths saw its cumulative toll climb to 461.

Satara district saw a spike of 215 cases, taking its total tally to 4,290, of which 1,689 are active cases. Six deaths took the district's toll to 150.

Solapur district in Pune division reported 12 more fatalities, pushing its death toll to 523. With 184 new cases, the district's total case tally has climbed to 9,538, of which 4,250 are active cases.

Nashik, a major hotbed in north Maharashtra, reported a spike of 390 cases as its cumulative case load rose to 15,617, of which 5,547 are active. With eight more deaths, the district's death toll has reached 483. Raigad reported 247 new cases as its total tally touched 9,901. With five more deaths, its cumulative toll has now reached 242.

Dr. Awate said, "Till date, of a total of 22,55,701 laboratory samples, 4,41,228 (19.56%) have tested positive. Nearly 61,000 samples across the State were tested in the last 24 hours." He said a total of 9,25,269 people across the State are in home quarantine, while 37,944 are in institutional quarantine.

Interrogation of the accused revealed that on July 26 afternoon, the victim and a friend had gone to a waterfall to bathe. The accused were also present at the spot and they tried speaking to her. But she ignored them.

CM stands by city police

"Mr. Fadnavis should understand that this is the same police with whom he worked for the last five years. It is the same police that has given so many sacrifices during the fight against COVID-19. I would like to condemn those who are raising questions over the efficiency of the police," Mr. Thackeray had said.

He said the Mumbai Police is not inefficient. "If anyone has any proof about the case, they can bring it to us and we will interrogate and punish the guilty. However, please don't use this case as an excuse to create friction between the States of Maharashtra and Bihar. Bringing politics into the case is really the most deplorable thing to do," Mr. Thackeray had said.

Anil Deshmukh says actor's death is being politicised

Minister speaks on allegations in Sushant Singh Rajput case

ALOK DESHPANDE

MUMBAI

Breaking his silence on the ongoing series of allegations in the death of actor Sushant Singh Rajput, Maharashtra Home Minister Anil Deshmukh on Sunday said the case is now being politicised for personal gains.

Sushant Singh Rajput was found dead in his Bandra home on June 14. ■ FILE PHOTO

leaving no stone unturned.

Mr. Fadnavis and senior BJP MLA Ashish Shelar had recently demanded a CBI investigation into the death of the actor, prompting a riposte from Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray.

a particular party.

Mr. Deshmukh said the Mumbai Police have already begun its investigation into the unfortunate incident. "Even if the Bihar Police registered an offence in Patna, under Chapters 12 and 13 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, it has to be investigated, inquired and tried by the police and courts within whose jurisdiction the offence is committed," he said.

The Home Minister also said the State police are inquiring into the case professionally and are competent enough to find out the truth,

Roha murder case: investigation reveals victim was gang-raped

Seven booked, including a minor

RAINA ASSAINAR

NAVI MUMBAI

Close to a week after the rape and murder of a 14-year-old girl from Roha, the investigation into the incident has revealed that it was a case of gang rape.

After the first arrest on July 27, the police identified six accomplices, including a minor. "When we arrested the accused, we thought he was the only perpetrator, but his contradictory statements raised suspicion and he later confessed that there were more people involved," police inspector Jamil Shaikh from Local Crime Branch (LCB), Raigad, said. While the minor was apprehended, the other five were arrested on Friday night.

When she left her house at 5.45 p.m. to pick up her grandfather from Tamhanshet village, which is three km away, the man alerted his accomplices. They then waited for the girl near the turning of a ghat and blocked her way.

When the men made advances at her, the girl abused

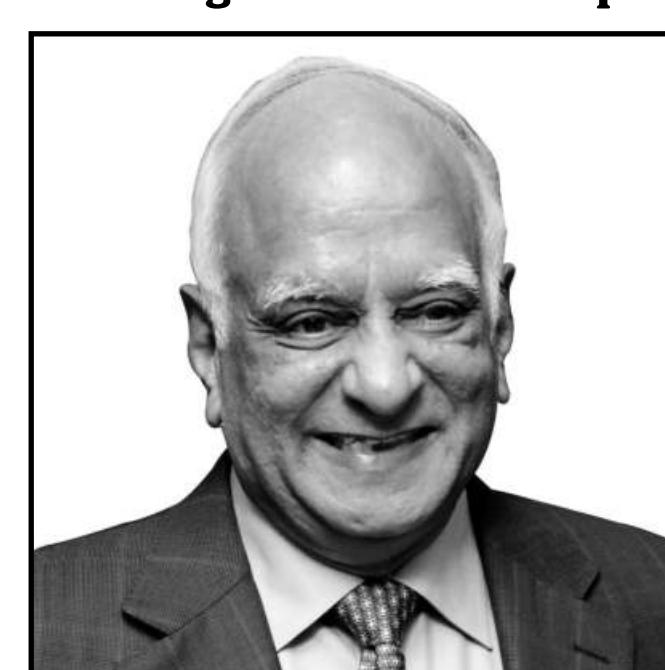
them. One of the accused then slapped her and dragged her into a nearby valley, where she was raped. When the victim tried to resist, the accused hit her head with a stone and killed her. A police officer privy to the investigation revealed that the girl was also abused after death. Police officers have refused to reveal the names of the accused considering the sensitive nature of the case.

Accused in early 20s

Mr. Gunjal said, "All of them are in their early 20s and worked as labourers." He added that a charge of gang rape has been added to the case along with murder and criminal conspiracy under sections of the Indian Penal Code and the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act.

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74 IPS officers transferred in Gujarat

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AHMEDABAD

The Gujarat government has transferred 74 Indian Police Service (IPS) officers and appointed new police chiefs for Ahmedabad, Surat and Vadodara.

The



Contraction slows

As lockdown restrictions ease, the economy sees the first signs of recovery

The latest data on output at the eight core industries point to tentative signs that the pandemic-spurred economic contraction may have begun to bottom out. Commerce Ministry provisional figures show that while overall production at the infrastructure industries extended their year-on-year decline to a fourth straight month in June, shrinking 15%, the pace at which activity contracted slowed for a second consecutive month following April's precipitous 37% plunge. The sector-wise performance also affirms that the gradual reopening since June appears to have helped tease back some smattering of demand in the economy. Of the seven industries that extended their contractions, only coal shrank at a faster pace (-15.5%) than in May, when production had declined 14%. Refinery products, the largest weight on the index contributing 28%, shrank 8.9% marking an improvement from the 21.3% contraction seen the previous month. The lifting of restrictions on inter and intra-State movement of persons and goods revived both vehicular movement and, consequently, demand for auto fuels. With personal modes of mobility preferred given the fear of infection, petroproduct consumption grew 11% month-on-month in June. Electricity output too fell at a slower 11% pace than the preceding month's 14.8% slump, again signalling an uptick in demand from some manufacturing clusters including in western and northern India.

Among the other sectors, while steel production continued to tumble – output shrank by more than a third (-33.8%) from June 2019 – cement appeared to have put the worst behind as urban construction and projects under the rural job guarantee scheme spurred demand. Cement output fell 6.9%, a sharp deceleration in the pace of decline from May's 21.4% contraction. Fertilizers, the only industry to post growth for a second straight month, however, saw the expansion ease to 4.2%, from 7.5% in May. Still, with monsoon activity above normal so far this year, kharif sowing was almost 14% higher as on July 31 than at the same time in 2019. With the IMD forecasting above average rainfall in August and September as well, the outlook for the agriculture-reliant rural economy is far more promising than for most other sectors. To be sure, the economy is still a fair distance from a sustained turnaround with other data flagging the risks to a recovery. For one, the significant shortfalls in GST collection point to the difficulties the central and State governments are facing in garnering crucially needed revenue. This has already swelled the fiscal deficit at the end of the first quarter to 83% of the full year's target. With the new infections curve showing no signs of plateauing as yet, policymakers have the unenviable task of stemming the COVID-19 tide without dampening economic momentum.

Fraudulent claims

In election postponement talk, Trump sought to cast doubts on integrity of electoral process

President Donald Trump imperilled the confidence of his fellow citizens in the November 2020 U.S. presidential election, when he asked via Twitter whether he ought to postpone it due to concerns surrounding the possibility of fraud owing to mail-in voting. This form of voting, which includes absentee voting but can include broader measures for voting via the postal system, is expected to occur on a large scale owing to social distancing measures necessitated by the COVID-19 pandemic. His tweet has raised a furor, with speculation that the President may be toying with the idea of delaying the democratic exercise beyond November 3 after trailing his Democratic challenger, former Vice-President Joe Biden, in the opinion polls. The U.S. elections, the dates for which are fixed by federal statute through Congress, have never in history been delayed, including during the Civil War era and the World Wars. Further, five States offer universal mail-in voting to all their registered voters. Nevertheless, this is not even the first occasion on which the 45th President has lashed out at mail-in voting as a fraudulent process. In May 2020 he attacked the California government for sending out mail-in ballots and was swiftly fact-checked by Twitter, showing little evidence to support the claim that mail-in voting will lead to fraud.

While it is safe to assume that there is a near-negligible chance of the election getting postponed, principally due to the wisdom of the country's founding fathers in separating power across the executive, legislature and judiciary, the bigger question that looms in the shadow of the first Trump presidency is the damage done to the fabric of American democracy so far. At the formal level, Mr. Trump has suffered the ignominy of being only the third U.S. President ever to get impeached by the House of Representatives, on the serious charges of abuse of power, potentially including a compromise of national security involving a foreign government, and of obstructing justice during a Congressional investigation into allegations of wrongdoing against him. However, even this political embarrassment pales in comparison to the torrents of hateful rhetoric associated with his administration. Racism, sexism, xenophobia, nativism and economic and geopolitical isolationism appear to be the buzzwords that have shaped White House policy outlook since 2017. The sheer depth of rancour and disenchantment that this has generated across America can only be understood over the decades to come. Now, with exactly three months remaining until the scheduled presidential poll, voters at last have an opportunity to ask themselves whether their rightful indignation about elitism and stasis in Washington warranted electing in a President who brazenly disregarded innumerable tenets of the law.

Rebuild India's confidence, revive the economy

The path to a sustained recovery is to improve sentiments in society, using economic tools



MANMOHAN SINGH &
PRAVEEN CHAKRAVARTY

These are extraordinarily difficult times for our nation and the world. People are gripped with the fear of disease and death from COVID-19. This fear is ubiquitous and transcends geography, religion and class. The inability of nations to control the spread of the novel coronavirus and the lack of a confirmed cure for the disease have exacerbated people's concerns. Such a heightened sense of anxiety among people can cause tremendous upheavals in the functioning of societies. Consequently, disruption of the normal social order will inevitably impact livelihoods and the larger economy.

The economic impact of COVID-19 has been much discussed. There is unanimity among economists that the global economy will experience one of its worst years in history. India is no exception and cannot buck the trend. While estimates vary, it is clear that, for the first time in many decades, India's economy will contract significantly.

An event with deep impact
Economic contraction is not merely a GDP number for economists to analyse and debate. It means a reversal of many years of progress. A significant number among the weaker sections of our society may slip back into poverty, a rare occurrence for a developing nation. Many enterprises may shut down. An entire generation may be lost due to severe unemployment. A contracting economy can adversely impact our ability to feed and educate our children owing to a shortage of financial resources. The deleterious impact of an economic contraction is long

and deep, especially on the poor.

It is thus imperative to act with utmost urgency to nurse the economy back to good health. The slowdown in economic activity is both a function of external factors such as the lockdown and behavioural changes of people and enterprises, driven by fear. The foundation for reviving our economy is to inject confidence back in the entire ecosystem. People must feel confident about their lives and livelihoods. Entrepreneurs must feel confident of reopening and making investments. Bankers must feel confident about providing capital. Multilateral organisations must feel confident enough to provide funding to India. Sovereign ratings agencies must feel confident about India's ability to fulfil its financial obligations and restore economic growth.

On NREGA and cash support

There is extreme duress among India's poor. At a time when agriculture activity has been robust, data show that just in the month of June, 62 million people demanded work under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) programme at minimum wages.

This is thrice the usual number and 10 times more than the total number employed by the entire listed corporate sector. It is evident that most of them are displaced non-agricultural workers, struggling to make ends meet. Such is the scale and enormity of despair in our labour force. Fortunately, the MGNREGA programme has proved to be a bedrock of support in such times but it is not enough.

A meaningful cash transfer can restore confidence in these families. Money in the hands of people can provide an immediate sense of security and confidence, which is the cornerstone to restoring economic normalcy. India is perhaps the only large democracy that has not provided direct cash assistance of a significant amount during the COVID-19 crisis. There seems to be a misplaced sense of apprehension that providing large cash assistance may deter people from returning to the workforce when needed and starve industry of labour. Such fears are stale and unfounded. In the United States, as per reports, nearly three-quarters of unemployed workers received higher pay and benefits under their government's COVID-19 assistance than from their employers. But this has not prevented American industry from reopening. While it is inordinately late, it is still prudent to provide a significant sum as direct cash assistance to the poor which can inject confidence in them to weather this COVID-19 storm.



GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCKPHOTO

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Look at the financial system

There is also a dire need to restore confidence in the financial system which acts as the vital lubricant for the economy. COVID-19 assistance measures undertaken by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) and the government such as interest rate reductions, credit guarantee and liquidity enhancement schemes are welcome steps, but they have largely failed since banks are not confident of lending. Reviving the health of the banking sector is not merely about capital infusion or disinvestment of public sector banks. Allowing institutions such as the RBI, public sector banks, bankruptcy boards, securities and insurance regulators to function freely and professionally is the foundational step to restoring confidence in the financial system. It is critical to allow processes such as the insolvency process to function smoothly without intervention. If there is confidence among people to spend and among bank-

ers to lend, then the private sector will spontaneously derive the confidence to reopen and invest. When firms feel confident of availability of capital and consumers, they do not need much else to kick-start production and investment. Corporate tax cuts, such as the one announced last year, are misguided luxuries that will neither boost private investment nor are fiscally affordable. Knee-jerk reaction such as protection of Indian industry through trade restrictions cannot catalyse economic activity immediately but instead, is a dangerous reversal of established industrial policy that has generated enormous economic gains over the last three decades.

A large direct cash assistance to people, improving capital adequacy of banks and providing credit guarantee schemes for corporates require significant financial resources. Government finances are already stretched with a major shortfall in revenues. New avenues for tax revenues are not feasible in the short term. Higher borrowing by the government is inevitable. India cannot afford to be too fiscally restrained in these distressing times.

Government needs to borrow

India must make full use of loan programmes of international institutions such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. Our long track record as an impeccable borrower with no default, timely repayments and full transparency make us an ideal borrower for these institutions.

However, these will not suffice, and the government needs to borrow more.

Some have opined that India should hark back to the old ways of deficit monetisation by the RBI, also known as printing money. This is understandable given the current unforeseen circumstances. But we must be cognisant of the unhealthy impulses that seemingly free money creates for governments. Deficit monetisation

imposes high intangible and institutional costs, as we have experienced in the past. It is perhaps prudent to adopt deficit monetisation as the last resort when all other options are exhausted.

India is confronted with a dangerous trinity of military, health and economic threats. Diverting people's attention from these threats through choreographed events and headlines will not make them disappear. India entered the COVID-19 crisis in a precarious position, with slowing growth, rising unemployment and a choked financial system. The epidemic has manifestly made it more painful.

Setting things right

It is important to enlarge one's diagnosis of India's economic woes from mere GDP numbers to the underlying sentiments of fear, uncertainty and insecurity prevalent in people, firms and institutions. Restoring confidence in people through direct cash assistance and other welfare programmes can help them live their lives and spend. Restoring confidence among bankers through autonomy of institutions and processes will help them lend. Restoring confidence among businesses with greater access to capital will help them invest and create jobs. Restoring confidence among international organisations by re-establishing the credibility of our institutions will help get funding assistance and objective sovereign ratings.

Without being lulled into complacency over illusory recovery of headline numbers, the path to India's sustained economic revival is through the philosophical pursuits of improving confidence and sentiments of all in our society, using the economic tools of fiscal and monetary policies.

Dr. Mammooh Singh was the Prime Minister of India from 2004 to 2014. Praveen Chakravarty is a political economist and a senior office-bearer of the Congress party.

The significance of the Char Dham board verdict

It is a setback to Hindutva and a victory for state regulation of temples



FAIZAN MUSTAFA

In a major setback to Hindutva arguments on the state's control of Hindu temples, the Uttarakhand High Court on July 21 upheld the constitutionality of the Uttarakhand Char Dham Devasthanam Management Board Act, 2019 that was surprisingly enacted by the Bharatiya Janata Party government through Hindutva forces are opposed to such kind of laws.

All religious reforms are resisted. Thus the Sabrimala judgment (2018) saw huge public protests similar to those after the Shah Bano judgment (1985). From the bogey of 'minority appeasement', the nation has now moved to injustices against Hindus. Hindus are under threat is the new battle cry. This writer favours grant of autonomy to Hindu temples in managing their religious affairs as state control of temples is neither constitutionally permissible nor desirable.

But in the last six years, the central government has not taken any initiative to release temples from the clutches of the state.

The Uttarakhand law allegedly takes control of four of the most sacred places in the State including Kedarnath and Badrinath, which was challenged by MP and former Minister Subramanian Swamy. Such laws are in place for a number of temples such as Jagannath Puri (1955), Vaishno Devi (1988), Shrinathji at Nathdwara

(1959), Mahakal at Ujjain (1982), Kashi Vishwanath (1983), and Tirupati Balaji temple (1987). Interestingly even Manu's code provided that priests do not have the absolute right in temple management; instead, kings (state) in ancient India had a vital say in temple management. Even Kedarnath and Badrinath were under state management as prescribed by the Shri Badrinath and Kedarnath Temples Act, 1939. The newly enacted law merely replaced this Act. The Chief Justice of the Uttarakhand High Court, Ramesh Ranjan-Led Bench in its 129 page order not only cited 144 judgments but also examined all issues connected with the violation of religious rights of Hindus in temple management.

Laws upheld by the judiciary
Though Hindutva forces blame the Congress party and secularism for these laws, these laws were upheld by courts. Thus, the Shri Jagannath Temple Act was upheld by the Supreme Court of India in *Raja Birakishore vs The State Of Orissa* (1964), the Nathdwara Temple Act in *Tilkayat Shri Govindalaji Maharaj vs The State Of Rajasthan And Others* (1963), the Tirupati Balaji law in *Shri A.S. Narayana Deekshithulu vs State Of Andhra Pradesh & Ors* (1996) and the Uttar Pradesh Sri Kashi Vishwanath Temple Act in *Sri Adi Visheshwara Of Kashi ... vs State Of U.P. And Ors* (1997). There are consistent judgments of the Supreme Court such as *State Of Orissa And Sri Jagannath ... vs Chintamani Khuntia And Ors* (1997) and *M.P. Gopalakrishnan Nair & Anr vs State Of Kerala & Ors* (2005) holding that the management of

temple is primarily a secular act.

Chief Justice Ranganathan (he retired on July 27, 2020) accordingly held that though offerings (of money, fruits, flowers or any other thing) are given to the deity, religious practice ends with these offerings, and that collection and distribution of these offerings for the maintenance and upkeep of temple are secular activities.

The Supreme Court in *Nar Hari Sastri And Others vs Shri Badrinath Temple Committee* (1952) had already held Badrinath to be a public temple of Hindus and not confined to any family or denomination, and that secular activities of these temples can be regulated by the state. The Court explicitly said that legislature is not bound to demonstrate mismanagement of temples while enacting such laws.

One of the major arguments of Hindutva victimhood is that this kind of state control is absent for Muslim waqfs and Sikh gurudwaras. But then as many as 27 waqf laws have been enacted so far. The Shiromani Gurudwara Parbandhak Committee Act too was enacted in 1925. In the latest judgment, Chief Justice Ranganathan rightly observed that it is not necessary that the legislature should make a law uniformly applicable to all religious or charitable institutions or endowments. Acknowledging the diversities of our society, he went to say in paragraph 34 that 'enact-

ment of a uniform law in one go, though desirable, may perhaps be counter-productive'. Thus, the concept of one nation, one law was impliedly rejected.

Moreover the right to management under Article 26 (Freedom to manage religious affairs) can only be claimed after the fact of establishment has been proved. Dr. Swamy could not prove 'who established the Badrinath temple after Hindu temples were destroyed by Buddhists' and who has been deprived of right to management.

The judgment thus acknowledges that the history of temple destruction in India certainly pre-dates Muslim invasion.

The court held that Article 26 cannot be invoked if the denomination never had the right to manage temple properties. It merely acknowledges the pre-existing right. Dr. Swamy failed to convince the court about any denominational sect having managerial rights in respect of these temples. Relying on earlier decisions, the court clarified that 'in matters of religion', right to management is a guaranteed fundamental right under Article 26(b) but in respect of properties, the right to administer properties under Article 26(c) is to be exercised in 'accordance with law'. Thus, the state is entitled to regulate administration of religious or temple properties by means of validly enacted law. But a law that completely and permanently takes away the right to management will clearly be violative of Article 26(c).

As a denominational sect

The biggest setback to the Hindutva group is the rejection by the

High Court of recognising Sanatan Dharma as a Hindu denominational sect. In paragraph 83, the court observed that the 'Hindu dharma is said to be 'Sanatan', i.e. one which has eternal values: one which is neither time bound nor space bound.' Since all Hindus by and large have faith in Sanatan Dharma, they cannot be equated to any religious denomination, for the chord of a common faith and spiritual organisation which unites the adherents together, is absent.

Citing the *Sabrimala* judgment (2018), the court observed that Hindu believers including those of the Shaivite and Vaishnava forms of worship, are not denominational worshippers. No caste or sub-caste or sect of the Hindu religion, who worship mainly a particular deity or god, can be termed as a religious denomination.

The judgment is likely to be stayed on this point by the Supreme Court as a nine-judge Bench of the court is reviewing the *Sabrimala* verdict on the rights of denominational sects.

Finally, the plea based on Article 31-A (saving of laws providing acquisition of estates) was also rejected though the 2019 Act indeed vested the administration of these temples in the Char Dham board in 'perpetuity' rather than for the limited duration as is permissible under Article 31A(b) because properties of these temples will continue to be owned by the deities and mere possession will be vested with the board.

Faizan Mustafa is Vice-Chancellor of NALSAR University of Law, Hyderabad. The views expressed are personal.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Letters emailed to letters@thehindu.co.in must carry the full postal address and the full name or the name with initials.

Israeli research in India
The partnership between India and Israel to evaluate rapid (in 'less than 30 seconds') COVID-19 testing technologies (Page 1, 'Special' - "ICMR fast-tracks approvals for Israeli research coordinated by DRDO", August 2) sets an example for those countries battling each other with individual vaccines and technologies in the hope of winning the race. "Vaccine Nationalism" is now a trending term. The need is for such international

collaborations, especially with an aim to helping the less advanced and poorer nations.

VISHAL DABAS,

New Delhi

■ The coordination by the DRDO will help provide credence and accountability. It is time for all to shed differences as this is a united fight against a common and unseen enemy. As saliva is the best medium to detect the virus, it is imperative to find a standard medium for transport. International

guidelines should be mandatory for all protocols regarding testing and antigen detection. If done well, this idea can be significant step in the fight against COVID-19.

De. JAYASEKHAR V.P.,

Thayineri, Payanur, Kerala

■ The undue haste with which the Indian Council of Medical Research has expedited approvals to help Israel is worrisome. Material transfer agreements (MTA) have to pass through the stipulated regulatory body's approval. Although this is

do with COVID-19 research, one hopes that these approvals were not waived or overlooked due to governmental pressure.

Issues such as these have to be looked into by regulatory watchdogs as they involve the transfer of sensitive data and a sharing of biological material.

A policy with many a right intention

The NEP has several innovative ideas and daring proposals, but also makes a few problematic assumptions



JANDHYALA B.G. TILAK

Thirty-four years after the last National Policy on Education was introduced, in 1986, the National Education Policy, 2020 has been announced. It has been approved by the Union Cabinet, and will hopefully be approved by Parliament soon. It has several innovative ideas and daring proposals, but also makes a few problematic assumptions.

A majority of the path-breaking proposals submitted by the Dr. K. Kasturirangan Committee, in the 2019 draft National Education Policy, seem to have been approved. Those proposals saw extensive debates and discussions in the country and generated a lot of feedback. Very few important proposals that figured in the draft have been ignored in the final policy. There are a couple of major new proposals in the 2020 policy which were not proposed in the draft or which have been marginally modified from the draft policy. While I welcome the policy as it promises a large set of transformative reforms of the entire education system, I refer to some proposals and issues here.

Bold moves

It is heartening that there are statements in the policy such as "education is a public good" and "the public education system is the foundation of a vibrant democratic society". I wish these statements forcefully guide the formulation of the policy in all aspects. The recognition of education as a public good has important implications for public policy in planning, providing, and financing education. It also has important implications for the state's approach towards private education. In fact, benevolent private players and private philanthropists draw inspiration from the nature of education as a public good. It is public education that contributes to the building of nations, their growth – socially, economically, politically, culturally, and technologically – and the building of a humane society. There are many more statements in the policy that



may be welcomed. For instance, the policy promotes a holistic education as well as "each student's holistic development in both academic and non-academic spheres", emphasises extra-curricular activities, emphasises research, speaks of "substantial investment in a strong, vibrant public education system", and so on.

The major recommendations of the Committee that have been approved include a 5+3+3+4 system in school education that incorporates early childhood care and education; universal education that includes the secondary level; adoption of school complexes; breakfast in the school meal programme; and introduction of vocational education at the upper primary level. A series of reforms have been proposed in higher education too. These include a multidisciplinary system offering choices to students from among a variety of subjects from different disciplines; integrated (undergraduate, post-graduate and research levels) education; a four-year undergraduate programme; and overhauling of the governance structure in higher education. There will be just one regulatory body for the entire sector in the Higher Education Commission of India. The policy also places emphasis on the liberal arts, humanities, and Indian heritage and languages; facilitates selective entry of high-quality foreign universities; aims to increase public investment in education to 6% of the GDP; promises to provide higher education free to about 50% of the students (with scholarships and fee waivers); and aims to increase the gross enrolment ratio in higher education to 50% by 2035. Some of these proposals were suggested by earlier committees such as the Yashpal Committee and C.N.R. Rao Committee, and several experts. As they have immense scope in revi-

talising the system, we may applaud many of these moves.

Some policy decisions are bold. For instance, the policy says, "Wherever possible, the medium of instruction until at least Grade 5... will be the home language/mother tongue/local language/regional language." It also says the three-language formula will be implemented. The first proposal, which should apply to all schools including private schools, will reduce elitism and dualism in schools to a great extent, though one might expect a bolder move like a common school system, which would be a greater equaliser. The three-language formula will promote national integration. Reforms like revamping the University Grants Commission and abolishing the affiliating system were only dreamt of earlier by many experts. Of course, implementation of these audacious reforms is still a major challenge.

Missing in the final policy

What are the proposals or statements that were emphatically made in the draft but are missing in the policy? One important statement that was repeatedly made in the draft policy, that all commercially oriented private institutions will be closed, is missing in the final policy – though the 2020 policy promises closure of sub-standard teacher education institutions only. Now the policy simply states, "The matter of commercialization of education has been dealt with by the Policy through multiple relevant fronts, including, the 'light but tight' regulatory approach that mandates full public self-disclosure of finances", though almost every policymaker and administrator in education recognises that there is a serious problem with the private education sector in India. Second, the draft policy promised doubling

public expenditure on education to 20% of the total government expenditure, from 10%. The 2020 policy simply reaffirms the commitment to allocation of 6% of GDP.

A few other recommendations of the Committee did not find a place in the final policy. They include setting up of a National Education Commission at the national level and a similar one at the State level. There is no mention of State School Education Regulatory Authorities in the 2020 policy. At the State level, the Department of School Education is regarded as the apex body. There is also no promise of 'full' recruitment of teachers at all levels, though the policy promises robust recruitment mechanisms to be put in place.

Among the few new proposals, the establishment of a model Multi-Disciplinary Education and Research University in every district is one. In school education, a National Assessment Centre has been promised to make assessment and evaluation more holistic. The policy, unlike the draft, rightly recognises the need to strengthen the Central Advisory Board of Education.

Apart from a few controversial proposals, a few untenable basic beliefs and assumptions of the Committee prevail. The Committee seems to have great faith in "light but tight" regulation, confidence in the private sector in making honest self-disclosures of all aspects of their operations, and faith in the adequacy of common norms for public and private institutions. It also seems to have faith in the government's ability to implement many reforms – for example, in doing away with the affiliating system and making all colleges autonomous degree-awarding colleges of high quality, ensuring institutional and faculty autonomy, and in the autonomous functioning of institutions of governance with no external interference. Policymakers and administrators have been struggling unsuccessfully with some of these issues for years. A major challenge policymakers will continue to face is how to differentiate the benevolent philanthropic private sector from undesirable but powerful market forces in the education sector and regulate the entry and growth of the latter.

Jandhyala B.G. Tilak is ICSSR National Fellow, New Delhi. jtilak2017@gmail.com

FROM THE READERS' EDITOR

Cyberbullying must stop

Governments, courts and social media companies have done little to address the problem of gender-based cyberbullying



A.S. PANNEERSELVAN

personal attacks, the most important one for me is newsroom diversity. The presence of women journalists in newsrooms was low even in the first decade after India liberalised its economy in 1991. Only in this millennium has the composition of newsrooms become more inclusive. And we cannot permit a few cyberbullies to pull us back to the early centuries.

Disturbing trend

The issue is not restricted to Tamil Nadu or even India; it is a global problem. In June 2019, UNESCO organised a symposium, "Standing Up against online harassment of women journalists – What works?" UNESCO recorded the fact that women journalists face ever-increasing amounts of gender-based threats and attacks, simply for being women. UNESCO's input for the symposium read: "While the Internet is a valuable tool for journalists to acquire and disseminate information, it is also increasingly being utilized by sexist abusers to commit violence on an unprecedented scale. Insults, public shaming, intimidation, hacking and cyberstalking are but a few of the types of behaviour that women journalists are systematically confronted with on the Internet. Faced with the growing ubiquity of online harassment, some women journalists are forced to restrict the scope of issues they report on in order to protect themselves."

While studies since 2012 have been showing a disturbing trend of growing gender-based cyberbullying, unfortunately the governments and courts have done little to address this malady. Women journalist groups have been trying to reach out not only to governments but also to large platform conglomerates like Twitter and Facebook to come up with gender-sensitive algorithms.

On November 2, 2019, the International Day to End Impunity for Crimes against Journalists, a study from International Media Support looked at the status of women in journalism in nine countries across four continents. Titled "The safety of women journalists: Breaking the cycle of silence and violence", it covered a range of issues that affect women in journalism and documented the growing cases of attacks on the Internet and their impact. All researchers who have been studying journalists' safety agree that online stalking has profound emotional and physical consequences for women journalists – many women experience long-lasting fear, anxiety and trauma.

readerseditor@thehindu.co.in

Parents, the first and natural tutors

How low-income parents can start getting more involved in early childhood care and education

NAMYA MAHajan & UTSAV KHERIA

The National Education Policy (NEP) emphatically makes the case for early childhood care and education (ECCE). It says, "Schools providing quality ECCE reap the greatest dividends for children who come from families that are economically disadvantaged." Over 85% of a child's cumulative brain development occurs before the age of six. Yet, over 5 crore children are estimated to not have attained foundational literacy and numeracy in India. At present, says the policy, children from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds do not have access to ECCE.

The NEP lays out a detailed paradigm for educators to provide high-quality ECCE through preschools and anganwadis. It also talks of how parents can be active stakeholders in their children's education. Indeed, it is crucial that we dig deeper into how parents can help, as any learning in school can be reinforced or undone at home. Parents are their children's first and natural tutors at that age. Involving them is necessary to ensure that children learn the foundational skills they need to succeed in school.

But how can low-income parents, with constraints on their time and energy, start getting more involved in ECCE? Through our work with low-income communities and youth, we believe the answer is through AIM (aspiration, information, and motivation and measurement).

Building aspiration
At present, 30% of low-income parents don't send their children to any ECCE institutions. Instead, many opt to send their children to primary school too early, when they are still cognitively and emotionally unprepared for Class 1 studies. These are often the children who get left behind in primary school and beyond, with limited scope for recovery. Evidence suggests that low-income parents do value education from primary school onwards, spending a disproportionate amount of their monthly income on it. However, awareness of the importance of education at the preschool age is missing. Indeed, while high-income parents face a huge amount of social

pressure to help their children achieve developmental milestones before the age of six, low-income parents lack such social incentives. Building aspiration through role modeling, mass media and social media involving examples of celebrities and influencers is the crucial first step.

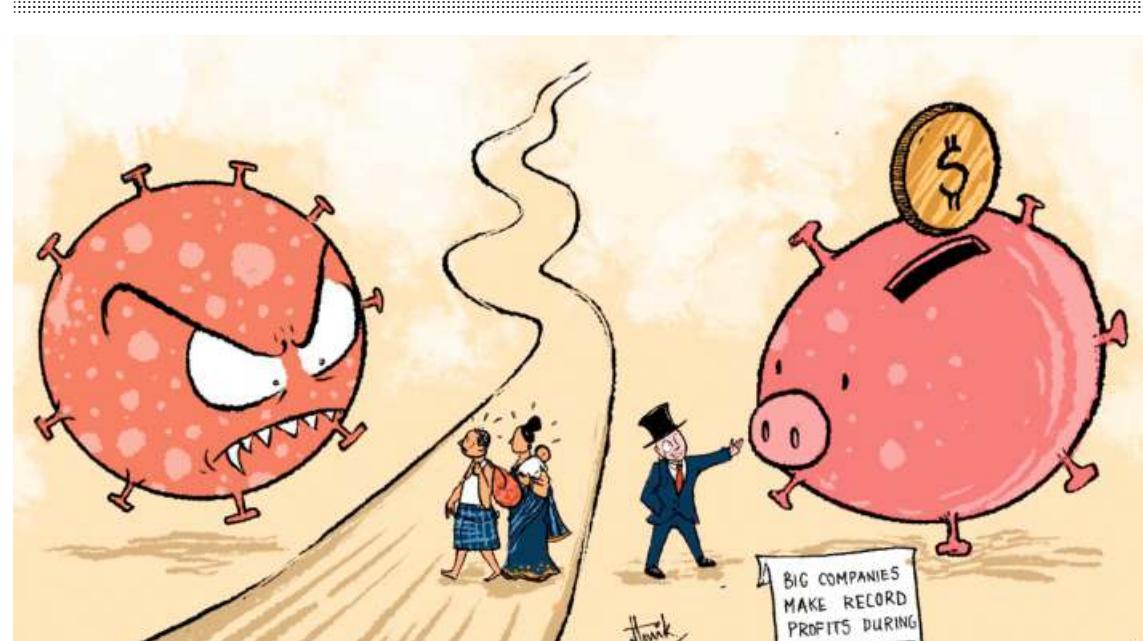
Providing information

Once awareness and aspiration have been built, we must provide low-income parents with educational tools to support their children that they can themselves confidently administer. Preschool-aged children usually have an attention span of 5-15 minutes, which is not enough to focus on learning materials themselves, so parental involvement is necessary. Fortunately, all parents are usually equipped to understand the foundational skills that their children are learning at this age, especially now that 70% of mothers and even more fathers are educated up to Class 5 themselves. We need to assist them in coming through the vast wealth of print and online content. Information must be simplified and contextualised – creation, curation, and dissemination of content that is in their local language, relevant to their context, and relatively convenient to administer is essential.

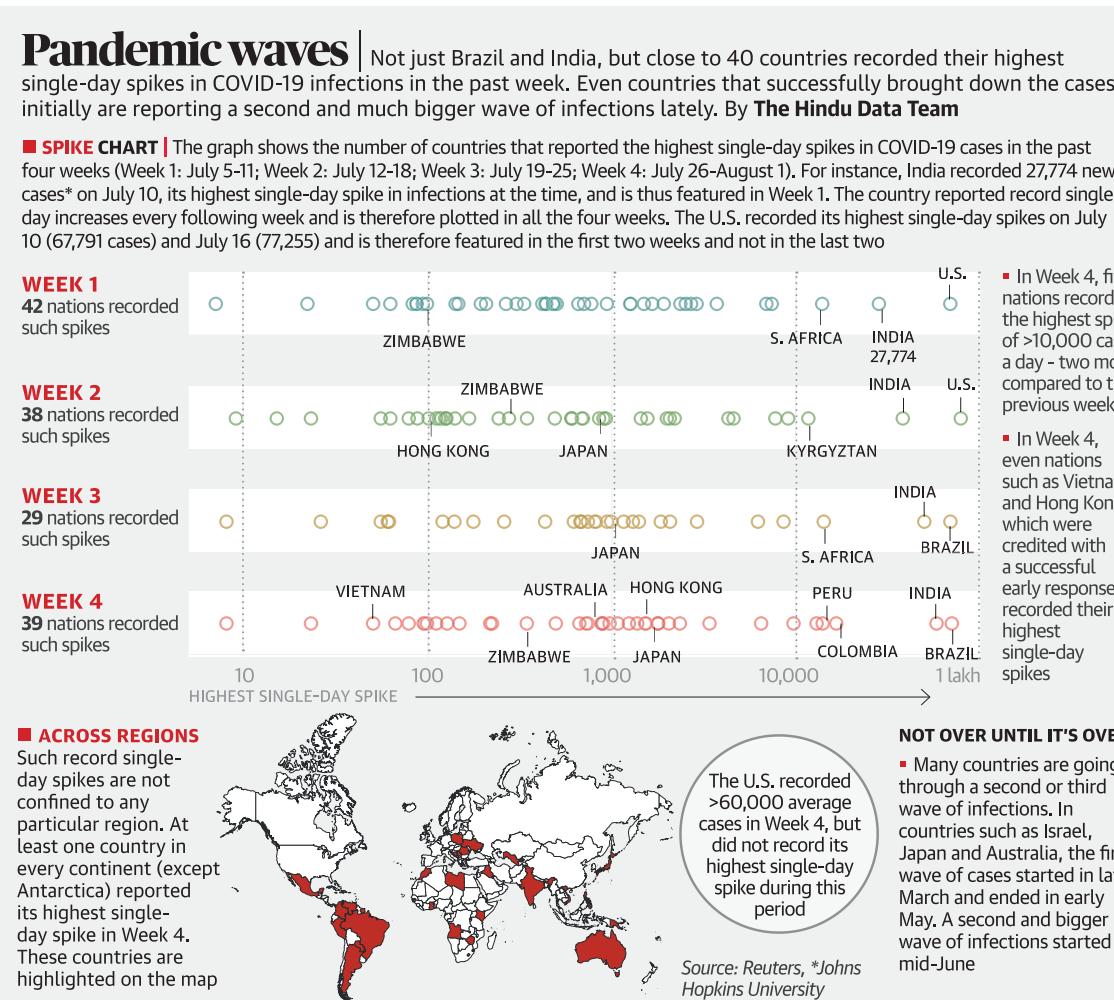
Measuring progress

The last essential piece of the puzzle for sustained engagement from parents is to motivate them on a regular basis and give them measurable indicators of progress and change. Behavioural research on nudges, social incentives, and the power of creating habits demonstrates some possible ways to provide continuous feedback and encouragement. Measurement also acts as a powerful motivation mechanism. The child's progress and growth can be measured through rigorous assessments and through visual learning journeys. Sharing results with parents, and developing plans in partnership with them, can ensure that truly no child is left behind.

Namya Mahajan and Utsav Kheria are co-founders of Rocket Learning, an organisation focusing on school and life readiness for all young children



DATA POINT



The Hindu

FROM THE ARCHIVES

FIFTY YEARS AGO AUGUST 3, 1970

Ceylon's Stateless
(From an editorial)

Those who have watched the agony of the million or so of stateless persons of Indian origin in Ceylon hope that, with the co-author of the Sirimavo-Shastri Pact again firmly in the saddle in the island, the Agreement will be fairly and speedily implemented. The latest directive of Prime Minister Sirimavo Bandaranaike to speed up repatriation of those persons of Indian origin by removing such bottlenecks as the settlement of the provident fund and other dues to such would-be repatriates may well reflect anxiety on her part to get the Pact moving faster. For it is well nigh six years since it was signed, Ceylon thereby agreeing to confer its citizenship on 3,00,000 stateless persons to match the grant of Indian passports to 5,25,000 persons. But for a variety of reasons, political and administrative, Ceylon has lagged far behind India in granting Ceylon citizenship, the actual figures being only 7,316 persons given Ceylon citizenship as against 72,000 persons given Indian passports. What is causing greater concern is the apparent emphasis on Ceylon's part on matching its grant of citizenship with the actual number of repatriates to India rather than the number of those given Indian citizenship, but whose repatriation may be delayed.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO AUGUST 3, 1920

Mr. Montagu as viceroy.

(From an editorial)

The campaign that is being carried on in England to secure the appointment of Mr. Montagu as the next Viceroy will create more amusement than approval in this country. Apparently that campaign is being pursued with all the vigour and verisimilitude that one has learnt to associate with Montague enterprises and, besides banquets and luncheons which have resolved themselves into mutual admiration societies, there is talk, according to our special correspondent, of getting up a deputation to the Premier which will impress upon him the fact that the whole of India is single-mindedly swelling the chorus of "We want Montagu." So far as Mr. Montagu is concerned, we do not suppose he particularly longs to grace the Vice-regal throne. In the present temper of the European community and of the bureaucracy as evidenced by Sir Michael O'Dwyer's statement that many officers are preparing to resign, his position will not exactly be a bed of roses.

FROM PAGE ONE

Pakistanis behind 'Chinese' info war

Some have gone to great lengths to establish authenticity, choosing Mandarin names, regularly retweeting information from official Chinese media outlets, such as Xinhua, and using photographs of Chinese soldiers as their profile images.

One such account has 17,000 followers and regularly tweets information from official Chinese media, in addition to disinformation. It is even followed by a couple of Chinese diplomats.

While in its case, the loca-

tion is difficult to pinpoint, a careful reading of the tweets, and the fact that it is mostly shared by Pakistani accounts, strongly hints at its origins – a fact that most readers are unaware of.

This strategy has not been limited to adopting Chinese identities. Pakistani accounts have also recently adopted Nepali and Sri Lankan avatars, all with the same motivation: posting information aimed at creating an unfavourable narrative about India.

An 'analog' library gets a new avatar

Mr. Wangsu and his students then took turns to clear the wild bushes around the centre, and repair, paint and decorate the rooms with the help of donations. The 15 feet by 7 feet reading hall with a library room and a toilet opened in July.

"Apart from my own collection of books, papers and magazines, there are more than 100 academic books and journals collected from the library. The Deputy Commissioner and other officers also provided some reading material," Mr. Wangsu said, adding that civil service aspirants were making full use of the library.

"The district administration and students who returned post the lockdown joined hands for the initiative. Students, otherwise, seldom return, largely due to the lack of educational opportunities," Ms. Yadav said.

Despite many challenges, Longding has made strides in improving education. The Class 10 success rate during 2019-20 was 38.12%, compared to 26.83% during the previous year. The 'Mission 100%' project saw an average of 96% Class 12 students in the district pass the Science and Humanities exams, up from about 70% during 2018-19.

"As an encouragement to pursue higher education, we are providing airfare for students to pursue higher education in colleges under Delhi University and other States," Ms. Yadav said.

Quarantine rules eased

Passengers will have to apply to the www.newdelhi-airport.in to seek relief at least 72 hours before boarding the flight. The decision will then be communicated online.

Additionally, those who don't fall into any of these categories, may also seek exemption from institutional quarantining "by submitting a negative RT-PCR test report on arrival". The test should be conducted within 96

hours of undertaking the journey.

Such passengers will have to undergo home quarantine for the total duration of 14 days.

These guidelines supersede those issued by the Ministry of Home Affairs on May 24. Earlier, passengers were required to register with the Indian embassy in their country, but now they can simply register online at www.newdelhi-airport.in.

Hyderabad airport gets thermal scanner

The state-of-the-art mass fever screening system will help in fighting COVID-19

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD

To fight COVID-19, the Hyderabad International Airport is now equipped with a state-of-the-art thermal scanner provided by the Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare in coordination with the Asian Development Bank and funded by UNICEF.

The ceiling-mounted mass fever screening system is capable of scanning, detecting and tracking febrile persons with elevated skin temperature. It automatically adjusts and adapts to the surrounding ambient temperature without any human intervention. With its intuitive user interface and dual-dis-



Battle-ready: The Hyderabad international airport received a UNICEF-funded fever screening system. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

plays (day camera + infrared), it provides easy identification of passengers with elevated temperature, while simplifying operations and minimising handling, said an official spokesperson.

Now, software professionals' body reaches out to Sharada

IT professional turned to vending vegetables after she lost her job due to the pandemic; TITA offers her laptop, AI course

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD

After actor Sonu Sood offered a job to IT professional Sharada after she lost her job due to the pandemic-induced employment crisis and was forced to take up her parents' occupation of vending vegetables, a software professionals' industry body, the Telangana Information Technology Association (TITA), too has come forward to help her.



TELANGANA

TITA president Sundeep Kumar Makthala visited her home, presented her with a free laptop and enrolled her

in a technical course in artificial intelligence (AI) on Sunday. The association initially wanted to extend financial assistance to her, but on learning about her technical prowess, it had decided to give her free training in artificial intelligence through the training module it is offering in association with the University of Texas at Dallas (UTD), one of the top universities in the United States.

Support family' The laptop would help her complete the course from home and allow her to conti-



Helping hands: Members of the Telangana Information Technology Association with Sharada. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

nue supporting her family by selling vegetables, said Mr. Kumar. "Sharadha's story is

inspiring in these COVID-19 times where job losses are not uncommon. However,

she took things in her stride and went on to work with the resources at hand. She has sent a message that tough times don't last but tough people do. We interacted with her and learnt that she is willing to hone her technical skills. We thought a course in artificial intelligence will be of more help in the current situation," he said.

The IT industry was not immune to the changes happening globally. However, IT professionals should learn to cope with the job scenarios and should not lose heart, Mr. Kumar said.

They should use the current times to hone their skills

or learn new skills, which would enhance their employability, he added.

'Learning new skills' TITA had been working on this front to drive the need for learning new skills constantly, Mr. Kumar said. Youngsters should look at entrepreneurship as well and not just look for placements, despite AI, cybersecurity and blockchain technologies promising to provide job opportunities as they were the current flavour, he said.

TITA spokesperson Venkata Vanam, sports secretary Ronith Banda were also present at the meeting.

Four southern States account for 3,86,171 cases

New deaths in Karnataka, A.P., Telangana and Kerala total 162

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Kerala's COVID-19 case tally was 25,911 on Sunday, with the reporting of 1,169 new cases. The number of patients currently under treatment in hospitals was 11,342.

Of the new cases, 1,031 were locally acquired infections. No source of infection

number of recoveries reported in the State now was 14,463.

Ernakulam reported 128 new cases, Malappuram (126), Kasaragod (113), Kottayam (70), Kollam (69), Thrissur (58), Kozhikode (50), Idukki (42), Alappuzha and Palakkad (38 each), Pathanamthitta (25), Wayanad (19) and Kannur (16). Kerala tested 22,028 samples in 24 hours. The cumulative tally in the pandemic for four southern States excluding Tamil Nadu stood at 3,86,171 cases reported as of Sunday.

Telangana's cases stood at 66,677 as 1,891 more samples tested positive on Saturday (reported on Sunday). At least 10 COVID-19 patients died, taking the toll to 540.

The new cases included 517 from Greater Hyderabad, 181 from Rangareddy, 146 from Medchal-Malkajgiri, 138 from

The long haul

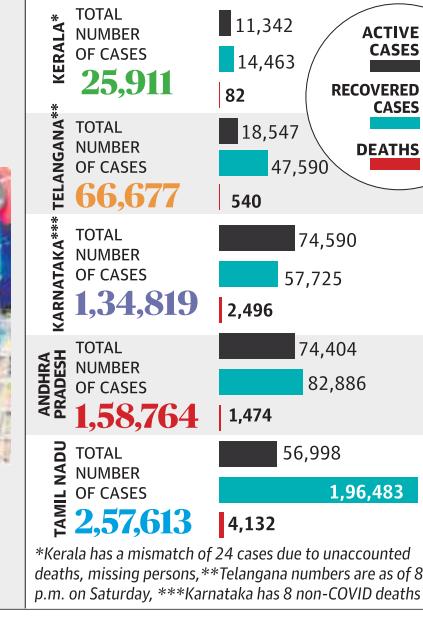
With the onset of the pandemic, masks and other social distancing norms have become the new normal. The graphic shows the spread of COVID-19 in the southern States.



Masked reality: The selling of masks has become a thriving business. Masks are sold at prices ranging from ₹15 to ₹150, depending on their quality. The image shows a scene near Palakkad in Kerala on Sunday. ■ K.K. MUSTAFAH

Warangal Urban, 131 from Nizamabad and 111 from Sangareddy districts.

Of 66,677 cases, 18,547 were active, 47,590 were discharged and 540 people died. On Saturday, 19,202 samples were tested, and be-



sides those that tested positive, results of 1,656 were awaited. Total testing stood at 47,795 samples. The cumulative Test Positivity Rate dropped to 13.95%.

In Andhra Pradesh, 67 new deaths and 8,555 new

cases were reported on Sunday. The overall tally rose to 158,764 and the death toll to 1,474. There were 74,404 active cases.

Krishna district with the highest death rate at 2.31% reported 11 new deaths. Vi-

sakhapatnam reported 1,227 new cases, the highest, followed by Kurnool and East Godavari with 996 and 930 respectively.

A total of 20,65,407 samples had been tested, 52,834 from the past day. The overall positivity rate was 7.69%.

In Karnataka, 5,532 new positive cases were detected on Sunday; the total was 1,34,819. Also, 84 new deaths were reported, touching a total of 2,496. In Bengaluru, 2,105 new cases were reported.

T.N. cases
With 5,875 fresh positive cases in Tamil Nadu on Sunday the number of active cases, including those in isolation, rose to 56,998. The State recorded 2,57,613 positive cases in all.

The number of persons discharged was 5,517, taking the total to 1,96,483.

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

IN BRIEF



Karnataka constable donates plasma

BENGALURU
Constable Veerabhadraiah, 26, attached with the Karnataka State Reserve Police and successfully battled COVID-19, became the first policeman in the State to donate his plasma on Saturday. "I hope it saves someone's life. My senior officers also encouraged me and gave me the confidence to donate my plasma," he said. Mr. Veerabhadraiah, who hails from Bidar district and lives at the police quarters in Bengaluru's Koramangala tested positive for the virus on June 26.

Child trafficking case: police conduct searches
VISAKHAPATNAM
A special team, constituted by the Commissioner of Police R.K. Meena to investigate the Universal Srushti Hospital's involvement in the alleged child trafficking case in Andhra Pradesh, conducted searches in another children's hospital at Seethammadhara here on Saturday. The team examined the records at the hospital. The police also reportedly questioned the head of the hospital. Police sources say that some of the cases from Srushti Hospital were referred to the private hospital in Seethammadhara.

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Amaravati authority constituted in A.P.

VIJAYAWADA
In a quick follow-up to the notification of Andhra Pradesh Capital Region Development Authority (CRDA) Repeal Act, 2020, the government issued a GO for constituting the Amaravati Metropolitan Region Development Authority (AMRDA), and a separate order appointing CRDA Commissioner P. Lakshmi Narasimham as the AMRDA Commissioner. The AMRDA will comprise the same area which was in the A.P. Capital Region notified under the A.P.-CRDA Act, 2014.

Life amid pandemic



Ray of hope: People in urgent need of eye treatment visiting the Sarojini Devi Eye Hospital in Hyderabad despite the hospital being used as a COVID-19 testing facility. ■ NAGARA GOPAL

Couple beat COVID-19, but fall victim to stigma

They end lives unable to bear boycott

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
ANANTAPUR

A trader and his wife allegedly died by suicide here on Sunday after reportedly getting stigmatised by people around following their turning COVID-19 positive. They had won over the virus, but could not overcome the psychological trauma of getting diagnosed from those nearest and dearest.

Kiran shop owner Seshu Phaniraj, 40, and his wife Sirisha, 36, could not bear the social stigma of boycott after Seshu's mother (a known

asthma patient) expired 15 days ago and they tested COVID-19 positive on July 26, circle inspector M. Karunakar said. The duo jumped to death from the roof of their building at 3 a.m., leaving behind a son, Balaji Prem.

The couple were lodged in the Narayana College COVID Care Centre in Anantapur and was discharged on July 31.

There is always someone to talk to in case of distress at: 100; 9989819191 or ananthapurampolice@gmail.com



Helping hands: Members of the Telangana Information Technology Association with Sharada. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

nue supporting her family by selling vegetables, said Mr. Kumar. "Sharadha's story is

inspiring in these COVID-19 times where job losses are not uncommon. However,

she took things in her stride and went on to work with the resources at hand. She has sent a message that tough times don't last but tough people do. We interacted with her and learnt that she is willing to hone her technical skills. We thought a course in artificial intelligence will be of more help in the current situation," he said.

The IT industry was not immune to the changes happening globally. However, IT professionals should learn to cope with the job scenarios and should not lose heart, Mr. Kumar said.

They should use the current times to hone their skills

or learn new skills, which would enhance their employability, he added.

'Learning new skills' TITA had been working on this front to drive the need for learning new skills constantly, Mr. Kumar said. Youngsters should look at entrepreneurship as well and not just look for placements, despite AI, cybersecurity and blockchain technologies promising to provide job opportunities as they were the current flavour, he said.

TITA spokesperson Venkata Vanam, sports secretary Ronith Banda were also present at the meeting.

Helping family' The laptop would help her complete the course from home and allow her to conti-

nue supporting her family by selling vegetables, said Mr. Kumar. "Sharadha's story is

inspiring in these COVID-19 times where job losses are not uncommon. However,

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They should use the current times to hone their skills

Helping hands' The laptop would help her complete the course from home

INTERVIEW | MANISH TEWARI

'Cong. needs to have ideological clarity to take on BJP'

Party leader calls for elections to appoint a full-time president if the Gandhis are not inclined to take up the responsibility

SANDEEP PHUKAN

At a time when the Congress seems to be going through a churn, former Union Minister Manish Tewari spoke about the rift in the party and the need to have ideological clarity to take on the BJP and hold elections to appoint a full-time president if the Gandhis are not inclined to take up the responsibility. Edited excerpts:

The Congress is in turmoil. Jyotiraditya Scindia's departure and Sachin Pilot's rebellion give a sense that people close to Rahul Gandhi are being marginalised in the party after he stepped down as president.

■ Mr. Scindia and Mr. Pilot were "princelings" of the party. They inherited their fathers' respective Lok Sabha seats after their tragic demise. They never went through the grind of the NSUI or IYC. They did not spread mats at public meetings, paint slogans on the walls, get knifed in student politics, or lathicharged by police. Be it Priyanka Chaturvedi, Ajay Kumar, Pradyot Manikya and many others like them, they never had any ideological convictions or emotions attached to the party. For them, it was but a

vehicle to catapult them into organisational or governmental positions. When they thought that this lorry had outlived its utility, they ditched it for the next bus available. I have always believed that "imports from outside" can be made MPs, MLAs, even Ministers but should not be given organisational positions.

It almost looks like an all-out war with so many of you – from Anand Sharma, Mukul Wasnik, Shashi Tharoor to Milind Deora – attacking Rajeev Satav for questioning the UPA. Again, he is seen to be close to Mr. Gandhi.

■ No, it's not at an all-out war. Some colleagues seem to have bought into the BJP's narrative as if there was monumental malfeasance in the UPA [United Progressive Alliance] government. This is

simply untrue. Those of us who worked in the government are trying to set the record straight. Unfortunately, those who labour under those misconceptions were too focused on internal organisational processes at that point in time to carry the message of the "good work" of the UPA effectively to the people.

Mr. Satav blamed the UPA-II government for the party's problems, and you hit back by questioning the 2019 Lok Sabha defeat. Isn't this a clear divide?

■ As someone who defended the UPA I and II with all the conviction at my command from 2008 to 2014, including losing my health in the process, it gets my goat when some ill-informed people do not get the obvious. What the UPA did in terms of the RTI, MNREGA, mid-day meal scheme, Food Security Act etc. was truly transformative. Even Nirmala Sitharaman was compelled to acknowledge in her Budget speech that 271 million people were lifted out of poverty during the UPA years. So



Mr. Scindia and Mr. Pilot were princelings. They inherited their fathers' seats after their tragic demise

why did the UPA then fail at the hustings? Primarily because it became the victim of a deep-rooted conspiracy orchestrated by some telecom czars ably fronted by the former CAG and a "certain criminal investigation" whose trajectory had the potential to hurt very deeply entrenched "institutional" interests had it gone to a logical conclusion. The convergence of these two shards caught the UPA in its cross hairs. If you rewind back to the forces backing India Against Corruption, the context of the above would become clear. The UPA failed to demonstrate that he has a

deal with this twin attack despite a spectacular victory in 2009. If there was malfeasance, why has not even a subordinate court anywhere in the country found against the UPA on any count?

As Sonia Gandhi completes a year as interim president, some people have asked for Mr. Gandhi to return. Is it not possible for the Congress to elect someone outside the Gandhi family?

■ The Congress rank and file have a special place in their hearts and minds for the Nehru-Gandhi family. From 1991 to 1998, no Nehru-Gandhi was in the party. For the past 21 years, no Nehru-Gandhi has been a part of any government either in the Centre or the State. Ms. Gandhi led us with empathy and fairness for 19 long years. Under her leadership, we formed two governments. We unanimously elected Mr. Gandhi for five years in December 2017 because we had faith in his leadership. Ironically, no one asked him to step down in 2019, the fact that he chose to demonstrate that he has a

sense of righteousness that is both rare and appreciable.

In your opinion, what will it take to revive the party?

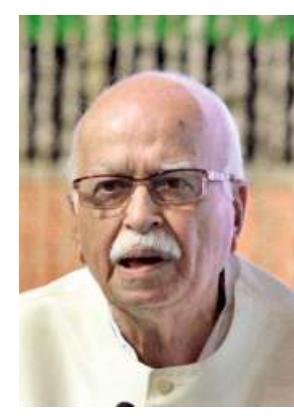
■ A full-time president elected by the All India Congress Committee (AICC) in terms of Article 18(h) of the Constitution. The options are: (a) Rahul Gandhi could withdraw his resignation. (b) If he is reluctant for whatever reasons, then Ms. Gandhi should be persuaded to continue, notwithstanding her known disinclination for the job. (c) If the two are non sequitur, then elections should be held for the presidency. The positions in the Congress Working Committee should be filled through polls and the Congress Parliamentary Board should be revived; AICC sessions like in the past should be held biannually and the process of internal elections should be externally supervised like the Youth Congress. However, most importantly, ideological and strategic clarity is imperative going forward. We must effectively fight against the NDA/BJP State by State and win.

Confusion over invite to Advani

Bhoomi poojan for temple on Aug. 5

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Amid massive preparations for the *bhoomi poojan* (ground-breaking ceremony) for the construction of a Ram temple in Ayodhya slated for August 5, confusion prevails over whether the architect of the Ramjanmabhoomi movement, former Deputy Prime Minister L.K. Advani, has received an invitation to participate in the ceremony.



L.K. Advani

nied that even such an arrangement has been mooted as yet.

Other leaders associated with the movement, former Chief Ministers of Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh Kalyan Singh and Uma Bharti, respectively, have both received an invite, and have declared that they shall attend in person and be in Ayodhya from August 4.

Last week, Mr. Advani deposed before a special CBI Court in Lucknow via video-conference to answer questions pertaining to a case on the destruction of the Babri Masjid in 1992.

Mr. Advani's office has de-

Amitabh out of hospital

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MUMBAI

Megastar Amitabh Bachchan on Sunday said he had tested negative for COVID-19 and would now be under home quarantine.

The 77-year-old actor, who was admitted to Nanavati Hospital along with son Abhishek, tested positive on July 11. He expressed his gratitude to well-wishers for their continued support and prayers. "I have tested COVID-19 have been discharged. I am back home in solitary quarantine. Grace of the Almighty, blessings of Ma Babaji, prayers, duas of near and dear and friends fans EF and the excellent care and nursing at Nanavati made it possible for me to see this," Amitabh wrote on Twitter.

Minutes before the screen icon, Abhishek shared on the microblogging site that his father had tested negative for the virus.

Mr. Abhishek Bachchan said he was still COVID-19 positive and would remain under care. "I, unfortunately due to some comorbidities, remain Covid-19 positive and remain in hospital. Again, thank you all for your continued wishes and prayers for my family. Very humbled and indebted. I'll beat this and come back healthier! Promise."

Patients can use smartphones

Govt. directs States, UTs to let those hospitalised with COVID-19 stay connected

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Union government has directed all States and Union Territories to allow the use of smartphones and tablet devices by COVID-19 patients admitted to hospital to ensure that they are able to stay connected with their families for psychological support during treatment.

A senior health official said people had been advised not to panic if they get infected.

Recovery rate

"Remember that most people get better. Practice self-isolation and take medications that are advised."



Sense of connection: The Health Ministry says India registered more than 51,000 recoveries in 24 hours. ■ R.V. MOORTHY

On Sunday, the Health Ministry said India registered more than 51,000 recoveries in 24 hours. "51,225 patients cured and discharged, total recoveries have touched

11,45,629. With the highest ever single-day increase in recovered patients in the last 24 hours, the recovery rate has seen a high of 65.44%." It said the gap between

the recoveries and the active cases had seen a steady rise.

The Ministry said that on June 10, for the first time, the number of recovered patients exceeded the active cases with a difference of 1,573 which has increased to 5,77,899 now.

Low CFR

"The active cases are the actual case load for India and currently (5,67,730) account for 32.43% and all are under medical supervision either in hospitals or in home isolation."

India has one of the lowest case fatality rates (CFR) at 2.13% as compared with the global average, it said.

NEP being pushed through without consultation: Cong.

'It misses basic goals, circumvents parliamentary scrutiny'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Congress on Sunday said the new National Education Policy (NEP) missed "the fundamental goal of human development and expansion of knowledge", and questioned the government's move to push it through during the COVID-19 pandemic without adequate consultation.

The party alleged that the policy circumvented parliamentary oversight, and there had been no discussion with academics but only with the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS).

High on verbosity

At a joint virtual press conference, former Human Resource Development Minister M. Pallam Raju, the party's chief spokesperson, Randeep Surjewala, and former Rajya Sabha member Rajeev Gowda said the NEP was high on "catchwords and verbosity", but lacked critical finances and a coherent road map for implementation.

They also said the NEP would further the digital divide between the poor and the rich and promote privatisation of public education that "will lead to education going out of reach of the



Randeep Surjewala

middle class and the disadvantaged in society".

The Congress asked how the government would deliver on its promise of spending 6% of the GDP on education when it had already fallen from 4.14% of the GDP in 2014 to 3.2% right now.

"The National Education Policy, 2020, which aimed to pave the way for transformational reforms in school and higher education, is high on catchwords, gloss, appearance and verbosity yet lacks a coherent implementation road map and strategy, clearly defined milestones and the critical finances necessary to execute this grand vision," the Congress leaders said in a joint statement.

"There is no mention of Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Other Backward Classes. There is no discussion about these underprivileged sections who comprise of over 50% of the population," he said.

Cong. asks leaders to stop 'Twitter games'

Top leadership sends message that Sonia, Rahul happy with UPA track record

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

A day after former Ministers in the UPA government took to Twitter to defend their "track record", the Congress on Sunday asked party leaders to raise issues in party's internal fora and "stop playing twitter games".

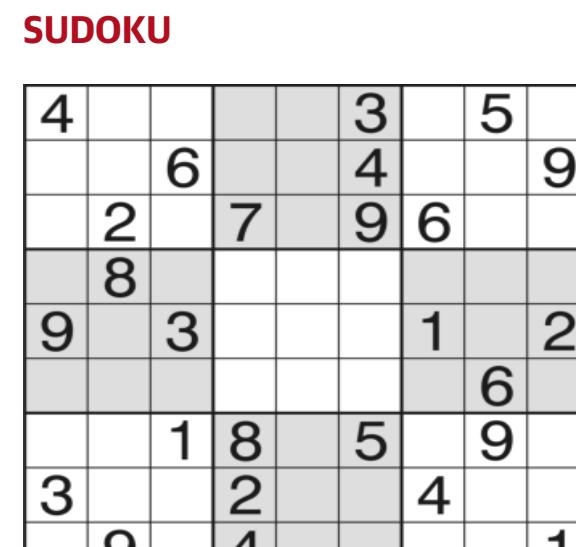
Congress communication chief Randeep Surjewala reached Delhi by a special aircraft from Jaisalmer to address a press conference on

Sunday where "he urged party colleagues with folded hands" to stop airing views in public.

The move comes after top leadership took serious note of the ongoing Twitter war.

Mr. Surjewala tried to assuage the feelings of senior Congress leaders by praising their rich experience and contribution.

"Rahul Gandhi wanted to send a clear message that there is no difference bet-

SUDOKU

Solution to puzzle 13003

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

Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

1	9	7	8	5	3	6	2	4				
8	6	3	9	4	2	5	1	7				
4	2	5	1	6	7	3	8	9				
9	3	7	6	2	9	5	8	4	1			
1	8	5	9	6	3	2	7	4	9	5	6	
6	4	1										

Kerala's aspirations to establish a new 'education city' should be seen in the context of national developments and the situation in the State

■ ELDHO MATHEWS

In June, the Kerala government had formed a committee headed by M.P. Poonia, vice-chairman of the All India Council for Technical Education, to study the feasibility of setting up an 'education city' in the State. The idea had its genesis in the government-supported Loka Kerala Sabha Conference – a platform for the cultural, socio-political and economic integration of non-resident Keralites – held in Thiruvananthapuram, a few months ago.

Although Kerala may be able to offer a good environment for an 'education hub,' the government's decision has surprised many for two reasons. First, when the previous Congress-led government organised a Global Education Meet in Thiruvananthapuram in 2016 to discuss establishing an Academic City and International Higher Academic Zones, the Left-affiliated organisations, who were then in opposition, had strongly opposed the move. Second, it comes at a time when globally "the halcyon days of growth in educational hubs and franchise operations and other forms of transnational education are diminishing," an important argument raised by Philip G. Altbach and Hans de Wit, who are known for their extensive contributions on the field of internationalisation of higher education.



Keep the focus on education

Favourable national policy environment

A careful look at Kerala's policy retreat shows that it is closely linked to ongoing reforms at the national level. The Central Government has, in recent years, brought out a

number of blueprint documents on higher education, including the National Education Policy (NEP), approved by the Union Cabinet last week.

Currently there are many legal hurdles in India regarding the op-

eration of foreign universities. The NEP addresses this and recommends for the operation top foreign universities through a new legislative framework.

Another important development is the growth of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in the Indian education sector. It is important to note that the last Union budget had proposed to encourage External Commercial Borrowings and Foreign Direct Investments (FDI).

Shifting priorities

In India, many States had attempted to establish 'education hubs' in the past. However, only Haryana and Gujarat have been successful to some extent, as reflected in the 'Rajiv Gandhi Education City' in Sonipat and the 'Knowledge Corridor' in Gandhinagar.

Although branch campuses of foreign universities are not legally permitted in the country, many other forms of international collaborations are happening within the existing legal framework. In Kerala, the Start-up Mission under the government recently established Fab Labs – technical prototyping platforms – in association with the Center for Bits and Atoms, Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Last year, the State established the Institute of Advanced Virology in Thiruvananthapuram with the support of Global Virus Network, an international coalition of medical virologists based in Baltimore, the United States.

Focus on human capital development

A UNESCO study conducted by

Although Kerala has a good network of public schools, most higher education institutions are ill-equipped to address the skill requirements of the future workplaces

N.V. Varghese on institutional restructuring in higher education had highlighted the links between the quality of professionally trained human resources in achieving international competitiveness. Kerala's aspirations to establish a new 'education city' can be situated in this broader context.

Kerala has been facing unique challenges in developing human resources over the past few decades. Although the State has a good network of public schools,

most higher education institutions are ill-equipped to address the skill requirements of the future workplaces. A large number of students go outside the State for higher studies every year. The fact that many private professional colleges in the State have been running with less than 50% of the intake capacity for many of their courses underlines the relationship between students' choice and employment opportunities.

Identifying and overcoming challenges

Globally, whether in the Education City of Qatar or the Dubai International Academic City, 'education hubs' are examples of neo-liberal market model in education. Therefore, the State's involvement is of utmost importance from the stage of identifying a suitable location to addressing challenges related to equity and equality.

Along with foreign institutions, the proposed 'hub' should have space for reputed Indian institutions as well. Many private institutions in India have already started operating out of their headquarters in this way within the existing framework. For instance, Amrita Vishwa Vidyapeetham in Coimbatore and Jain University in Bengaluru have satellite campuses in Kerala.

Along with generous funding, the government should try to rope in the huge Kerala diaspora and institutions connected to the state in some way. The success of the initiative in a State like Kerala will, however, largely depend upon the government's ability to attract philanthropists focussed on education rather than commercially oriented actors who view education as a commodity.

The writer is a researcher in higher education based in New Delhi.

Disclaimer: The views expressed are personal

VIEWPOINT

Tap into new options

In these uncertain times, what should students look for when applying to colleges?



■ PRADEEP K. SINHA

work culture.

Will I still be able to appear in the exams or tests that are needed for my admission application to be accepted? Is my chosen university still accepting international applications? Will I be able to pursue my degree in-person, or has the university switched to online learning? Such thoughts have been wandering in every student's mind during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Students should use this time to brush up their knowledge and find out which institutions provide the best academic facilities, career opportunities, placements and overall growth depending on their interest.

Here are some points to consider while choosing a university:

HIE in India

Due to the pandemic, many students and their parents will now prefer to pursue higher studies in India rather than go abroad. The Indian higher education system is considered to be on a par with foreign ones. It is the third largest in the world after the U.S. and China and several institutions have collaborations with foreign ones. These collaborations enable Indian institutes to design their curriculum in alignment with international ones and offer a mixed portfolio of subjects and specialisation. Some institutes also offer courses in foreign languages and cultures to prepare students for an international

Technology ready

To prepare ourselves for a changed future, we should first get used to online teaching and learning. It is, therefore, important for parents and students to choose institutes that are in the forefront of using online technology for their academic activities.

IT gets a boost

The emergence of a new business environment, in the wake of COVID-19, is expected to boost digitisation. The current scene in companies, with respect to work-from-home and data accessibility during the lockdown, has resulted in tremendous increase in enquiries for cloud space services. This trend is expected to gather further momentum, resulting in huge demand for IT and electronics professionals in all sectors.

Build entrepreneurs

An important learning and outcome of this pandemic is that we have understood the importance of self-reliance. While we gradually work towards reducing our dependence on imports, we need to prepare our future generation for the immense opportunity in the field of manufacturing. Students should aspire to become entrepreneurs and choose institutes that have facilities to promote entrepreneurship.

The writer is Vice Chancellor and Director, IIIT-NR.

Are you uncertain about a career option? Do you lack the freedom to choose a subject that you want to pursue? Do you feel low on self-confidence? A Q&A column to assuage your doubts



OFF THE EDGE

NANDINI RAMAN

I am 26 and have been preparing for the UPSC since 2015 but haven't been able to clear the prelims. Do I pursue UPSC or quit? – Swati S

Dear Swati,

Yes, maybe it is time to let go of this and realise another dream and walk a new path. Your life has a meaning and purpose beyond the UPSC – fit it. Please get a career profiling done and understand what else will suit you best. Wishing you the very best in your journey from here on.

I am currently pursuing my Master's in Geography from Delhi University. I want to go abroad for further research in Human Geography. However, I do not find lucrative career opportunities in this field. Should I let go of my dream? – Peeyus Raj

Dear Peeyus,

I disagree that there are not enough career opportunities in Human Geography. It has a number of sub-branches like anthropogeography, cultural geography, economic geography, political geography, historical geography, social geography, population geography and settlement geography. Where does your interest lie?

Yes, education across Europe is expensive and so apply for scholarships and work on building your resume and portfolio. Also, talk to a few existing students, old students and alumni who are already doing research work and working in the field of your choice to get a better understanding of the potential. The admissions counsellor of the colleges that interest you will also help you understand the nuances of the course better. Start an email conversation with them. Best wishes.

I am a 25-year-old B.Com graduate. I have been failing to crack the Staff Selection Commission-Combined Graduate Level Exam (SSC CGL) by two to three points every year. I like technology and am interested in gadgets, but

want a good job in the government or private sector. What can I do? – Sachin Kumar

Dear Sachin,

You are only 25 years, so don't worry. You still have time with respect to the age criteria to join SSC CGL, so don't get disheartened. Have you considered joining the armed forces? The UPSC conducts the Combined Defence Services Examination twice a year for recruitment into the Indian Military Academy, Officers Training Academy, Indian Naval Academy and Indian Air Force. You can apply for this. Check the details online (<https://bit.ly/39Ijqy4>) and see if this interests you.

If you are an Air Force enthusiast (having mentioned technology and gadgets) then AFCAT (<https://bit.ly/2DixyH9>), organised by the Indian Air Force twice a year, is also a great option.

I am 24 years old and graduated in 2016. Since then, I have been preparing for competitive banking exams, but took a break in 2018-19 because of a surgery. I started preparing again last year but don't know whether to continue or look for private sector jobs. – Ashutosh

Dear Ashutosh,

I hope you are doing well now. Do you have any other skills sets that you have pursued and enhanced across these four years, which you can add to your CV? You should certainly start looking for opportunities in the private sector as well. Be honest and sincere with the interviewing panel. It always goes a long way in building your credentials and trust with the organisation. And should you still want to give the bank exams another shot, do that with whatever you can prepare, post your working hours.

Disclaimer: This column is not a substitute for long-term therapy. It is merely a guiding voice. Some issues may need medical intervention.

The writer is a practising counsellor and a trainer. She has worked extensively with students and young adults across a range of issues. Send your questions to eduplus.thehindu@gmail.com with the subject line 'Off the edge'.

Free webinar on the Civil Services exams

Kingmakers IAS Academy, in association with *The Hindu*, presents "Unakal Oru IAS", a free guidance webinar for the Civil Services exams.

This will be held on August 9 at 10.00 am.

Speakers include V. Irai Anbu, IAS; M. Ravi,

IPS; and Beno Zephine, IFS. According to the academy director Sathyashree Boominathan, participants can avail up to 100% scholarship for the training programme through a scholarship test.

To register, send a text message (SMS) to

+91444227273 with your name, qualification and contact number.

The programme for the 2020-21 batch will begin on August 16 (regular) and August 20 and will be conducted both online and offline.

For more details, visit www.kingmakersiasacademy.com

Meet Northern* and Uttar Pradesh Region Toppers for 2019

CENTA TPO is a unique international competition for teachers; participation from 10000+ schools in 3000+ cities & towns in 35 states/UTs across India.

*Northern Region includes participants from Chandigarh, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu, Punjab & Uttarakhand

Sukanya Banerjee | Senior Secondary School English | Shiv Nadar School, Gurugram |

"I believe that the only way to reach the right answers is to ask the right questions, and CENTA does exactly that."

Sukanya always had an affinity for teaching. As a child, she would learn by teaching her peers. She found the structure and analysis involved in the process deeply enjoyable. What keeps her going is her desire to learn, and to explore the multifarious ways in which learning can happen.

Finding silver linings in the challenge caused by Covid-19, she is finding comfort in her ability to engage shy children better on an online platform!

She believes that her goal is to empower her students for life, and not just to teach them English. She loved the sample questions which not only indicate the right answers but also explain why those are the right answers. She would love to explore research in pedagogy and pursue education not just within the classroom but also beyond.

Srinivas's journey as a teacher started with helping his mother with tutoring at home. He realised that he loved addressing queries and making the learning process fun for children. He feels that the biggest challenge for teachers today is to prepare students for professions that don't even exist today. He considers himself as a teacher of skills and not just content. He is proud of his first batch of IGCSE students who graduated last year with exceptional results. He was felicitated by the school for his contribution. He feels that as CENTA TPO does not focus only on content but also on teaching aptitude, one doesn't need any specific preparation. He learnt from the mistakes he made in the TPO. In the future, he sees himself teaching in a truly international and multi-cultural environment.

Anurag Arora | Regional Rank 2 | Secondary School Biology | BR Ambedkar College of Education |

Kanika Kapoor | Regional Rank 2 | Middle School Maths | Montessori School, Sunbeam School, Lucknow |

Neha Khanna | Regional Rank 3 | Middle School Maths | Lahartara, Varanasi I

Reliance Foundation

Prakash Kumar | Regional Rank 3 | Middle School English | Gurugram I

Prakash Kumar | Regional Rank 3 | Middle School English | Gurugram I

Prakash Kumar | Regional Rank 3 | Middle School English | Gurugram I

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Prakash Kumar | Regional Rank 3 | Middle

As social media accounts by 'positivity coaches', 'wellness mentors', and 'motivational speakers' mushroom, here's why we might need better regulation



ployment. However, there is a new law in the offing, the Allied and Healthcare Professions Bill of 2018, which when passed, will include a therapist as a healthcare professional. It seeks to maintain a central register of all healthcare professionals, and hand out penalties to those practising outside of it.

Until such a law is passed, it's a free market for all 'mental health influencers'. "Regulation right now, is focussed on illness, and not wellness," says Dr Pathare. But given the boom in India's wellness industry, how wise is this?

"Certain accounts online do not follow the basic tenet of not being judgemental," says Farheen Meraj, who has a Master's in Clinical Psychology from Amity University. She has called out some of them for it. "A psychologist's job is to give you advice related to your emotions, and not your situation, it is to help you navigate through your thoughts."

A presence on social media with several thousand followers creates a halo effect, so no matter what they call themselves, "You tend to believe what they are saying, even if it is about an area that they do not have expertise in."

"It's easier regulating in countries like the US, where you pay for these services using medical insurance, or the UK, where you have the NHS paying for them," says Dr Pathare. "In India, we pay out of our own pocket, ultimately what is driving it is commerce." As long as there is a demand, there will be alternative therapy suppliers, he believes.

Ayushi Khemka, co-founder of Mental Health Talks India, says mental health has become a

sort of "hobby project" for many influencers. Currently pursuing a PhD from Jawaharlal Nehru University, her research involves looking at the prevalent dialogues on social media.

Are these spaces safe?
Her organisation, started in 2018 following the suicide of a college batchmate, calls itself a 'safe space' that offers help free of cost. "We recognised that there were people who wanted to talk, but not to a crisis helpline. So we leave our DMs open. While we are doing that, we make sure that if a person is in crisis, we direct them to suitable resources. We are not psychotherapists, we can only listen to you without judgements, and talk to you about what our own experience has been," she says.

Ayushi feels such online spaces should not be restricted to psychotherapists. "Doing that negates the lived experiences of people who have mental health issues, and of their caregivers."

In fact, the existence of these online safe spaces point to the inadequacy of formal services.

Says Dr Pathare, "The number of psychologists in India is half the number of psychiatrists. If you were to shut down all these informal spaces, where would people go? Formal spaces can't cope with the demand; they are working at full stretch anyway." There is also the question of expense: a one-hour session online can cost anywhere from ₹1,500 to ₹3,000.

Perhaps what India needs, besides more professionals in the mental health space, are volunteers who work in the area between structured therapy and unstructured support. These members of the community, who come from a position of lived experience and want to help, can avail themselves of courses and be affiliated to mental health professionals, who can in turn guide, counsel, and support them in their work. They can feed into the mental healthcare system, be the community's eyes and ears, identifying a crisis before it happens, and having the support system to go back to, when they need help too.

0.75

The number of psychiatrists India currently has, per 100,000 people; we need at least three for that number

Source: Indian Journal of Psychiatry

The mental health market

SWETA AKUNDI

It was the week following Sushant Singh Rajput's tragic death. Farheen Meraj, a Noida-based research fellow with the DRDO, stumbled upon a post by a someone who called themselves a mental health counsellor.

The person used the actor's name and photo to advertise an online session on depression.

Dismayed at what she perceived as a blind eye to ethics, she took to Facebook to voice her concern. A debate ensued in the comments, with some mental health professionals claiming it helped increase awareness, and others saying the deceased was being used as a "marketing mascot".

While Sushant's death was a flashpoint in the discussion on mental health in India, the conversation has increased since the pandemic began. Google Trends reveals that the search words 'anxiety' and 'mental health' were slowly climbing before shooting to a peak on June 14, and plateauing.

New ventures such as Emotionally have started with the ex-

press intent to address the emotional repercussions of our times. Existing ventures such as VentAllOut, which invites people to either rant (for free) or talk to them for five minutes (paid) have seen growth. On social media too, 'positivity' accounts have been mushrooming. And as the chatter increases, regulation decreases.

Influencer Santoshi Shetty's now-taken-down video, offering unqualified mental health advice in exchange for money, (she later apologised) is a case in point. For every account helmed by clinical psychologists, there will be one led by 'mental health coaches', 'life coaches', 'wellness mentors', and 'motivational speakers'. But what do these job titles mean?

Dr Soumitra Pathare, director of Centre for Mental Health Law and Policy chuckles at the question. "They hold whatever meaning you make of them, really," he says. "These are not formal or official terms."

Illness not wellness
Dr Pathare who was involved in drafting the Mental Health Care

Act of 2017, points out that in India, "there is no particular set of qualifications you need to call yourself a therapist. Anyone and everyone can set up shop calling themselves therapists." Not only is it a field that is poorly regulated, he adds, but it has inherent multiplicity: "there are many different kinds of therapies, including religious ones."

Clinical psychologists are required to be licensed by the Rehab Council of India, which recognises clinical psychology degrees, and in many states, certain Master's degrees in psychology are enough to provide em-



WELLNESS ON THE SHELF



Fast feet

ASICS has launched Metaracer for men and women. The shoe has a pronounced toe-spring shape that reduces the load on the calf muscle, says the company. The Flytefoam technology keeps the shoe lightweight, the supportive upper mesh is engineered to keep feet cool, and the wet grip rubber sponge enhances grip in wet conditions. Available at all ASICS retail and online stores; ₹17,999.

Hand care

Frequent hand washing is a necessity these days, however, over use of soap and sanitisers can make our skin dry and flaky. Nourish Mantra has a set of Ayurveda-based products to keep the skin moisturised. The vegan hand wash and lotion have been formulated with natural ingredients like vetiver and lavender root oil, shea butter, aloe vera, coconut and almond oil. Suitable for all skin types; available at Nourishmantra.com; ₹550 for 250 ml.

Eco-friendly baby pleaser

Heyday has launched an all-natural biodegradable diaper, made with plant-based fibres of corn and bamboo, grown in chemical-free vertical farms. The disposal covers are made from corn starch and boxes with soy coated oxo-degradable paper bags. The diapers come in sizes S to XL, ensure a rash-free experience that help babies sleep better. There is also a subscription service on offer. Available in select stores or on Heydaycare.com and Amazon.in; ₹829 upwards, for 20 diapers.

Exercise routine

1. Standing on the board

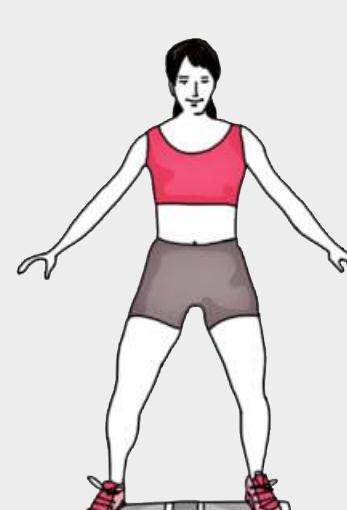
Maintain the posture mentioned above and stand on the board. The challenge is to prevent the edges of the board from touching the ground. The ankles and legs may wobble and shake in the beginning, but you will soon find it easy. The ankle joint gets a good challenge as several small muscles in the feet have to work hard to find stability.

2. Single leg stance

Take the exercise a notch up and stand with one foot in the centre of the board, the other foot lifted off. Hold for 30 seconds on each foot and repeat 6 times.

3. Side to side

Get off the board, walk around for a minute. Stand on the board again with both feet. Once you are fairly steady, move your weight from side to side, tilting the board from left to



right, but without the edges touching the floor. Do three sets, for a minute each.

4. Front and back

Maintaining the above position, shift the weight forward and back so the board tilts to the front and the back. Prevent the edges from touching the floor. Do three sets, for a minute each.

5. Move in circles

Maintaining the above position, rotate the board: forward, side, back and the other side, as if you are making a circle. Start with the right side first and then the left. Do three sets, for a minute on each side.

BEFORE YOU START

Exercises can be done with or without shoes.

Avoid the equipment if you have a history of ankle injury.

Post injury training is usually done under guidance, specific to the need of the joint, so consult a rehab trainer or physiotherapist before you begin.

Maintaining the right posture is important. Position your feet shoulder width apart, shoulders back and down, chin parallel to the floor, weight equally distributed on both feet. Keep knees unlocked at all times.

EXERCISE AT HOME

A fine balance

Gain stability, strength, and efficiency, with these exercises on the balance board



A balance board is a plank that rests on a hub or is placed on a cylindrical roller to give it more movement and instability. A piece of physiotherapy equipment, it is now widely used by fitness trainers as well. It comes in many avatars: with round, oval and rectangular surfaces. Under ₹2,000, it is easy to store, and needs zero maintenance.

The main benefit of the balance board is that it can be used even without expert supervision, to improve basic fitness, balance, and stability. Professional athletes, especially gymnasts, surf boarders, roller skaters use it widely.

The board improves the ability to move efficiently. It helps to strengthen weak and unstable ankles, and can also be used for a full body workout. Squats, lunges, planks, pushups and all the other body weight exercises can be done on the board. The unstable surface makes the exercises more challenging and interesting.

For full body workouts

Squats with or without external weight can be done.

Lunges with one foot on the board and one foot on the floor. Dynamic lunges are more challenging.

Planks with hands on the board, planks with the hands tilting the board, pushups with one hand on the floor and one hand on the board.

Biceps, triceps and all shoulder exercises using dumbbells or barbells become more challenging, when done on the board.

Bridging with feet on the board adds a different dimension to the glute strengthening exercise.

Nisha Varma is an ACSM-certified exercise physiologist. A monthly column with exercises for a home workout

THE CREAKING TREE

The end of saying hello



SHOVON CHOWDHURY

In this new, post COVID-19 world, we don't have to worry about saying hello anymore, and that's a good thing. Of course, COVID-19 has been bad as well, and many are living in fear. But we can't just live in fear, and it's important to look on the bright side. Saying hello has always been a big source of stress, especially in the office.

Big offices with many co-workers are the worst. Not all of your colleagues are your best friends, but you can't ignore them. What do you do when you meet your vaguely familiar approximately equal ranked co-worker in the corridor for the third time in the day? The first time you said a cheery hello, conveying how tremendously happy you were to see them, even if you weren't sure of their name.

The second time you were less effusive but still upbeat, to show that the thrill was not totally gone, but you saw no point in overdoing things. But the third time? That's when it got tricky. You could smile uncertainly. You could pretend not to see them. You could sidle across the wall like a crab with your face turned away. You could pretend to see someone else just behind them and shout out, hoping they didn't turn around and discover that the corridor is, in fact, empty. It was a tough one.

Chance encounters with bosses were equally fraught with per-

il. You wanted to register your presence, but you didn't want to be too familiar. It was also an opportunity to showcase how hard working you were. One of my friends, frequently promoted, used to look very thoughtful and walk with an extreme sense of purpose, even if he was just headed to the bathroom.

It all depended on the nature of the boss. Sometimes it was just safer to keep your head down and slink past. But what if that made you come across as too timid? How did you convey that you were worthy in those few fleeting moments? This is where the mobile phone has been such a boon to society. I used to pretend to have imaginary conversations, where I provided insights and dominated the narrative. It was extremely impressive, and worked like a charm.

Now COVID-19 has freed us from all of this. Saying hello has become simple. There's nothing much to decide at your average Zoom meeting. You just say hello or wave and get on with it. Since you're mostly wearing a mask, the quality of your smile and the extent to which you are happy to see your colleagues no longer matters.

Poor Internet connections are an additional plus. Taking advantage of this, in the majority of meetings that I attend, most people don't even turn their video on, so there's no way to tell whether they've shaved, or they're wearing pants. Hair care has become irrelevant. Executives used to be marked out for promotion based on the quality of their hair, but this is no longer the case. Now only true merit can shine, instead of hair gel.

There is much to fear about COVID-19, and we all have to take precautions. But one thing it has definitely done is free us from the tyranny of saying hello, and brought us all closer to a kinder, gentler, more meritorious world. For this, we must be thankful.

In Shovon Chowdhury's most recent novel, *Murder With Bengali Characteristics*, the hero has no social skills whatsoever, and it does not seem to bother him.



■ GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCK

Sima Aunty spills the tea

The star of the hit Netflix reality series *Indian Matchmaking* talks about life after the show and the kind of feedback she has been getting

GAUTAM SUNDER

In less than two weeks, she has gone from relative obscurity to being one of India's most searched – and coveted – personalities online. Sima Taparia has been the subject of numerous debates: 'woke' Twitter berates her and the Netflix original series, *Indian Matchmaking*, accusing both of propagating patriarchy, casteism and colourism in a gold-dusted setting.

Yet, the only one walking out high from the aftermath of the show – none of the prospects from the Netflix series stayed together with their 'matches' – is the matchmaker herself.

Her 'market' has shot up exponentially since the show aired, with the Mumbai-based fielding calls from several of India's wealthiest (both locally and abroad), while also attending to her already existing database of clients.

Meanwhile, the reality series continues to trend on most-watched lists, as more Indians across the world discover and binge on it, and wonder about the unresolved plot points – like what exactly transpired between Vinay and Nadia.

All of which sets the stage deliciously for a possible revival..

Talking to us from Mumbai, 'Sima Aunty' is as profound – and succinct – as ever, though she does not drop too many

gems like her now-viral "Ultimately, my efforts are meaningless..." phrase. Excerpts from a chat:

When the show was pitched to you, did you agree instantly?

It was a very easy decision, and I was excited to do the show. As a person, I am very social; it is easy for me to connect with everyone. I have got so much praise since the show's release. Of course, there is some criticism also, but that is life...



Are you now flooded with calls from potential brides, grooms and families?

So many messages have come! I can't keep track of them all, but I am trying. I also have 500 regular clients I have to work for.

How did you choose your subjects for *Indian Matchmaking*?

The candidates in the show were the ones who agreed to be filmed.

We hear that none of the clients who got together on the series stayed together...

A matchmaker's job ends only if their client is happy. The process of finding matches still continues for some, while for others, they have decided to pause for a while.

'Sima Aunty' has become a popular reference today. Do you approve of the moniker?

I love it! My younger clients have always called me Sima Aunty. I become like a family member to my clients.

Can we expect Season Two sometime soon? Viewers need closure...

(Laughs) It has been a very short time (since the first season released). I think you need to ask Netflix and not me.

What according to you, are the three key elements for a happy marriage?

Compromise, adjustment (for both boys and girls!) and, of course, love.



Virtual bond Many see the festival as a chance to plan family reunions, but not this year • GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCK

for years – for studies, career or marriage – and getting together on a particular date for a particular festival is not always an option. Some just take it in their stride more than others: like New York-based cyber security professional Gireesh Devadas. Gireesh has been in the US, and his sister in Canada, for four years now. "So celebrating it apart this year is not a big change," he says nonchalantly over the phone, "We'd be wishing each other over the phone, and I will be sending her a customary gift."

For Gireesh and his siblings, Rakshabandhan is a far less serious affair than it is for their parents. "Other festivals, like Diwali, are the ones we really look forward to, when the family comes together. But Rakhi is something I personally celebrate just to keep my parents happy. Which is why, even this year, I drove down to my cousin's place in New Jersey for a 15-minute ritual last week. I was wearing a mask, but my cousin is a doctor, so she wasn't too happy at being told to do the rituals that need physical contact."

The fact that her concerns were those of safety is not ironic, considering that the ritual itself symbolises protection. Many siblings are opting out of physical contact particularly to keep each other safe, but that does not make the festival any less fun or loving. Shefali, for instance, is still hoping everyone will be free for a loud, happy Zoom call on the day of Rakshabandhan. In the meantime, she is having a blast picking out rakhis of different colours and patterns to each of her brothers' likings even if the process is online. She adds happily, "One of them loves chocolate, but another enjoys fruits. So chocolate boxes and fruit baskets it is!"

Distant, but protective

Long life and safety are the key ideals behind Rakshabandhan. Here's how a few siblings are upholding it through a pandemic, by staying apart, foregoing some rituals and connecting online

MEGHNA MAJUMDAR

"We are in the same city, but we won't be celebrating Rakhi together," says Shefali Gupta over a phone call from Delhi. Shefali, a programme administrator for an international NGO, is

used to celebrating the festival of Rakshabandhan with her bustling family of over 20 cousins, aunts and uncles.

But this year, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, safety takes priority. "We are all well now, but a couple of people in diffe-

rent households tested positive recently, so we don't want to take any chances," she says.

So instead of prepping to host her extended family, she shifted her focus online, picking out just the right *rakhis* and presents for each of her little brothers, to be shipped before-hand.

She is not alone: with travelling restrictions in place around the country and abroad, the number of siblings celebrating a long-distance Rakshabandhan is far higher this year. While some went the extra-careful route and decided to not even courier the sacred thread, others are relying on video calls to watch someone else complete the rituals on their behalf.

But long-distance Rakshabandhan is not new. Brothers and sisters have been moving to different cities and countries

HOMING IN



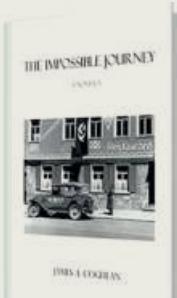
HOMING IN

This week's **Reading List** by Saaz Aggarwal, a writer, biographer and translator with a keen eye on our country's history features some gripping ventures down memory lane

PRIYADERSHINI

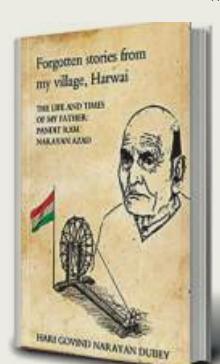
Forgotten Stories from my Village, Harwai by Hari Govind Narayan Dubey

In despair, unable to read, unable to write, I dug into my files seeking comfort, and came across this. In 2015, I worked with the author to translate this charming book, based in rural India during the freedom struggle, into English. It has dramatic stories – pots of gold uncovered by a farmer ploughing his fields, a spectacular jailbreak, the impact of caste division and social boycott, and more. What makes it a classic is the ringside view of the lifestyles, thought processes, and other subtleties of an epoch of Indian history invariably dominated by political figures with vested interests. To make it easily accessible to all, I uploaded it for free download on <https://www.academia.edu>.



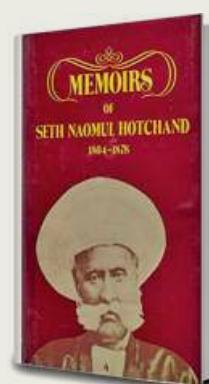
The Impossible Journey by James A Coghlan

Still unsure about being able to concentrate, I decided to attempt this slim volume with an uncomplicated cover. This lovely story of a Scottish boy's experience of serving in the Indian Army is fiction, but based on the diary of the author's great uncle's accounts of a road journey from Rawalpindi to London in 1936, it is quite as alive with engaging detail as Naomul's memoirs. Along with glimpses of world history and geography, the reader understands a little about the connection between India and Scotland, while revelling in the wry turn of phrase that permeates the book.



Memoirs of Seth Naomul Hotchand of Karachi (1804-1878)

When the lockdown commenced, life turned grim overnight; stranger than fiction. I was reading this well-told narrative of a wealthy merchant of Sindh. Being the elaborate personal account of someone who belonged to a community about which not much documentation exists, the book, with an interesting history of its own, is fascinating. However, my eye lazed mid-sentence while my mind wandered, and the pages stayed put.



The Strange Case of Billy Biswas by Arun Joshi

And then, a drowning woman who miraculously began to swim, I picked this up. This book shows that IWE [Indian writers in English] were quietly turning out classic prose decades before the term IWE was coined. Billy Biswas belongs to two peculiar and mutually exclusive communities: the privileged Anglophiles who once governed India, and an ancient tribe, both groups reduced today to appendages verging on extinction. Though I found its traces of schoolboy fantasy a little annoying, the plot captivated me and I read in long happy bursts, freed at last from lockdown.

We would love to know how you are keeping busy at home. Tell us what you are reading, at metro@thehindu.co.in.

POOCHE CAFE



HAGAR THE HORRIBLE



PEANUTS



CALVIN AND HOBBES



TIGER



PEARLS BEFORE SWINE



Australia imposes curfew, while S. Africa's count tops 5,00,000

Melbourne to be under lockdown for 6 weeks; fatalities keep rising in Mexico

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
MELBOURNE

Australia's second-largest city Melbourne imposed an overnight curfew on Sunday to halt the spread of COVID-19 cases, as South Africa's infection count topped more than half a million.

Six months after the World Health Organization (WHO) declared a global emergency, the virus has killed more than 6,85,000 people and infected more than 17.8 million since it first emerged in China late last year.

Fresh clusters have been reported in countries – such as Australia – that had previously brought their outbreaks under control, forcing governments to reimpose lockdown measures to curb the spread despite worries over more economic fallout.

Restrictions in Victoria

Australia's Victoria State imposed fresh, sweeping restrictions on Sunday, including a curfew in Melbourne for the next six weeks, a ban on weddings, and schools and universities going back online in the coming days.

"Anything short of this will see it drag on for months and months and months," said Victoria leader Daniel Andrews.

Despite a lockdown, Melbourne has continued to report hundreds of new cases daily even as other States in Australia have reported zero or a small number of cases.

Many other parts of the world are struggling with much bigger outbreaks.

Health authorities in South Africa, who had been expecting a surge in cases af-



Stocking up: Shoppers waiting in a long queue outside an outlet in Melbourne on Sunday after Victoria government announced sweeping restrictions. • AFP

ter the gradual loosening of a strict lockdown, reported that infections had exceeded the half-million mark.

The nation is by far the hardest-hit in Africa, accounting for more than half of diagnosed infections, although President Cyril Ramaphosa said the fatality rate is lower than the global average.

Latin America and the Caribbean passed a grim milestone on Sunday as fatalities in the region climbed over 2,00,000, with Brazil and Mexico accounting for nearly three-quarters of those deaths, according to an AFP tally compiled from official sources.

Iran's highest count

Iran – battling West Asia deadliest outbreak – on Sunday also reported its highest single-day infection count in nearly a month, warning that most of its provinces

have been hit by a resurgence of the disease.

With infections and deaths soaring the WHO has said that the pandemic is likely to be protracted and warned of possible "resonance fatigue".

"WHO continues to assess the global risk level of COVID-19 to be very high," the agency said, adding that the effects of the pandemic "will be felt for decades to come".

Mexico overtook Britain to become the third hardest-hit country in virus deaths – after Brazil and the United States – with more than 46,600 fatal cases.

The U.S., the worst-hit country in the world, has now tallied more than 4.6 million cases and 1,54,319 deaths.

Virus impact in Europe

Even as the race for a vaccine heats up, the pandemic

and the lockdowns to stop its spread have hammered the global economy.

France, Spain, Portugal and Italy all reported huge contractions in their economies for the April-June quarter, while Europe as a whole saw gross domestic product fall by 12.1%.

While many of the continent's outbreaks were largely brought under control, Switzerland's case numbers have crept up again in recent weeks, while Norway recorded its first virus death in two weeks.

Austria's month-long Salzburg festival celebrates its 100th anniversary, but now with a reduced programme and strict safety measures, including masks for spectators until they are seated and its 80,000 tickets – down from the usual 2,30,000 – personalised to enable contact-tracing.

For many, historical scepticism of a system that tried to keep black people from the polls and worries that a mailed ballot won't get counted outweigh the prospect of long lines and health dangers from a virus that's

Trump to act against Chinese firms

These software companies present an array of national security risks: Pompeo

REUTERS
WASHINGTON

U.S. President Donald Trump will take action shortly on Chinese software companies that are feeding data directly to the Beijing government, posing a risk to U.S. national security, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said on Sunday.

"President Trump has said 'enough' and we're going to fix it and so he will take action in the coming days with respect to a broad array of national security risks that are presented by software connected to the Chinese Communist Party," Mr. Pompeo said on Fox News Channel's "Sunday Morning Futures."

The news comes after Mr. Trump told reporters onboard Air Force One on Friday that he would issue an



Going tougher: U.S. President Donald Trump at an air base in Maryland last week. • AP

order for social media platform TikTok to be banned in the United States.

Over the last several months, U.S. officials have repeatedly said TikTok under its current Chinese parent company, Beijing-based software firm ByteDance,

poses a national risk because of the personal data it handles.

"They're true privacy issues for the American people and for a long time, a long time the United States just said 'well goodness if we're having fun with it, or if

a company can make money off of it, we're going to permit that to happen,'" Mr. Pompeo said.

Possible sale to Microsoft

In response, under a recent proposal, ByteDance is willing to divest the U.S. operations of TikTok to Microsoft in a bid to make a deal with the White House, two people familiar with the matter told Reuters on Saturday. That offer has gained some support from allies of the President, including Republican Senator Lindsey Graham.

In a separate interview on Sunday, Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin said the Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States, which reviews the national security implications of foreign business deals, is looking at the matter.

No media at Republican convention

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
WASHINGTON

Media will be barred from the Republican National Convention in North Carolina later this month, U.S. news outlets reported, when President Donald Trump will receive his party's nomination.

"We are planning for all of the Charlotte activities to be closed press: Friday, August 21-Monday, 24th given the health restrictions and limitations in place in the State," the convention spokesperson told the *Kansas Democrat Gazette*.

The vote to formally nominate Mr. Trump will, however, be livestreamed, according to CNN, which cited a Republican official.

15 killed in Cameroon Boko Haram attack

Camp near Nigeria border targeted

REUTERS
DOUALA

Suspected militants from Islamist group Boko Haram killed 15 people and wounded six others in a grenade attack on a camp for displaced people in northern Cameroon on Sunday, a security source and a local official told Reuters.

In the early hours, assailants threw a grenade into a group of sleeping people inside the camp in the village of Nguetchewa, said district Mayor, Medjewel Boukar.

The camp is home to around 800 people, he said. The village is located in the Mozogo district, close to the Nigerian border in the Far

North region. Mr. Boukar was informed by residents that 15 had died. A security official confirmed the attack and the death toll. The wounded were taken to a nearby hospital, they said.

Over the past month there have been twenty incursions and attacks by suspected Islamist militants, Mr. Boukar said.

Boko Haram has been fighting for a decade to carve out an Islamic caliphate based in Nigeria. The violence, which has cost the lives of 30,000 people and displaced millions more, has frequently spilled over into neighbouring Cameroon, Niger and Chad.

U.K. to issue coin to honour Gandhiji

Finance Minister says members of non-white communities need to be recognised

REUTERS

Britain is considering minting a coin to commemorate Mahatma Gandhi, amid growing interest in recognising the contributions of people from the Black, Asian and other minority ethnic communities.

British Finance Minister Rishi Sunak asked the Royal Mint Advisory Committee (RMAC) in a letter to pursue recognition of individuals from those communities, the U.K. Treasury said in an emailed statement late on Saturday. "RMAC is currently considering a coin to commemorate Gandhi", the Treasury said. Gandhiji's birthday, October 2, is observed as the International



Standing tall: A Mahatma Gandhi statue in London. • REUTERS

Day of Non-Violence. As part of a global reassessment of history, colonialism and racism triggered by the death in May of a Black man, George Floyd, in the United States after a Minneapolis

police officer knelt on his neck for nearly nine minutes, some British institutions have begun re-examining their past.

Many organisations have taken initiatives to make in-

vestments to help the Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) communities and to support racial diversity. Floyd's death has led to global protests against racism, colonialism and police brutality.

Profound contribution

In his letter to the RMAC, Mr. Sunak said members of the BAME communities have made a "profound contribution" and that the committee should consider recognising it on the U.K.'s coinage.

The RMAC is an independent committee made up of experts who recommend themes and designs for coins to Britain's Finance Minister, the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

300 Taliban prisoners freed during ceasefire

Id truce holds for third and final day

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
KABUL

straight after Id. In restive

Zabul province, several residents recited poems calling for the ceasefire – only the third official halt in fighting in nearly two decades of conflict – to be made permanent.

The National Security Council said on Sunday that 300 Taliban

prisoners had been released since Friday, taking the total number of insurgents freed so far to just over 4,900.

Authorities however have refused to free hundreds of inmates accused of serious crimes that the insurgents had requested for release.

The Taliban said it has already fulfilled its side of the exchange.

ELSEWHERE



No confidence in Trump's COVID-19 adviser: Pelosi

WASHINGTON

U.S. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi said on Sunday that she does not have confidence in White House COVID-19 task force coordinator Dr. Deborah Birx, linking her to disinformation spread by President Donald Trump. "[S]he is his [Trump's] appointee so, I don't have confidence there, no," Ms. Pelosi told ABC's "This Week" when asked if she has confidence in Ms. Birx. AFP

45 policemen injured in Berlin protests

BERLIN

Some 45 police officers were injured in a wave of weekend demonstrations in Berlin, including protests against COVID-19 restrictions, police said as protesters gathered again in smaller numbers on Sunday. A total of 133 people were arrested during Saturday's protests, which included a demonstration against curbs, police said. AFP

In Sri Lanka's rice hub, a tale of rural neglect and mounting debt

Disillusioned farmers in Polonnaruwa district ask why they must vote when their suffering persists amid unkept electoral promises

MEERA SRINIVASAN
POLONNARUWA

A week ahead of Sri Lanka's parliamentary elections R.A. Karunavathi, a farmer in Chandana Pokuna village in Polonnaruwa, located in the island's North Central Province, is looking for a reason to vote. "Why not boycott? We are forced to think like that," she says, obviously fatigued with polls and politicians.

Polonnaruwa district is known internationally for its evocative rock-cut Buddha sculptures and ancient city – now a UNESCO World Heritage Site – that one strand of popular history traces to the Cholas. It is also the country's rice bowl, with the district's farmers producing the highest amount – 3 lakh metric tonnes last year – of paddy in the country.

Trapped in debt
As droughts, floods and pests took turns in affecting their crop over the last few years, nearly 60 women farmers in Ms. Karunavathi's village are neck-deep in



Agrarian distress: Farmers in Sri Lanka's Polonnaruwa district are trying to make their voices heard. • MEERA SRINIVASAN

debt. "It began with one loan to cope with a failed crop." And then led to another loan to cope with the first loan. And soon, to a third. "Today, we're trapped in four, five loans each with no way to repay," she says, speaking of the stifling impact of microfinance loans that came to their doorsteps, with the exorbitant interest rates hidden in fine print.

"We didn't know or understand the terms when we signed up for these loans. But now, we realise we are paying up to 200% interest in some cases," says K.A. Karunavathi.

Struggling to repay their loans, some women in their group mortgaged their farmland, while a few died by suicide, amid growing anxiety and harassment from collection agents of the lending companies.

They voted for a new promise last year. "When President Gotabaya Rajapaksa stood for presidential elections, he said he would solve our problem. He even mentioned it in his manifesto. Since he is not a regular politician, we felt he might be different," Ms. Karunavathi says, explaining her vote for the retired Lieutenant Colonel nine months ago. "Nothing much has changed so far, but we really hope his government will do something after this election."

It is widely expected that the Rajapaksa's Sri Lanka Podujana Peramuna (SLPP) or People's Party-led alliance will secure a parlia-

mentary majority in the August 5 general elections, with possibly over 100 MPs in the 225-member legislature.

But the women of Chandana Pokuna have very low expectations from the aspiring elected representatives, including former President Sirisena, from their district.

Mr. Sirisena, who hails from the neighbouring Laksha Uyana village, is in the fray to enter Parliament after re-aligning himself with the Rajapaksa.

Paddy distribution

The challenge facing the women is a more recent symptom of a long-ignored problem, according to farmer groups.

Nearly three lakh people in this district are engaged in agriculture, some of whom are landless. While paddy production here is the highest in the country, its procurement and sale are controlled by a handful with known links to powerful politicians, according to M.K. Jayatissa, a farmer and long-time activist. "It is an irony that farmer producing all

this paddy are kept like beggars. And those producing their paddy for low prices, sell it in the market for millions and make huge profits.

This situation will change only when farmers are able to take control of the value addition as well," he notes.

The discontent among farmers, in a country where people eat at least one rice meal a day, tells a larger story of Sri Lanka's diminishing focus on agriculture, according to T.B. Sarath, General Secretary of the All Ceylon Farmers' Federation affiliated to the Opposition Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna, who is also contesting polls from Polonnaruwa.

Liberalisation in 1977
In his view, the trend began after Sri Lanka liberalised its economy in 1977. The sector's contribution to the GDP dropped significantly since. A World Bank survey of 1973 on agriculture, "the largest productive sector" then, states that it contributed 34.7% of the GDP in 1970. By 2018 agriculture's share to

the national GDP dropped to 7%, according to official data.

The last few years have not only witnessed severe droughts and floods, but also recurring farmer protests in different parts of the country, demanding irrigation, fertilizer subsidies and better paddy prices.

"But we have not had any serious discussion on our national agriculture policy. Governments don't care," Mr. Sarath notes. Barring a few garment factories, the district has seen few industries being set up. Wary of hasty or thoughtless industrialisation, locals emphasise the need for industries based on local resources, including paddy, vegetables and fruits such as wood apple and guava.

Meanwhile, farmers leading precarious lives, wait to see if their distress might reduce, at least a little. "That is why we vote despite everything, but sometimes I wonder what is the point," says N.R. Gnanavathy Menike, another farmer repaying multiple loans. "You know, it has been a long time since I slept at night."

ASK US



N. SREE KANTH

Q. Please tell me whether the annual premium paid under Atal Pension Yojana and accident death claim of the Union government are eligible for deduction under Section 80CC?

RAVINDRA KUMAR

A. Contribution to Atal Pension Yojana is deductible under Section 80CCD(1B) of Income Tax Act, 1961. It is treated on par with NPS. This section provides for deduction of up to ₹50,000 over and above the overall limit of ₹1,50,000 provided under Section 80CCE.

Q. I am a bank pensioner and senior citizen. I have deposited some funds with banks. Kindly guide me on the following:

1. Standard deduction applicable to pensioners?
2. How do I claim exemption under Section 80TTB?

VIJAYAKUMAR O

A. Standard deduction is available for pension received from your old employer to the extent of ₹50,000 per year.

Deduction under Section 80TTB is allowed for all senior citizens up to a limit of ₹50,000 per year for interest received from the funds deposited in banks, post office schemes and co-operative societies engaged in the functions of bank.

Section 80TTB deduction benefits can be claimed from the respective ITR under deductions under Chapter VIA. You may enter the appropriate deduction amount based on your interest income subject to a limit of ₹50,000.

Q. I am a senior citizen with only interest income. However an amount of ₹1,500 is credited to my bank account every month by LIC P&GS Department, being my employers' superannuation annuity.

In addition, I receive an annuity of ₹830 per month from LIC Jeevan Suraksha Policy. I am including these receipts in my income tax return. The question is am I eligible for standard deduction of ₹50,000? Two, my wife, being a Central government retiree, has opted for CGHS and I am also a beneficiary under the CGHS Scheme. She made a lump sum payment (whole life coverage for both of us) at the time of retirement.

We do not have any other health insurance coverage at all. But, we do incur approximately ₹5,000 each year on outpatient consultations / medicines that are not allowed by CGHS for reimbursement. This being the case, how much can we claim under Section 80D? Kindly clarify.

JANAKIRAM RAMAMURTHY

A. First, you will be eligible for a standard deduction of ₹50,000 for the amount received from your former employer as superannuation annuity pension, as same is declared under "Income from Salaries".

However, the annuity pension received from the life insurance policy is covered under "Income from Other Sources" and thus, standard deduction cannot be availed of.

Two, under Section 80D for senior citizens with no coverage whatsoever from any policy, medical expenses incurred can be availed up to ₹50,000.

However, in your case, since you are covered under CGHS, you will not be eligible to claim deduction towards medical expenses incurred for which reimbursement is not received.

(The author is partner, GSS & Associates, Chartered Accountants, Chennai)

Readers can send in queries on personal finance and investing to moneywise@thehindu.co.in. Our experts who write on personal finance will answer these queries. Moneywise will not give specific recommendations for investment in a particular mutual fund scheme, share or fixed deposit.

Should you time MF investments?

Mutual funds, unlike stocks, are not buy low, sell high instruments

VIDYA BALA

Many investors who invest in mutual funds (MFs) do so to leave it to the experts; to avoid trying to time the market, which can be like catching a falling knife sometimes. But few stick to this discipline for the rest of their investing lives.

Investors who start out well, with the intention of doing an SIP in a disciplined manner in an asset-allocated portfolio, get this urge to start timing the market, start timing SIP, start dynamically shifting between asset classes and start booking profit often.

And, if they get hurt in the process, they ask for a product/scheme that will effectively time the market or dynamically manage it. Here are some queries that are most often asked and strategies that are sought but best avoided.

Timing SIPs

The idea of an SIP is not to get high returns; nor is it about timing the market. It is only about rupee-cost averaging. Yet, many want to stop SIPs when markets are at a peak and wait for the right time to deploy it at a

low. And, what if markets remain elevated for a longer period? Nothing happens other than your losing out on your disciplined savings and not allowing the money to compound.

SIPs are simply meant to give you a regular savings vehicle to invest in. SIPs are not infallible, and can deliver negative returns. For example, a 5-year SIP in the Nifty 50 would have given a negative 8% IRR (internal rate of return) in the March 2020 lows. Had you held it for another 4 months, it would have bounced back to 6% IRR. That is the nature of the market. SIPs can't skip it.

An AMC did a study by taking the 1990-2019 period and calculated monthly SIPs on the Sensex on the worst days of each month (where you think you are averaging better) and also on the best days (where you think it is too expensive).

The return differential was less than 30 basis points on an annualised basis (IRR). This was to drive home the point that trying to time SIPs isn't really going to significantly change your

fortunes. If any, you will only disrupt your savings habit.

There are two simple ways to tackle the market volatility instead of trying to time the market: one is to have asset diversification and two, rebalance; that is, periodically shift from the asset class that has swelled (from your original allocation) to the one that is deflated in your own portfolio. This needs no market timing. Just a periodic review of your own portfolio would do.

At best, when there are deep market falls, you can always add more to your investments. But remember, you need deep pockets for this. For averaging to be meaningful, on top of your existing investments, you

need to deploy funds substantially. Otherwise, at best, it gives you some psychological satisfaction.

Managing asset allocation

Some investors have asked us for price earnings ratio (PE) ranges to deploy into equity or to exit. It is indeed true that had you invested at lower PEs, you would have gained. But what if you stayed away from markets too long because valuations are high? Even fund managers who took such cash calls have burnt their fingers. Let me explain some of the limitations of this strategy if you try to do this based on a playbook.

who has stayed away too long seldom has the courage to deploy everything in one go and hence, deploys too little to meaningfully buy at lows. Again, simple acts of annually rebalancing asset allocation should do the job, rather than trying to disrupt your portfolio too often. You can still use PE signals to deploy additional sums.

Selling when 'expensive'

Many of you are happy with the returns in some of your funds and when the market also looks bullish, you want to sell the high-returning fund and go for a lower returning (or lower NAV) fund or an NFO. Why? Because you think the fund valuation has turned expensive. Funds are not stocks. They only hold stocks. And they can exit a stock and buy better ones if a stock turns expensive or is underperforming. If a fund returns high, it is true that it may not be able to replicate such performance yet again. But to sell it in favour of a lower returning fund (which may be simply an underperformer) or to go for an NFO, which has no track record, cannot possibly provide you cheaper alternatives.

So, in essence, MFs, unlike stocks, are not 'buy low, sell high' instruments. They are 'buy when you have money, sell when you need money' instruments. Understanding this basic truth will serve you well.

(The author is co-founder, Primeinvestor.in)



COVER NOTE: INSURANCE AGENTS

Do you know what you want?

Understand your needs, do adequate research before bringing an agent into the picture

K. NITYA KALYANI

Many feel that insurance agents and other intermediaries don't share enough information, don't give sound enough advice and perhaps don't know enough to provide the clarity we need to buy insurance. The point is, you should do your research yourself and only then bring an intermediary into the picture.

Take the process of buying a policy. We recognise the need for insurance, but feel anxious and out of depth while buying it. Maybe, because the product is complex with a lot of legality and legal language involved. Perhaps, it is because the product itself is intangible and it is uncomfortable to contemplate loss or death.

Reluctance to buy

All this ends in a reluctance to buy insurance and, ironically, poor analysis and application of mind when actually buying it. Which is why the intermediary, who sells you the policy, can be the biggest help. Or, just the opposite.

There are multiple distribution channels for insurance policies. You can buy from agents, insurance brokers, an insurance marketing firm, a corporate agent, a web aggregator or, even directly from the insurance company, usually online. Insurance Regulatory and



Right choice: Once you have chosen the policy, you can approach the agent of the insurer offering the product. ■ GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCK

Development Authority of India (IRDAI) regulations lay down the framework within which all these types of intermediaries can sell insurance policies.

Proper licensing, basic educational qualifications, adequate and updated product knowledge, needs-analysis skills and a code of conduct are all part of it.

Agents are the most common type of intermediary from whom we buy personal insurance. They are individuals who earn a commission by selling policies of a single insurer whom they represent. They can be composite agents too, repre-

senting one life insurer, one non-life insurer and one standalone health insurer.

It is not a job where they get a salary at the end of the month, so, they are impelled to make the sale to earn their living. Hence their persistence, when they approach you to buy a policy or press you to make a quick decision.

Facilitator's role

What do you get when you buy from an agent? You plug into his ecosystem of an insurance company. He is familiar with all their policies and options, their documentation and procedures and can take you through the

process of buying a policy, maintaining it and renewing it. He will also handhold you at the time of a claim. So, he plays the role of facilitator.

As for the role of adviser, most agents play this role adequately and can get you specific information and clarification about their company's products. But before an agent can even enter the picture, you have to do the initial research, understand your needs and decide which policies fit the bill.

Fortunately, today, compared with about 25 years ago, information is the easiest thing to access. Once you have a fair idea of what policies are available, you can approach the agent of the company or companies offering the appropriate product to fine tune your buying decision.

At this point, the agent's knowledge and willingness to get answers to your questions comes into play. His ability to guide you to the right variant of the right product will help here.

But remember, the agent can sell you only policies of his company. So, your first decision should be the type of coverage you want, which leads you to your option of insurers, and then, to an agent.

(The writer is a business journalist specialising in insurance and corporate history)

TECH TRAIL: PRECIOUS METALS

Gold shines again

Pandemic, weak dollar drive sentiment

B. KRISHNAKUMAR

Precious metals regained lustre with gold and silver recording handsome gains in July. The rising number of COVID-19 cases, along with the weakness in the U.S. dollar, was the driving force behind the surge in precious metal prices. Concerns around U.S.-China tensions too aided sentiment.

Comex gold gained 10.3% to settle at a high of \$1,985.9 an ounce. This is the biggest monthly gain for Comex gold in the last 8 years. The price action in Comex silver was even more interesting, as it rose a whopping 30.6% in July to \$24.2 an ounce. This was the biggest-ever monthly gain in silver.

Gold futures at MCX rose 9.5% in July to ₹53,544 per 10 gm. MCX silver futures closed 29% higher at ₹64,984 per kg in July. As observed last month, comex gold ruled firm and moved well past the target of \$1,835-1,840. The recent uptrend in comex gold is likely to sustain in the short term. The price could head to the next target of \$2,020-2,030 an ounce. A fall below \$1,920 would invalidate the positive outlook for gold.

After several months of consolidation, Comex silver posted a massive breakout in July. The price moved well above the target zone of \$19.9-20. The short-term out-

look remains positive and a move to the next target zone of \$25.75-26 is likely. The trend in Comex silver would turn negative below \$22.

The price action in MCX gold futures was broadly in sync with earlier expectations. MCX gold moved well above the target of ₹50,700-51,000 and is currently at lifetime highs. The short-term outlook is positive; the price appears headed to the immediate target of the ₹55,200-55,500 zone. The short-term trend would turn weak if the price falls below ₹51,000 per 10 gm. MCX silver posted handsome gains in July. A rise to the target of ₹68,500-69,000 appears likely. The short-term positive outlook would be under threat if the price closes below the support level of ₹60,000-60,500.

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(The writer is a Chennai-based analyst/trader. This is not meant to be trading or investment advice)



LOOSE CHANGE

RAVIKANTH



*Exide coverage upto 60 years for age 30 years

Life insurance term plan premium

Male: 30 Years, Sum Insured - ₹1 crore, Cover upto- 70 Years			
Insurance company	Plan name	Maximum cover Up to (Years)	Annual premium (₹.) (Male)
Aditya Birla Capital	Life Shield Plan	80	12,998
Aegon Life	iTerm Insurance Plan	100	9,114
Bajaj Allianz	Smart Protect Goal	85	10911
Canara HSBC OBC Life	iSelect+ Term Plan	99	9,284
Exide Life Insurance	Smart Term Plan	75	12411*
Future Generali	Flexi Online Term Plan	75	9,427
HDFC Life	Click2Protect Plus	85	12,601
ICICI Prudential	iProtect Smart	99	17190
India First Life	e-Term Plan	80	8,260
Kotak Life Insurance	Kotak e-Term Plan	75	9,558
Max Life Insurance	Smart Term Plan Plus	80	11,800
PNB Met Life	Mera Term Plan	99	10,148
Reliance Nippon Life	Digi Term	80	11,012
SBI Life	eShield	80	15,070
TATA AIA Life	Maha Raksha Supreme	100	12,980

Health insurance premium

Insurer name	Key features	Plan names	Premium(₹)	Insurer name	Key features	Plan names	Premium (₹)

</tbl

TV PICKS

NBA: Sony Six (SD & HD), 6 a.m. & 11 p.m.**Magnus Carlsen Chess Tour:** Final, Eurosport (SD & HD), 7.30 p.m.

IN BRIEF



Aubameyang powers Arsenal to FA Cup title

LONDON
Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang inspired Arsenal to a record 14th FA Cup triumph, the Gunners captain scoring both goals in the 2-1 win against Chelsea in the final on Saturday. The win earned Mikel Arteta silverware in his first season as Arsenal boss.

The result: Arsenal 2 (Aubameyang 28-pen, 67) bt Chelsea 1 (Pulisic 5). AFP



Atwal makes slight rally; Grace tests positive

TRUCKEE (US)
Arjun Atwal landed three birdies against two bogeys for a fine 4+4-round that helped him rise two spots to tied 44th at the Barracuda Championships here on Saturday. Branden Grace withdrew prior to his third round after testing positive for COVID-19. Troy Merritt on 33 takes a four-point lead into the final round. PTI

Three share lead at LPGA Drive On

WASHINGTON
Overnight leader and fourth-ranked Danielle Kang carded three bogeys in the last six holes but held on to a share of the lead after Saturday's second round of the LPGA Drive On Championship. The 27-year-old American fired a one-over 73 to join France's Celine Boutier and England's Jodi Ewart Shadoff for the lead on five-under 139. AFP



Lowry lifts Raptors over Lakers

MIAMI
Kyle Lowry scored 33 points and grabbed 14 rebounds to lift defending NBA champion Toronto Raptors over Los Angeles Lakers 107-92 in a showdown of title contenders on Saturday.

The results: Toronto Raptors bt Los Angeles Lakers 107-92; Los Angeles Clippers bt New Orleans Pelicans 126-103;

Indiana Pacers bt Philadelphia 76ers 127-121; Miami Heat bt Denver Nuggets 125-105;

Oklahoma City Thunder bt Utah Jazz 110-94. AFP

Todd manages to keep his nose ahead

LOS ANGELES
Brendon Todd clung to a one-stroke lead after Saturday's third round of the WGC St. Jude Invitational with South Korea's An Byeong-hun, Justin Thomas and Phil Mickelson making a charge. Todd scrambled to a one-under 69 to stand on 12-under 198. AFP



Daruvala storms to fourth-place finish

His best till date in the championship

SPORTS BUREAU

SILVERSTONE
Jehan Daruvala fought back strongly and stormed to a creditable fourth-place finish in the reverse grid sprint race of the FIA Formula 2 championship here on Sunday. It was his best till date in the championship, and fetched him eight points, taking his tally to 18.

The Indian, part of the Red Bull Racing junior team, started 12th and was stuck there for the first part of the race and despite showing good pace, couldn't move up the road.

He continued to struggle in getting a good start and failed to gain positions off the line.

Cagliari O. AFP

CM YK

IPL in UAE gets provisional govt. nod

The 2020 edition to be staged from Sept. 19 to Nov. 10; squad size limited to 24 per team

AMOL KARHADKAR
MUMBAI

With the Union Government granting provisional clearance for IPL 2020 to be shifted to the UAE in the wake of COVID-19, the IPL governing council, which met on Sunday, decided that the tournament will be held from September 19 to November 10. The date for the final was fixed following a request from the broadcaster.

Besides deciding to stage the first-ever weekday final – coinciding with the Diwali celebration – the governing council finalised the proposal to advance the start of the night matches to 7.30 p.m. from 8 p.m.

While the squad size will be capped at 24, it was also decided to not allow spectators in any of the three venues – Dubai, Abu Dhabi and Sharjah – during the initial phase of the tournament. The council decided to not tinker with any of its



Desert storm: Abu Dhabi, which hosted a few games in 2014, will witness IPL action again.

sponsorship deals.

While a statement issued by BCCI secretary Jay Shah said that the governing council's decision was "subject to necessary clearances" from the government, a governing council member revealed that the BCCI had secured "verbal clearance" from the

government. "The governing council also discussed the comprehensive Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), which will be finalised and published in due course, including the agencies to execute and deliver a bio-secure environment for safe and successful conduct

of IPL 2020 season," the statement added.

Capping the squad size to 24 players won't affect the teams much because only three of the eight franchises – Kings XI Punjab, Rajasthan Royals and Sunrisers Hyderabad – have a squad size of 25, the maximum limit at the

Key decisions

- IPL in UAE from Sept. 19 to Nov. 10
- Each team can take a maximum of 24 players
- Night matches to start at 7.30 p.m.
- SOPs and fixtures to be announced later this week
- Chinese sponsors to be retained for this edition

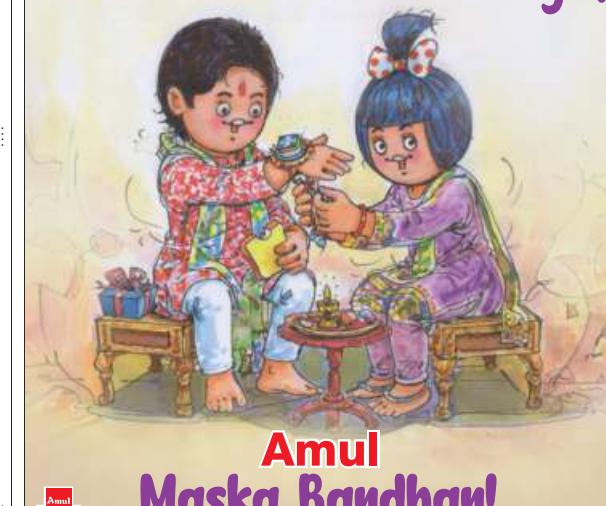
time of the auction.

In the wake of the government's increased curbs against Chinese entities following a border standoff, the BCCI had announced that it would review IPL's sponsorship deals, including the one with Chinese mobile company VIVO, the title sponsor.

Sticking with sponsors

However, it was decided to "stick to the sponsors," citing a lack of time to look for alternatives.

Yeh snack sabko bhaiya!



Amul
Maska Bandhan!

daCunha/AB/703

Surendhar and Jabir to get gold

ATHLETICS

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI

J. Surendhar (110mH) and M.P. Jabir (400mH) were upgraded and are set to receive gold medals in the 13th South Asian Games held in Kathmandu (Nepal) in December 2019.

This, after gold medalists, Mohammed Naeem

and Mehboob Ali of Pakistan tested positive for a banned substance and decided not to appeal their dope results.

Santosh Kumar of India, who had won bronze in men's 400mH will now get silver. Similarly, India's Maymon Poulose will get bronze in 110mH while silver will go to Roshan Dhamika of Sri Lanka.

Giri lets Nepomniachtchi off the hook

LEGENDS OF CHESS

RAKESH RAO
NEW DELHI

An upbeat Anish Giri made Ian Nepomniachtchi suffer before their first game of the deciding set ended in a draw in the semifinals of chess24 Legends of Chess on Sunday.

At one stage, Nepomniachtchi was six minutes ahead on the clock but Giri was toying with ideas of forcing the issue, after gaining a pawn-majority on the

queenside.

But Giri did not find the right continuation in time and let Nepomniachtchi improve his position.

Eventually, the Russian recovered the pawn and forced a draw after 40 moves.

The results: Semifinals: Set Three: Game One: Anish Giri (Ned) drew with Ian Nepomniachtchi (Rus).

After two sets: Magnus Carlsen (Nor) bt Peter Svidler (Rus) 2-0; Giri level with Nepomniachtchi 1-1.

England clinches series

IRELAND IN ENG

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
SOUTHAMPTON

Jonny Bairstow equalled the England record for the fastest One-Day International fifty as the World champion beat Ireland by four wickets in a series-clinching victory here on Saturday.

England was cruising to a

target of 213 while opener Bairstow, whose 21-ball half-century equalled skipper Eoin Morgan's mark against Australia at Nottingham two years ago, was at the crease.

His exit for 82 sparked a mini-collapse that saw three wickets fall for six runs. But Sam Billings made 46 not out and David Willey 47 not out to take England home.

SCOREBOARD

Ireland: 212 for nine in 50 overs.

England: Jason Roy c Delany b Young 0, Jonny Bairstow c Tucker b Little 82, James Vince b Campher 16, Tom Banton lbw b Campher 15, Sam Billings (not out) 46, Eoin Morgan c Campher b Little 0, Moeen Ali c Tucker b Little 0, David Willey (not out) 47; Extras (b-2, nb-2,

w-6): 10. Total (for 6 wkts. in 32.3 overs): 216.

Fall of wickets: 1-0, 2-71, 3-98, 4-131, 5-137, 6-137.

Ireland bowling: Young 9-0-68-1, Little 10-3-60-3, McBride 5-0-33-0, Campher 6.3-1-50-2, Simi Singh 2-0-3-0.

Man-of-the-Match: Bairstow.

England won by four wickets with 17.3 overs to spare.

A welcome boost for Bajrang Punia

His personal coach Bentiniidis has returned to India

WRESTLING

Y.B. SARANGI
KOLKATA

Three-time World championships medalist wrestler Bajrang Punia is eagerly waiting to welcome personal coach Shakti Bentiniidis to chart his course of action leading up to the Olympics.

Georgian Bentiniidis returned to India on Thursday night by a special flight. "Shakti will undergo seven days of quarantine in Delhi and another seven days of quarantine in Vijayanagar before joining me at the Inspire Institute for Sport (IIS) campus for training," Bajrang told *The Hindu*.

Bentiniidis has been overseeing Bajrang and partner Jitender Kumar's (74kg)

(up to the Olympics) as we don't know about the upcoming tournaments yet."

About his decision to move to IIS, Bajrang said, "It is a secure and safe campus, having the best of facilities and scientific support. The coach here is an Olympic champion (Cuban Drago Quintana), he has got different ideas and I can learn a few things from him."

"There is a good trainer here. I can put myself through various tests and work on different areas of my game."

Bajrang fondly recalled the time he spent at home during the lockdown. "I trained with Jitender at the training. We will start by addressing smaller areas. However, it is difficult to make a concrete schedule



Bajrang Punia. ■ FILE PHOTO

training over video calls.

Bajrang, who won an Olympic quota place in men's freestyle 65kg class last year, said Bentiniidis' presence would help him.

"Shakti and I will sit down and discuss how to go about the training. We will start by addressing smaller areas.

However, it is difficult to make a concrete schedule

"I stayed positive and thought whatever happened was for good. I could never spend enough time at home due to my tight training and competition schedule. This was an opportunity to spend quality time with my parents."

"I love cooking, I prepared desi food items. I also got time to read two books (Laukik Vyavahar and Pauranik Kathayen)."

Looking forward to the Tokyo Olympics next year, Bajrang said, "I will use the time to work on my weaknesses. There is a lot of hope (from me), it's a dream of 135 crore people (that I win a medal). I never take pressure because of expectations. Rather, it motivates me to give my best."

Angad asks SAI for ammunition and clay

He uses the simulator for about 30 minutes every day

SHOOTING

KAMESH SRINIVASAN
NEW DELHI

To have a shotgun range at home is a blessing, especially during the time of pandemic. Reigning Asian skeet champion Angad Vir Singh Bajwa is happy to train at home in Chandigarh, but has been compelled to slow down.

"I have been rationing ammunition as I don't have enough. I have asked the Sports Authority of India (SAI) for ammo and clays. I am waiting for the approval," said Angad.

He makes up for lack of ammunition by using the simulator for about 30 minutes every day.

"It is a machine similar to Scatt system that rifle and pistol shooters use. I managed to get the simulator before the lockdown."

"My coach Tore Brovold used it before the Beijing Olympics. It has been very



Working hard: Angad Vir Singh Bajwa is happy to train at home in Chandigarh, but has been compelled to slow down.

■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

useful for me during this time."

Brovold won the silver in the Beijing Olympics.

Frustrating wait

While it has mostly been a frustrating wait of one more

year for the Olympics, Angad feels it is a blessing in disguise.

"I am constantly in touch with my coach via video calling. I have made good progress in my shooting during this time. Getting an extra

one year for the Olympics is a blessing for me. I have become a stronger shooter," he said.

If he can afford to have a shotgun range at his farmhouse, it is not such a big task for Angad to have a gym at home.

Focus on fitness

"Tore told me to train less at the moment and focus more on my physical fitness and diet. I work out at the gym every day."

Angad was clear that travelling to Delhi, a "hot spot", would not be safe, especially considering he has world class facilities at home.

"I have almost finished all shows on Netflix," joked Angad, who reads a bit and watches a lot of football.

A ND-NDE