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Priyanka Gandhi vacates government bungalow in New Delhi
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Willey takes five as England bundles out Ireland for 172
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NEARBY



Delhi cuts VAT on diesel, price down by ₹8 per litre
NEW DELHI

The Delhi Cabinet on Thursday decided to slash Value Added Tax rates on diesel, effectively reducing its price to ₹73.64 from ₹82 per litre, said Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal. He said the VAT has been reduced from 30% to 16.75%.

CITY ▶ PAGE 2

Fresh COVID-19 cases continue to decline in city

NEW DELHI
Delhi reported 1,093 new COVID-19 cases in the past 24 hours, taking the total to 1,34,403, said a government health bulletin. Also, 29 more deaths were reported, pushing the toll to 3,936. The number of new cases has remained under 1,500 for the 14th consecutive day.

CITY ▶ PAGE 3

Pandemic claims lives of 11 doctors in Bihar

PATNA
The surging COVID-19 pandemic in Bihar has claimed the lives of 11 doctors and 250 more are infected, the State secretary of the Indian Medical Association said. Amid acute shortage of medical staff, the number of positive cases crossed 48,000 on Thursday.

NORTH & EAST ▶ PAGE 4

India now has fifth highest COVID-19 fatalities in the world

Seven-day rolling average for daily cases crosses 50,000; new highs in A.P., U.P.

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI

In a densely populated country like India, herd immunity cannot be a strategic option because this will come at a very high cost in terms of human lives lost and will cripple the health care system, the Union Health Ministry said on Thursday.

"Herd immunity can only be achieved through immunisation and till then COVID-19 appropriate behaviour is the only way forward," said Rajesh Bhushan, Officer on Special Duty, Health Ministry, at a press conference.

Maharashtra tops chart

With 786 deaths registered on Thursday, India's death toll reached 35,800. Maharashtra (266 deaths), Tamil Nadu (100), Karnataka (83), Andhra Pradesh (68) and Uttar Pradesh (57) contributed to the bulk of the fatalities.

India now has the fifth highest death toll in the world, surpassing Italy with 35,132 deaths, according to Johns Hopkins University's COVID-19 tracker. The seven day rolling average for deaths in India is now 735, next only to the U.S. (1,075) and Brazil (1,052).

The case fatality rate in the country is now 2.18%,

Viral tracker

With 786 COVID-19 deaths recorded on Thursday, India's tally stood at 35,800, the fifth highest in the world, surpassing Italy's toll of 35,132. As many as 54,660 new cases were added, the second consecutive day with more than 50,000 infections

NEW CASES AND DEATHS

CASES 54,660 7 DAY-CHANGE +11.6%

DEATHS 786 7 DAY-CHANGE +3.8%

The graphs depict the new cases and deaths in the last 14 days in select States. If average cases/deaths in the last seven days are higher than the previous seven days, then the cases/deaths are rising; if they are lower, then dropping; if they are similar, then cases/deaths are flattening.

FIGURES IN THE GRAPHS DEPICT NEW CASES AND DEATHS RECORDED ON THURSDAY

which is "among the lowest in the world.. 24 States and Union Territories have a lesser fatality rate than that of the country," according to the Health Ministry OSD, Rajesh Bhushan.

As many as 54,660 confirmed cases were registered across the country, marking yet another high in daily cases (data from Tripura and Arunachal Pradesh were not available when this report went to press). The seven day rolling average for cases also crossed the 50,000 mark. The total confirmed

cases went up to 16,38,951 with a 64.58% recovery rate (10,58,464 people have recovered while 5,44,687 people are actively infected).

"16 States have a recovery rate more than the national average," Mr. Bhushan said.

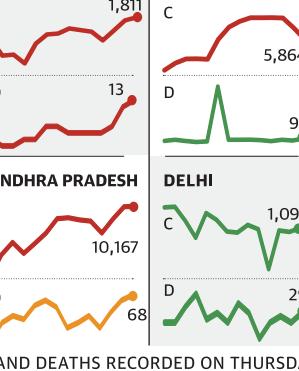
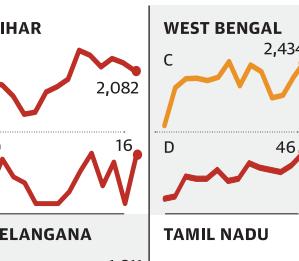
Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh registered 11,147 and 10,167 cases each, both daily highs. The latter had also tested 70,068 samples on July 29, among the highest in States.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

EDITORIAL ▶ PAGE 6

Trump adviser sees crucial role for India

Anthony Fauci, top infectious disease specialist and senior adviser to U.S. President Donald Trump on COVID-19, said India would play a critical role in supplying the world with a COVID-19 vaccine. India's manufacturing capabilities is going to be very vital, he said. ▶ PAGE 10



Junior priest at Ayodhya Ram temple tests positive

Police personnel at makeshift shrine also infected

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT LUCKNOW

An assistant of the head priest of the makeshift Ram Janmabhoomi temple in Ayodhya has tested positive for COVID-19. Around a dozen police personnel posted at the Ram Jammabhoomi complex have also tested positive, sources said.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi is scheduled to participate in the *bhoomi puja* (ground-breaking ceremony) for the Ram temple to be constructed at the site of the Babri Masjid, which was demolished by kar sevaks on December 6, 1992.

Acharya Satyendra Das, the court-appointed head priest of the makeshift temple, confirmed that his assistant Pradeep Das had tested positive. Mr. Satyendra Das and other priests at the temple have tested negative.



Quick stop: A devotee praying before a wayside mural of Lord Ram in Ayodhya on Thursday. ▶ PTI

According to the State government, Ayodhya recorded 417 active cases and 13 deaths due to COVID-19 till July 30, with 59 new cases over the last 24 hours.

Last week, Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath had visited Ayodhya to review preparations for the ground-breaking ceremony. While performing a ritual,

Mr. Satyendra Das and Mr. Pradeep Das were seen standing in close proximity to the Chief Minister.

The Acharya said a separate set of priests, including some from Varanasi, would conduct the *bhoomi puja* on August 5. He added that testing of priests at the Ram Jammabhoomi complex would continue till August 5.

Outside Mr. Soz's house, the policemen on guard do not open the gates. Media personnel are shooed away.

Mr. Soz scaled the pillar but his interaction was cut short by policemen, who warned of action.

"The government lied to the Supreme Court. If I am a free man, then allow

for several months in return for a paltry food bill of ₹250 a week.

The workers, hailing mostly from Balangir, Nuapada and Kalahandi, struck a deal with the owner that they could return home if they finished their work in a week's time, which they did at breakneck speed.

The owner, however,

backtracked on his promise

and did not let the workers go.

When they tried to leave the brick kiln in the second week of May, the owner and his men thrashed them mercilessly. Even women and children were not spared. Despite the unprovoked attack, the girl kept recording the incident. She immediately shared

Soz scales pillar at home, police warn of action

'Under house arrest sans formal orders'

PEERZADA ASHIQ SRINAGAR

Senior Congress leader and former Union Minister Saifuddin Soz on Thursday scaled a tall pillar of his gate at Srinagar's Friends Colony, even as policemen kept warning him against doing so, to make a point that he remained "under house arrest without any formal orders" since August 5 last year.

The J&K administration had on Wednesday told the Supreme Court that Mr. Soz was "not under detention", following which the court closed the petition by his wife asking for his release.

Outside Mr. Soz's house, the policemen on guard do not open the gates. Media personnel are shooed away. Mr. Soz scaled the pillar but his interaction was cut short by policemen, who warned of action. "There has been no communication from any official or any relaxation on my restrictions so far," he told *The Hindu*.

GOVT. LIED TO SC: CONG. ▶ PAGE 9

L-G rejects govt's decision on lawyers

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI

Lieutenant-Governor Anil Baijal on Thursday rejected the decision of the Delhi Cabinet regarding the selection of a panel of lawyers to represent it in cases of north-east Delhi riots and anti-CAA protests in the High Court and the Supreme Court.

The L-G has issued orders to the Delhi government to notify the panel of lawyers suggested by the Delhi police instead of the panel selected by the Home Department. Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's office said that the Delhi government is now bound to implement the L-G's order.

DETAILS ON ▶ PAGE 3



Mansi Bariha at Matiabhatta village in Odisha's Balangir district. ▶ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Pudhukuppam in Tamil Nadu's Tiruvallur district.

By the time the COVID-19 lockdown was announced, the trio had already worked

photos, audio recordings and videos of the injured workers with WhatsApp contacts, appealing for help urgently. When the videos were shared widely on social media, a voluntary organisation reached out to the Tiruvallur district administration, leading to the expeditious rescue of the workers.

According to NGO International Justice Mission, the Tamil Nadu government subsequently arranged about 150 buses and ferried 6,750 labourers, including the 355 labourers from the kiln which Ms. Bariha was working, to board trains to their homes in Odisha, Bihar, Jharkhand and Uttar Pradesh.

DETAILS ON ▶ PAGE 3

'Team Rahul' takes on UPA Ministers at Congress meet

Younger members blame UPA-II govt. for party's decimation

SANDEEP PHUKAN NEW DELHI

A virtual meeting of Rajya Sabha members of the Congress on Thursday, chaired by party president Sonia Gandhi, witnessed a sharp exchange of views between former Ministers in the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) government and members who are believed to be close to former party chief Rajiv Gandhi, highly placed sources said.

There has been no formal communication from the party on the closed-door brainstorming session.

According to sources who did not wish to be named, when former Law Minister Kapil Sibal questioned the party's style of functioning, pointed to a lack of coordination and called for "introspection", newly elected Rajya Sabha member Rajeev

Patav, another close aide of Mr. Gandhi. Mr. Venugopal and Mr. Satav, strongly endorsed Assam MP Ripun Bora's suggestion that Mr. Gandhi take over the reins of the party again.

The meeting, which went on for nearly four hours, was convened to discuss the current political situation, including the impact of COVID-19, the economic slump, and the stand-off with China.

Talking about the challenges of the past few months because of the pandemic, Ms. Gandhi informed her colleagues about her letters to the Prime Minister to help migrant workers through welfare measures, and the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act and (MGNREGA) the Food Security Act, among others.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8



Sonia Gandhi



Kapil Sibal

Cong. MLAs to stay together till session

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT JAIPUR

Closing ranks ahead of a possible test of strength in the Rajasthan Assembly, Congress MLAs and Independents supporting them, put up at a luxury hotel outside Jaipur for the last fortnight, will continue to stay

together till the session starts on August 14.

Governor Kalraj Mishra has summoned the Assembly after approving the State Cabinet's fourth proposal.

The political situation and the strategies for keeping the MLAs united were discussed at a Congress Le-

gislature Party (CLP) meeting at the hotel on Thursday.

Congress chief whip Mahesh Joshi told reporters after the meeting that all legislators would "remain united" and stay together till the session.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

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Govt. cuts VAT on diesel, price down by over ₹8

Kejriwal says decision will help boost economy in the Capital

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Delhi Cabinet decided to slash Value Added Tax (VAT) rates on diesel effectively reducing its price to ₹73.64 down from ₹82 per litre, said Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Thursday.

He said the reduction of VAT from 30% to 16.75% would lead to a dip in the per litre cost of the fuel by ₹8.36 per litre. Mr. Kejriwal added that the move would not only bring huge relief to the people of Delhi but also would also be a big step towards boosting economic revival in the Capital.

The Delhi government had, on May 4, ordered an increase in VAT on petrol to 30% from 27% and on diesel to 30% from 16.75%.

Dip in State revenue

The order had come into effect the following day and was in response to dipping State revenue on account of the national lockdown to contain the pandemic.

"The two crore people of

C The two crore people of Delhi have brought COVID-19 under control. We now need to focus on how we can revive the economy of Delhi because many people have been affected due to shutting down of businesses and industries. We will accept and win this economic challenge

— ARVIND KEJRIWAL,
Chief Minister



Delhi have brought COVID-19 under control. However, we need to ensure social distancing and wear masks, because if we become complacent, the virus might spike again. We now need to focus on how we can revive the economy of Delhi because many people have been affected due to shutting down of businesses and industries," he said.

"The people of Delhi have accepted big challenges in the past and have overcome them. We will accept and win this economic challenge as well. A crucial decision was taken in a Cabinet meeting held today, which I believe will be an important step in taking the economy forward," he added.

Many industry representatives, businessmen and traders were demanding a reduction in the prices of diesel because its price was affecting the budget of the people in addition to impacting trade and businesses.

The decision to slash VAT, and, in effect, reduce diesel prices, was taken after consultations between the Delhi government and several stakeholders, Mr. Kejriwal said.

BJP govt. should lower petrol and diesel prices'

AAP accuses Centre of 'extortionist approach'

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

After the Delhi government decided to reduce VAT on diesel on Thursday, the AAP later in the day said diesel "is the lifeblood of the economy" and the decrease in its prices will act as "sanjeevani booti" in reviving an "unconscious economy".

"On the other hand, the BJP-led Centre adopted an extortionist approach and increased excise duty on diesel and petrol 22 times over 22 continuous days from June 7, 2020, to June 29 2020. They should take a leaf out of Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's book and rollback," said AAP leader Raghav Chadha at a press conference.

He added that the Centre should decrease the price of petrol by ₹24/litre and diesel by ₹28/litre. The BJP government has hiked the excise duty on petrol by 260% petrol and diesel price by 820% from 2014, the AAP said.

Party leader Durgesh Pathak also alleged corruption in the allocation of funds to gaushalas by the

BJP-ruled municipal corporations.

₹30 crore pending

"Nearly 25,000 cattle in Delhi are suffering from scarcity of food. The BJP is responsible in Delhi for this negligence of the cows because they have not paid the requisite amount for their maintenance for three years from the civic bodies. There is a pending ₹30 crore from the civic bodies," Mr. Pathak said.

The AAP said the government has always paid the money on time. "In the last three years, the civic bodies have not paid single rupee for the cow shelters in the last three years," he added.

The BJP harasses people and asks for votes in the name of cows and Delhi has four government cow shelters where nearly 25,000 cows stay, said AAP.

"According to the rules, the government pays ₹20 per day per cow and the same money should be given by civic bodies. This amounts to ₹10-₹11 crores for the government per year," he said.

BJP supports move but says not enough

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Kin suspect foul play in police officer's death

They refute police claim, want fair probe

HEMANI BHANDARI
NEW DELHI

Two days after a Delhi police officer allegedly shot himself in South Delhi, his family raised suspicion over his death and demanded a fair investigation.

Leader of the Opposition in the Delhi Legislative Assembly, Ramvir Singh Bidhuri, said the decision would definitely provide relief to the people but VAT on diesel needed to be reduced to 12.5% and to 20% on petrol. "Before Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal came to power, VAT in Delhi was charged at the rate of 12.5% on diesel. This was increased from 12.5 to 30% during the Kejriwal government's tenure while the VAT on petrol was also increased from 20% to 30%," Mr. Bidhuri said.

"If the government wants to give relief to the people of Delhi, then it should charge VAT at the rate of 12.5% on diesel and 20% on petrol. Ever since the government increased the VAT rate on diesel and petrol, the BJP has been demanding a reduction," he added.

The family denied that the officer could take his own life. "We can't understand why he would do this? He didn't share any problems with us. We don't think it's a black and white case and we want to know what exactly happened," the brother said.

The family said that they were visited by senior officers on Wednesday. "We told them to investigate his death in a fair manner and also asked them to tell us what they find," he said.

A senior police officer privy to the case said that they have not found any foul play as of now. "Forensic Science Laboratory team inspected the spot and the post-mortem has been conducted by a board of doctors at AIIMS. None of the parties have suspected foul play. However, inquest proceedings are under way," he said.

The 33-year-old head constable posted at Saket police station allegedly shot himself dead using his service pistol on Tuesday morning. The deceased is survived by his wife and two children.

'NEP a progressive document, but comes with flaws'

Sisodia says the policy does not provide clarity on how it is to be implemented

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Education Minister Manish Sisodia on Thursday said the National Education Policy (NEP) was a forward-looking and progressive document that acknowledges the flaws in our education system and seeks to better it.

However, he said the problem with the policy is that there is no clarity on how it is to be implemented and does not break-free from the pressures of the old education system.

'Poorly funded'

"The NEP is poorly funded and highly regulated policy that has multiple regulatory bodies that will end up clashing with each other," the Mi-



Manish Sisodia addresses a press conference on NEP in New Delhi on Thursday. ■ PTI

that the HRD Ministry will now be an Education Ministry and also hoped for a change in the way the Ministry works.

"For the first time, early childhood education has been brought in the mainframe and there are talks about serving breakfast along with lunch under the mid-day meal scheme. Instruction during foundation years in mother tongue is also a positive step," Mr. Sisodia said.

One of the biggest flaws he said was the policy does not talk about how to improve government schools but encourages private ones. The Minister said a four-year B.Ed course for future teachers was a good step but ques-

tions why the policy does not talk about training existing teachers. Elaborating on why he felt that the policy does not break away from the traditional education system, Mr. Sisodia said: "The policy says that board examinations will be made easier and conducted twice a year. Board examinations do not need to be made tougher or easier but it needs to do away with rote learning and move to a continuous assessment model instead."

He pointed out that the policy was completely silent on sports.

He said he hoped that the Centre looks into the suggestions made by him as there was still time to make changes to the document.

Govt. ignoring their plight, allege JJ cluster residents

They are living in tents even 12 days after their homes were swept away in rain

HEMANI BHANDARI
NEW DELHI

The residents of Anna Nagar JJ cluster – where 12 houses were swept away 12 days ago – still continue to live in tents and expect a closure.

"There has been no word from the government. At least they should tell us if they are even planning to take action. They should tell us if we need to start looking for accommodation ourselves so that we can prepare accordingly," said Kuber Chandra Kotiyal, a resident who works as a security guard.

The residents said they have been living in open tents since July 19 and while officials have visited them,



Residents of JJ clusters taking shelter in tents on Thursday. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

nothing has changed.

"A local MLA had visited four days ago. After we shared our problems, he promised us a bigger tent and mattresses. We haven't received anything yet," said Neha, another resident.

Earlier, the residents

would rush to the Indraprastha Metro Station whenever it rained. "Hence, we stay here in the tents whenever it rains," said Baljeet.

The residents said they have been struggling for basic requirements.

"We are not given breakfast. Even if I buy milk, I have to boil it in a neighbour's house. How long will they entertain us after all?" asked Kotiyal.

'A permanent place'

The residents said they would be content with even just a roof over their heads. "We just need a permanent place to stay. Whatever losses we have incurred, nothing can be done. We will buy things again with our meagre earnings, but we do need a roof to stay," he said.

IN BRIEF

Traders' body slams SDMC over hike in taxes

NEW DELHI
The Confederation of All India Traders' (CAIT) on Thursday hit out at the South Delhi Municipal Corporation over its recent decision to charge new taxes and increase rates of property tax. At a time when traders were facing an unimaginable financial crisis, the association termed the move "barbaric". The traders called for an immediate rollback.

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CMC/BY/20-21/RB/P/014	Providing Meter Testing and Other Support Services in MMG dept. of BYPL	₹ 1.74 Crores	₹ 3.48 Lakh	15:00 HRS	21.08.2020 12:00 HRS
CMC/BY/20-21/RB/P/015	Providing Support services in Miscellaneous Department of BYPL	₹ 1.73 Crores	₹ 3.46 Lakh	15:00 HRS	21.08.2020 13:00 HRS

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Timings
DELHI

FRIDAY, JUL. 31
RISE 05:43 SET 19:13
RISE 16:37 SET 02:15
SATURDAY, AUG. 01
RISE 05:43 SET 19:12
RISE 17:36 SET 03:09
SUNDAY, AUG. 02
RISE 05:44 SET 19:12
RISE 18:29 SET 04:06

Delhi Weather max min
Delhi City 32 26
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Delhi Palam Today
33°C Light to moderate rain and thunder shower would affect some places with cloudy skies.

Delhi Palam Tomorrow
33°C Few spell of light to moderate rain likely to occur over the area with gusty winds.

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CM holds meet to plan revival of economy

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Thursday held a meeting with representatives of over 28 industrial associations and urged them to join hands with the Delhi government in reviving the city's economy.

He took suggestions made by various industry representatives and assured them of full support of the State government. A total of 28 industrial associations, including the Confederation of Indian Industry, Badli Industrial Estate Association, Narela Industrial Complex Welfare Association, Okhla Chamber of Industries, Apex Chamber of Commerce and Bawana Manufacturers Welfare Association, attended the meeting.

"While acknowledging that these are challenging times and that the economic revival of Delhi was an uphill task, Mr. Kejriwal stressed on how Delhi defeated COVID-19 by coming together and the need of collective efforts of all the stakeholders to work together towards the economic revival of the national capital," the Delhi government said in a statement.

As virus graph dips, DMs asked to reassess containment zones

They have been asked to come up with a list of zones that can be removed

NIKHIL M BABU
NEW DELHI

With the number of new COVID-19 cases in the city on a downward trend, the 11 District Magistrates (DM) were on Thursday directed to reassess about 700 containment zones in the city, which is expected to bring down the number of such zones, according to officials.

"The DMs have been directed to review all containment zones that are 28 days and older and with a population of more than 1,000 or more, based on directions received from the Central government yesterday [Wednesday]," a Delhi government official told *The Hindu*.

They have also been asked to come up with a list of zones that can be removed from the list or made into micro containment zones for effective implementation of measures by



Residents of a hotspot area in Jahangirpuri waiting for rapid antigen test on Thursday. ■ SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

Friday.

The move follows an office memorandum issued by the Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare on Wednesday to all States to scale down operations and de-nify containment zones.

Downscale measures

"In view of the hardships faced by residents, States having such containment zones with prolonged lock-

downs may opt for the following... The surveillance operations will be scaled down if no laboratory confirmed COVID-19 case is reported from the containment zone for at least 14 days," the memorandum said. This was earlier done after 28 days.

A containment zone is a geographic area such as a large colony, a street, or even two or three houses,

and people are not allowed to enter or leave such zones.

"Some States have experienced continuing outbreaks in some containment zones and buffer zones [encircling the containment zones], keeping them under the lockdown for over months. In such cases, to have another period of 28 days, to de-notify such containment zones brings hardships to its residents," the memorandum further said.

"With the number of days coming down to 14 and directions to reassess the containment zones, the number of such zones will come down for sure," a District Magistrate said.

An official of another district said that it is better to declare smaller containment zones. "When a containment zone is large, officials are unable to implement proper measures," the official said.

COVID-19 cases continue steady decline in the Capital

Active cases have decreased by 60.2% from early July

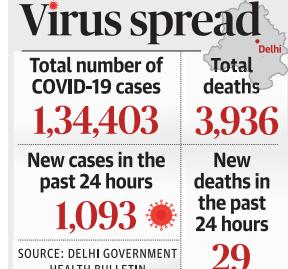
STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

As many as 1,093 new COVID-19 cases were reported in Delhi in the past 24 hours, taking the total number of cases to 1,34,403, according to a health bulletin released by the Delhi government on Thursday.

Also, 29 more deaths have been reported, taking the tally to 3,936. Of the total cases, 1,19,724 people have recovered and there are 10,743 active cases.

Since the daily count touched almost 4,000 - highest so far - on June 23, a total of 5,892 beds in COVID-19 hospitals were occupied and it has decreased to 2,950 on Thursday. In the same period, the number of COVID-19 positive people in home isolation has come down from 16,703 to 5,873.

Active cases have decreased by 60.2%, from 27,007 on July 1 to 10,743 on Thursday. Of the total 19,475 tests done in the past 24 hours, 71.5% were rapid anti-



gen tests, which have shown a low positivity in the city compared to RT PCR tests.

The number of people admitted to COVID-19 hospitals has been dipping. On July 1, a total of 5,892 beds in COVID-19 hospitals were occupied and it has decreased to 2,950 on Thursday. In the same period, the number of COVID-19 positive people in home isolation has come down from 16,703 to 5,873.

Also, the positivity rate, which is the percentage of people who test positive, has

dropped from 12.2% to 5.6%. There are 694 containment zones now.

Meanwhile, the Delhi government on Thursday issued an order to form four committees to inspect 11 COVID-19 hospitals and give hospital-wise recommendations on following standard operating procedures and protocols. The committees will also examine the reasons behind the COVID-19 deaths in the hospitals.

"It has been observed that the percentage of COVID-19 deaths vis-a-vis admissions and the percentage of COVID-19 deaths in wards in 11 hospitals is on the higher side from July 1 to July 23," the order said.

Following a High Court order, the Delhi government decided not to test people admitted with severe acute respiratory infections (SARI) using rapid antigen tests.

Javed, a National Health Mission doctor, had succumbed to the virus after contracting it in the line of duty last month. He had been on the frontline in the fight against the highly contagious virus since March, the Delhi government said in a statement. He had tested positive on June 24 and was on ventilator for the last 10 days. He is survived by his wife and two children.

"Without caring for his own life, he kept helping people. The people of Delhi salute his service," Mr. Kejriwal said.

"Without caring for his own life, he kept helping people. The people of Delhi salute his service," Mr. Kejriwal said.

New session at DU to begin on August 10 with online classes

Entrance tests scheduled for second week of September

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

Delhi University on Thursday announced that classes for the new academic session would begin on August 10, with online classes for students in the third, fifth and sixth semesters.

The beginning of the new session had been postponed multiple times due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the consequent lockdown in the country. Earlier, the university had extended summer vacations to July 31. Now the vacations have been extended till August 9. Online classes had begun at the university at the end of the previous semester after the lockdown was announced in March.

Meanwhile, registrations



number of registrations have gone up by about 60,000 this year compared to last year the figure was 2.58 lakh. The preceding year had seen 2.78 lakh paid registrations.

Significantly, a higher proportion of unreserved-category students have applied for UG programmes this year at 64.9% of paid registrations compared to 59.01% last year. On the other hand, the number of students applying under all other categories, such as OBC, SC, ST, EWS, has dipped.

Apart from this, up to 1,43,892 people have applied for postgraduate programmes at the university and 20,806 for M.Phil and Ph.D programmes.

for admission to the university's merit-based courses have been extended to August 31 and entrance tests have been scheduled for the second week of September. So far, nearly five lakh people have registered for undergraduate courses. Out of these, 3.18 lakh paid registrations have been made. Despite the COVID-19 crisis, the

court expressed dissatisfaction with the time frame, blaming the government for showing "laxity" in complying with its order on January 13 to complete the smog tower in three months.

Appearing before a Bench led by Justice Arun Mishra, Solicitor General Tushar Mehta said the "drawings" of the project would take two months.

The court expressed dissatisfaction with the time frame, blaming the government for showing "laxity" in complying with its order on January 13 to complete the smog tower in three

months.

When Mr. Mehta submitted that it was IIT-M that had backed out of the project, Justice Mishra retorted "you [government] had to make the effort. Our direction was to your Ministry. This is a government project. It was for the government to do it... A detailed order has been violated and you seem to have no intention to comply with it". "We will not tolerate laxity," Justice Mishra said.

Mr. Mehta offered to file an affidavit with an undertaking to complete the project. Amicus curiae Aparajita Singh suggested the court to ask the government to come up with a "firm time frame" on the project. The court listed the case on Tuesday.

It was decided in this meeting that in the coming

months, it will be ensured that the contractual labour holding organisations have a HUM number. Under this, the registration of contractors and workers is being done with their Aadhaar card number. The Labour Department will confirm that every such organisation is registered and after February 1, 2021, if any contractor or organisation is not found registered, then strict action will be taken against it.

It was informed at the meeting that so far during this year, 427 institutes have obtained their certificates by registering themselves under The Contract Labour (Regulation and Abolition) Act, 1970 in the State. Similarly, 1,882 contractors and organisa-

L-G rejects Cabinet decision on lawyers for riots, anti-CAA cases

Baijal asks to notify panel suggested by Delhi Police instead

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Lieutenant-Governor Anil Baijal on Thursday rejected the decision of the Delhi Cabinet regarding the selection of a panel of lawyers to represent it in cases of Delhi riots and anti-CAA protest in the Delhi High Court and the Supreme Court.

The L-G has issued orders to the Delhi government to notify the panel of lawyers suggested by Delhi Police instead of the panel of lawyers selected by the Home Department.

"With the number of days coming down to 14 and directions to reassess the containment zones, the number of such zones will come down for sure," a District Magistrate said.

An official of another district said that it is better to declare smaller containment zones. "When a containment zone is large, officials are unable to implement proper measures," the official said.

"The Hon'ble Lieutenant-Governor of Delhi has rejected the decision of the Delhi Cabinet by exercising his special powers under Article 239AA(4) of the Constitution."

"The Hon'ble Lieutenant-Governor of Delhi has rejected the decision of the Delhi Cabinet by exercising his special powers under Article 239AA(4) of the Constitution."



Anil Baijal

ment, the Delhi government is compelled to issue an interim order to approve the panel of Delhi Police," the statement said.

The Delhi government held its Cabinet meeting on Tuesday to decide on the appointment of the panel of lawyers in the Supreme Court and Delhi High Court.

The Delhi Police had sent a proposal to the Delhi government regarding the appointment of six senior lawyers, including Solicitor General Tushar Mehta and

Aman Lekhi as Special Counsel in the High Court and the Supreme Court in 85 cases related to the riots and anti-CAA protests.

The Delhi government rejected the proposal stating that its standing counsel, Rahul Mehra, and his team were capable of contesting these. This was followed by disagreement on Mr. Baijal's part who then sought the proposal sent by the Delhi Home Minister, using special powers.

On Tuesday, the Cabinet sources said, observed that there had been allegations that the investigations of Delhi Police in riots cases were "biased and not impartial". The judiciary had also made adverse remarks against investigations by Delhi Police on "several occasions". Sources claimed the Cabinet also termed the L-G's "repeated expression" of his difference of opinion on the matter unfortunate.

Unlock 3 to end night curfew, allow hotels, hawkers to operate

Move taken to ensure Delhi's economy gets back on track

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Delhi government on Thursday decided to end night curfew, allow operation of hotels and hospitality services and street hawkers in addition to weekly bazaars on a trial basis with social distancing norms in place under Unlock 3 guidelines issued by the Central government.

These decisions, the government said in a statement, were in continuation of others taken by Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal in the past few days to ensure that Delhi's economy, which has been impacted severely by the lockdown, gets back on track.

As part of the decisions taken today [Thursday] under Unlock 3 guidelines, Delhi government has decided to end the night curfew that was earlier in operation from 10 p.m. to 5 p.m. Since hotels of Delhi are no longer linked to hospitals, Delhi government has also decided to allow normal functioning of hotels and hospitality services, as already permitted under Centre's Unlock guidelines," the statement said.

Earlier during the week,

Mr. Kejriwal launched 'Rozgar Bazaar', a job portal to ensure synchronisation between businesses looking to hire and job-seekers looking for jobs, permitted street hawkers to start op-

erating on a trial basis from 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. for a week and de-linked hotels from COVID-19 hospitals so that they could start functioning normally.

"It was decided today that the street hawkers will be permitted to function in the future without any limitations on hours of operation. Delhi government has also allowed weekly bazaars to function on a trial basis for a week adhering to social distancing and all necessary precautionary measures," the statement also said.

Haryana to link registered organisations having contractual labour with HUM

Announcement made at Advisory Contract Labour Board meet

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GURUGRAM

The Haryana government has decided to link all registered sites and organisations having contractual labour with Haryana Udyami Memorandum (HUM) in the next six months. It will ensure complete benefits of Employees' State Insurance and Employees Provident Fund to the workers.

The State's Deputy Chief Minister Dushyant Chautala, who also holds the portfolio of Labour and Employment Department, said this while presiding over the second meeting of the State Advisory Contract Labour Board in Gurugram on Thursday.

It was decided in this meeting that in the coming

months, it will be ensured that the contractual labour holding organisations have a HUM number. Under this, the registration of contractors and workers is being done with their Aadhaar card number. The Labour Department will confirm that every such organisation is registered and after February 1, 2021, if any contractor or organisation is not found registered, then strict action will be taken against it.

The second important agenda in today's meeting was to allow contractual labour in the units related to rubber industry. In this case, it was decided to invite suggestions from all industrial associations and trade unions.

tions have obtained licences under this Act. It was also informed that under the Act, the primary employer or industry receives a certificate after registering itself by providing information about the empanelled contractors working with them to the State government. Thereafter, all the impanelled contractors apply under the Act and obtain a licence. The Act covers units or organisations with 50 or more workers.

The second important agenda in today's meeting was to allow contractual labour in the units related to rubber industry. In this case, it was decided to invite suggestions from all industrial associations and trade unions.

3 Assam Rifles men killed in Manipur ambush

Three extremist groups, including ULFA-Independent, claim joint responsibility

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GUWAHATI/IMPHAL

Three personnel of paramilitary Assam Rifles were killed and five others injured in an ambush by suspected extremists groups in Manipur's Chandel district on Wednesday night.

The incident happened

around 6:30 p.m. at Khongtal village near the Myanmar border, officials from Assam Rifles headquarters near Meghalaya capital Shillong said on Thursday.

Three outfits in the region – the Manipur National People's Front, the Revolutionary People's Front and the United

Liberation Front Asom-Independent – claimed to have carried out the "joint military offensive". They also claimed four Assam Rifles personnel were killed and many more wounded.

The personnel killed in the ambush have been identified as Pranay Kalita from Assam,

Ratan Salam from Manipur and Methina Konyak from Nagaland of 4 Assam Rifles battalion.

"The injured men were airlifted to a military hospital for treatment and combing operations launched in the surrounding areas", a Chandel district police officer said.

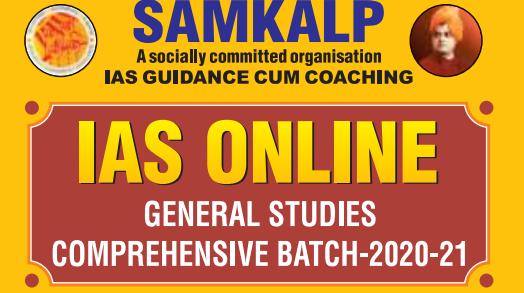
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TENDERS

TENDER EXTENSION NOTICE

The last date of submission of online tenders for Supply of **Bloodless Castators (Large)** vide ALDA/M-3/2004-05/225 dated 10th July 2020 is extended up to **10th August 2020 (3pm).** The last date of submission of samples is also extended up to 14th August 2020 (5 pm). Parties may log on to <http://assamtenders.gov.in> for all details & participation.

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WANTED WITH relevant experience, atleast for Five years.1. HR Manager, 2. Finance Manager 3. Digital Marketing Manager 4. Sales Officer – Door / Wooden Furniture & Ready-made items 5. HP printing machine operator. For M/s. Suresh Mass Marketing Pvt Ltd, Madurai District, one of the largest Importer, Manufacturer and Trader of Timber Products in South India. Please email your resume to hr.mmp@gmail.com.CC: t:8903765588

New Okhla Industrial Development Authority
Administrative Building, Sector-6, Noida-201301 (U.P.)
Website : www.noidaauthorityonline.com

E-TENDER NOTICE

E-Tenders are invited from eligible contractors/firms for the following jobs against which bids can be uploaded and same shall be opened/downloaded as per schedule mentioned. The details and conditions of all tenders are available on Noida Authority's official website: www.noidaauthorityonline.com & <https://etender.up.nic.in>. Please ensure to see these websites for any changes/ amendments & corrigendum etc.

Fresh - Tender work

A) The above tenders can be uploaded by dated 13.08.2020 upto 5.00 PM. shall be opened/downloaded on dated 14.08.2020 at 11.00 AM.

S. No.	Job No.	Name of Work	Tender Amount (Rs. Lacs)
1.	102/GM(R)/Sr.M. (E&M)-III/2020-21	M/o Street light (Repairing of 63 KVA Transformer) Installed for street light at Morna road, Ghijore road, Sector-33 & 34 road Morna Underpass road and different location of sector-33,34,35,52,53,61, Noida.	14.06
2.	103/GM(R)/Sr.M. (E&M)-III/2020-21	M/o Street light (Strengthening of Street light in L-Park sector-52), Noida.	23.69
3.	104/GM(R)/Sr.M. (E&M)-III/2020-21	D/o Village (Renovation of Internal Wiring in Barat Ghar, Panchayat ghar in village Sarfabad, Parthala Khanjarpur, Morna, Ghijore & Nithari), Noida.	23.03
4.	108/GM(R)/Sr.M. (E&M)-III/2020-21	M/o Street light (Repairing of 63 KVA Transformer) Installed for street light at Kalindi Kunj road, DSC road, Botanical Garden road, around Mahamaya flyover, Som Bazar steller park, sector-42, Underpass sector-94, Sector-43, 44, 45 and Sector-18, Noida.	19.72
5.	110/GM(R)/Sr.M. (E&M)-III/2020-21	D/o Village (Renovation of Internal Wiring of Nagar Barat Ghar in village Barola), Noida.	6.34

Re - Tender work

B) The above tenders can be uploaded by dated 06.08.2020 upto 5.00 PM. shall be opened/downloaded on dated 07.08.2020 at 11.00 AM.

S. No.	Job No.	Name of Work	Tender Amount (Rs. Lacs)
6.	61/GM(R)/Sr.M. (E&M)-III/2020-21	M/o Street light in B-10 Udaygiri Apartment sector-34, Noida.	18.05
7.	77/GM(R)/Sr.M. (E&M)-III/2020-21	Strengthening of street light in Different Block of Sector-15, Noida.	13.11
8.	79/GM(R)/Sr.M. (E&M)-III/2020-21	M/o Street light at DSC road Atta Peer Crossing to sector-14, Noida.	9.11
9.	81/GM(R)/Sr.M. (E&M)-III/2020-21	Strengthening of street light in Sector-15A and SDF Block, sector-15A, Noida.	12.73
10.	84/GM(R)/Sr.M. (E&M)-III/2020-21	M/o Street light (Strengthening of street light in the park opp. B-9, Sector-63), Noida.	12.60
11.	86/GM(R)/Sr.M. (E&M)-III/2020-21	M/o Street light (Repairing of 63 KVA Transformer) Installed for street light at Nithari road, Zonal road No-8, Bhardwaj road, DPS road, Bhrimpura road, Vishav Bharti road, Saheed Samrak road & Mall road, Noida and different location of sector-28, 29, 30, 31, 36, 37, Noida.	7.01

General Manager, Noida

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11 doctors die of COVID-19 in Bihar

State battles an acute shortage of doctors and paramedics; cases cross 48,000

AMARNATH TEWARY
PATNA

The surging COVID-19 pandemic in Bihar has claimed the lives of 11 doctors and 250 more are infected, the State secretary of the Indian Medical Association (IMA) said on Thursday.

Amid acute shortage of doctors and paramedics, the number of positive cases in the State crossed 48,000 on Thursday.



Family members carry oxygen cylinders for COVID-19 patients at Nalanda Medical College and Hospital in Patna. ■FILE PHOTO

On Thursday, the government cleared the way for the appointment of 900 doctors. "But, out of these 900 doctors, 500 are already working on a contract basis... so where is the gap being filled?" said Dr. Kumar.

'Senior doctors needed'
"At a difficult time like this, we need senior doctors and experts to deal with the situation," said a senior doctor at the Patna Medical College and Hospital (PMCH).

The doctors at AIIMS, Patna, have to work long hours to meet the rush of COVID-19 patients. Since the condition at government hospitals in the State is bad, everyone wants to be admitted at AIIMS and doctors here are at a high risk of infection," said a relative of a resident doctor who tested positive two days ago.

14 inmates escape from Mathura juvenile home

Nine of them have been brought back

ANUJ KUMAR
GHAZIABAD

Fourteen inmates escaped from a government juvenile observation home in Mathura on Wednesday by removing the grill of a window, the police said, adding that nine were brought back after a night-long operation.

Local sources said the inmates were complaining of poor food quality in the juvenile home.

Mr. Mishra said, "It is a matter of investigation, but the role of the home guard on duty and the in-charge of the juvenile home needs to be looked into as both were present at the time of the incident." Prima facie, he said, the plot was hatched by one of the juveniles who was about to be shifted to the district jail because he had turned 18.

Additional Superintendent of Police, Mathura, Uday Shankar Singh said: "The juveniles escaped by removing the screws of the grill of a window around 2.30 a.m. One of the home guards noticed the movement and in-

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Request for Proposal (RFP)

Applications are invited from eligible parties for selection as Media and Public Relations Agency of AICTE. The detailed RFP documents containing Scope of work, Qualification Criteria, Requirements, Procedure for submitting online application, EMD/Tender fee etc, is available at the AICTE's website & e-wizard portal as under:-

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e-Wizard Portal:- <https://mhred.euniwizarde.com>

Last date for submission of online application is 12.08.2020.

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Advt. No. Admn.(Estt.)/07(06)/2020 Member Secretary

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E-TENDER NOTIFICATION FOR SOLAR RESCO PROJECT IN KERALA

Tender ID: 2020_ANERT_367801_1

Competitive e-tenders in two cover system with Earnest Money Deposit (EMD) and Price Bid are invited from experienced and eligible bidders to participate in the Request for Selection (RFS) of Bidders for the Implementation of a Ground Mounted Solar PV System with Grid connectivity under RESCO Model in Moongilmada, Palakkad, Kerala, India. The e-tender documents can be downloaded from the e-tendering website of Govt. of Kerala - www.etenders.kerala.gov.in. Tender form will not be available in any other form. The last date for submission of bids: 02-September-2020.

Director

TRIPURA STATE ELECTRICITY CORPORATION LIMITED
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NIEt No. DGMTD/AGT/2020-21/05 Dated: 30/07/2020

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For details, please visit the website <http://tripuratenders.gov.in> and <http://www.tsecl.in>

Sd/- Deputy General Manager,
Transmission Division, TSECL
79 Tilla, Agartala, Tripura (W)

THE HINDU GROUP

OBITUARY & REMEMBRANCE

DEATH



REBEKAH (Kuruvila) MANI

Rebekah Mani, daughter of K. Kuruvila Jacob (late) and wife of Dr. Mani Modale Mani ended her earthly journey on Tuesday July 28, 2020, after a brief illness.

She was born in Chennai on May 17, 1936. She studied in the Bain's school, Presidency High school and Women's Christian College. She did her BSC and MSc in nutrition and dietetics. She did her internship at the Catering College in Bombay.

After graduation in 1959, she joined the Christian Medical College in Vellore. She was one of the pioneers in the field of Dietetics in India.

She helped to start a state-of-the-art dietary department in CMC Vellore. She was the first head of the department and trained large number of dieticians who are shaping the specialty all over India and in several nations overseas.

She leaves behind her husband, her sister Sulochana Abraham and three children.

M.M. Mani and his family of two children, Mia Grace and Elijah William of Arlington VA.

Kuruvila Mani of Austin Texas and his wife Julie and two daughters Anjali Rebekah and Asha Sulochana.

Rachel Finn in Kansas City, and her daughter, Elizabeth, son Chacko and grandson Bodhi.

Funeral service was held on Wednesday the 29th at the College Chapel at Christian Medical College, Vellore.

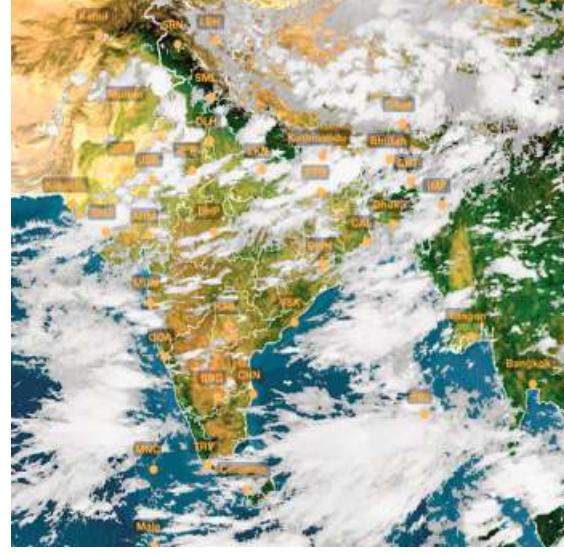
Her mortal remains were interred at the Vellore CSI cemetery along with her father Kuruvila Jacob, mother Grace Elizabeth Jacob and brother K. Chakko Kuruvila.

BIRTHDAY REMEMBRANCE

80th Birthday Remembrance

WEATHER WATCH

RAINFALL, TEMPERATURE & AIR QUALITY IN SELECT METROS YESTERDAY



TEMPERATURE DATA: IMD, POLLUTION DATA: CPCB, MAP: INSAT/IMD (TAKEN AT 16.00 HRS)

Forecast for Friday: Heavy/very heavy rainfall likely at isolated places over Assam, Meghalaya, sub-Himalayan West Bengal, Sikkim, Uttarakhand, Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, east Rajasthan, Gujarat, central Maharashtra, Goa, south interior Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Puducherry, Kerala and Andaman & Nicobar Islands

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	0.1	35.0	26.8	Kozhikode	87.2	30.6	23.2
Ahmedabad	..	35.6	28.1	Kurnool	..	34.1	25.0
Aizawl	..	24.1	19.2	Lucknow	1...	31.4	26.3
Allahabad	22.3	33.6	26.3	Madurai	1.9	39.2	24.9
Bengaluru	1.2	28.6	20.2	Mangaluru	26.8	29.9	22.9
Bhopal	2.6	32.6	25.0	Mumbai	18.1	31.0	25.0
Dhubaneswar	..	36.3	26.5	Mysuru	..	29.8	21.4
Chandigarh	49.9	31.5	24.9	New Delhi	9.3	31.5	25.8
Chennai	5.9	35.4	25.8	Patna	0.9	30.2	27.6
Coimbatore	..	32.0	21.8	Pond Blair	40.7	30.7	24.1
Dehradun	0.3	31.2	24.0	Puducherry	2.6	34.5	24.8
Gangtok	9.	19.5	18.4	Pune	..	32.2	22.1
Goa	10.3	29.2	24.8	Raipur	..	32.2	26.5
Guwahati	17.6	30.0	24.6	Ranchi	..	32.6	24.6
Hubballi	..	28.0	22.0	Shillong	10.7	25.6	18.7
Hyderabad	1.4	34.3	23.2	Shimla	85.3	26.5	18.8
Imphal	0.6	29.1	21.6	Srinagar	..	32.0	16.2
Jaipur	17.4	35.1	25.5	Thiruvananthapuram	30.2	30.0	22.9
Kochi	137.4	29.6	23.2	Tiruchi	0.2	36.2	24.6
Kohima	1.2	25.2	18.0	Vijayawada	..	34.6	27.0
Kolkata	0.6	34.7	27.0	Visakhapatnam	..	33.6	28.0

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)

Pollutants in the air you are breathing

CITIES	SO ₂	NO _x	CO	PM2.5	PM10	CODE
Ahmedabad	15	50	31	105	—	■■■■■
Bengaluru	..	9	.24	47	11	■■■■■
Chennai	..	4	.14	100	67	■■■■■
Delhi	22	38	116	37	—	■■■■■
Hyderabad	.5	30	.6	42	48	■■■■■
Kolkata	13	10	.34	.56	—	■■■■■
Lucknow	.8	16	.55	.52	.202	■■■■■
Mumbai	63	12	.11	.20	—	■■■■■
Pune	20	..	.7	.51	.18	■■■■■
Visakhapatnam	10	18	..	.19	..	■■■■■

Yesterday

In observation made at 4.00 p.m., Nanded, Gulbarga recorded overall air quality recorded AQI score of 150 indicating a moderate level of pollution. In contrast, Kozhikode, Kerala recorded a healthy AQI score of 9

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

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

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

Expedite setting up of jumbo hospitals: CM to Pune officials

Uddhav urges MLAs, MPs from district to push Centre to provide medical supplies

SHOUMOJIT BANERJEE
PUNE

Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray on Thursday directed the Pune district administration to expedite the setting up of the proposed three jumbo hospitals to tackle the surge in COVID-19 cases and constantly monitor the availability of beds.

In his first visit to Pune since the start of the outbreak, Mr. Thackeray urged MLAs and MPs from the district to push the Centre to their respective levels to ensure that the district's hospitals have adequate supplies of ventilators, personal protective equipment and N-95 masks from September 1.

'Reduce case growth rate' At a meeting at the Vidhan Bhavan, Mr. Thackeray said, "Elected representatives must act as a bridge between the administration and the people. Everybody must act in unison and make a determined effort to bring down the case growth and fatality rates. I have already directed officials to form a task force for clinically ill patients in every district. While the State has already requested the Centre to provide medical equipment to cope with the rise in cases after August, I urge all local leaders from



Keeping close watch: Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray at a meeting with officials in Pune on Thursday. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Pune to do the same."

The Chief Minister urged the Pune Municipal Corporation (PMC) to take the lead in streamlining the bed management system and making sure correct data is uploaded on its dashboard. He said the civic bodies in Nashik and Aurangabad districts must ramp up their medical infrastructure to deal with the spike in cases.

Mr. Thackeray said, "The State government will give all necessary funds to these civic bodies to bring the contagion under control. Private labs must immediately refer patients who have tested positive to PMC authorities. They can then arrange for treatment immediately."

Mr. Thackeray's visit follows criticism from the Opposition, especially the Bharatiya Janata Party's Shivajinagar MLA Siddharth Shirole and party State president Chandrakant Patil, that the Chief Minister has abandoned Pune to its fate.

'Fix inauguration date'

Speaking to *The Hindu*, Mr. Shirole said he had urged the Chief Minister to direct the district administration to declare a date when the three jumbo facilities will be opened. "While we welcome the directive of setting up three jumbo hospitals in the city, I have demanded that the administration declare a fixed date as to when these facilities would be set up, given that authorities are giving multiple dates and likely possibilities," he said. He also demanded daily monitoring of the COVID-19 situation by the State government.

Mr. Shirole said the PMC needs to evaluate the "worst-case scenario" in cases and fatalities at the end of every month.



A Youth Congress delegation hands over a list of demands to Governor Bhagat Singh Koshyari on Thursday. ■ TWITTER

Youth Congress urges Governor to cancel final year varsity exams

Members threaten to launch agitation

ALOK DESHPANDE
MUMBAI

A Youth Congress delegation led by State unit president Satyaajeet Tambe met Governor Bhagat Singh Koshyari on Thursday and requested his support to call off the final year university exams in view of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Following the meeting, Mr. Tambe took to Twitter and said the Youth Congress would start State-wide agitations if the Governor fails to meet their demand.

In its charter of demands, the delegation sought results to be declared based on the aggregate marks secured by students in the previous semester exams.

Mr. Shirole said the PMC needs to evaluate the "worst-case scenario" in cases and fatalities at the end of every month.

iversity and college in the country to avoid lapses," Mr. Tambe said.

The delegation also said universities should not charge fees as there is no clarity when colleges will reopen and exams will be conducted. It also demanded varsities to refund the exam fees collected from students.

The delegation also said students working on the ground and volunteering to help authorities fight COVID-19 should be paid through an 'earn and learn scheme' in order to encourage more students to come forward and serve society.

One held with scrapped notes

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
SURAT

A 40-year-old man from Surat was arrested and demonetised notes worth ₹1.49 crore were seized, police said on Thursday.

Punjab Government
led by
Chief Minister
Capt. Amarinder Singh
pays glowing tributes to
SHAHEED UDHAM SINGH SUNAM
legendary revolutionary
who laid down his life to avenge the Jallianwala Bagh massacre.
81st MARTYRDOM DAY

SONAM SAIGAL
MUMBAI

A letter to the Chief Justice of the Bombay High Court seeks transfer of the probe into actor Sushant Singh Rajput's death to an independent investigation agency or a court-monitored team headed by a retired judge.

The 17-page letter by advocates Sarthak Nayak and Kanchan Rai of Let Us Talk Foundation stated, "The forensic team reached his [Rajput's] house the next day ... the house was not sealed immediately and was easily accessible. Even though more than 40 persons have already been interrogated but till now FIR has not been registered and not a single person has been arrested. The lapse in the time will provide sufficient opportunity to the real accused to seek anticipatory bail."

Rajput, 34, was found dead in his Bandra home on June 14. The letter said, "Mumbai Police quite irresponsibly gave a statement before media that he was under depression and was taking medicines without ascertaining any facts. Rajput's father in the FIR had alleged that actor Rhea Chakraborty self-medicated him and gave him overdose of medicines."

Police visit Rhea's home Meanwhile, the visiting Bihar police team on Thursday started the process of scrutinising financial transactions and bank account details of

Rajput, according to a Mumbai Crime Branch official.

The team from Bihar, which arrived here on Wednesday, visited several places, including the residence of Ms. Chakraborty, who is facing 'abettment to suicide' charge in a FIR filed in Patna, but did not find her at home, the official said.

The police team visited a Bandra-based bank where Rajput had an account. They are also looking into evidence collected so far by the Mumbai Police and statements recorded by them.

They are expected to question some people linked to Rajput, including his ex-girlfriend, actor Ankita Lokhande, the official said.

(With PTI inputs)

'Some people have made opposing the temple their profession'

ALOK DESHPANDE
MUMBAI

The Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) on Thursday said the ceremony on August 5 to mark the construction of the Ram temple in Ayodhya will showcase the togetherness of the country and motivate people to celebrate social harmony, and national unity and pride.

The VHP, which is affiliated to the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), has urged people to organise pujas on August 5, light lamps in the evening, and make a donation to a good cause.

At a press conference in Nagpur, Milind Parande, central secretary general of the VHP, said, "Lord Ram gave the message of social harmony and empowerment from his own life. Water and soil will be carried to Ayodhya from thousands of

holy rivers, pilgrimage centres and shrines across the country to form a part and parcel of the foundation and consecration ceremony of the temple."

Taking on critics On Nationalist Congress Party chief Sharad Pawar's statement that building the temple will not cure COVID-19, Mr. Parande said only those working against the interests of Hindus will make such statements. "Each and every person concerned about national interests must not oppose the temple. Some people have made opposition to the Ram temple their profession. The Supreme Court has given its verdict and those who swear by the Constitution must abide by it," he said.

Mr. Parande said the temple's construction is a matter

of pride for Hindus. He said the emancipation of Ahalya by lord Ram, high esteem shown to Shabari Mata and camaraderie with Nishadraj are illustrations of social harmony. He said soil and water will be carried to Ayodhya from historical places such as Nagpur, the birthplace of the RSS; Kashi, the birthplace of Sant Ravidasji; and Mahu, the birthplace of Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar.

Mr. Parande said that soil and water will also be transported to Ayodhya from Maharsi Valmiki Ashram at Sitamarhi in Bihar, Kachargarh in Gondia district in Vidarbha, Ramrekhadham in Jharkhand, Tantya Bhel's holy land in Madhya Pradesh, the Golden Temple in Amritsar, Jain Lal Mandir in Delhi, and Valmiki Temple in Delhi, where Mahatma Gandhi stayed for 72 days.

Sushant case: letter to CJ seeks independent probe into death

Bihar police team scrutinises actor's financial transactions

SONAM SAIGAL

A letter to the Chief Justice of the Bombay High Court seeks transfer of the probe into actor Sushant Singh Rajput's death to an independent investigation agency or a court-monitored team headed by a retired judge.

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lapse in the time will provide sufficient opportunity to the real accused to seek anticipatory bail."

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Police visit



A long road

The Centre will have to convince States that the National Education Policy benefits all

The National Education Policy 2020 announced by the Ministry of Human Resource Development sets for itself the goal of transforming the system to meet the needs of 21st Century India. In a federal system, any educational reform can be implemented only with support from the States, and the Centre has the giant task of building a consensus on the many ambitious plans. The policy, inter alia, aims to eliminate problems of pedagogy, structural inequities, access asymmetries and rampant commercialisation. The NEP 2020 is the first omnibus policy after the one issued in 1986, and it has to contend with multiple crises in the system. It is no secret that primary schools record shockingly poor literacy and numeracy outcomes, dropout levels in middle and secondary schools are significant, and the higher education system has generally failed to meet the aspirations for multi-disciplinary programmes. In structural terms, the NEP's measures to introduce early childhood education from age 3, offer school board examinations twice a year to help improve performance, move away from rote learning, raise mathematical skills for everyone, shift to a four-year undergraduate college degree system, and create a Higher Education Commission of India represent major changes. Progress on these crucially depends on the will to spend the promised 6% of GDP as public expenditure on education. The policy also says that wherever possible, the medium of instruction in schools until at least Class 5, but preferably until Class 8 and beyond, will be the home language or mother tongue or regional language. This is a long-held view, and has its merits, although in a large and diverse country where mobility is high, the student should have the option to study in the language that enables a transfer nationally. English has performed that role due to historical factors.

There are some good elements to the NEP 2020 that will generate little friction, and need only adequate resourcing. Provision of an energy-filled breakfast, in addition to the nutritious mid-day meal, to help children achieve better learning outcomes, is one. Creation of 'inclusion funds' to help socially and educationally disadvantaged children pursue education is another. Where the policy fails to show rigour, however, is on universalisation of access, both in schools and higher education; the Right to Education needs specific measures to succeed. Moreover, fee regulations exist in some States even now, but the regulatory process is unable to rein in profiteering in the form of unaccounted donations. The idea of a National Higher Education Regulatory Council as an apex control organisation is bound to be resisted by States. Similarly, a national body for aptitude tests would have to convince the States of its merits. Among the many imperatives, the deadline to achieve universal literacy and numeracy by 2025 should be a top priority as a goal that will crucially determine progress at higher levels.

Banking on serology

The virus isn't as lethal as originally feared, but is more infectious than previously believed

A recent serology survey that scientists used to estimate the spread of COVID-19 in Mumbai has found that nearly three in five, or 57% of those tested in slums had been exposed to the virus and had developed antibodies against it as compared to only 16% of those tested in residential societies. Results from Delhi's seroprevalence study, earlier this month, found that nearly a quarter of the 21,000-odd samples tested had been exposed to the virus and some of the densest districts had over 20% prevalence. Of the nearly 7,000 tested in Mumbai, nearly 61% were slum-dwellers and the higher prevalence of the virus there showed that – as expected – those living in the densest urban agglomerations were most likely to have been infected by it. A large proportion of those in whom antibodies were detected – the numbers aren't known – were asymptomatic and this pointed to the fact that the fatality rate in Mumbai may be "as low as 0.05-0.10 per cent, instead of the existing 5.5 per cent," as per an estimate accompanying the results of the survey. Such serological surveys are increasingly being used by States. Ahmedabad's civic body conducted one to conclude that only 17% of the city had been likely exposed to the virus and Tamil Nadu too is in the midst of conducting such a survey. A dominant theme driving State bodies that commission such surveys is to check for levels of 'herd immunity', or if 60%-70% of the population have encountered the infection. The argument is that this degree of exposure will, akin to a vaccine, also protect the rest of those uninfected. But given the absence of knowledge about how long antibodies last and the extent to which they protect from fresh infections, herd immunity isn't a precise science and not something that ought to be pursued by a state as a matter of policy.

It is four months since India got its first 100 cases and very early in May, the Indian Council of Medical Research's survey had shown that the number of those infected by the virus were many multiples of those that were being reflected in official confirmed-case statistics. The unrelenting advance of the virus shows that while it is much less of a killer, in aggregate, than expected, it spares few from infection. Therefore, in the absence of a reliable vaccine, the vast majority of people everywhere – irrespective of peaks and ebbs in daily caseloads – continue to be vulnerable. Serology surveys can at best be crude pointers to chronicle the progress of the pandemic and not a psychological palliative.

Getting ahead of constitutional practices

If constitutional principles and practices no longer excite the citizens, but new political norms do, democracy is in trouble



P.D.T. ACHARY

to the petition stating clearly that he has so satisfied himself.

Rule 7 says that on receipt of the petition, the Speaker shall consider whether the petition complies with the requirements of Rule 6. If he finds that the petition does not meet all the requirements, he shall dismiss it. If it complies with all the requirements, he shall forward the copy of the petition and the annexure to the member concerned and require him to submit his comments within seven days of the receipt of the copy of the petition. This is the so-called show cause notice which has been challenged. The rules do not mention any show cause notice.

The Speaker cannot go into the reasonableness of the grounds cited in the petition at this stage because the comments of the respondent, evidence he may submit etc., are not before him. Only through a proper hearing will the Speaker be able to know whether reasonable grounds exist for disqualification. It is thus beyond my imagination how a challenge can be brought against a 'notice' at this stage. It can thus be concluded that the Speaker's act of forwarding the petition cannot be legally challenged as he is acting in accordance with the rules. This point does not seem to have received any attention from the court as otherwise the petition would have been dismissed at the threshold.

In *Khilot Hoilhan v. Zachillhu* (1992), while barring any interlocutory intervention by the court in the Tenth Schedule proceedings, the Supreme Court held that a challenge is not barred if there is an imminent threat of disqualification/suspension before the Speaker takes a final decision. In the Tenth Schedule proceedings, there is no disqualification/suspension of a member in the interim period. Therefore, the exception mentioned by the court does not become applicable here.

Staying the Speaker's action is unprecedented at the 'notice' stage. It will stymie the operation of the Tenth Schedule because any member can go to court and obtain a stay and put a stop to the



proceedings – more so when the court has allowed all the larger issues such as the vires of para 2(l) (a) of the Tenth Schedule to be tagged together, which will take months to be heard and adjudicated upon. It is also puzzling how a High Court can reopen a constitutional issue that was settled long ago by a Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court.

Date of the Assembly session

The second part of the political drama, about the date of the Assembly session, has just ended, with the Cabinet yielding to the Governor's demand that there should be a 21-day gap between the summoning and commencement of the session. Although the government has averted an ugly situation by agreeing to the proposal made by the Governor with regard to the date of the session, it has opened the way to future confrontations between elected State governments and Governors. Summoning the Assembly is a routine constitutional function of the Governor. That this has created a serious confrontation resulting in a constitutional deadlock underscores the need to comprehend the ferocity of adversarial politics and its potential to disrupt normal politico-constitutional operations in the field of governance.

As per the normal procedure, once the Cabinet decides to call the session on a particular date, that decision is conveyed to the Governor who signs the summons order and sends it back the same day or the next day. Thereafter, the summons is issued to individual members by the Assembly Secretary. By not agreeing to the date decided by the Cabinet, the Governor has shown that he has the final say. This is fraught with many disturbing possibilities in the rela-

tionship between the Governor and the State government.

Under Article 174 of the Constitution, the Governor summons the Assembly. But the Governor can act only on the advice of the Council of Ministers. The Cabinet form of government presupposes that the executive power of the state vests in the elected government headed by the Chief Minister. The Governor does not exercise any of the executive powers except where the Constitution assigns him certain functions to be performed in his discretion. Calling the session of the Assembly is a part of the executive functions of the government and the Governor can summon the Assembly only on the advice of the Cabinet. In *Nabam Rebia and Bamang Felix v. Deputy Speaker* (2016), the Supreme Court reaffirmed this position.

The crucial question in Rajas-

than is whether the Governor has any discretionary power in the matter of summoning the Assembly. The Governor asked the government to change the date of commencement recommended by the Cabinet and proposed a date after 21 days. Finally, he got the Cabinet to yield to his wishes.

The *Nabam Rebia* case makes it clear that so long as the Chief Minister enjoys majority support in the Assembly, the Governor has no discretionary powers and is bound to accept the decisions of the Cabinet in regard to the date of commencement of the session. The decision to convene the Assembly is taken by the Cabinet; the Governor has to merely sign the summons order. Further, the Governor has no role in the conduct of the business of the House, which is done under the control and supervision of the Speaker. Therefore, it is not open to the Governor to ask the government to clarify whether it wants to bring a confidence motion in the House.

And what if the Governor does not sign the summons? This question cannot arise where the Constitution and the rule of law are in force. In *Shamsher Singh v. State of Punjab* (1974), the Supreme Court

P.D.T. Achary is former Secretary General, Lok Sabha

An education policy that is sweeping in its vision

The National Education Policy 2020 provides the ingredients and the right recipe; what we make of it depends on us



BHASKAR RAMAMURTHY

learning, and self-actualisation.

India has faced unprecedented challenges in providing quality education to children and the youth. Lack of resources and capacity, dozens of mother tongues, a link language that despite being the global language of choice is alien to most, and a persistent mismatch between the knowledge and skills imparted and the jobs available have been some of the challenges that have bedeviled our efforts since Independence.

The 2020 policy attempts to break free from the shackles of the past. In adopting a 5+3+3+4 model for school education starting at age 3, it recognises the primacy of the formative years from ages 3 to 8 in shaping the child's future. It also recognises the importance of learning in the child's mother tongue till at least Class 5. Here, we are up against the strong desire of parents today, born of pragmatism, to give a head start to their children by exposing them to English from day one. Maybe we should recognise that between ages 3 and 8, picking up languages is child's play, and blend the mother tongue and English in the first five years of school. Multilingual felicity could become the USP of the educated Indian.



Another key aspect of school education in the new policy is the breaking of the straitjackets of arts, commerce and science streams in high school, and the laudable goal of introducing vocational courses with internship. How exactly this will be realised is to be worked out, given the penchant of overzealous parents to "stream" their children into professions at the earliest. The 'blue-collarisation' of vocations in our society is also a hurdle to be overcome, but this need not deter us from recognising the merits of the proposed policy. Needless to say, the policy envisages 100% Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in school education by 2030.

In keeping with the philosophy of flexibility in enabling our students to deviate from the straight and narrow, NEP 2020 proposes a 24X7 pursuit for the institutions, leading to all-round improvement in their standard. A single, lean

body with four verticals for standards-setting, funding, accreditation and regulation is proposed to provide "light but tight" oversight.

In a country still beset by huge inequality and challenges faced by the disadvantaged and disabled, the NEP lays particular emphasis on providing adequate support to ensure that no child is deprived of education, and every challenged child is provided the special support she needs. The long-neglected ancient Indian languages and Indic knowledge systems are also identified for immediate attention. All this requires enormous resources. An ambitious target of public spending at 6% of GDP has been set. This is certainly a tall order, given the current tax-to-GDP ratio and competing claims on the national exchequer of healthcare, national security and other key sectors. However, resources are never the main roadblock to success in education. If public and political will can be mustered, resources will find their way from both public and private sources.

NEP 2020 provides the ingredients and the right recipe. What we make of it depends entirely on us.

Bhaskar Ramamurthy is Director, IIT Madras

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.

Education policy

The proposed reforms look impressive, but an education policy alone cannot guarantee a revolution in the education sector ("4-year UG courses in, M.Phil out in new education policy", July 31). The government has increased spending on education. It is hoped that these funds reach the many schools across the country that do not even have a toilet or a roof. The number of teacher vacancies remains high in many areas, including far-flung places. In some schools, one teacher takes all the classes.

In higher education, it is laudable that there the model has changed. But the issue of unemployment remains. While it is good that candidates will leave with a certificate or a diploma, it is hoped that they won't be branded as failures in a society like ours which places high emphasis on success.

D.V.G. SANKARARAO,
Vizianagram

The suggestion in the NEP that one's mother tongue should be the medium of instruction till at least Class 5 will enable children to value their regional language more. It will help

them develop an interest in regional literature and culture and help them understand better the customs and traditions that are indigenous to a particular region.

V.P. DHANANJAYAN,
Chennai

That the NEP provides greater flexibility in the three-language formula and does not impose any particular language is great. But no attempt should be made to dethrone English in our education system. English is the language required for jobs and opportunities the world over, so it should be made

compulsory for all students.

SUNIL CHOPRA,
Ludhiana

It will be difficult for children to suddenly switch their medium of instruction after Class 5, especially when they have to grasp difficult concepts in subjects like science and history. This suggestion reminds me of the late 1950s when I was in school. When I was in Class 9, we were taught science in English. The following year, when a new policy was introduced, we were suddenly made to study science in Punjabi. Even

technical words like 'cornea' were translated into Punjabi and were hard to memorise. Since that policy was ill-conceived, we reverted to English the next year. We wasted an entire year in this exercise.

BALVINDER,
Chandigarh

India is a land of thousands of languages, so what happens, for instance, to the children of parents with transferable jobs? Second, there is an emphasis on digitisation, but not everyone enjoys access to digital facilities. Third, multiple entry and exit points in higher institutes

must not affect people's job opportunities.

VISHAL DABAS,
Delhi

No strong Opposition
The rise of Narendra Modi's popularity cannot be attributed to his leadership qualities alone, but also to the lack of an effective Opposition leader ("The limits of Rahul as Gandhi", July 31). Weak Opposition leaders make the leaders in power look stronger.

D. SETHURAMAN,
Chennai

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Should the government go easy on the telecom sector?

PARLEY

The imbroglio over adjusted gross revenues has shaken the once-booming sector's foundations

Following years of breathtaking subscriber growth, tele-density is showing signs of strain. Some telecom players are facing an existential crisis due to brutal competition and the government demanding unpaid dues. At the same time, investors of different hues are lining up to invest in the space, signalling a belief that the industry still holds prospects of juicy returns. In a conversation moderated by K. Bharat Kumar, B.K. Syngal and V. Sridhar discuss what lies in store for the industry. Edited excerpts:

Consumer demand has recently been impacted. Is that affecting the subscriber base as well, as we see tele-density slipping?

B.K. Syngal (BKS): Tele-density has been increasing since the early 2000s. The trigger point was in 1999 when we moved away from upfront licence fee payments to a pay-as-you-go regime. In the lower rung of consumers, movement is higher as well as temperamental. The Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) itself admitted at one point that the actual numbers are 30% lower than the numbers being bandied about. So, I am not unduly worried. This could be a COVID-19 effect where mass movement of migrant labour and joblessness could have resulted in surrendered SIM cards.

V. Sridhar (VS): What worries me is not so much the urban tele-density, but the mobile broadband reach. Recent statistics show we have 656 million mobile broadband subscribers and too few – about 19 million – fixed broadband subscribers. The good news in mobile broadband is that over one year, it has risen by about 200 million to reach here. But we still have a lot of ground to cover. The second worrying aspect is fixed broadband. We have about 35 million fixed line subscribers, and only 19 million broadband subscribers. Especially when we are moving towards work from home, long-distance education, tele-medicine and the like being dependent on connectivity, we need a reliable fixed line broadband network.

Will the imbroglio over

adjusted gross revenues shake the industry's foundations?

BKS: The government is demanding penal interest from telecom operators which, in a way, defines them as wilful defaulters. They are not wilful defaulters. That is one big flaw in the AGR [adjusted gross revenue] imbroglio. The second big flaw is that the case has been going on for the last 15-16 years. And the government has merrily calculated interest on the basis of the number of years, at some LIBOR plus 2% or something like that. Now, how on earth is the industry to be blamed for the delay? The delay has been from both sides. The industry went to court and had a favourable judgment from TDSAT, which was very clear that you cannot have AGR included for non-telecom services. The government decided to go against that judgment to the Supreme Court. That dragged on and on. Finally, last year, this judgment came out of the Supreme Court. Of course, the entire saga is predicated on the faulty definition of AGR accepted by industry while migrating from a fixed licence fee to the variable licence fee regime. Little did the industry realise the consequences of that hasty acceptance.

Here's another interesting angle: Justice Bobde, in the Devas case, asked Devas, 'Why don't you waive off the interest because our liability is increasing every day?' Now, why can't the same principle be applied to this case too? To get out of this stalemate, a bold executive decision on the lines of 1999 is needed.

VS: AGR comprises the regulatory fees that are broadly categorised into two areas. One is the licence fee which is 5% universal service obligation fee (USOF) plus 3% as licence fee. So that is 8%. Second comes the spectrum usage charges that range from 1% for 2,300 MHz up to 7.8%. This is huge. We are talking probably about 15% of the AGR as regulatory fees for the government. This is a flawed policy. In any country, the licence fee is not more than 3%, including the USOF. There is no reason why the government should levy a spectrum usage when the spectrum is auctioned. In the last

GETTY IMAGES/STOCKPHOTO



auction in 2016, telcos coughed up ₹60,000 crore on buying spectrum. Spectrum is not something that will deteriorate. It doesn't have depreciation or management costs associated with it. Now, the Supreme Court has just gone by the executive order, which says that this is the adjusted gross revenue due from these companies, and therefore, they have to pay that. The only thing that can be done is for the Department of Telecommunication to take a decision on cancelling or revising the AGR due, excluding the penalty.

Both the government and industry have said they would not come back with a recalculation. Are we setting ourselves up for a 2- or 3-player market?

VS: If this pulls on, Vodafone UK may not continue to infuse capital into the Indian company. That means we are looking at three operators now. The world over, even in the U.S., in specific areas, there are only three or four operators. That is not really bad as long as the three are equipped to compete. Right now, we are looking at a monopoly emerging in Indian telecom. That will not be good for the consumer.

BKS: There are other issues here: we are taxing the industry's success in perpetuity at 33%. There are cases worldwide; for example, Ofcom, the U.K.'s communications regulator, told the government that industry just couldn't be in a mode of paying windfall profits all the time. The industry here should ask the govern-

5G is not just about connectivity and high speed; it is also about creating an ecosystem

V. SRIDHAR,
Professor

ment for revenue neutralisation.

The average revenue per user (ARPU) will have to go up if the industry's health has to improve. But can it?

VS: According to the ITU's ICT price basket study, India is ranked 49th in the mobile broadband data plans. So, for about 1.5 GB per month on our average data plan, ARPU is at about \$4.75 per month, adjusted for purchasing power parity. The world average, according to the GSM database, is about \$8.45. We are very low compared to the international average. The ARPU has to go up. Here's how it could: ARPU can go up based on the content generated or by creating a larger ecosystem, with operators playing the role of not just connectivity and bandwidth providers, but also as solution providers. Telcos can actually tie up with businesses especially in 5G and IoT.

BKS: Data usage per subscriber per month has grown 43 times in the last three years. In September 2016, it was 0.235 GB per subscriber per month; now it is close to 10 GB. There is what I call tariff rebalancing, that is, how to tariff the data vis-a-vis voice – that needs to be looked into. Tariffing of data is still not being properly carried out. There should be reasonable numbers for

data charging. Today, about 60% or so of the long distance calls, whether internal or external, are running on Internet or broadband connectivity. People are hardly making any switch calls. Let there be studies as to how much of revenue has migrated away. The regulator should then look into the tariffs for both data and voice. There are still a large number of customers who use basic voice service. So, there has to be a tariff for voice as well. So, look at the tariff and stop this obnoxious 'free' trend. When Jio came into play and gave some one year of some free services, etc., TRAI should have intervened at that stage saying that the operator 'was not doing anyone a favour'. The cellular industry got seriously bruised as a result of that laxity by authorities.

Given the financial state of some players, is the industry even ready for 5G auctions?

VS: 5G is not about connectivity and high speed only; it is about creating an ecosystem. For example, in the case of healthcare, it is an ecosystem that would comprise telecom operators, healthcare providers, hospitals, governments, system integrators that provide Internet of Things and machine-to-machine communication. We need to have spectrum so that high bandwidth-intensive applications can be provided to end users. India is poor in allocating spectrum. There are specific spectrum bands which have been pending auction for a while now due to various reasons. We don't have enough spectrum for operators despite the consolidation that has taken place.

As to affordability, the auction methodology we use is appropriate. But what is wrong is the setting up of the reserve price. They have always set the reserve price based upon the winning bid price of the previous auction, which is never done in any other country. A very high price puts off operators. The 700 MHz spectrum, which went unsold in 2016, has remained vacant for the last four years. What have we got? With a lower reserve price, at least that could have been used.

I advocate actually starting with a zero reserve price.

BKS: The latest count on 5G consumers is something like 100 mil-

lion worldwide, and 80% of those are in China. Then, there are three technologies today: Huawei-ZTE's, Nokia's and Ericsson's. They are in the process of being standardised. It is the Europeans versus the Chinese. Now with the sanctions, industry is also waiting and watching, as to which technology to choose. They have limited choice, but want technology that is interoperable. Interoperability between networks is a priority. So, operators are asking, 'why should we be the guinea pigs?' Further, 5G is a bandwidth that has to be used by consumers and consumers must have devices to use that bandwidth. There is also this debate using E and V bands for dense urban areas.

Has anyone discussed health concerns, obstructions and complications? For example, Israel has not adopted the E and V bands yet, because they say there are health hazards. We have to get out of this euphoria and look at practical issues. There is also a debate about the mix of fibre and Wi-Fi hotspots. I believe in applying technology to reach out to the masses.

Let's not be hung up on 5G technology to provide bandwidth upwards of 100 Mbps. Have no doubt that higher bandwidths are needed, but how to deliver those most effectively and timely, is the question. I have an upgradeable FTTH delivering me 100 Mbps plus; is not that 5G? I think we should wait on 5G auctions, not rush into it. We should educate the government.

What gives global tech majors the confidence to invest in India, albeit so far in one player, Reliance Jio?

VS: Previously, the likes of AT&T or Telstra or Etisalat, would pick up stakes in telecom companies as FDI. Today, it is Facebook, Google and other Internet firms that are putting in money. Why? Because the value proposition is more on the content, and applications are abundant. India's 650 million mobile broadband subscriber base is a huge potential base for any Internet firm to tap into. So I won't be surprised if for example, Amazon is interested in picking up a stake in Airtel. Because it will include the synergic operation of e-commerce along with this digital cloud offering as well as connectivity.



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conversation online

Not the right time to open gyms

The virus spreads faster in closed, crowded spaces that have poor ventilation facilities

R. PRASAD

At a time when the number of confirmed COVID-19 cases in India is over 1.6 million and the daily growth of cases continues to remain high, the Ministry of Home Affairs on July 29 permitted yoga institutes and gyms in areas outside the containment areas to function from August 5. This, even while other enclosed settings such as cinema halls, bars, auditoriums and assembly halls have been ordered to remain shut.

There is wide agreement that regular moderate intensity exercise is beneficial for immunity. The World Health Organization (WHO) recommends 30 minutes per day of physical exercise for healthy adults. But, beginning with the cruise ship *Diamond Princess* and clusters that had their origin in churches in South Korea and Singapore, it has been known that prolonged exposure in closed spaces with poor ventilation facilitates the virus's spread. The spread becomes even more pronounced if such places are crowded.

Transmission through aerosols
The WHO recently acknowledged that transmission of the virus through aerosols "cannot be ruled" out in "certain closed settings that are crowded, and inadequately ventilated spaces where infected persons spend long periods of time with others". In addition to being closed spaces with poor ventilation, gyms have another critical factor that will actively facilitate virus spread – deep breathing and exhalation through the mouth by members. The number of droplets and aerosols emitted during huffing and puffing will certainly be manifold higher. While deep breathing is likely to take the tiny droplets and aerosols containing the virus deep inside the lungs, leading to infection, exhalation with force will eject more virus particles into the air and make it travel a long distance.

Given the breathing pattern of people exercising, poor ventilation would mean that the amount of virus present in the room continues to increase with time. People visiting a gymnasium spend at least 30-60 minutes exercising, thus increasing the

risk of infection. Cases investigated between January 15 and April 4 in Japan found that many of the COVID-19 clusters were associated with "heavy breathing in close proximity, such as singing at karaoke parties, cheering at clubs, having conversations in bars, and exercising in gyms".

In mid-February, in Cheonan city in South Korea, 112 persons who participated in fitness dance (Zumba) classes involving high aerobic intensity at 12 sports facilities were found to be infected with SARS-CoV-2. In a report in the journal *Emerging Infectious Disease*, the researchers said: "Intense physical exercise in densely populated sports facilities could increase risk for infection. Vigorous exercise in confined spaces should be minimised during outbreaks."

Another route of spread is through shiny surfaces contaminated with viruses. Since contact with objects of regular use such as dumb bells, weights is inevitable in gyms, chances of virus spread is high.

Investigation in South Korea revealed that unlike the high-intensity Zumba dance classes, pilates (a form of low-impact exercise) and yoga "did not cause the same transmission effects". However, it is not clear if certain yoga *asanas* that involve deep breathing and exhalation will increase the risk of infection.

Maintaining distancing
One way to limit the risk of virus spread is by limiting the number of patrons who can use the gymnasium at any point of time, maintaining physical distancing, vastly improving ventilation, and through regular and periodic cleaning of all equipment. Care also needs to be taken to change masks the moment they get wet.

In recent weeks, the virus has spread from large cities to tier-2, tier-3 cities and towns, and its spread is also being observed in areas even outside the containment zones in large cities, as the sero surveys in Delhi, Ahmedabad and Mumbai have revealed. Hence, during the course of the pandemic, it would be prudent to exercise in the open by maintaining physical distancing.

K.C. VIJAYA KUMAR

Sport is about adrenaline rush, stunning reflexes, evergreen champions and nostalgia's warmth. But it needs historical context and essentially, sport is reality drama that prospers along with an audience. Crowds gift buzz and it is an intangible quality that athletes constantly seek.

Sadly in these times of social distancing due to COVID-19, sport has snapped its umbilical cord with a fan base that packs the stands and even enlivens dull passages with impromptu Mexican waves. Recently, Stuart Broad said: "Wish I had family and friends to wave at." He had just taken 500 Test wickets at Old Trafford fringed by vacant seats! The lone consolation being that his father Chris Broad was present as the match referee.

Equally, sports correspondents are resigned to filing their despatches from

empty stadiums with just the squads, officials and broadcast crew providing a human dimension. It is not that they aren't used to this as some domestic tournaments and essentially, sport is reality drama that prospers along with an audience. Crowds gift buzz and it is an intangible quality that athletes constantly seek.

Back then, there was bone-crushing rush, fans stretched their vocal chords, former players lent mystique and scribes did not crane their necks to find colour and atmosphere.

Vibrant press boxes
If sport is larger than life, its nuanced perceptions emanate from vibrant press boxes. There are moments when the player, fan and writer find communion and that is when a goal is scored, a six hoisted or a wicket snared. In that fleeting second, the earth

stops on its axis and magic finds a second life through the reporter's hyper-active laptop. The crowd amplifies surrealism, without that it is akin to penning a lyric from a cemetery.

The press box always hosts a congregation. Rookie writer, wizened veteran, cricketers-turned-commentators and scorers, and there is always hugs, banter and high fives. Reporters also seek their jostling spaces for what gives them a high - be it caffeine or nicotine. A legend like Sunil Gavaskar could regale you with his anecdotes from the West Indies, a Michael Vaughan might speak with deep insight about sport as a metaphor and draw West Asia or race into it while a Sanjay Manjrekar can talk technique and belt out an old Hindi song. This bouquet of experiences needs to be savoured.

All that has come to a halt inside media enclosures and another loss is

the acoustic clues that spectators offer.

Often in late-night matches, the correspondent has one eye on his report and another on the ground. If he or she misses a beat, the crowd's roar prompts a quick look at the television as there is a time-lapse between live action and its corresponding telecast. Thankfully that big hit or sizzling forehand is seen and the observation merges into frenetic prose. Even bland press conferences acquired a life. There are takeaways too like when Sachin Tendulkar went on the charm offensive, grinned and asked: "So you guys are going to ask a few questions?" That personal touch is lost as sport grapples with sweaty kinetics on the turf and silence off it. The sports correspondent too is looking beyond the ball and awaiting a vaccine because reporting from venues bereft of fans, is a punch in the gut.

The Hindu

FROM THE ARCHIVES

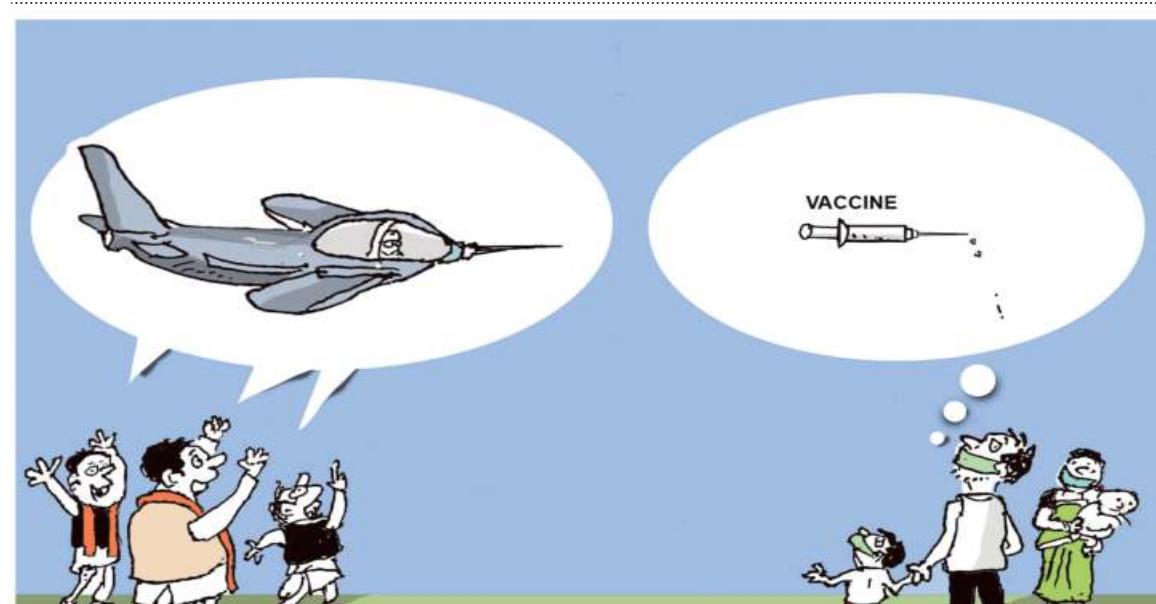
FIFTY YEARS AGO JULY 31, 1970

West Bengal assembly dissolved

The West Bengal Governor, Mr. S. S. Dhavan, to-day [July 30] dissolved the State Assembly setting at rest all speculations about formation of an alternative ministry in the State. The announcement was immediately welcomed by all major parties. Some of the parties, including the two Communist parties and the Forward Bloc, also demanded an early announcement of the date of mid-term poll in the State. The Assembly was suspended on March 19, when President's rule was imposed following the Chief Minister Mr. Ajoy Mukherjee's resignation on March 16. A Raj Bhawan communique issued this evening, said, "The Governor of West Bengal, by his order dated 30-7-70, has been pleased to dissolve the West Bengal Legislative Assembly with immediate effect." Mr. Dhavan had earlier sent a communication to the Union Government stating that it did not seem possible that a stable government could be formed in West Bengal. In view of this, it was recommended that the State Assembly should be dissolved. He, accordingly, dissolved the Assembly. Since the promulgation of the President's rule, the erstwhile constituents of the second United Front broke into groups, one headed by the Communist Party of India and the other led by the Communist Party (Marxist), with the Bangla Congress ploughing a lone furrow.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO JULY 31, 1920
Electoral rolls

The regulations for the preparation of electoral rolls for the general and special constituencies of the Madras Legislative Council are published in a Fort St. George Gazette Extraordinary issued last evening. The Gazette also contains a notification prescribing for the coming elections dates for the several stages in preparation of electoral rolls for the various constituencies. According to this notification, the preliminary rolls for the General and the Landholders' Constituencies are to be published not later than 15th August and that for the University Constituency not later than 5th September. In regard to the University, it may be pointed out that applications for registration must reach the registration officer not later than 20th August. Claims and objections are to be filed by the 28th August in the case of the General Constituencies, in regard to the Landholders' Constituencies by the 10th September, and in the case of the University by 20th September. The date for the final publication of rolls will be one not later than the 15th October for all the constituencies.



NOTEBOOK

Reporting sans spectators

Sports writing loses colour and atmosphere when there are no fans

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CM
YK

MN-NDE

FROM PAGE ONE

India has fifth highest COVID-19 fatalities globally

Karnataka with 6,128 cases and Uttar Pradesh (3,705) also had daily highs, while Tamil Nadu's daily case load dropped marginally from its seven day average to 5,864.

To a question on vaccine development and how the government plans to make this available to the general public, he said world over there are three vaccine candidates which are in phase III clinical trials.

No pact signed

"These three vaccines are being developed by the U.S., the U.K. and China. In India, two indigenously developed vaccine candidates are in phase I and II clinical trials. The first is being tested on 11,050 subjects at eight sites, and the second on 1,000 subjects at five sites. India has not signed any agreement with any vaccine manufacturing company so far but we are in discussions on

vaccine distribution and the Ministry is in talks with stakeholders," the official said.

Responding to a question on the proposed religious gathering at Ayodhya at a time when there is a ban on religious gatherings, Joint Secretary in the Ministry Lav Agarwal noted that "SOPs issued for social gatherings during Unlock 2.0 would be applicable for the event".

Mr. Bhushan said so far the Central government has received 131 claims under the ₹50 lakh Central government insurance scheme announced in March for COVID-19 healthcare workers. "Among them 20 have been cleared; in 64 cases the payments are being processed while 47 claims are still being looked into by various State governments. Maximum claims have come in from Maharashtra, Delhi and Telangana," he said.

Congress MLAs to stay together till session

Mr. Joshi did not clarify if the MLAs would continue to camp at the same hotel. "It will be decided [later] where to stay," he said, while affirming that no location outside the State would be selected. The Ministers would go to the Secretariat to take care of work in their respective departments, he added.

While the MLAs loyal to Mr. Gehlot will be celebrating the upcoming festivals of Id-ul-Zuha, Raksha Bandhan and Krishna Janmashtami away from their families, the 19 dissident MLAs in the rival Sachin Pilot camp are said to be camping at two hotels near Gurugram in Haryana.

The impasse between the Congress government and the Governor ended late on Wednesday night, when the latter accepted the Cabinet's advice for convening the Assembly session after rejecting three earlier proposals. The Governor had insisted upon calling the session on a 21-day notice, unless some "concrete reasons" were given for an urgent sitting.

Hints at horse-trading
Mr. Gehlot, who chaired the CLP meeting, said in a veiled dig at the Governor and the BJP that the "rate of horse-trading" had increased after the date for commencement of the session was announced. "Earlier, the first instalment was of ₹10 crore and the second ₹15 crore. It has now become unlimited."

'Team Rahul' takes on UPA Ministers at Cong. meet

The Congress chief accused the Bharatiya Janata Party of "toppling elected governments" instead of handling challenges, including China, which she described as a "grave challenge".

Senior leader Anand Sharma alleged that the government was deliberately avoiding a Parliamentary session in order to avoid accountability on the current challenges.

Mr. Chidambaram is learnt to have pointed out that the Modi government has been able to "manage public perception despite failing to effectively deal with China, corona[virus] or the economy because of the weak organisational structure of the Congress".

'Party doing its best'
Mr. Venugopal then went on to give details of a number of digital campaigns on social media, and meetings with Pradesh Congress Committee (PCC) chiefs and Lok Sabha MPs, to assert that "the party organisation was not weak and was doing its best".

Bihar leader Akhilesh

and everyone knows who is involved in these affairs," he said.

Mr. Gehlot hinted that a confidence vote would be sought during the session, but said the agenda for the House would be decided by the Business Advisory Committee. He also said he wanted the dissident MLAs to attend the session, as they had been elected on the Congress symbol.

The Chief Minister targeted Bahujan Samaj Party supremo Mayawati for her remarks against him and accused her of acting at the behest of the BJP. He said Ms. Mayawati's complaint about the merger of BSP MLAs with Congress was not justified.

Meanwhile, the Rajasthan High Court on Thursday issued notices to the Assembly Speaker and six BSP MLAs on the writ petitions moved by BJP MLA Madan Dilawar and the BSP challenging their merger with Congress. The Speaker had earlier rejected Mr. Dilawar's complaint in the matter.

The Single Bench of Justice Mahendra Goyal directed the respondents to file their replies by August 11. The support of the six legislators, who had contested the 2018 Assembly election on BSP's symbol and later joined the Congress, will be crucial for the Gehlot government in the event of a trust vote on the floor of the House.

Positive cases in Karnataka, A.P. at new highs

Andhra Pradesh tally rises by 10,167; Karnataka adds 6,128 cases; Telangana to deploy mobile testing; 2 more die in Kerala

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

BENGALURU

Karnataka on Thursday recorded another single day high in COVID-19 cases.

With 6,128 new cases, the State's total was 18,632.

A Health and Family Welfare department official said discharges were high as cases in the last one week to ten

COVID-19

days crossed the 5,000 mark per day. "There has been a huge increase in tests conducted and most patients testing positive are asymptomatic and spend very few days in the hospital," the official added.

With 22 deaths reported on Thursday in Bengaluru, total fatalities stood at 1,009. Across the State, 83 deaths were reported, raising total

mortality to 2,230.

Of the total 69,700 active cases, 620 were in intensive care. Of 6,128 cases reported, 2,232 were in Bengaluru. Mysuru added 430 cases. In Telangana, 1,811 more samples tested positive on Wednesday, and 13 COVID-19 patients died. The new cases included 521 from Greater Hyderabad, 289 from Ranga Reddy, 151 from Medchal Malkajgiri, and 102 from Warangal Urban.

Total cases till Wednesday stood at 60,717. Of the total, 15,640 were active, 44,572 had recovered, and 505 died. A total of 4,16,202 tests were performed till July 29, including RT-PCR and Rapid Antigen Tests (RAT). No break-up of tests was issued. The cumulative Test Positivity Rate was 14.5%. On Wednesday, 18,263 tests were performed. Mobile Testing laboratories would be de-

ployed in containment zones.

Andhra Pradesh COVID-19 cases and deaths registered a

fresh spike, as 10,167 new cases were detected, raising the tally to 1,30,557. The death toll was 1,281 with the

addition of 68 fatalities. There were 69,252 active cases. For the second day, the State tested over 70,000

*Telangana numbers are as of 8 p.m. on Wednesday

samples and total samples tested stood at 18,90 lakh.

Kerala reported 506 new cases of COVID-19 and 794 recoveries on Thursday. Among new cases, 431 were locally acquired infections with no epidemiological link in 29. Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan said the results were incomplete due to technical issues on the ICMR portal. The remaining data would be released later. Two deaths, from Kozhikode and Ernakulam were reported, taking the toll in the State to 70.

Tamil Nadu saw a marginal dip in fresh infections as 5,864 persons tested positive on Thursday. However, for the first time, the Health Department recorded the deaths of over 90 persons, including two children aged three and five years.

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



Testing times: Temperature of CET candidate being checked as she emerges from a disinfection tunnel. ■ H.S. MANJUNATH

Karnataka holds CET, results in 15 to 20 days

STAFF REPORTER

BENGALURU

Results of the ongoing Common Entrance Test (CET) in Karnataka will be announced in 15 to 20 days.

Speaking to presspersons on Thursday, Deputy Chief Minister and Minister for Higher Education C.N. Ashwath Narayan said the examinations for two papers – Biology and Mathematics – were conducted smoothly across 497 centres in the State.

Of the 1,94,419 registered students for CET this year, around 14,749 (75.89%) attempted the Biology paper and around 1,73,408 (89.22%) the Mathematics paper.

"COVID-19 might not be the reason for the dip in the number of students. Biology is optional and hence fewer students attempted it," Mr. Ashwath Narayan said.

Students will write Physics and Chemistry papers on Friday.

Karnataka issues fresh guidelines

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

BENGALURU

Following the Centre's guidelines, the Karnataka government on Thursday issued fresh guidelines for Unlock 3, allowing the opening of gyms and yoga institutes from August 5, with some restrictions. There will be no lockdown on Sundays in August and the night curfew too has been lifted.

The new guidelines, which will come into effect from August 1 for the entire month, says that metro services in Bengaluru, cinemas and educational institutions will not operate till the end of August. However, online classes are permitted, said the order.

Swimming pools, entertainment parks, bars, auditoriums, theatres, assembly halls will remain closed and social, political, and religious gatherings are banned.

Kerala's action plan against COVID-19

Religious leaders, NGOs to be roped in

STAFF REPORTER

KOZHIKODE

Religious leaders, opinion makers, and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) are to be roped in for implementing the Kerala government's COVID Health Action Plan for coastal areas that is expected to strengthen the COVID-19 prevention work there and ensure primary health-care facilities to the residents.

They will be part of the district coastal health boards to be chaired by the respective District Collectors. Local-level coastal health task forces too will be formed.

The action plan also proposes setting up special outposts, testing facilities, first-line treatment centres, and institutions for reverse quarantine to help elderly people and those with serious

health issues.

A release from the department on Thursday says the decision was taken in view of a large number of cases emerging in clusters in coastal areas.

Sentinel surveillance is being undertaken to get information of possible cases.

The first case of community spread of COVID-19 in the country was reported in the coastal belt of Thiruvananthapuram.

Elected representatives in local bodies, Accredited Social Health Activists (ASHAs), community volunteers, and health staff will visit each house to create awareness on COVID-19 protocol and look for symptoms. If there are any, testing facilities will be arranged. The residents will also be informed about good hygiene practices.

IN BRIEF



Actor Anil Murali passes away

KOCHI

Actor Anil Murali, who made his mark through villain roles in Malayalam films, died here on Thursday. He was 51. Anil was admitted with liver ailments on July 22, according to hospital sources. He is survived by wife and two children. Anil had acted in around 200 movies in Malayalam, Tamil, and Telugu.

A.P. govt. cancels Nellore airport agreement
VIJAYAWADA
The Andhra Pradesh government has terminated the concession agreement entered by the A.P. Airports Development Corporation Ltd. and the Nellore International Airport Private Ltd. for the development of a greenfield airport in Nellore district owing to the failure of SCL-Turbo Consortium Pvt. Ltd. to achieve financial closure.

One succumbs to burns in A.P. pharma unit fire

NEELORRE
One of the four persons who sustained burns in a fire accident in a pharma unit at Chandrapada village in Nellore district of Andhra Pradesh on Wednesday, succumbed to injuries in the early hours of Thursday. The police said Sk. Hafiz, a worker in the pharma unit, died while undergoing treatment at a hospital in Chennai.

Former A.P. Forest Minister dies of COVID-19
KAKINADA
Former Minister and senior YSR Congress Party leader Koppala Mohana Rao, 75, died of COVID-19 late Wednesday night. A native of Mallam village in Pithapuram mandal, he is survived by a daughter and a son. Mohana Rao, had served as the Forest Minister.



Off-track: The Railways have been hit hard by the fall in revenues due to the COVID-19 outbreak. ■ V. SREENIVASA MURTHY

₹70,000 crore this year and an outlay for capital expenditure amounting to ₹1.61 lakh crore. Of this, ₹20,000 crore is earmarked for funding critical safety-related works under the Rashtriya Rail Sanraksha Kosh (RRSK), the sources said.

The Railways received a budgetary allocation of

On how the suspension of work would impact the Railways, a senior official said, a variety of works relating to the enhancement of passenger amenities, modernisation of yards/workshops/production units, all non-safety construction work, etc.,

would be put on hold now. "This is an unprecedented blanket ban on non-safety works caused by the serious financial crisis. Passenger earnings have hit an all time low," the official said.

Though there is no specific instruction on suspending major projects like electrification and broad gauge conversion/doubling projects, a circular from the Financial Commissioner (Railways), pointing to the 58% drop in traffic earnings till the end of May, and imposing spending limits on Ordinary Working Expenses, Depreciation Reserve Fund, Development Fund and the Rashtriya Rail Sanraksha Kosh, only points to severe reduction on spending and more focus on earning, he added.

CBI takes over probe into death of violinist Balabhaskar

He and his daughter died in a car accident in Kerala in 2018

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The Central Bureau of Investigation has taken over the case of suspicious death of famous violinist Balabhaskar and his 18-month-old daughter in a car accident at Pallipuram in Kerala in September 2018.

In a petition to the Kerala Chief Minister last year, the violinist's parents alleged that the suspects in the case were linked to gold smuggling and that there were suspicious financial transactions in his bank account after his death.

Another Punjab MP, Partap Singh Bajwa, raised the issue of three agriculture-related ordinances and described as them anti-farmer.



Balabhaskar

CBI for further probe.

The accident took place, when Balabhaskar, his wife Lakshmi and their daughter Tejaswini Bala were on their way back from Thrissur. Their car hit a roadside tree due to "rash" driving by accused Arjun K. Narayanan.

Tejaswini succumbed to the injuries, while the others were rushed to hospital. The violinist died on October 2, 2018. Neither the local police nor the Crime Branch filed any final report in the case, according to the FIR.

Meanwhile, the CBI told its Special Court in Thiruvananthapuram on Wednesday that the parents of the musician were sceptical about the conclusion of the Kerala police that Balabhaskar and Tejaswini had died in a typical road accident. The police had also ruled out the question of foul play.

(With inputs from G. Anand in Thiruvananthapuram)

7 Excise officials booked for custodial death

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) has booked seven officials of the Anti-Narcotic Enforcement Squad in Kerala's Thrissur for the alleged murder of a 54-year-old man, Ranjith Kumar, who was arrested with about two kg of ganja in October 2019.

The agency has taken over the case on a reference from the State government. Among those named as accused are then Excise Preventive Officers Anoop Kumar, Abdul Jabbar V.B. and Ummer V.A.; and Civil Excise Officers Nidhin M. Madhavan, Mahesh K.U., Benny M.O. and Smibin V.M.

A.P. to collaborate with Amazon Web

STAFF REPORTER

VIJAYAWADA

State Minister for Industries and Commerce, IT, Skill Development and Training Meekapati Goutham Reddy held deliberations with senior executives of Amazon Web Services (AWS) via a virtual meeting on Thursday for a partnership which the Andhra Pradesh government sought to forge for skilling and promotion of entrepreneurship and digital governance in the State.</p

IN BRIEF



Sonia Gandhi admitted to hospital in Delhi

NEW DELHI
Congress president Sonia Gandhi was admitted to Sir Ganga Ram Hospital here on Thursday, according to hospital authorities. "She has been admitted for routine tests and investigations. Her condition is stable," said D.S. Rana, chairman, Board of Management, Sir Ganga Ram Hospital.

Jaya Jaitly, two others get 4-year jail term

NEW DELHI
Former Samata Party chief Jaya Jaitly and two others were sentenced on Thursday to four-year imprisonment by a special court in a corruption case. Ms. Jaitly, her former colleague Gopal Pacherwal and Maj. Gen. S.P. Murgai (retd.) were earlier held guilty of criminal conspiracy and corruption. The case was registered by the CBI following a sting operation by a news portal. In the sting, Ms. Jaitly was seen accepting ₹2 lakh from Mathew Samuel, who represented a non-existent firm named Westend International. The retired Major General received ₹20,000.

Three Ministers inducted into Himachal Cabinet

CHANDIGARH
Himachal Pradesh Chief Minister Jai Ram Thakur on Thursday inducted three more Ministers into his Cabinet. Sukh Ram Chaudhary, MLA from Paonta Sahib, Rakesh Pathania, MLA from Nurpur, and Rajinder Garg, MLA from Ghumarwin, took oath.

Soldier injured in militant attack in Pulwama

SRINAGAR
A soldier was injured in a militant attack in south Kashmir's Pulwama on Thursday. An Army spokesman said an Army vehicle, part of an area domination patrol, was fired upon by terrorists with an under barrel grenade launcher in the Drabgam area. "One soldier was injured. He is stable," the Army said.

Hooda seeks rollback of petroleum prices

CHANDIGARH
Leader of the Opposition and former Haryana Chief Minister Bhupinder Singh Hooda on Thursday demanded from the BJP-led governments at the Centre and in Haryana a reduction in oil prices as lockdown restrictions have been largely lifted and almost all revenue sources of the governments have been restored. Mr. Hooda said farmers have been hit hard by high fuel prices as their input costs have gone up. He alleged that the BJP government was turning a blind eye towards the problems faced by farmers.

Clarifying LAC could create new disputes, says Chinese envoy

China's traditional customary boundary line is in accordance with the LAC'

ANANTH KRISHNAN
CHENNAI

China was not in favour of resuming the process of clarifying the Line of Actual Control (LAC) because it could "create new disputes," its Ambassador to India Sun Weidong said on Thursday.

China's troops were on the side of its "traditional customary boundary line" on the northern bank of Pangong Lake, where disengagement between the two sides is yet to happen, he stated.

That is expected to be taken up later this week at the fifth round of talks between the Corps Commanders of both armies.

The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said "there has been some progress made" towards complete disengagement along the LAC, "but the disengagement process has as yet not been completed".

"The Senior Commanders of the two sides will meet in the near future to work out steps in this regard," MEA spokesperson Anurag Srivastava said.

China's Defence Ministry said on Thursday the situ-



Sun Weidong

tion "tends toward de-escalation and the disengagement between the border troops of the two countries is [being] gradually carried forward." While the Foreign Ministry said earlier this week border troops "completed disengagement in most localities", defence sources said it had only been "partial" in some spots, such as Patrolling Point 17A in Gogra-Hot Springs and Pangong Lake.

At Pangong Lake, following earlier talks, Chinese troops pulled back from the base of Finger 4, where Beijing's claimed border is, and moved to Finger 5, still well within where India sees the LAC at Finger 8. The 'fingers'

are mountain spurs on the northern bank of the lake.

The Chinese envoy said, "China's traditional customary boundary line is in accordance with the LAC" on the northern bank of the lake. "There is no such case that China has expanded its territorial claim," he said, speaking at a webinar organised by the Institute of Chinese Studies (ICS) in New Delhi.

"China hopes that [Indian] border troops will strictly abide by the relevant bilateral agreements and protocols, and refrain from illegally crossing the LAC to the Chinese side," he said.

Asked if this summer's clashes, marking the worst violence on the border since 1967, had reinforced the need to resume the process to clarify the LAC that had been stalled since 2002, Mr. Sun said "if one side unilaterally delimits the LAC as per its own understanding during the negotiations, that could create new disputes and that would be a departure from the original purpose of clarification of the LAC."

Mr. Sun said he differed with the view that relations were at a turning point or would be reset.

"The original purpose of clarification of the LAC is to maintain peace and tranquility in border areas," he said. "When we look back into history, we will find that if one side has unilaterally put our perception of the LAC during the negotiations, that will create new disputes. I think that is why the process cannot move on."

Galwan casualties

Asked if China would confirm the number of casualties on its side from the June 15 clash in which 20 Indian soldiers were killed, he said, "What we are now doing is to make joint efforts to de-escalate the situation and ease the tension along border areas."

Ashok Kantha, former Ambassador to China and director of the ICS, said "even experienced Indian diplomats who are deeply invested in this relationship are speaking of the need for a reset in ties".

The Islamabad High Court on Thursday constituted a two-member Bench to hear a review petition that has been filed by the Government of Pakistan on the death sentence awarded to Mr. Jadhav.

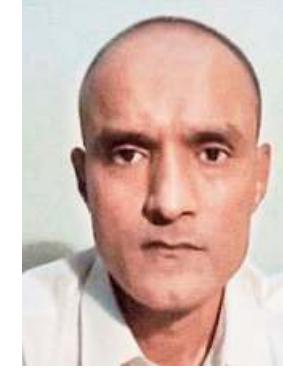
India vows to protect Jadhav

Pakistan engaging in farcical process

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

India reserves the right to take further remedies regarding former naval officer Kulbhushan Jadhav, who is facing the death sentence in Pakistan, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said on Thursday.

It reiterated that the legal and diplomatic process made available to Mr. Jadhav by Pakistan is "farcical" in nature.



Kulbhushan Jadhav

The Bench consisting of Chief Justice Athar Minallah and Miangul Hassan Aurangzeb will discuss the matter on Monday.

India has complained that Mr. Jadhav was not allowed to get the legal support of his choice as the Indian diplomats who went to meet him on July 16, were not allowed to discuss the case with him in an "unimpeded" manner.

The Islamabad High Court on Thursday constituted a two-member Bench to hear a review petition that has been filed by the Government of Pakistan on the death sentence awarded to Mr. Jadhav.

Signpost was picked due to past record: EC

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Election Commission said on Thursday that the office of the Maharashtra Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) did not choose the social media company allegedly linked to the BJP, for carrying out awareness campaigns.

It was responding to former State Chief Minister Prithviraj Chavan's demand for a probe into the hiring of Signpost. Mr. Chavan had asked the EC on July 24 to probe the "selection" of the company by the Maharashtra CEO ahead of the Assembly elections last year. He alleged that Signpost is owned by a Bharatiya Janata Yuva Morcha member.

The EC said the company was empanelled by the Director General of Information and Public Relations of Maharashtra in June 2018 till the Lok Sabha elections in 2019 following a tendering process. "The agency Signpost was selected on the basis of its financial offer, quality of their presentation and past performance, for Vidhan Sabha elections, 2019," the EC wrote.

Delhi stresses 'mutual respect' in ties with Dhaka

Responds to Foreign Minister's concern

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

India and Bangladesh recognise the importance of "mutual sensitivity" in fostering good neighbourly relations, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said on Thursday.

The remarks from the official spokesperson Anurag Srivastava come days after Bangladesh Foreign Minister A.K. Abdul Momen urged India to avoid actions that could create cracks in the relationship especially in view of the upcoming construction of the Ram temple in Ayodhya.

"We are confident that both sides appreciate mutual sensitivity and mutual respect in building further on this relationship," said Mr. Srivastava during the weekly briefing of the MEA when asked to respond to Mr. Momen's comments.

The *Hindu* had reported Mr. Momen's comments where he said "both the government and the society" of India have the responsibility of sustaining good relationship with Bangladesh.

"India and Bangladesh share a historic and arterial



Anurag Srivastava

relationship. We will not allow this (temple construction) to hurt ties but I would still urge that India should not allow any development that can fracture our beautiful and deep relationship," Mr. Momen had said speaking exclusively to *The Hindu*.

External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar, speaking during a ceremony to hand over 10 locomotives to Bangladesh Railways on Monday, had described Bangladesh as a "role model" of good neighbourly relation in South Asia.

The ceremonies to mark the commencement of the construction of the temple in Ayodhya on August 5 are scheduled to be telecast on Indian TV channels.

Govt. lied to Supreme Court that Soz is free, says Congress

J&K administration had claimed he was under no restraint

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Congress leaders on Thursday slammed the Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) administration for "lying" to the Supreme Court about Congress leader Saifuddin Soz not being under detention.

Senior Advocate and Raajiya Sabha member Abhishek Singhvi, who represented Mr. Soz, said if reports of restrictions are "factually" established then the J&K administration is liable for "perjury and contempt of court".

Mr. Soz's son, Salman, addressed the Supreme Court through Twitter and asked if the top court will hold the J&K administration accountable for lying or will it accept its own "humiliation".

Tagging a video clip, Mr. Salman Soz tweeted, "Dear Supreme Court of India: The J&K Government lied to you. This is proof. Now, will you accept your own humiliation or hold the govt accountable? History will judge you."

Former Congress chief Rahul Gandhi tweeted, "The illegal detention of political



A security person tries to prevent Saifuddin Soz from speaking to the media on Thursday. ■ NISSAR AHMED

leaders with absolutely no basis damages the fabric of our nation. Mr. Soz must be released at once".

On Wednesday, responding to a habeas corpus petition filed by Mr. Soz's wife, the J&K administration filed an affidavit to claim that the Congress leader was never placed under any restraint and was always free to move.

Plea disposed of

The Bench of Justices Arun Mishra, Vineet Saran, and M.R. Shah then disposed of the plea in which Mr. Singhvi, along with advocate Sunil Fernandes, had represented the Congress leader's wife.

However, a news report hours later showed a video clip where Mr. Soz was heard telling TV crew in Srinagar that he was not allowed to come out of his house and it was like being in a "Police State". He also asked the TV crew to show the clip to the Supreme Court.

"Depending on facts, depending on nature of limitations and restrictions on Mr. Soz, he will decide his further course of action," Dr. Singhvi told *The Hindu*. "If factually limitations and restrictions [are] established, it would be both perjury on affidavit and contempt of court."

Australia urges India, China to show restraint

Opposes attempts to alter status quo

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Australia on Thursday urged India and China to maintain restraint along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) and expressed support to the ongoing de-escalation efforts. It said it opposed any attempts to unilaterally alter the *status quo*, which only served to increase tension and the risk of instability.

"It is important that the bilaterally-agreed principles and norms that have helped prevent escalation or miscalculation in the border areas over many decades continue to be observed," Australia's High Commissioner to India, Barry O'Farrell, said in a statement.

Mr. O'Farrell pointed out that the Indo-Pacific region was grappling with the enormous challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic and reiterated the Australian vision for an open, free, rules-based Indo-Pacific.

"Territorial disputes and competing claims should be resolved peacefully by the claimant countries, and in ways consistent with international law," he observed.

Mr. O'Farrell, without

naming any country, said Australia remained deeply concerned by actions in the South China Sea (SCS) that were "destabilising" and could provoke escalation." On July 23, Australia lodged a note with the United Nations Secretary General, re-futing China's unlawful maritime claims in the SCS.

The Chinese Embassy reacted sharply, warning that Australia should not "go further on the road of harming [bilateral] relations" and that "any attempt to pressure China will never succeed."

NEP still not available in public domain

Academics await official document

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Even after a day Education Minister Ramesh Pokhriyal Nishank announced on Wednesday that the new National Education Policy (NEP) had been approved by the Union Cabinet, the policy document is yet to be made available in the public domain.

"We are still waiting for written approval for the policy to come from the Cabinet Secretariat. After that, we will upload it on the Ministry website", said a senior official in the Minister's office, when asked about the delay on Thursday evening.

Exact phrasing
Although its highlights were announced at a press conference after the Cabinet meeting on Wednesday, academics and State governments are awaiting the actual document, as the exact phrasing used has

Why no Parliament debate on NEP?

It should have offered more realisable targets for research, says Tharoor

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Previously resulted in significant changes in policies.

When the original NEP draft was released by the Centre in May 2019, it contained a clause stipulating the teaching of Hindi as part of the three-language formula in schools. Following a backlash from Tamil Nadu, West Bengal and other States, the Centre issued a revised phrasing of that clause.

The question of whether primary education in the medium of the mother tongue or regional language will be mandatory for States may now be dependent on the exact phrasing in the final document. Students and teachers are also awaiting the document to understand the implementation timelines of the decisions.

On Twitter, current M.Phil students are asking what will be the impact on them, now that the programme has been scrapped.



Thinking big: The NEP aims at increasing the gross enrolment ratio in school education to 100%. ■ FILE PHOTO

education & 68% in Class 9.

"The NEP should have offered more tangible and realisable targets for research. Total investment on research and innovation in India declined from 0.84% of GDP in 2008 to 0.6% in 2018.

There are currently only 15 researchers in India per 100,000 of population, compared with 111 in China," Mr. Tharoor said.

The NEP 2020 had also left many unanswered questions on the upgrade of school infrastructure and shortage of qualified and trained teachers. Placing the burden of pre-

primary education on the overstretched, under-funded and under-equipped anganwadis was disastrous, he said.

"Overall, my worry is the NEP showcases a strong tendency towards centralisation, high aspiration with low feasibility and an unspoken assumption that much of the challenge will be met by the private sector, which will drive up costs and make many opportunities unaffordable for the poor," he noted.

Education markets
General Secretary of the Communist Party of India

dia, D. Raja, said in a statement that the policy brought with it a fundamental change in the system towards creating education markets and away from ensuring universalisation of education through government schools, and denying quality education to the disadvantaged sections of society. He slammed the government for bypassing Parliament. "The NEP is an attempt to lead to total privatisation, commercialisation and over centralisation. The result will be higher fees, attacks on autonomy of universities and no permanent jobs in teaching," he said.

The only redeeming feature of the policy was extension of Right to Education, which currently was only till 14 years of age, to 18 years, and universalising pre-primary education. The success of this was extremely doubtful, considering the characteristic changes that were brought in the system, he said.

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IN BRIEF



Names of those killed in Galwan on war memorial

The names of 20 Indian Army personnel, who were killed after fighting Chinese troops in the Galwan Valley in eastern Ladakh on June 15, will be inscribed on the National War Memorial here, officials said on Thursday. They said the process for inscribing the names of the Army personnel on the Memorial may take a few months. Chinese and Indian troops clashed in the Galwan Valley for several hours on the night of June 15 in one of the deadliest brawls in the last five decades. PTI

Activists oppose rule for virus tests in Rajasthan

JAIPUR Health activists attached to the Jan Swasthya Abhiyan (JSA) here on Thursday demanded the revocation of a new rule making Aadhaar card mandatory for COVID-19 tests in Rajasthan. The rule has been enforced by the Medical & Health Department to ensure effective tracking of patients. The JSA, which functions as the State chapter of the People's Health Movement, has written a letter to Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot, pointing out that the rule would affect people's access to health care services and thwart the government's efforts to control the pandemic.

CBI searches premises of ex-Met Dept. officials

NEW DELHI The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) has conducted searches in connection with the alleged procurement of substandard digital display systems at inflated costs through a scientist and a technical officer of the Pune-based Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology (IITM). The systems comprising 12 outdoor, true-colour LED display boards were supplied by Video Wall India Private Limited, which bought them from a Chinese company for about ₹38 lakh but allegedly supplied the same to the IITM for ₹2.98 crore.

Sushant case: ED seeks copy of FIR against Rhea

NEW DELHI The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has sought a copy of the FIR lodged by the father of actor Sushant Singh Rajput, who was found dead at his Mumbai residence on June 14, to determine if a money-laundering case is made out. The Indian Penal Code (IPC) provisions invoked by the Bihar police in the FIR come under the purview of investigation under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act. In his complaint to the Patna police on July 28, Sushant's father said there were financial irregularities involving Bollywood actor Rhea Chakraborty and others.

India has key vaccine role: Fauci

Trump's adviser says its manufacturing capabilities going to be very important

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Anthony Fauci, top infectious disease specialist and senior adviser to U.S. President Donald Trump on COVID-19, on Thursday said that India would play a critical role in supplying the world with a COVID-19 vaccine.

At a web conference organised by the Indian Council for Medical Research, he, however, underlined that though the threat posed by COVID-19 was grave, it was not essential now to conduct human challenge trials to expedite vaccine development.

Dr. Fauci, who is the head of the U.S. National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Disease, said that two potential vaccines by Moderna and Pfizer were in advanced stages of human trials.

"India's manufacturing capabilities are going to be very important. We have made it clear that all tests on vac-



Taking a breather: Health workers waiting for students at the Children Aid Society during screening in Mumbai. ■ AFP

cines will have to meet regulatory standards and include all ethical review and strong data monitoring and safety boards," he said at the conference attended by top officials from the ICMR, the Departments of Biotechnology and the Health Ministry.

Human trials

Human challenge trials involve intentionally infecting healthy vaccinated volunteers with small amounts of the virus. While such trials have been conducted for malaria and dengue, researchers are divided on their ethics. Since COVID-19 is caused by a novel virus and does not have a standard treatment protocol, it is unethical to expose healthy volunteers to that level of risk.

"We recently convened an expert consultation on the issue and the conclusion was that such studies are not necessary at this time. The continuing high incidence of the

disease is concerning but it makes randomised control trials quite feasible. We don't have effective therapies to cure individuals infected. These factors have led us to conclude that human challenges are not essential nor ethically justified presently," he said. The conference also saw discussions on a way to ensure that a vaccine, if and when available, is equitably distributed.

Rajesh Bhushan, who will take over as Health Secretary soon, said discussions were under way in the government on the most appropriate way to ensure equitable access to vaccines. "Healthcare workers would be a priority. But there are several other stakeholders, the elderly, those with comorbidities and those extremely marginalised and because of socio-economic conditions are likely to be at particular risk of being severely ill by the infection."

SC looks to save both animals and crops

CJI suggests 'explosives that do not kill' but make noise and 'rubber bullets' to scare off vermin

KRISHNADAS RAJAGOPAL
NEW DELHI

An "anxious" Supreme Court accentuated the urgent need to find an alternative to killing marauding wild animals as vermin even while protecting crops from them.

Chief Justice of India Sharad A. Bobde, heading a three-judge Bench, suggested "explosives that do not kill" but make a lot of noise and "rubber bullets" to scare off the animals.

The court was hearing a



The court was hearing a plea seeking measures to prevent the killing of wild animals.

man-animal conflict is leading to both killing of wildlife and crop loss.

"We are treating this mat-

ter with anxiety. Wild animals are destroying agriculture. We have to preserve our crops... What do you eat if animals eat it all? At the same time, can we kill a wild tiger or a rogue elephant... What are the Forest Department officials to do about this? What is the extent of information they have?" Chief Justice Bobde asked senior advocate Siddharth Luthra, who appeared for Mr. Mohanty.

Chief Justice Bobde asked Mr. Luthra to study the pro-

blem and suggest measures so that the court could pass the necessary orders.

Human encroachments

The court asked Mr. Luthra to also enquire into whether human encroachments into forests are driving wild animals away from their natural habitats, forcing them to foray into human settlements for food.

"Encroachments by human is putting pressure on wild animals," Mr. Luthra submitted.

Bengal Cong. president Somen Mitra passes away

He took charge of the unit in 2018

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
KOLKATA

West Bengal Pradesh Congress Committee president Somendranath Mitra passed away at a city hospital in the early hours of Thursday. He was 78.

He was admitted to the health facility a few days ago with heart and kidney-related ailments.

A veteran Congress leader, Somen Mitra, as he was often referred to, took charge of the unit in 2018. He played a crucial role in forging an electoral understanding with the Left parties in the 2019 Lok Sabha polls. This was his third stint as Bengal unit chief.

The body was kept at the Bidhan Bhawan Pradesh Congress headquarters and the Assembly where party



Somendranath Mitra

workers and leaders from various parties came to offer their last respects. Tributes started pouring in from all quarters. "Saddened to hear about the passing away of veteran leader, former MP and @INCWestBengal president Somen Mitra," Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee said on Twitter.

SC refuses CBI probe in Sushant case

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Thursday refused to entertain a plea to order a CBI probe into the death of actor Sushant Singh Rajput.

A Bench led Chief Justice of India (CJI) Sharad A. Bobde said the "police should be allowed to do their job". The CJI asked writ petitioner Alka Priya, represented by advocate S.R. Setia, how she is concerned with the death of the actor. "He had done a lot in public interest," Mr. Setia submitted. "This has nothing to do with whether a person was good or bad, the police should be allowed to do their job," the CJI responded.

Rajput was found dead in his apartment in Mumbai on June 14. Mr. Shah has been Deputy Secretary in the Prime Minister's Office since last August.

GPCB official

Mr. Shah was elevated to the elite IAS in 2015 through selection, when he was Member Secretary of the Gujarat Pollution Control Board (GPCB).

Hardik Shah to be Private Secretary to PM

IAS officer will replace Rajiv Topno

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
AHMEDABAD

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has picked a Gujarat cadre Indian Administrative Service (IAS) officer, Hardik Shah, as his new Private Secretary in place of Rajiv Topno, who has earlier been appointed Senior Adviser to the Executive Director of the World Bank in Washington DC.

Mr. Shah has been Deputy Secretary in the Prime Minister's Office since last August.

After his elevation into



Narendra Modi

the IAS, Mr. Shah was sent on Central deputation first to the Ministry of Environment and Forest as Private Secretary to the Environment and Forest Minister.

In August 2019, Mr. Shah was shifted from the Environment Ministry to the Prime Minister's Office as Deputy Secretary.

Priyanka hands over bungalow to CPWD

Allotment was cancelled on July 1

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra on Thursday handed over the possession of the bungalow she was living in to the government, the party said.

On July 1, the allotment was cancelled and she was given a month to vacate.



Priyanka Gandhi Vadra

dation in Delhi rented by her is ready for use," the Congress statement said.

Ms. Vadra was allotted government accommodation in 1997 due to security concerns as she was given Special Protection Group (SPG) cover. The DoE, under the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, on July 1 cancelled the allotment, citing the revocation of her SPG cover. In November 2019, her SPG protection was downgraded to Z+ category.

UGC defends guidelines on varsity exams

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The University Grants Commission (UGC) on Thursday defended its revised guidelines to conduct final year exams by September 30, saying the move is to protect the academic future of students which will otherwise be irreparably damaged.

The Commission was responding to a writ petition filed by over 30 students questioning its insistence on conducting the terminal year exams amid the pandemic. In its reply, the UGC said the "final year/terminal semester exams is a crucial step in the academic career of a student".

It said the guidelines were revised on July 6 in consultation with the Prof. K.C. Kuhad expert committee. The court had on Monday asked the UGC to file its response.

Parliamentary panel to discuss draft EIA

Committee will meet on August 7

SOBHANA K. NAIR
NEW DELHI

After a flurry of letters between Congress leader Jairam Ramesh and Union Environment Minister Prakash Javadekar on the implications of the Draft Environment Impact Assessment 2020 (EIA 2020), the Parliamentary Committee of Science and Technology headed by Mr. Ramesh will deliberate on the subject at its meeting scheduled for August 7.



Jairam Ramesh

government decisions were always open to "scrutiny by Parliament and standing committees".

Mr. Ramesh shot back a four-page letter to Mr. Javadekar on Monday detailing his five main objections to the draft he had sent in his July 25 letter. He says the draft allowed *post-facto* approvals which go against the very principle of assessment and public participation prior to environmental clearance, and has provisions that will routinely legitimise illegality. Second, the notification reduces public participation in all steps of the environment clearance process, lessening the notice period for public hearing and doing away with them for a large category of projects. Third, it does away with the environmental impact assessment altogether in many cases of expansion. Fourth, it increases the validity of environment clearances allowing projects to "secure" land for long durations even when they are not constructed. And finally it gives the Union government full powers to appoint State environmental impact assessment authorities.

Representatives of the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change have been called to explain the draft. DMK Rajya Sabha member R.S. Bharathi, a member of the committee, had also urged Mr. Ramesh to convene a meeting at the earliest to deliberate on the subject after his party president M.K. Stalin demanded that the government revisit the draft.

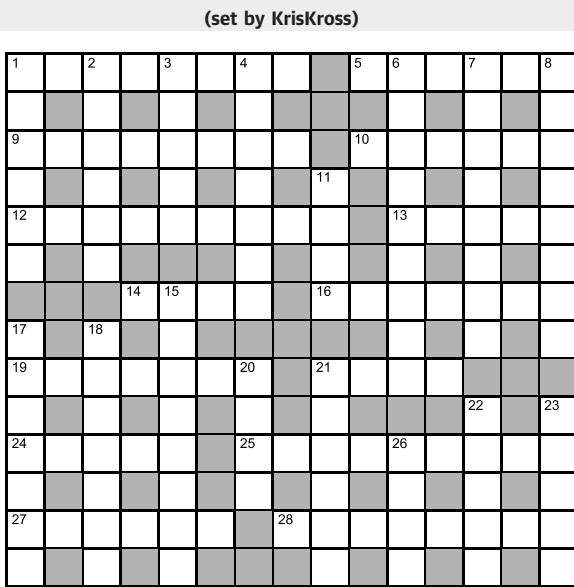
Mr. Ramesh wrote his first letter to Mr. Javadekar on July 25 saying that the proposed changes in the EIA display a mindset that "environmental regulations are unnecessary regulatory burden."

'Unfounded points'
In response, Mr. Javadekar on Sunday said the points made by Mr. Ramesh were "unfounded and based on misinterpretation". He said

TH CROSSWORD + 13002

(set by KrisKross)

Feeling down in lockdown?
Get across to our Crossword site.
at <https://qrgo.page.link/jjpTn>



ACROSS

- Policeman tears author's printed material (4,4)
- A help sent back for laziness (6)
- It cools the car as one goes through melting tar road (8)
- Mature team drinking whiskey (4,2)
- About to cut rent in Tamil Nadu town's terminal (9)
- Lass exercising before a dip (5)
- Vomited a jam sandwich, turning green (4)

- 16 Harry oddly pets Asian snakes (7)
- 19 Paternal grandmother's injected with primarily life-giving body fluids (7)
- 21 Has topless dresses (4)
- 24 Finishes scoring century, but suffers defeat (5)
- 25 Cycles replacing trains too (9)
- 27 Post I made about a local dialect (6)
- 28 Will bathe freshly when receiving that Parisian (8)
- 29 Asian country full of old farmers (6)
- 30 How to clue for "Arts and Elvis", say (4,4)
- DOWN
- 1 Infection of sick sheep fed with herbs essentially (6)
- 2 More embarrassed either way (6)
- 3 Money paid to hire a taxi (5)
- 4 Demonstrate how to hold fine needle (7)
- 6 Religious person travelling in this car (9)
- 7 Old man hides private diary – not good to save on computer (8)
- 8 Judge reviewed papers about a trial, essentially (8)
- 11 Unknown entity hacks the web later (4)
- 15 Crime – it's struggling to get peace (9)
- 17 Fit one will shortly break records regularly, say (8)
- 18 Chap sounding higher than usual? (8)
- 20 Either of two neighbouring characters could be kind (4)
- 21 Heading off for 30 days, I could be very busy (2,3,2)
- 22 Vehicle overturned, carrying Australian composer (6)
- 23 Artist cheers wildly (6)
- 26 Lorry traffic (5)

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DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★★★

Solution to puzzle 13001

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Flood situation remains grim in Bihar

More people shift to relief camps; CM Nitish Kumar asks officials to subject inmates to COVID-19 test

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

PATNA

As the flood situation in the State continues to worsen and more and more people from north Bihar seek refuge in government relief camps, Chief Minister Nitish Kumar has directed officials to subject inmates to COVID-19 test and give them free masks.

At a high-power meeting with State Water Resources Minister and department officials on Wednesday, Mr. Kumar asked officials to ensure social distancing among evacuees at relief camps and in community kitchens.

Thousands of people have taken shelter on embankments and national highways. Many have pitched tarpaulin tents, under which they live with their family and their cattle.

"We've got nothing other



Monsoon woes: Boats transporting people at a village in East Champaran on Wednesday. ■ PTI

than a packet of *chura-gur* [flattened rice and jaggery] from the government," one of them told a local TV journalist. The government has been air dropping packets of

chura-gur in affected areas.

For the flood-affected, COVID-19 norms are among the least of their concerns. "We can't bother about masks and social distancing when

we are struggling for food and livelihood," said a sexagenarian at Sangrampur, between Piprakothi near Motihari and Gopalganj districts. "Corona has come only now,

we've been suffering this flood fury for years and the government has done nothing." Others standing around him, all of them without masks, nod in agreement.

The government currently runs 19 relief camps and 989 community kitchens in 11 flood-affected districts of the State. In all, 25,116 people have taken shelter at these camps and 5,71,122 have food daily at the community kitchens.

The flood situation in northeastern Bihar continues to be grim, though water level in some rivers has not increased in the last 24 hours...but some new areas have been submerged too," said a State Disaster Management Department official. "As of now 102 blocks and 901 panchayats in northeast Bihar are affected," he said.

BJP accounts for 54% of U.P. Lok Sabha poll expenses

The national parties spent ₹1,309 crore, says ADR report

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

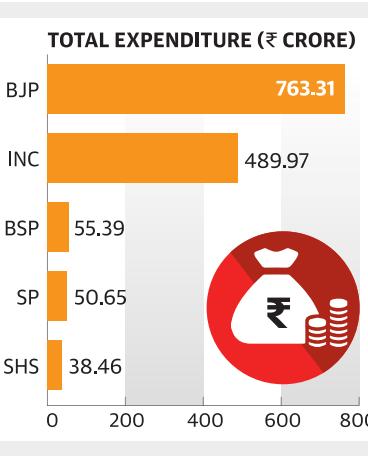
The BJP accounted for more than half of the expenditure incurred by 10 political parties in Uttar Pradesh in the 2019 Lok Sabha election, according to a report released on Thursday by the Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR).

The report analysed the expenditure statements submitted to the Election Commission of India (ECI) by five national parties - the BJP, the Congress, the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP), the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) and the Communist Party of India (CPI) and five regional parties - the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), the All-India Forward Bloc (AIFB), the Janata Dal (United) (JD-U), the Shiv Sena (SHS) and the Samajwadi Party (SP).

The flood situation in northeastern Bihar continues to be grim, though water level in some rivers has not increased in the last 24 hours...but some new areas have been submerged too," said a State Disaster Management Department official. "As of now 102 blocks and 901 panchayats in northeast Bihar are affected," he said.

Top spender

Nearly half (₹376.62 crore) of the ₹763 crore spent by the BJP for the Lok Sabha elections in Uttar Pradesh was for publicity, according to a report by the Association for Democratic Reforms



political parties. In the case of the BSP, the SP, the AAP and the NCP, no expenditure was incurred by parties from their State units," the report said.

Publicity expenditure

The parties analysed in the report declared that they spent the most on publicity (₹813.13 crore), followed by travel expenses (₹341.68 crore), other/miscellaneous expenses (₹241.95 crore) and lumpsum payments to candidates (₹64.08 crore).

The national parties spent a total of ₹1,309.846 crore and the SP, the SHS and the AAP ₹96.68 crore, while the JD-U and the AIFB declared that they did not incur any expenditure though they did contest the polls, the ADR report said.

Cong. spent ₹489.97 cr.

The highest expenditure was incurred by the BJP, which spent ₹763.31 crore or 54.27% of the total spending by the parties analysed. The Congress spent ₹489.97 crore, or 34.83%, followed by the BSP, or 3.94%.

"More than 99% of the political parties' total expenditure was spent from the central headquarters of the

Expenditure statements, which are supposed to be submitted to the ECI within 90 days of completion of the Lok Sabha poll, was submitted after a delay of 85 days by the BJP and 66 days by the Congress, the report noted.

Stop 'political theatrics', Punjab CM tells SAD chief

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

CHANDIGARH

Punjab Chief Minister Amarinder Singh on Thursday said Shiromani Akali Dal president Sukhbir Singh Badal should open his eyes to secessionist threat posed by anti-Indian forces instead of indulging in political theatrics over the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA).

The Chief Minister said after Canada, the United Kingdom has now come out with a categorical statement that "it is not involved in any way in this unofficial and non-binding referendum... and considers Indian Punjab as part of India."

Welcoming the U.K.'s statement, the Chief Minister expressed surprise that Mr. Badal continues to turn a blind eye to the threat posed by Pakistan-backed Sikhs for Justice (SFJ) and other terrorist and radical forces working to destabilise India, particularly Punjab.

"Can't he [Mr. Badal] see that the arrests under UAPA see

that the arrests under UAPA which he is opposing are part of the State government's strategy to combat this threat?" said Captain Amarinder, adding that it was unfortunate that instead of playing the role of a constructive opposition in the State, SAD was wasting its time with its baseless charges and comments.

Hitting out at Mr. Badal for his latest remarks on the issue, in which he said "we won't allow anyone to disrupt the sentiment of fraternity, especially among Hindus and Sikhs", the Chief Minister said it was the SAD chief who was, in fact, trying to create a divide between communities with his senseless attack on the State government's attempts to check anti-Punjab forces from succeeding in their game plan.

Meanwhile, Punjabi Ekta Party president Sukhpal Khaira on Thursday accused the ruling Congress government in Punjab and BJP-led government at Centre of misusing UAPA.

CBI books 4 Navy officials for corruption

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The CBI has booked 18 persons, including four Navy officials, for allegedly submitting forged contingent bills amounting to ₹6.76 crore.

"Searches have been conducted at 26 locations in Delhi, Mumbai, Karnataka and Gujarat," said a CBI official on Thursday.

The accused officials of the Western Naval Command and five others from the Principal Controller of Defence Accounts (PCDA) for Navy in Mumbai conspired with private entities to furnish the forged bills, to show that IT hardware equipment were supplied and IT services extended to the Command headquarters.

Among those arraigned are Captain Atul Kulkarni, Commanders Mandar Godbole and R.P. Sharma, Kuldeep Singh Baghel, and five private companies. A complaint alleging submission of fake bills was submitted to the authorities concerned in October 2017.

During the inquiry, seven suspicious bills pertaining to the Western Naval Command headquarters were found. The bills were passed and payments cleared in March 2016. Physical copies of the bills were not available at the PCDA's Mumbai office.

Bhopal gas leak widows await pension

Nearly 5,000 women have not received the meagre ₹1,000 since December 2019

SIDHARTH YADAV

BHOPAL

Gyarsai Prajapati is thankful to her house owner for waiving the rent for four months, albeit not due to the COVID-19 pandemic. For eight months, the 90-year-old woman, whose husband died in the 1984 Bhopal gas leak, has been awaiting in vain for the monthly pension of a meagre ₹1,000.

"That amount is invaluable for me," says Ms. Prajapati as she leans on a cane outside a fair price shop on Thursday afternoon. The

point of sale machine does not recognise her nearly flat thumb, precluding her from getting ration for three days.

"I used to pay my rent of ₹400 using the pension, and bought vegetables and lentils from the market. But now, only the ration shop can feed me," says Ms. Prajapati, who resides on the first floor of an apartment in the Jeevan Jyoti colony here, an enclave for the widows. Her son and his family live on the third floor.

Like Ms. Prajapati, as many as 4,998 other women, whose husbands died in the methyl isocyanate leak from a pesticide plant, have been awaiting widows' pension since December 2019. The pension, initiated in 2011, was stopped from April 2016 to November 2017, but was started again after being prompted by activists.

The widows need the pension during the pandemic more than ever, said Balkrishna Namdeo of Gas Peedit Nirashrit Pension Bhogi Sangharsh Morchha. "The government is going back on its stand," he said. The 2011 annual report of the Bhopal Gas Tragedy Relief and Rehabilitation Department said the pension would be lifelong."

"There are no funds left," the Department's director, Basant Kurre, told *The Hindu*.

The pension scheme, he said, was only meant for five years and the Centre had allocated ₹30 crore for it. Using the interest on that amount, it was extended for another two years. "Now it's a policy decision. We have referred the matter to the government," he said.

People eating less to cope with crisis in Odisha districts

Activists conducted survey of social pension beneficiaries in migration-prone districts of Bargarh, Balangir, Kalahandi, Nuapada

STAFF REPORTER

BHUBANESWAR

Cash benefits dished out by the government were not sufficient for marginalised people to cope with the crisis induced by the COVID-19 pandemic in the migration-prone districts of Odisha, said the State unit of the Right to Food Campaign (RTFC).

The RTFC, a forum of civil rights activists involved in highlighting right to food issues, conducted a telephonic survey of social pension beneficiaries – the elderly, disabled, widows and single



Welfare measure: A June 6 photo of food being distributed to migrants at a quarantine centre in Balangir. ■ BISWARANJAN ROUT

women – in four migration-prone districts of Bargarh, Balangir, Kalahandi and Nuapada between July 1 and 15. They were able to reach 63 respondents.

"More than half (54%) of the sample families had resorted to eating less to cope with food insecurity and are worried they may run out of food stock soon. Nearly a third of the families (69%) had to borrow or take a small loan from relatives or neighbours to buy food items during the lockdown. The worst situation is that 13% of the sample families had to go hungry for one or more days due to the non-availability of food at home," said Sameet Panda of RTFC.

"The pandemic has not only turned out to be a

health and economic crisis, it is slowly becoming food and nutrition crisis as well. In such a situation, where there is a restriction of movement due to lockdowns, the food security condition of already vulnerable populations such as the aged, disabled and single women tends to go worse," he pointed out.

"When it came to food insecurity among the sample families, 16% of them had already exhausted the PDS (public distribution system) rice, and for another one fourth sample families, the

rice at home would last only 2 to 7 days. And two-thirds of the families were left with no money to buy rice or food items," said Mr. Panda.

The RTFC recommended that PDS coverage be made universal in the State at least till the pandemic passed. Advance ration must be released for the next three months, which should include basic items like pulses, salt and oil, the campaigners said. The RTFC also urged the advance payment of social security pension for six months to all pension beneficiaries.

J&K administration set to highlight its achievements

Events to mark first anniversary of removal of special status

PEERZADA ASHIQ

SRINAGAR

From August 5, Jammu and Kashmir will start a series of programmes on the first anniversary of removal of special status to highlight the achievements made by the Union Territory (UT) administration in the past 12 months.

The Chief Secretary has asked all administrative secretaries in Srinagar to be present from August 8 to 11.

An important event is likely to be organised in Srinagar on August 10. The event is being coordinated by the Principal Secretary, Information, and the Secretary, Rural Development and Panchayati Raj," an official said.

The UT administration is planning a media blitzkrieg to highlight the achievements. Four IAS officers have been assigned to "facilitate and educate" reporters from outside the UT about the achievements made in the past 12 months.

An official said the spending under the ₹80,000-lakh Prime Minister Development Package, the market intervention scheme to buy apples directly from farm-



Lieutenant Governor Girish Chandra Murmu

tion one tax, unbundling of power department and structural reforms carried out in Industries, Tourism, Finance and Police departments are other focus areas of the UT administration.

"J&K becomes 100% (ODF) Open defecation free," it claimed.

The administration also highlighted as an achievement the unique public outreach, with 36 Union Ministers visiting J&K in one week.

Lt. Governor briefed

Meanwhile, General Officer Commanding (GoC) 15 Corps, Lieutenant General B.S. Raju, called on Lieutenant Governor Girish Chandra Murmu at the Raj Bhawan in Srinagar, days ahead of the anniversary.

An official said the Army officer briefed the Lt. Governor about the recent internal security developments and the prevailing security scenario in the Union Territory.

The Lt. Governor advised heightened surveillance and stressed on keeping a close watch on all vital installations to ensure the safety and security of the people, the official said.

Case against M.P. woman farmer

STAFF REPORTER

BHOPAL

The Dewas police have registered a case against a woman farmer who reportedly set herself ablaze while resisting an anti-environmental drive and nine others for reportedly manhandling officials and obstructing them on duty.

During the incident on Tuesday, the accused reportedly roughed up two patwaris and a revenue inspector when they arrived to remove a part of the encroachment on fields at Attawas village under the Satwas police station, said the police.

The incident came to light on Thursday after a video of the incident went viral on the social media. The case was registered based on an application filed by the injured officials," said Dewas SP Shrivdayal Singh.

The team had reached the spot after a revenue court decided a road would be paved through the encroachment for use by the villagers, said District Collector Chandra-mouli Shukla.

Demanding an inquiry, former CM Kamal Nath said, "The hapless woman set herself ablaze while protesting against JCBs razing standing crops."

Tougher lockdown curbs spurred domestic violence'

Study correlates complaints with COVID-19 incidence

JAGRITI CHANDRA

NEW DELHI

Domestic violence and online sexual abuse cases were higher in red-zone COVID-19 districts as compared to those in orange and green zones, according to a new study which argues that gender-based violence shifted from streets to domestic spaces due to restrictions on mobility.

The Working Paper titled, "Unintended Consequences of Lockdowns: COVID-19 and the Shadow Pandemic" was published in the National Bureau of Economic Research (NBER) on July 20, and is authored by Manisha Shah and Saravane Ravindran from the University of California at Los Angeles.

The study highlights that domestic violence complaints rose by 131% and those on online abuse increased by 184% in red zone districts as compared to green zone districts. Correspondingly, there was a significant decrease in harassment, rape, and sexual assault complaints in red and orange zone districts relative to green zone districts in the months during and after the lockdown.



This love story spans continents, and has resulted in a unique gin celebrating Cork's legacy, Wayanad's spices and histories of rebellion

Cheers, from across the seas

SHONALI MUTHALALY

When Bhagya and Robert Barrett met on a blind date at an Irish pub called Tom Collins in Limerick, Ireland, they had no idea that their romance would be encapsulated in a Malayalee-Irish gin, just five years later.

"We met in 2015, and by December 2016, Rob popped the question. We were married in Kollam by August 2017," says Bhagya, adding with a giggle, "It was speed dating by Irish standards."

The couple recently launched Rebel City Distillery in Cork's historic docklands, in a former Ford factory building. Although the boutique distillery is just a few weeks old, it is already drawing international attention for its first launch, Maharani Gin. "We still have to put up our sign board," says Bhagya.

Robert adds that they currently have just one employee. With Bhagya still working as a senior programme manager at Dell, Robert, who is a biochemist turned fine spirits expert, is handling production, with help from his father, Brendan.

Maharani's intriguing bottle has been doing the rounds on WhatsApp and social media for its clever efforts to encapsulate both their cultures on the label. Using Pantone's 2020 colour of the year, Classic Blue, the Malayalam lettering includes the word *viplava* (rebel) spirit, which Bhagya says is a nod to the rebellious history of both Ireland and Kerala.

Over a phonecall from Cork, Bhagya – like a freshly poured G&T – is bright and effervescent, while Robert is quiet and endearingly wry.

Explaining how she grew up in Kollam, then worked with HCL Technologies and Tata Consultancy Services in Chennai before moving to Madrid for a project, and then Dublin, where she got a job with Dell, Bhagya explains that the couple has strong links with Kerala. She switches excitedly between Malayalam and English as she speaks, punctuating her sentences with bursts of laughter. "We had a wedding on the backwaters in Kollam. It was *adipoli*."

Robert placidly explains his background, when she pauses. "I'm from Cork originally. I started with Biochemistry, then moved to Edinburgh to do a Master's in Brewing and Distilling at the Heriot-Watt University in Edinburgh."

He then worked in Ireland, with Kilbeggan (now Beam) and The Shed Distillery. And in Cana-

da, with Vancouver-based Central City Brewers and Distillers where he set up and established their distillery focussing on whiskey, gin and vodka.

"I wanted to start a distillery, and I was talking to Bhagya about gin. She suggested using nutmeg, cassia and pomelo from Kerala," says Robert. "Can I say it?" Bhagya interjects enthusiastically, "There was this *chechi* next door in Kollam who had the most amaz-

ing *jathikka* (nutmeg) and *bambilmas* (pomelo) when we were growing up. I also love Kerala's cassia, it gives a special sweetness."

The right match

Scouting around Kerala for farms, the couple discovered Vanamoolika, in Wayanad. Specialising in conservation and organic cultivation of plants, the organisation focusses on empowering women farmers. "We couldn't think of a better partnership: strong women from my homeland," says Bhagya. "We want to go back with bottles of Maharani and open the gin with those *adipoli chechimaar*."

Maharani gin blends nine botanicals, out of which the nutmeg, mace, cassia and pomelo are from Wayanad. The couple plans to source cardamom as well from Kerala soon.

Describing the flavour, Robert says "It's citrus and spice. You can taste the element of juniper, as well as the citrus of pomelo. There is a creamy mouth feel..." Bhagya adds. "And a nice spicy, bright finish. Also that sweetness of cassia. It's the taste of home."

Unfortunately, COVID-19 has delayed their celebratory trip to India. While the pandemic hampered the launch, Maharani is now being sold online and served in bars in Ireland. "The response has been great so far," says Robert. "This is the first distillery opening in Cork in 50 years, so we have got encouraging press here. With the pandemic, people are looking for good news."

The couple is keen on retailing in India as well, eventually. In the meantime, Robert is working on their next launch: "An India-inspired rum, made with jaggery".

Team of two Bhagya and Rob with a bottle of Maharani Gin; (top) the distillery in Cork, Ireland

■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT



Pink dragon bread

A bakery in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam has found the ideal way to make use of its unsold red dragon fruit. Kao Sien Luc, founder of ABC bakery could not bear to see the wastage of the pink fruit, 30 metric tonnes of which were reportedly left without buyers across the country, so she decided to turn them into bread. With the sealing of borders with China due to the Coronavirus outbreak since February, harvested dragon fruits were piling up in huge numbers. The founder of the bakery

started experimenting with the fruit after she overheard farmers talk about their struggles to sell the unsold fruits. She was seen on social media explaining how the fruit with a neutral fragrance and flavour stood out because of its natural rich pink colour. The bakery first experimented by making plain baguettes. After that became an instant hit, they started playing with different ingredients for flavour. Now, ABC bakery makes dragon fruit bun with yam as well as with durian, and a red dragon fruitcake, too.



MasterChef Australia (Season 10). She is also a regular presenter and host on network television in Australia. The author of colourful cookbooks, Anna launched her first book *Sweet Street* (Murdoch) in May 2018. Her second book, *Kids' Corner* (Bauer), was released in November 2019. Anna will be teaching her classic chocolate cake tart. The pastry chef knows how to wow people with her sweet treats and unique style. The workshop will be held on Zoom, on August 1 at 12.30 pm. For details, and registration, visit <https://conosh.com>.

Bake with Anna

Conosh is a hyperlocal service in Bengaluru and Delhi that allows food lovers to bond with like-minded people over a meal at home or in a restaurant, to build a sense of community living. Post COVID-19, however, Conosh has moved to online experiences, keeping in mind anything and everything around food via home chefs, chefs and people who have a passion for food. This weekend on August 1, Conosh is bringing in a workshop with Anna Polyviou, who appeared on

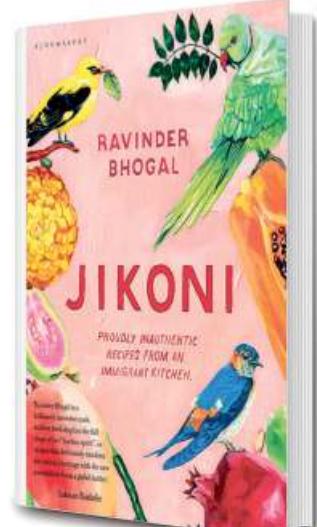
A love letter to integration

Through her latest book, restaurateur-chef Ravinder Bhogal celebrates immigrant food and its ability to organically blend myriad cuisines. In her case: Indian, Kenyan, and West Asian



On the table
Ravinder's book, like her restaurant, features recipes created from a mix of cultural memories

■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT



KRITHIKA R

Ever heard of kimchi *parathas*? Or oat and chickpea *cheelas*? These are just two of the unusual recipes in London-based restaurateur Ravinder Bhogal's latest cookbook *Jikoni: Proudly Inauthentic Recipes from an Immigrant Kitchen* (Bloomsbury).

The tagline begs the question: what does she think about authenticity when it comes to food. "Very restrictive," is her answer over email. "Authenticity is very subjective and, for me, it is only important that one is authentic to oneself. We are all products of differing landscapes and experiences, so it is natural that that is reflected in the food you cook. My grandmother's *dal* is always going to be different from your grandmother's because of their unique life experiences. So to ask which is more authentic seems ludicrous."

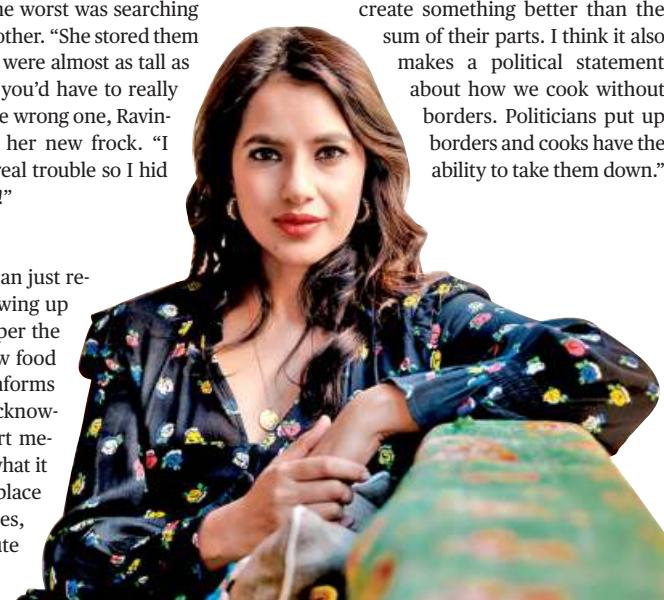
In the initial days of her move to England from Kenya as a child, she says "I longed for the familiar and the foods that signified the familiar to me." Food that immigrants create, she says, comes out of reconciliation of the ache for what they have left behind and the wonder of their new landscape. "It comes out of resourcefulness, the ability to adapt and often economic circumstances. Immigrants preserve their culinary heritage and overlay it with the customs and ingredients of their new nation to create unique cuisines."

Apart from family, she credits being an immigrant as a major influence in her work as a chef. "Trying to find a space to fit into, trying to assimilate into other people's versions of what it meant to be British was always challenging because I am Indian and East African too. So in a way, opening my restaurant and cooking in the mixed heritage way I do was perhaps a subconscious effort to create a space into which I felt like I belonged."

Her best food memory is "probably eating ice cream at a 1950s ice cream parlour called Sno Cream in Nairobi with my grandfather. It was the feeling of being adored and indulged; the sharing of something naughty but nice with him." She fondly recalls the seats that "you could spin around on till you were dizzy or until an adult yelled at you to sit still." The worst was searching for biscuits baked by her mother. "She stored them in large steel canisters that were almost as tall as me. They were airtight so you'd have to really pull at the lids." Opening the wrong one, Ravinder spilled cooking oil over her new frock. "I knew I was going to be in real trouble so I hid for what seemed like hours!"

A salute to women

The book features more than just recipes. Anecdotes from growing up in Kenya and England pepper the narrative, emphasising how food connects people and informs one's identity. Ravinder acknowledges that the book is part memoir. "It tells the story of what it is like to settle into a new place as an immigrant," she muses, adding, "It also pays tribute to the many women who taught me to cook and



These shoes smell like fried chicken

You might be surprised to learn that they were all sold out in half an hour. But then, the love for fried chicken knows no bounds. Limited-edition Crocs shoes, which first saw the spotlight at New York Fashion Week this February, went up for sale in the US on July 28 at 8 pm ET, and were sold out within minutes. A result of cross-promotion between the fast food giant KFC and footwear brand Crocs, the KFC x Croc Classic Clogs featured prints of fried chicken on top, and also the signature scent of KFC fried chicken.



Each pair retailed at \$60. "Combining the unmistakable look of our world-famous fried chicken and signature KFC bucket, with the unparalleled comfort and style of Crocs, these shoes are what fried chicken footwear dreams are made of," said Andrea Zahumensky, chief marketing officer for KFC in the US.

M ND-NDE

Head turner

After earning a place in the India Book of Records for tying the smallest Rajasthani turbans on fingers, Pawan Vyas is now attempting a record for the world's biggest headgear

PRIYADARSHINI PATTANDY

"Hold one end of the cloth, take it over the right ear to the upper part of the left ear," explains Pawan Vyas, carefully explaining how to drape a turban. That is just his first version. The 19-year-old from Bikaner, Rajasthan knows 107 more ways of draping a turban.

"I have been doing this for 11 years," says Pawan over a call from Bikaner, and adds, "Last August, I made it to the India Book of Records for tying the smallest Rajasthani turbans on fingers." For the record, each finger had a different style: *Maheshwari pagdi, Udaipuri pagdi, Barmeri safā, Jaisalmeri pagdi, Jhalori safā, kesariya dulha safā, red chunri safā, khidakiya safā, darbari safā and batdar kesariya safā* and the sizes varied from one to three centimetres in radii. He explains there is a difference between *pagdi* and *safā*. "*Pagdi* is longer than 21 metres and *safā* is between nine to 11 metres."

Pawan is now set for his attempt at another record. This time for the world's biggest turban. "It'll weigh 15 kilograms and be around 450 to 500 metres long, and take around five hours to tie," he says. He plans

to invite officials from the Guinness Book of Records and India Book of Records for this feat, which he plans to organise as soon COVID-19 dies down. He is optimistically looking at September this year.

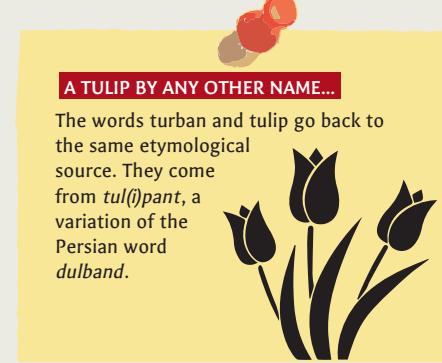
Pawan and his family are well-known in their locality for their skills with turbans. "We are known as *Safeywaale Vyas Ji*," he laughs and with a sense of pride adds, "You can find us on Google maps as well."

His father and uncle too are part of this family business, which started in 1982. Apart from the different styles, Pawan is also known for his agility. He can tie a *safā* in 13 seconds. "Most people take two minutes to do it," he says. It probably is due to years of practice and the fact that he ties nearly



25,000 to 30,000 turbans in a year in Bikaner alone. "The Bikaner camel festival and Holi are popular events here and there is a demand at that time. I also travel to cities like Mumbai, Delhi, Jalpaiguri, Bengaluru, and Kolkata especially to drape turbans of different styles for weddings and other celebratory events."

For details, check out his Facebook page [Vysturban](#).



Tie and tell Pawan can tie a *safā* in 13 seconds

• SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Through thick and thin

SHILPA NAIR ANAND

Every evening since the lockdowns first began in March, Mridul George, has been 'meeting' 16 friends and colleagues virtually over a cup of tea. The senior software developer with Nielsen Kochi says his 'tea group' has been a lifeline in these days of distancing. The pandemic has changed the dynamics of friendship for almost everybody, across age groups. If old friends have reconnected, others have found time to indulge in their buddies.

Together apart

"Before the lockdown, all of us would step out of office together everyday, for tea. With the lockdown, this is how we keep in touch. Everybody logs in for the video call, depending on the time each person has. We might be meeting vir-

Friendships during crisis are the ones that really last, say these buddies who lean on each other and keep the bond sustained virtually

tually, even so we recreate the mood – each one of us has a cup of tea when we log in," he says. Present and former colleagues/friends are part of this group. Weekends are for games such as Picture or dumb charades.

Paradoxically, self isolation and social distancing have brought people closer. Hanging out as a group and catching up over a coffee or a drink is off the table, as are workplace meetings. With all the gloom around, rela-



ationships in general and friendships in particular have become a lifeline for many. Like for jewellery designer and stylist Raji Anand from Chennai, who lives away from family. Her friends are an invaluable support system.

She has reconnected with old friends, while some recent friendships have faded away to make space for more meaningful friendships. "Pre-pandemic, when you socialised over a drink or on an evening out, you were just unwinding. Now, the quality of interaction has changed. More than the people I

used to meet regularly, I fall back on those I knew from before to sustain and reassure me during these difficult times. These were people with whom I couldn't connect frequently due to my hectic schedule," she says.

For Germany-based Indu Sharma, the lockdown in India means she can catch up with her friends irrespective of clashing time zones. "This time has been one for friends and friendships; thanks to technology and social media it is so much easier," says Indu whose friends are spread across India, and oth-

ers parts of the world. She interacts with them constantly through the day either on WhatsApp or Zoom calls.

Pining for campus

For grown-ups, friendships have been made easier with time and technology. But Kochi-based 14-year-old Anu A

(name changed) says friendship just got complicated. "With the amount of school work we have thanks to online classes, friends and friendships have dropped to an all-time low on the priority list. All of us don't have mobile phones or access to social media – how do we talk to each other?" says the Class IX student. Anu and her friends tried video calls, "but our schedules clash – either parents are at work or one of us has assignments or tuition. In school, all of us were in the same place and had time for each other."

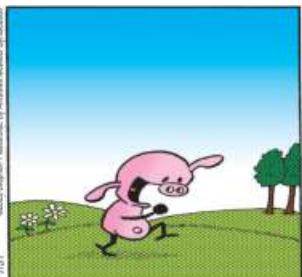
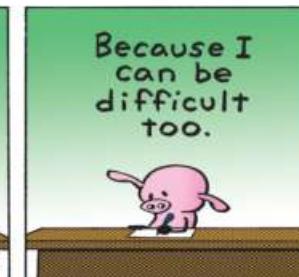
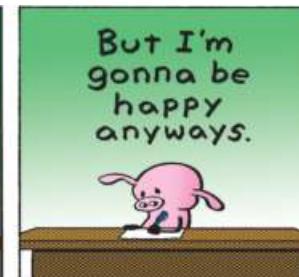
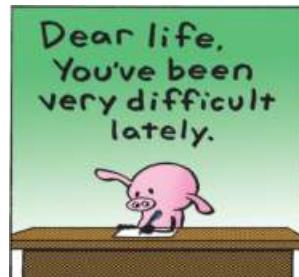
Mitr P from Bengaluru, who turns 12 on August 2, says, "I have been doing video calls with my friends. I miss them a lot because online cannot replace the connection I feel with them in school." But Mitr has made a new friend: a neighbour's pet dog named Kishmish. "I was hesitant at first, as I used to be scared of dogs. But she was friendly. She can't replace my friends, but she is an alternative," he says.

Raji feels that these friendships – made and rekindled – would not have happened if not for the pandemic. "Some friendships have fallen through, but I think the ties formed during this time are the ones that will last."

POOCH CAFE



PEARLS BEFORE SWINE



HAGAR THE HORRIBLE



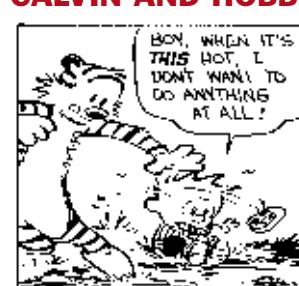
PEANUTS



TIGER



CALVIN AND HOBBES



HOMING IN

From a Sidney Lumet classic to a Paul Thomas Anderson experimental, filmmaker **Dheeraj Vaidy**'s list for this week's **Watchlist** is a handbook for cinephiles

PRAVEEN SUDEVAN



12 Angry Men

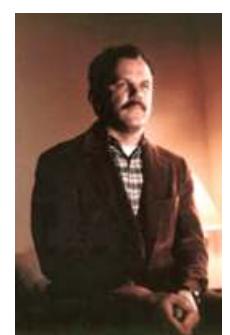
What I learnt from *12 Angry Men* was: 'To make a film, you need just a room and a few characters.' You needn't be too worried about other things like budget, aesthetics, etc.



I think it is the perfect kind of movie to make during a time like this. The film is basically about the conflict within the characters and between them.

No Country for Old Men

Usually, movies are about 'good vs evil'. But this one isn't. In this, the hero doesn't win. The film is unpredictable. After all the randomness and chaos we witness throughout the film, it ends with a relaxed monologue of a clueless, old police officer talking about his dream of a world he can finally understand. It is a fitting end for the world and the characters this film sets up.



Magnolia

This film introduced me to Paul Thomas Anderson. He is an auteur in his own way. All of his films are something else and describing them with words is in a way belittling them. The film itself is one of my all-time favourites. It offers closures for all its characters. And, there is something organic about the way the characters behave and interact with each other. You sense a thread that connects all of them. It is a three-hour movie but it doesn't feel that long.

Little Miss Sunshine

The movie tells you that any dream of yours is valid, no matter how crazy it is. All you need is a little push in the right direction from a few people who believe in you regardless of what happens.



Pariyerum Perumal

I remember walking out of this film feeling something I have never felt in no other Tamil movie before that till date. *Pariyerum Perumal* is a classic about caste. Yet there is nothing preachy about the film. The hero doesn't preach to the audience; he simply makes them feel what he feels and leaves it to their conscience.

We would love to know how you are keeping busy at home. Tell us what you are watching at [metro@thehindu.co.in](#)

(name changed) says friendship just got complicated. "With the amount of school work we have thanks to online classes, friends and friendships have dropped to an all-time low on the priority list. All of us don't have mobile phones or access to social media – how do we talk to each other?" says the Class IX student. Anu and her friends tried video calls, "but our schedules clash – either parents are at work or one of us has assignments or tuition. In school, all of us were in the same place and had time for each other."

Mitr P from Bengaluru, who turns 12 on August 2, says, "I have been doing video calls with my friends. I miss them a lot because online cannot replace the connection I feel with them in school." But Mitr has made a new friend: a neighbour's pet dog named Kishmish. "I was hesitant at first, as I used to be scared of dogs. But she was friendly. She can't replace my friends, but she is an alternative," he says.

Raji feels that these friendships – made and rekindled – would not have happened if not for the pandemic. "Some friendships have fallen through, but I think the ties formed during this time are the ones that will last."

Trump suggests postponing election

'Mail-in voting is already proving to be a catastrophic disaster; it's vulnerable to foreign interference'

SRIRAM LAKSHMAN

U.S. President Donald Trump has suggested postponing the November 3 presidential election in order to avoid voting by mail, which he has repeatedly called fraudulent, without basis. Mr. Trump tweeted out his suggestion shortly after news broke that the U.S. economy had experienced a record level of contraction in the second quarter of this year.

"With Universal Mail-In Voting (not Absentee Voting, which is good), 2020 will be the most INACCURATE & FRAUDULENT Election in history. It will be a great embarrassment to the USA. Delay the Election until people can properly, securely and safely vote???" Mr. Trump



Campaign mode: President Donald Trump is greeted by supporters as he lands in Texas on Thursday. ■ NYT

tweeted just after news emerged that the U.S. economy had shrunk by a post-war record of 32.9% on an annualised basis as per preliminary estimates from the Bureau of Economic Analysis.

Minutes prior to tweeting

out his suggestion, the President had tweeted that voting by mail was a "catastrophic disaster".

'Catastrophic disaster'
"Mail-In Voting is already proving to be a catastrophic disaster. Even testing areas

are way off. The Dems talk of

foreign influence in voting,

but they know that Mail-In

Voting is an easy way for

foreign countries to enter the

race. Even beyond that,

there's no accurate count!"

he said on Thursday morning.

Despite the President's

claims, there is no significant

evidence of extensive fraud

when voting happens by

mail.

"Never in American history – not even during the Civil War and World War II – has there been a successful move to 'Delay the Election' for President," Presidential historian Michael Beschloss said on Twitter. Fifteen States had postponed their primaries or switched to vote by mail with extended deadlines, the *New York Times* had reported earlier

this year. These were in compliance with State laws. Postponing the general election is a lot more complex though.

Changes to Election Day, which, by law, is the Tuesday after the first Monday in November in an election year, can be effected only by changing the law. For this to happen, the U.S. Senate and House – which is controlled by Democrats – would need to vote for such legislation.

"Let's be clear: Trump does not have the ability to delay the election. Our elections are enshrined in the Constitution. The Constitution also says that if the date of the election is to be changed, it must be changed by Congress," Chair of the House Judiciary Committee, Jerrold Nadler, said.

Hong Kong bars 12 opposition candidates from election

Joshua Wong is among them; 4 held under security law

REUTERS

HONG KONG

Hong Kong's government said on Thursday 12 pro-democracy candidates had been disqualified from running for election to the legislature, citing opposition to a new national security law imposed by Beijing, but denied by Democrats – would need to vote for such legislation.

Disqualified candidates included pro-democracy activist Joshua Wong, some members of the Civic Party, a moderate, old-guard opposition group, and others who won an unofficial "primary" vote held by the opposition camp this month.

The move is sure to infuriate supporters of democracy, a month after Communist Party rulers in Beijing announced the national security law that reins in dissent in the semi-autonomous city. It could also steer China further onto a collision path with the West.

The government said there could be more disqualifications. Critics said the move sought to curb the ascendancy of a young, more defiant generation of pro-democracy activists after an overwhelming win in last year's lower-level district council elections.

"Clearly, #Beijing shows a total disregard for the will of the opposition voices. Outrageous, Nathan Law, a pro-democracy activist and former lawmaker who was kicked out of the legislature, said on Twitter. Mr. Law fled



Stumbling blocks: Members of the Civic Party at a news conference in Hong Kong on Thursday. ■ AP

ture under its firm grip," Mr. Wong tweeted.

Hong Kong for Britain earlier this month.

The Civic Party said its existence is not confined to the legislature, often referred to as Legco, and it will continue to work for its values. "When the regime wishes to enslave us, the best thing to do is to stand firm and tell the regime we would not change," said Civic Party member Kwok Ka-ki, who was among those disqualified.

Meanwhile, Hong Kong police have arrested four people aged 16-21 for suspected offences under the city's new national security law, the first such detentions outside of street protests since the legislation took effect a month ago.

"We arrested for ... subversions and for the organising and also the inciting (of) secession," said Li Kwai-wah, police superintendent.

"They wanted to unite all the independent groups to promote the independence of Hong Kong."

China conducts drills in South China Sea

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

BEIJING

Beijing recently conducted "high-intensity" naval exercises in the South China Sea, China's Defence Ministry said on Thursday, as tensions grow over the Asian power's manoeuvres in the contested waters.

China's expanding military presence in the region has worried several of its neighbours, while the U.S. has vowed to stand up against Beijing's territorial claims to much of the South China Sea, including the con-

tested Paracel Islands.

Chinese H-6G and H-6J jet bombers carried out "high-intensity training, and completed day-and-night training exercises in taking off and landing, long-range assault, and attacks on sea targets," Defence Ministry spokesman Ren Guoqiang said at a virtual press conference.

Mr. Ren said the exercises were part of routine training and had "achieved the expected results", without giving their specific location.

China – which is locked in disputes with neighbours in-



War games: The Shandong aircraft carrier docked at a port in Sanya, Hainan province, China, in this file photo. ■ AP

cluding India, Japan and Vietnam over islands in the South China Sea – has infu-

riated other nations by build-

ing artificial islands with military installations in parts of the sea.

Washington declared ear-

lier this month that Beijing's claims to most of the sea are illegal, ramping up support for Southeast Asian nations with claims to parts of it.

The region is believed to have valuable oil and gas deposits.

Australia has also rejected Beijing's territorial and maritime claims in the sea, saying there was "no legal basis" to several of China's claims.

The U.S. regularly conducts so-called "freedom of navigation operations" in the South China Sea in order to stand up to Beijing.

After 99 days of success, virus returns to haunt Vietnam

43 cases reported in 6 parts of the country within a week

ASSOCIATED PRESS

HANOI

For 99 days, Vietnam seemed to have defeated the COVID-19 pandemic. There wasn't a single reported case of community transmission. Not a single death. The country of 96 million people was hailed globally as a standout success.

But then a week ago, an outbreak began that has now grown to 43 cases in six parts of the country, including three of the largest cities, and forced authorities to reimpose restrictions many thought they had put behind them. And experts worry the outbreak could be much larger than currently known.

The outbreak began last Thursday in the coastal city of Da Nang, where thou-



A woman walks past a shop selling T-shirts in Hanoi on Thursday. ■ AP

sands of tourists had gathered for vacations. A 57-year-old man was hospitalised with a fever and tested positive. His condition worsened and he was put on a ventilator.

Then health workers found three other infections in Da Nang over the weekend. And then on Monday,

Ahead of polls, Sri Lankan PM hits out at TNA

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
MOSCOW

Sri Lanka's main Tamil party TNA will not be allowed to achieve through the election what the LTTE and its slain leader Velupillai Prabakaran failed to accomplish with the gun, Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa has said.

Speaking at an election rally on Wednesday ahead of the August 5 parliamentary election, the PM said that his action to end the LTTE's over three decades-long violent campaign had freed the country from terrorism. "We will not allow the Tamil National Alliance (TNA) to achieve their objectives," he said. The TNA will not be allowed to achieve through the election what the LTTE and its leader Prabakaran failed to accomplish with the gun, he said.

Just how the virus crept back remains a mystery. Authorities say they think the source was from outside Vietnam because this time the virus is a different strain. "One big difference I've noticed between this wave and the previous one is that the cases we have right now, a lot of them are severe," said Marc Choisy, a bio-mathematician.

Another 11. All of those were other patients or health workers at the Da Nang Hospital, where the man remains in critical condition.

On Monday, authorities encouraged 80,000 tourists to leave the city by providing extra flights. Hotels emptied out and thousands cancelled their plans to visit. Then on Tuesday, the city was put into lockdown.

Speaking at an election rally on Wednesday ahead of the August 5 parliamentary election, the PM said that his action to end the LTTE's over three decades-long violent campaign had freed the country from terrorism. "We will not allow the Tamil National Alliance (TNA) to achieve their objectives," he said. The TNA will not be allowed to achieve through the election what the LTTE and its leader Prabakaran failed to accomplish with the gun, he said.

As the world's oldest and largest democracies, the U.S. and India have long traditions of upholding these shared values championed by figures like Gandhi, King, and Congressman Lewis. But they are increasingly under threat in both countries. This legislation will help ensure those values endure and remind us that by holding true to them, we embody and live up to the best of our two nations," he said.

Other co-sponsors included Indian American Democratic lawmakers Pramila Jayapal (Washington state), Ro Khanna (California) and Raja Krishnamoorthi (Illinois).

The Bill, co-sponsored by Indian American Congressman Ami Bera will establish annual scholar and student exchange programmes for Indians and Americans to study the leaders' legacies and visit historic sites in India and the U.S., relevant to the India's freedom struggle and the U.S.'s civil rights movement.

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The Bill was inspired by Mr. Lewis's visit to India in 2009 to commemorate the 50th anniversary of Dr. King's visit to India, according to an email from Mr. Bera's office.

The Bill will need to be voted through the House and Senate before it becomes law.

The Bill will establish annual student exchange programmes

Russia jails U.S. ex-marine for 9 years

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

A Russian court on Thursday sentenced former U.S. marine Trevor Reed to nine years in prison for assaulting police officers while drunk last year.

His conviction follows the high-profile trial of another former U.S. marine Paul Whelan last month on espionage charges in a case that has fuelled speculation of a prisoner exchange with

the United States.

Reed, a 29-year-old student and former marine from Texas, allegedly attacked police after attending a party in Moscow.

While being driven to a police station, he purportedly grabbed the arm of a police officer, causing the car they were in to swerve, and elbowed another officer in the abdomen.

Reed appeared wearing a facemask in a cage for defen-



Trevor Reed

dants in a courtroom in Moscow as the judge read out the guilty verdict, saying the police officers had suffered

mental and physical harm". The court ruled that Reed's "state of intoxication" had played a decisive role in the incident and sentenced him to nine years in a penal colony.

Reed denounced the verdict as "completely political" and vowed to appeal to the U.S. government for political support. A representative of the US embassy at the hearing declined to comment on the verdict.

ELSEWHERE



Ex-Chinese top banker pleads guilty to graft

BEIJING

A former top banker in China pleaded guilty on Thursday to illegally receiving over \$12 million after being caught last year in President Xi Jinping's sweeping campaign against corruption. Hu Huaibang, former party secretary and chairman of the China Development Bank, had taken advantage of his positions to illegally receive money and goods worth a total of 85.5 million yuan (\$12.2 million). AFP

Gandhi-King initiative passes U.S. House committee

The Bill will establish annual student exchange programmes

SRIRAM LAKSHMAN

A Bill authored by American civil rights leader and lawmaker John Lewis, which seeks to establish an exchange programme between India and the U.S. to study the work and legacies of Mahatma Gandhi and civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr., passed an important committee in the U.S. House of Representatives on Wednesday, days after Mr. Lewis's death.

The Bill, co-sponsored by Indian American Congressman Ami Bera will establish annual scholar and student exchange programmes for Indians and Americans to study the leaders' legacies and visit historic sites in India and the U.S., relevant to the India's freedom struggle and the U.S.'s civil rights movement.

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TAMIL NADU GENERATION AND DISTRIBUTION CORPORATION LTD.

Sl. No. Specification No. Name of work Closing date for online submission of e-tender

1. Specification No. DRIP (Phase II and III) / CE/CD/DP/SPMU / DRIP/TANGEDCO NCB/No.01/2020-21

World Bank funded Rehabilitation and works of Pykara Dam in Kundala Generation Circle, The Nilgiris District, Tamil Nadu under DRIP (Phase II and III)

Last date for submission of e-tender: 31.08.2020 upto 14.00 Hrs.

EMD: Rs.13.72 Lakhs

www.tangedco.gov.in, www.tenders.tn.gov.in, www.tntenders.gov.in/nicgep/app

DIPR/2878/Tender/2020

CHIEF ENGINEER/CIVIL DESIGNS

CENTRE FOR MATERIALS FOR ELECTRONICS TECHNOLOGY (C-MET)

(Scientific Society, Ministry of Electronics & Information Technology (MeitY), Govt. of India)

MARKET WATCH

	30-07-2020	% CHANGE
Sensex	37,736	-0.88
US Dollar	74.84	-0.05
Gold	53,860	0.12
Brent oil	42.70	-2.18

NIFTY 50

	PRICE	CHANGE
Adani Ports	312.50	-2.65
Asian Paints	1743.35	3.20
Axisc Bank	425.85	-15.05
Bajaj Auto	3048.95	-50.35
Bajaj Finserv	6177.60	-151.00
Bajaj Finance	3219.30	-65.95
Bharti Airtel	552.70	-13.50
BPCL	419.10	-34.70
Britannia Ind	3805.95	-11.25
Cipla	685.95	4.70
Coal India	128.60	-2.60
Dr Reddys Lab	4516.60	214.40
Eicher Motors	21201.35	-199.60
GAIL (India)	96.60	-2.20
Grasim Ind	602.95	-13.35
HCL Tech	695.45	1.05
HDPC	1810.65	-66.65
HDPC Bank	1050.65	-13.95
Hero MotoCorp	2703.95	-76.05
Hindalco	162.00	-2.05
Hind Unilever	2195.60	-35.70
ICICI Bank	344.95	-6.10
IndusInd Bank	519.85	-30.65
Bharti Infralet	192.50	-4.00
Infosys	961.45	7.30
Indian Oil Corp	88.55	-4.05
ITC	193.35	-3.35
JSW Steel	214.35	-3.20
Kotak Bank	1385.00	-4.45
L&T	908.25	-13.70
M&M	598.35	-6.50
Maruti Suzuki	6265.40	80.25
Nestle India Ltd.	16524.00	-73.85
NTPC	86.60	-1.55
ONGC	77.70	-1.80
PowerGrid Corp	176.85	-4.90
Reliance Ind	2108.85	12.20
State Bank	186.55	-4.65
Shree Cement	21395.10	-348.55
Sun Pharma	509.95	16.95
Tata Motors	103.65	-2.10
Tata Steel	366.60	-7.15
TCS	2279.50	3.45
Tech Mahindra	674.75	-1.65
Titan	1041.85	1.40
UltraTech Cement	4155.55	-25.40
UPL	464.60	2.85
Vedanta	110.90	0.90
Wipro	284.10	7.10
Zee Entertainment	140.20	-2.15

EXCHANGE RATES		
Indicative direct rates in rupees a unit except yen at 4 p.m. on July 30		
CURRENCY	TT BUY	TT SELL
US Dollar.....	74.64	74.96
Euro.....	87.57	87.95
British Pound	96.90	97.32
Japanese Yen (100).....	70.98	71.29
Chinese Yuan.....	10.65	10.70
Swiss Franc.....	81.59	81.94
Singapore Dollar.....	54.22	54.46
Canadian Dollar.....	55.59	55.84
Malaysian Ringgit.....	17.59	17.68
Australian Dollar.....	53.25	53.49

Source: Indian Bank

IN BRIEF

LAKSHMI VILAS BANK	
#477 JAYS	

Lakshmi Vilas Bank loss narrows to ₹112 crore
CHENNAI
Lakshmi Vilas Bank Ltd. (LVB) reported net loss for the first quarter ended June 2020 has narrowed on lower provisioning for bad debts. The bank posted a net loss of ₹112 crore against ₹237 crore in the year-earlier period. Net interest income stood at ₹91 crore while net interest margin at 1.58%. Provisions for the quarter were ₹112 crore against ₹212 crore in the year-earlier period.

Karur Vysya Bank's Q1 profit rises 45%
CHENNAI
Private sector lender Karur Vysya Bank Ltd.'s (KVB) standalone net profit for the first quarter ended June 2020 increased by 45% to ₹106 crore. Net interest income stood at ₹562 crore, the bank said in a statement. Net non-performing assets reduced by ₹737 crore to ₹1,585 crore. Gross NPAs reduced by ₹455 crore to 8.34% (₹4,056 crore), according to the bank.

Tata Power to focus on renewables sector
MUMBAI
Tata Power will focus on becoming a leading player in renewable energy, chairman N. Chandrasekaran said. "The company will scale both its manufacturing of solar cells and modules as well as the solar EPC business. The company intends to add additional capacity of 10 gigawatts in the next five years," he said, addressing shareholders at the Annual General Meeting.

Laurus Labs Q1 net profit surges to ₹171.78 crore
HYDERABAD
Pharmaceutical company Laurus Labs has posted ₹171.78 crore consolidated net profit for the quarter ended June, against ₹15.10 crore in the same period of previous fiscal. The surge in the Q1 net profit came on the back of a 77% increase in revenue from operations to ₹974.32 crore (₹555.57 crore). The increase is 16.10% from the March quarter's ₹839.14 crore.

U.S. economy shrinks by a record 33%

Q2 contraction driven by deep pullback in consumer spending; outlook clouded by rising infections

ASSOCIATED PRESS/REUTERS



Bottom falls out: Spending by consumers collapsed 34% last quarter, with the pandemic triggering business closures. ■ AP

The U.S. economy shrank at a dizzying 33% annual rate in the April-June quarter – the worst quarterly plunge ever – when the viral outbreak shut down businesses, throwing tens of millions out of work and sending unemployment surging to 14.7%.

The Commerce Department's estimate of the second-quarter decline in the gross domestic product marked the sharpest such drop on records dating to 1947. The previous worst quarterly contraction, a 10% drop, occurred in 1958.

The contraction last quarter was driven by a deep pullback in consumer spending, which accounts for about 70% of economic activity. Spending by consumers col-

lapsed 34% as travel all but froze and shutdown orders forced many restaurants, bars, entertainment venues and other retail establishments to close.

Economists polled by Reu-

ters had forecast GDP plunging at a 34.1% rate.

HDFC Q1 net profit drops 5% on higher provisions

Provisions jump 35% to ₹1,199 crore

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

MUMBAI

Housing Development Finance Corporation (HDFC) Ltd. reported first quarter standalone net profit declined 5% to ₹3,052 crore on higher provisioning and COVID-19-related impact.

Net interest income rose 10% to ₹3,392 crore.

The firm made a provision of ₹1,199 crore, including a COVID-19-related special provision of ₹916 crore, compared with ₹890 crore in the year-earlier period.

Keki Mistry, vice-chairman and CEO, HDFC, said as on June 30, 2020, the company's total provision stood at ₹12,285 crore, higher by ₹7,833 crore than required as per regulatory guidelines.

Total comprehensive income stood at ₹5,070 crore compared with ₹3,465 crore. Assets under management stood at ₹5,31,555 crore against ₹4,75,933 crore, it said in a filing.

Individual loans under 'moratorium' accounted for 22.6% of the individual loan portfolio.

The non-performing loans of the individual portfolio stood at 0.92% while that of the non-individual portfolio at 4.10%.

Nielsen cuts FMCG outlook to 'flat' growth

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

"We have done a high level of provisioning and I do not think we will have to make any more COVID-19-related provisioning in the quarters ahead," he said.

Income rises

Total comprehensive income stood at ₹5,070 crore compared with ₹3,465 crore. Assets under management stood at ₹5,31,555 crore against ₹4,75,933 crore, it said in a filing.

Keeping these unprecedented dynamics in the market", Nielsen revised its outlook and said it sees branded FMCG industry to be in the flat growth range (-1% to 1%) this year, as against a 5-6% expansion projected earlier.

This is Nielsen's second revision for 2020. In January, it forecast 9-10% growth for the industry.

openings. That has tempered hopes of a sharp rebound in growth in the third quarter.

'Cannot gain traction'

Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell on Wednesday acknowledged the slowdown in activity. The Fed kept interest rates near zero and pledged to continue pumping money into the economy.

"The bottom fell out of the economy in the second quarter," said Sung Won Sohn, a finance and economics professor at Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles.

"The outlook is not very good. Americans are not behaving well in terms of social distancing, the infection rate is unacceptably high and that means economic growth cannot gain any

traction."

The plunge in GDP and faltering recovery could put pressure on the White House and Congress to agree on a second stimulus package. President Donald Trump, whose opinion poll numbers have tanked as he struggles to manage the pandemic, economic crisis and protests over racial injustice three months before the Nov. 3 election, said on Wednesday he was in no hurry.

Economists say without the historic fiscal package of nearly \$3 trillion, the economic contraction would have been deeper.

The package offered companies help paying wages and gave millions of unemployed Americans a weekly \$600 supplement, which expires on Saturday.

RIL profit jumps 31% even as revenue declines 42%

One-time gain from stake sale lifts net

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

MUMBAI

Reliance Industries Ltd. (RIL) on Thursday reported first-quarter profit increased 31% to ₹13,248 crore, from ₹10,141 crore in the year-earlier period.

Profit included an exceptional gain of ₹4,966 crore (net of taxes ₹1,508 crore) from the disinvestment in Reliance BP Mobility Services Ltd., RIL said in a filing.

Revenue plunged 42% in the April-June period to ₹1,00,929 crore.

"The decline in revenue was primarily due to fall in O2C [oil to chemicals] revenues, led by sharp decline of 57.6% in average Brent crude price," the company said. "Retail business also witnessed 17% decline in re-

venues due to lockdown and restrictions in store operations," it added.

"Overall decline in revenue was partially offset by increase in revenue of digital services business with strong subscriber addition and significant improvement in ARPU," it said.

All businesses except Jio reported lower EBITDA.

Sundaram Clayton posts ₹53 cr. net loss

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

CHENNAI

Sundaram Clayton Ltd. has posted a standalone net loss of ₹53 crore for the first quarter ended June 2020, following disruption in manufacturing activities across its plants due to COVID-19.

The company said in a regulatory filing that it had made a small profit of ₹5 crore during the corresponding year-earlier period and ₹62 crore in the December 2019 quarter.

During the period under review, total income declined to ₹113 crore from ₹381 crore. The management said it had taken into consideration internal and external factors that might affect its profitability.

In its 162-page rejoinder, Tata Sons said there is "no quasi-partnership" between the two groups.

Tata Sons said the NCLAT verdict does not, in fact, secure the interests of his company from prejudicial conduct in the future from the Tata Group.

Mr. Mistry had described the relationship between the Tata Group and the SP Group as one running on the

No relationship of trust with SP Group, Tata Sons tells SC

Counters Mistry's claim in rejoinder to his cross appeal

KRISHNADAS RAJAGOPAL

NEW DELHI

Tata Sons Private Limited on Thursday denied in the Supreme Court of having any relationship of a "personal character" with Shapoorji Pallonji (SP) Group, a minority shareholder and the company of its ousted chairman, Cyrus Mistry.

TV PICKS

British Grand Prix: Practice, SS Select (SD & HD), 3.20 p.m. & 7.20 p.m.
NBA: Sony Six (SD & HD), 6.30 a.m. & 4 a.m. (Saturday)

IN BRIEF



World No. 1 Barty pulls out of US Open

Brisbane: World No. 1 Ashleigh Barty has pulled out of the US Open, to be held from August 31 to September 13 in New York, because she doesn't want to risk travelling during the pandemic. The 24-year-old Australian is yet to decide if she'll defend her French Open title. The second Slam will begin on Sept. 27. AP

Sergio Perez isolates after inconclusive test

SILVERSTONE: Formula One driver Sergio Perez went into isolation at the British GP after returning an inconclusive coronavirus test on Thursday. The Racing Point driver, who has been retested, was absent from his scheduled media duties. AP



Amir and Rauf cleared to join Pakistan squad

DERBY: Left-arm fast bowler Mohammad Amir has joined the Pakistan squad here after two consecutive negative COVID-19 tests while serving his mandatory quarantine period after his arrival here. Fellow pacer Haris Rauf has also been cleared to join the squad.

McLaren joins hands with Gulf Oil

CHENNAI: McLaren and Gulf Oil announced a multi-year strategic partnership which will see Gulf partner with the McLaren Racing F1 team from this week's British GP and McLaren Automotive. The two won more than 40 races in both Formula One and Can-Am Series.



DOHA: Former Barcelona star Xavi Hernandez said on Wednesday he had recovered from the coronavirus, returned home and resumed his duties as Qatar side Al-Sadd's head coach. Xavi, 40, had announced last Saturday that he had tested positive. AFP

East Bengal appoints Francisco as new coach

KOLKATA: East Bengal on Wednesday announced the appointment of Francisco Jose Bruto Da Costa as its new coach for the upcoming season. The Goan will replace Spaniard Mario Rivera under whom East Bengal finished runners-up in the I-League last season. PTI

Ireland restricted to 172

Willey gets a five-for; Campher props up the visitors

IRELAND IN ENG

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
SOUTHAMPTON

David Willey marked his return to England duty with a maiden five-wicket One-Day international haul after sparking an Ireland collapse as white-ball cricket resumed on Thursday.

The left-arm paceman, left out of England's World Cup-winning squad, responded by taking five for 30 from 8.4 overs as Ireland was dismissed for just 172 in the first of a three-match series that launches the new World Cup Super League to determine qualification for the 2023 50-over showpiece in India.

Willey took four early wickets as the visitors slumped to 28 for five after losing the toss. But Curtis Campher held firm with an unbeaten 59 on debut and with Andy McBride (40) shared a stand of 66 after Ireland was in danger of being dismissed for under 100 at 79 for seven. The players took a knee before play in support of the Black Lives Matter campaign.



What a start! Curtis Campher marked his Ireland debut with an unbeaten half-century. GETTY IMAGES

SCOREBOARD

Ireland: Paul Stirling c Morgan b Willey 2, Gareth Delany c Banton b Willey 22, Andy Balbirnie c Bairstow b Willey 3, Harry Tector b Saqib 0, Kevin O'Brien c Willey b Rashid 22, Lorcan Tucker lbw b Willey 0, Curtis Campher (not out) 59, Simi Singh run out 0, Andy McBride c Billings b Tom Curran 40, Barry McCarthy c Vince b Saqib 3, Craig Young c Roy b

Willey 11; Extras (b-4, lb-2, w-4): 10; Total (in 44.4 overs): 172.

Fall of wickets: 1-2, 2-7, 3-28, 4-28, 5-28, 6-79, 7-79, 8-145, 9-156.

England bowling: Willey 8.4-2-30-5, Saqib 9-1-36-2, Rashid 10-3-26-1, Tom Curran 7-0-37-1, Moeen 10-0-37-0.

Toss: England.

Anand finishes ninth

Carlsen tops league, meets Svidler

RAKESH RAO

NEW DELHI

Viswanathan Anand signed off his dismal campaign in the chess24 Legends of Chess with a 2-3 loss to fellow veteran Vassily Ivanchuk in the ninth and final round on Wednesday.

All five games, including the tie-breaker Armageddon game, ended as draws. Since Anand played Armageddon with white pieces, with a minute more on the clock, the winning point went to Ivanchuk. Overall, this was Anand's fourth loss in Armageddon in as many appearances.

Eight defeats in nine rounds pushed Anand to the ninth spot in the league standings, ahead of Hungary's Peter Leko.

Magnus Carlsen posted his ninth successive win after dominating Vladimir Kramnik 3-1 and topped the league table. Kramnik needed to beat Carlsen to claim a

Standings (after round-robin league): 1. Carlsen (25), 2. Nepomniachtchi (20), 3. Giri (18), 4. Svidler (14), 5. Ivanchuk (13), 6. Kramnik (12), 7. Gelfand (11), 8. Liren (9), 9. Anand (7), 10. Leko (6).

Roller-coaster start for Shubhankar Sharma

HERO OPEN

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
BIRMINGHAM

Indian golfer Shubhankar Sharma began with a flourish, but two slightly wayward tee shots cost him dear as he ended the first day with a roller-coaster one-over 73 in the Hero Open on Thursday.

The 24-year-old Indian, who has two wins on the European Tour, had a birdie and an eagle on the second and third holes, but double bogeys on the 10th and 13th on the back stretch saw him drop a bunch of shots. Overall, he had an eagle, three birdies, two bogeys and two double bogeys.

Rodriguez in lead
Spain's Sebastian Garcia Rodriguez fired a stunning 62 to hold the clubhouse lead on day one, two strokes ahead of compatriot Pablo Larrazabal.

Srihari rues time lost in lockdown

National record holder feels it will take months to catch up

N. SUDARSHAN

If things had gone well, Srihari Nataraj would have now been in Tokyo, competing with the world's best swimmers. While COVID-19 forced the postponement of the Olympics, the Indian government's continued prohibition of swimming activities – gyms have been allowed to open but not pools – has meant that the country's best swimmers haven't so much as wet their feet since late March.

"I am at a loss for words. A break for a month or two is understandable, but pretty much everyone around the world has started training but us," Srihari told *The Hindu*. "The amount of progress we could have made in these months.... we have lost it all. There is still time for the Olympics, but we can't swim for a month and expect to do well."

Swimming careers are notoriously short – the late teens and early 20s are considered peak years. Srihari is 19 and, after a record-breaking season last year, remains the nation's best bet to achieve the elusive A-mark



Hopes dampened: Srihari says that only if the swimmers are allowed to train, they will be able to do well at Tokyo.

Olympic Qualifying Time. In 100m backstroke, he is 0.84s off the A-mark (53.85s).

"I expected a lot of drop in my timings in the last six months," he said. "Now it is going to take me another four to five months to make up for it. And from now till the next guidelines come out in September, I will waste one more month of my career waiting."

During the lockdown, Srihari has occupied himself with fitness drills with some gym equipment. But it's the feel of water he is desperate for.

"I have had some of my best races when I have done very little gym work. I know of people who can lift a lot more than me but cannot use that strength in water. So

regardless of the gym time, if I don't get two sessions a day in the pool, it's not of much use. The feel of the water matters more than the strength."

Travel abroad
Going abroad to train was something he thought about too. "I tried contacting my friend Tarun who travelled to Sydney in Australia and has started training. The federation (SFI) is also looking at a few places, but nothing is final yet."

"I try to not bother about the negative stuff, but I do think about the months lost. Right now I am supposed to be in Tokyo and I am not. That's definitely a disappointment."

Cagliari stuns Juventus

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
MILAN

Juventus crashed to a humiliating 2-0 defeat at Cagliari on Wednesday, days after sealing its ninth consecutive Serie A title.

Immobile scores

Ciro Immobile moved to within one goal of equalling a single season scoring record as Lazio beat Brescia 2-0 to stay in the race for second place.

Immobile struck his 35th league goal to close in on Gonzalo Higuain's record of 36 goals, scored for Napoli in 2015-16.

The results: Cagliari 2 (Gagliano 8, Simeone 4+2) bt Juventus 0; Lazio 2 (Correa 17, Immobile 82) bt Brescia 0; Sassuolo 5 (Traore 26, Berardi 39, Caputo 66, 77, Raspadori 74) bt Genoa 0; Udinese 1 (Samir 36) lost to Lecce 2 (Mancosu 40-pen, Lapadula 81); Sampdoria 1 (Askliden 87) lost to AC Milan 4 (Ibrahimovic 4, 58, Calhanoglu 52, Leao 90+2); Hellas Verona 3 (Di Carmine 7, 11, Faroani 47) bt SPAL 0; Fiorentina 4 (Chiesa 48, 54, 89, Milenkovic 74) bt Bologna 0; Torino 2 (Beregutti 14, Singo 65) lost to AS Roma 3 (Dzeko 16, Singo 23, Diawara 61-pen).

Ashoke Mustafi passes away

Y.B. SARANGI
KOLKATA

Ashoke Mustafi, First Class cricketer and one of the first coaches of former India captain and current BCCI president Sourav Ganguly, Ashoke Mustafi passed away here on Thursday.

He was 86 and is survived by his daughter, said a Cricket Association of Bengal statement.

Mustafi played two First Class matches for Bengal in 1958-59. He is better known as a coach of several First Class players.

"Mustafi was one of the oldest coaches in the 'main-dan'. He coached youngsters at the Dukhiram Babu Cricket Coaching Centre. Mustafi coached Sourav when he was less than 10 years of age. He was a soft-spoken, respected and dedicated coach," said former Bengal captain and ex-National selector Sambaran Banerjee.

Top tennis pros share their knowledge

KAMESH SRINIVASAN

NEW DELHI

Some of the biggest names in tennis have been brought together to share their knowledge and experience through a series of high quality videos.

While Slovakian Dominika Cibulkova, the former world No. 4, and Poland's Urszula Radwanska, who was ranked 29, have shared their experience in six hours of video footage, the likes of Boris Becker and Wolfgang Thiem, father and coach of

Run as One for Livelihood matters'

KAMESH SRINIVASAN

NEW DELHI

The Sunfeast India Run as One, an initiative by Procam International is expected to galvanise Indians across the globe to contribute their might for the cause 'Livelihood matters'.

Having raised about ₹450 crore for charity over the years, Procam, a pioneer in marathon and many other runs, has taken up the task to bring cheer to the lives of people across the country, who have been affected by

the pandemic. "Everybody is facing the same storm. But, not everyone is in the same boat," said Vivek Singh of Procam, as he emphasised the need for everyone to get together to support those affected.

Stars associated with running over the years, Rahul Bose and Milind Soman, also spoke their heart in support of the cause. "Every step makes a difference, even if it is a tiny step," said Soman. Registrations open on Aug. 1.

'54 nations not doing enough to fight slavery'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

With Commonwealth countries accounting for about 40% of people living in conditions of modern slavery in the world, the 54 nations were found lacking in actions to eradicate modern slavery by 2030, according to a report released by the Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (CHRI) and anti-slavery organisation Walk Free, on Thursday, on the occasion of World Day Against Trafficking in Persons.

The report stated that India had fared the worst in terms of coordination, issue as early as June.

"We have received at least 10 incidents of children missing in the South 24 Parganas. Most of the girls are minors," Subhasree Raptan, a representative of the Gorabose Gram Bikash Kendra (GGK), an organisation working in the district. Ms. Raptan said some girls, reported to have travelled to other States, have actually been trafficked to other areas of the same district.

There are also reports of an increase in child marriages.

A representative of the Child Line that operates a helpline said that between April and July, at least 30 complaints were reported.

Sambhu Nanda, who works for the Partners for

"with no national coordinating body or National Action Plan in place".

"Commonwealth countries have made little progress towards their commitment to eradicate modern slavery by 2030, despite an estimated one in every 150 people in the Commonwealth living in conditions of modern slavery," CHRI and Walk Free said in a statement.

The report found that one-third of the Commonwealth countries had criminalised forced marriage, while 23 had not criminalised commercial sexual exploitation of children.

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SHIV SAHAY SINGH

KOLKATA

Over the past few months, people vulnerable to trafficking and survivors of the organised crime in parts of West Bengal have had to grapple with the challenges of lockdown due to COVID-19 and the devastation caused by cyclone Amphan.

The districts of South 24 and North 24 Parganas, which have taken the battering of the cyclone, are hotspots of trafficking. Anticipating an increase in child marriages and trafficking in the aftermath of cyclone Amphan, the Commission for Protection of Child Rights (WBCPCR) had come up with a dedicated helpline and a desk to deal with the