

Expression of opinion is not contempt, Prashant Bhushan tells SC
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Bihar MLAs seek CBI investigation into actor Sushant's death
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29 killed as Islamic State attacks prison in Afghanistan
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NEARBY



Active COVID-19 cases in Delhi dip to nearly 10K

NEW DELHI
The Capital reported 805 new COVID-19 cases in the past 24 hours, taking the total to 1,38,482, said a health bulletin released by the Delhi government. As many as 1,24,254 patients have recovered so far and there are 10,207 active cases in the city.

CITY ▶ PAGE 3

Curfew announced in Srinagar for two days

Srinagar

The Srinagar administration on Monday declared a curfew on August 4 and 5, the first anniversary of withdrawal of Jammu and Kashmir's special status, as it "feared protests and violence". Only medical emergencies would be exempted as the restrictions would come into force with immediate effect.

NORTH & EAST ▶ PAGE 4

Hooch tragedy: Cong., Akalis exchange barbs

CHANDIGARH

Punjab Cabinet Ministers and Shiromani Akali Dal leaders on Monday engaged in a war of words over the hooch tragedy that has claimed 108 lives in the State so far. The Ministers issued statements hitting out at the Akali leaders for blaming the Amarinder Singh government for the tragedy.

NORTH & EAST ▶ PAGE 4

Rajasthan Congress factions inching towards a truce

Dissident MLAs with Sachin Pilot willing to attend Assembly session on Aug. 14

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
JAIPUR

Ahead of the crucial Rajasthan Assembly session beginning on August 14, a compromise between the two rival factions in the ruling Congress seems possible, with both the sides softening their stance on the rebellion staged by the former Deputy Chief Minister Sachin Pilot. The MLAs loyal to Mr. Pilot are reportedly willing to attend the session.

Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot, who had earlier used harsh words against Mr. Pilot, has said that if the Congress high command forgave the 19 rebel MLAs, he would also welcome them back in the party fold. The legislators of the Gehlot camp have since been shifted to a resort near Jaisalmer amid speculations that the votes required for proving the government's majority on the floor of the House might be dwindling.

CM targets BJP

However, Mr. Gehlot has reiterated his charge that the BJP had hatched a conspiracy to topple his government and said the offer of money for luring the MLAs had gone up after the Governor announced the date for convening the Assembly ses-



Happy ending? Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot at the Sangam airport in Jaipur last week. ■ ROHIT JAIN PARAS

sion. The political crisis began last month after he accused Mr. Pilot of being directly involved in the conspiracy with the BJP.

The recent gestures from the Pilot camp have given indications of a possible compromise within the Congress. Mr. Pilot, who was also removed from the position of the Pradesh Congress Committee president, congratulated his successor, Govind Singh Datasra, when he took charge on July 29, and hoped that he would give "full respect" to the party workers without any pressure or bias.

Gajendra Singh Shaktawat, one of the MLAs loyal to Mr. Pilot, told *The Hindu* from an undisclosed location in Haryana on Monday that the dissident legislators would come to Jaipur to attend the Assembly session.

Still with party'

"We have never said that we have shifted away from the Congress. We will participate in the House proceedings as Congress MLAs," he said.

Mr. Shaktawat, elected to the Assembly from Vallabhnagar, said that the fight of the legislators supporting Mr. Pilot was that of "self-respect".

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

Gehlot seeks CBI raids on Shekhawat

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
JAIPUR

Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot on Monday attacked Union Minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat, saying the CBI and the Enforcement Directorate (ED) should raid his premises as the BJP leader's name has cropped up in the ₹900-crore Sanjivani Credit Cooperative Society scam.

Women Cong. MLAs tie rakhi on Gehlot

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
JAISALMER

Women Congress MLAs of Rajasthan celebrated the festival of Raksha Bandhan by tying rakhis on the wrist of CM Ashok Gehlot. They also tied rakhs on other legislators staying in a hotel in Jaisalmer. They are expected to be here till the Assembly session begins on August 14.

Modi, Bhagwat will be on stage at Ayodhya event

Uma Bharti will not attend Ram temple ceremony

OMAR RASHID
LUCKNOW

Around 175 guests, including 135 seers from across the country and kin of the 'kar sevaks' killed in police firing in 1990, have been invited to attend the Ram temple foundation laying ceremony in Ayodhya on August 5, the Trust, which will be building it, said on Monday.

Only five persons, including Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh chief Mohan Bhagwat, will be on stage, said Champat Rai, general secretary of Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra (Trust).

Senior BJP leader Uma Bharti, however, said on Twitter that she would not be present at the event as she was concerned about Mr. Modi's health over COVID-19, following some party leaders testing positive, and would only go to the site once he and other dignitaries left.

The other persons on the stage would be Maham Nrityagopal Das, head of the Trust, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath and Uttar Pradesh Governor Anandiben Patel. Iqbal Ansari, who was a litigant in the Babri Masjid-Ram Janmabhoomi case, and local resident Mohammad Shareef, who was



Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath taking stock of the preparations at Ayodhya on Monday. ■ PTI

Digvijaya urges PM to postpone ceremony

The dispute is over, says Iqbal Ansari

Iqbal Ansari, who was a litigant in the Ayodhya land dispute case, has decided to gift a 'Ram nami' stole and a copy of the *Ramcharitmanas* to PM Narendra Modi when he attends the ceremony on Wednesday. "The dispute is over now after the court's verdict," he said. ▶ PAGE 9

would also include the priest of the Janaki temple in Nepal, he added. The Trust started distributing the invitation cards on Monday.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

Govt. sets out rules for yoga classes, gyms

No reopening in containment zones

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

All yoga institutes and gyms in containment zones will remain closed, the Union Health Ministry said on Monday while issuing revised guidelines for opening these facilities for public use from August 5.

The Ministry has specified that visitors here should maintain a minimum distance of 6 feet as far as feasible and while use of face covers/masks is mandatory at all times within the premises, during yoga exercise or exercising in gyms, as far as possible only a visor may be used to avoid any difficulty in breathing.

Issuing details of planning and scheduling activities, the Ministry said the "practice of Yogic Kriya(s) may be avoided for the time being and even if it is to be practised essentially, it may be done in open spaces".



A worker in protective gear cleaning equipment at a gym in east Delhi. ■ PTI

Group fitness rooms and classes are to follow staggered times and allow a minimum of 15-30 minutes between classes to avoid overlap between members arriving and leaving, while offering classes online, whenever possible," it noted.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

+ Cut gratuity period to one year: panel

'Extend it to all kinds of employees'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The Parliamentary Committee on Labour has, in its latest report, recommended that the eligibility period for gratuity payable to an employee on termination of his employment should be reduced to one year from the present provision of five years.

The Committee made this recommendation in its report on Social Security Code, which has been evolved subsuming nine Central Labour laws. This comes in the wake of extensive retrenchment in all sectors in COVID-19 pandemic-induced economic slowdown.

The committee, which is headed by Biju Janta Dal MP Baratruharai Mahtab, submitted the report to Speaker Om Birla on Friday.

Keeping in view the na-

ture of India's Labour Market where most employees are employed for a short duration period only, making them ineligible for gratuity as per extant norms, the Committee desires that the time limit of five years as provided for in the Code for payment of gratuity be reduced to continuous service of one year," the report says.

It has also recommended that this facility be extended to all kinds of employees, including contract labourers, seasonal workers, piece rate workers, fixed term employees and daily/monthly wage workers.

The committee has stressed that there should be a robust redressal mechanism in case an employer does not pay up the dues.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

The protector



Celebrating a bond: Women who came for COVID-19 test tying a rakhi on a doctor at a mobile testing unit at the Government ENT hospital in Visakhapatnam on Monday on the occasion of Raksha Bandhan. ■ K.R. DEEPAK

SpaceX with NASA crew is back home

2 astronauts splash down off Florida; first such manoeuvre in U.S. in 45 years

ASSOCIATED PRESS

CAPE CANAVERAL, FLORIDA

Two NASA astronauts returned to Earth on Sunday in a dramatic, retro-style splashdown, their capsule parachuting into the Gulf of Mexico to finish an unprecedented test flight by Elon Musk's SpaceX company.

It was the first splashdown by U.S. astronauts in 45 years, with the first commercially built and operated spacecraft to carry people to and from orbit. The return clears the way for another SpaceX crew launch as early as next month and possible tourist flights next year.

Test pilots Doug Hurley and Bob Behnken returned to earth in their SpaceX Dragon capsule named Endeavour, less than a day after de-



Successful endeavour: SpaceX landing in the Gulf of Mexico off the coast of Pensacola, Florida after 64 days in space. ■ AFP

parting the International Space Station and two months after blasting off from Florida. The capsule parachuted into the calm

gulf waters about 40 miles off the coast of Pensacola.

"Welcome back to planet Earth and thanks for flying SpaceX," said Mission Con-

trol from SpaceX headquarters. After medical checkups, the astronauts were flown to Houston.

Mr. Musk had rushed to Houston from SpaceX headquarters in Hawthorne, California, to welcome them. He was clearly moved – and relieved – while addressing the group. "I'm not very religious, but I prayed for this one," he said.

"Great to have NASA astronauts return to Earth after very successful two month mission. Thank you to all!" U.S. President Donald Trump tweeted.

The last time NASA astronauts returned from space to water was on July 24, 1975, in the Pacific to end a joint U.S.-Soviet mission known as Apollo-Soyuz.

Palaniswami rejects three-language formula

Union Education Minister's office says no language will be forced on States

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

CHENNAI/NEW DELHI

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami on Monday categorically stated that the AIADMK government will "never allow the three-language policy [which has been proposed as part of the National Education Policy 2020], and will continue to implement the two-language policy" in the State.

As for NEP as a whole, the government would constitute committees to examine the policy before taking a stand on the proposals it entails, he said.

Responding to Mr. Palaniswami's remarks, Union Education Minister Ramesh Pokhriyal Nishank's office told *The Hindu* that he would "talk to all stakeholders



Tamil Nadu Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami

accept the collective sentiment of the people of Tamil Nadu and reconsider the three-language formula.

Collective sentiment

"The collective sentiment of Tamil Nadu's people and political parties, including the AIADMK, is for following the two-language policy. It is saddening that the three-language formula is part of the NEP," he said.

"If the interests of Tamil language or Tamils are affected, the government will take steps [to redress it]," he said, recalling that his government had opposed the three-language policy when the draft NEP was released last year.

The people of Tamil Nadu have been firm in following the two-language policy for

over 80 years, and have expressed their sentiments on the issue through protests at different points in time.

Recalling the agitation against the imposition of Hindi in 1965, the CM underlined a resolution rejecting the three-language policy that was passed by the Madras Legislative Assembly on January 23, 1968, during C.N. Annadurai's tenure as Chief Minister. On November 13, 1986, when M.G. Ramachandran was the CM, a resolution in support of the two-language policy was passed in the Assembly. Former Chief Minister Jayalalithaa, too, had maintained that Hindi should not be imposed on people in non-Hindi-speaking States, and any such effort would be defeated, Mr. Palaniswami said.

A.C. DEEPAK

IN BRIEF

Woman, daughter killed in car accident

A woman and her teenage daughter died in a car crash on a highway in Uttar Pradesh's Greater Noida on Monday, while her son and the driver were hospitalised with injuries, the police said. The incident took place on the Eastern Peripheral Expressway and the four were returning to their home in Dadri from Ghaziabad after celebrating Raksha Bandhan, the police said. The speeding car allegedly collided with a truck, leaving the mother-daughter duo dead on the spot, a police said.

Air Quality of Delhi-NCR			
Delhi	67	Gurugram	57
Ghaziabad	77	Faridabad	60
Noida	83	Greater Noida	90
Good	■	Satisfactory	■
Poor	■	Very Poor	■
0-50	51-100	101-200	>400
201-300	301-400	>400	
Air Quality Index at 4 p.m. yesterday (Average of past 24 hours) Source: CPCB			

Allow us to accept bodies not infected by COVID-19'

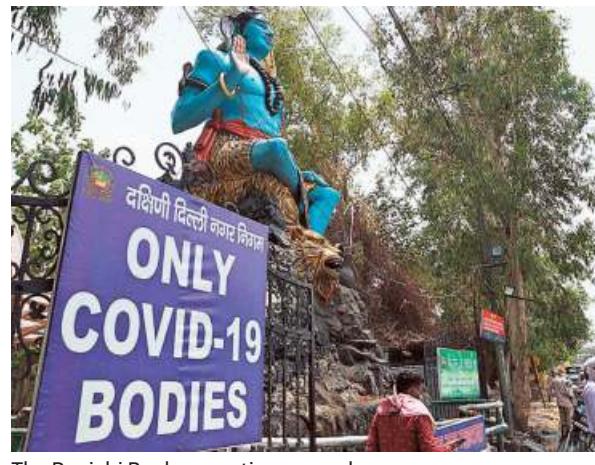
Punjabi Bagh cremation ground priests face financial crisis as number of virus-related deaths dip in the Capital

HEMANI BHANDARI
NEW DELHI

Priests and helpers at Punjabi Bagh cremation ground have requested the municipal corporation to make the COVID-19-only facility to non-COVID-19 also and allow them to start accepting non-COVID-19 bodies as they are facing financial crisis as the number of virus-related deaths started to decrease in the Capital.

The priests and helpers – working at the wood-based funeral space – said that they're "thankful to God" that few people are dying of COVID-19, but request the authorities to let them accept non-COVID-19 bodies so they're able to run their household expenses.

The letter addressed to the Deputy Health Officer dated July 8, stated, "In the Punjabi Bagh Cremation



The Punjabi Bagh cremation ground. ■ FILE PHOTO

Ground, 5-10 bodies have been coming every day for the last 15 days because of which we are unable to take care of our families. Sixteen families are dependent. We request you to either increase the number of CO-

VID-19 bodies coming in

here or allow us to accept non-COVID bodies".

In debt

A helper identified as Sonu Kumar Sharma, 29-year-old resident of Sudarshan Park, said that he is in debt because of the current situ-

ation. "I haven't been able to pay our landlord and our grocery store owner. I have to pay ₹4,000 house rent and about ₹2,000 for groceries. My child fell ill this month and I had to borrow ₹1,500 from one of the priests," he said. Mr Sonu claims to be earning around ₹50 every day these days making it tough for him to manage finances.

Priest Kamal Kant Sharma, who has been working

at the cremation ground for the last 25 years, said that there are eight priests and helpers each who are dependent on the money generated from cremations.

"We take ₹5,000 from the family which includes ₹2,800 for wood, ₹1,200 for material required for last rites and ₹1,000 for completion of last rites," he said, adding that the amount generated from cremations is divided among the 16 persons (priests and helpers).

Number of bodies

The data shared by Mr Sharma showed that starting July 17, the number of bodies coming in ranged between seven and two with an exception of eight bodies on July 20. However, on a usual day, about 35-40 bodies were being cremated at the ground till June. Mr Sharma

said that they have spoken about the issue with their committee called Punjabi Bagh Shashan Bhumi Sudhar Samiti (PBSBSS) which manages the cremation ground.

PBSBSS' president S.K. Sachdeva said, "I have spoken to officials verbally. They assured that it is in process. However, I will take up the matter formally with the authorities in a day or two".

First COVID crematorium

Punjabi Bagh became the first COVID-19-only crematorium in early June as number of deaths increased in the Capital. When contacted, an SDMC official said, "While the NGO managing the facility had made representations to the SDMC, no decision has been taken in the matter as of yet".

Man finds dead lizard in bowl of sambar

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

A man who went to South Indian restaurant Saravana Bhavan in Connaught Place for dinner on Sunday evening allegedly found a dead lizard in the sambar that was served to him.

Complainant Pankaj Agarwal, a resident of Fahehpuri, visited the restaurant in P Block with his friends.

Manager response

In a video uploaded on social media, he said the manager had reached out to them with the response that it would not happen in the future.

In a separate video, Mr. Agarwal showed the dead lizard in the sambar as well as the reaction of the restaurant employees.

A senior police officer said that an FIR has been registered at the Connaught Place police station based on the complaint by Mr. Agarwal. DCP (New Delhi) Eish Singh said the FIR mentions the name of Saravana Bhavan.

"We have lodged an FIR against the restaurant under IPC Sections 269 (Negligent act likely to spread infection of disease dangerous to life) and 336 (Doing any act which endangers human life or the personal safety of others). The case is under investigation," Mr. Singh added.

The officer said they have asked for CCTV footage from the restaurant as well as details of the cook, ingredients used to make sambar, and food licence information.

'Another instance of relentless hounding of civil rights advocates'

Staffers of Miranda House express solidarity with Rowena

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

Staffers of Miranda House on Monday expressed solidarity with colleague Jenny Rowena, wife of Delhi University Professor Hany Babu who was arrested in the Bhima Koregaon case. They called for an end to Ms. Rowena's harassment".

"We are deeply distressed by the arrest of Prof. Hany Babu by the NIA," the college's staff association said in a statement. The arrest of Mr. Babu, a respected academic and Bhaujan rights activists, was another instance of the "relentless and incremental hounding of civil rights' advocates and critics of the pre-

sent regime", the group said.

Continued harassment'
It also expressed concern over the "harassment" faced by Ms. Rowena, whose house was searched on Sunday "when she was alone with her school-going daughter", the group said. This was just the latest incident of continued harassment of Mr. Babu, it noted.

The group condemned the "witch-hunt of progres-

sive voices across the country", and demanded the release of all those arrested in the Bhima Koregaon case and of the activists against CAA-NRC who were being "falsely" implicated in the Delhi riots.

The People's Union for Civil Liberties (PUCL) also expressed its outrage and condemned Mr. Babu's arrest. "It shows once again the Indian State's desperate and diabolic endeavour to continuously silence intellectuals and criminalise those questioning its actions and holding different views, by resorting to fabricated prosecutions using the UAPA," the PUCL said.

Slowly returning to normal



Crowds at a wholesale vegetable market in Dwarka on Monday. ■ V.V. KRISHNAN

HC rejects plea against IP University reserving seats for its own students

'Varsity is following SC decision of institutional reservation'

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court has rejected a plea against Guru Gobind Singh Indraprastha University (GGSIU) decision to reserve 50% State quota of PG medical seats to MBBS graduates from colleges affiliated only to itself by way of 'Institutional Preference'.

The High Court said GGSIU is following the decision of the Supreme Court in which it has approved 'institutional reservation' up to 50% of the postgraduate seats.

Several MBBS graduates and students from Jamia Hamdard University had

challenged GGSIU's policy of allocating the entire 50% State quota of postgraduate medical college seats to MBBS graduates from colleges affiliated only to itself by way of 'Institutional Preference'.

The petition had sought direction to the university to amend its admissions guidelines for academic year 2020-21 without reserving entire 50% State quota only for graduates of colleges affiliated to itself by way of 'Institutional Preference', as was done in previous academic years and to allow Hamdard Institute of Medical Sciences and Research (HIMSR) MBBS graduates in the statewise merit list.

The plea raised the question whether 'Institutional Preference', namely the right of an institution offering postgraduate courses to reserve such seats for undergraduate students from colleges affiliated to itself, can be permitted to be exercised while deciding the manner of allocation of 50% of State quota.

The High Court noted that in view of the legal position, this is clearly permissible.

55% of students not using any form of renewable energy: CSE survey

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

An online survey done by the Centre for Science and Environment (CSE) among 47,000 students showed that 55% of them did not use any form of renewable energy.

The survey was done in 28 States and covered both urban and rural areas.

The highest number of participants – from government as well as private schools – were from Delhi, close to 8,000.

"The survey results pointed towards some promising aspects: 96% of the students had energy-efficient lighting in their homes; 67% repurposed or gave away food leftov-

ers; and 51% use sustainable modes of transport like walking and cycling for their every day activities.

The survey results also flagged areas where intervention may be required: for instance, 55% of the participants do not use renewable energy in any form," CSE said in a statement.

Tushita Rawat, programme officer (environmental education) of CSE said, "It is a good start as people have started exploring renewable energy as an option. But there is a long way to go."

The survey was done as part of CSE's Green Schools Programme (GSP) to ensure environmental learning does

not stop while students remain in their homes under full or partial lockdown due to COVID-19.

Ranjita Menon, programme director, (environmental education) of CSE, said, "The survey helped students gain insights into the practices followed in their households regarding waste management, food consumption, water and energy usage, etc.

Becoming aware of these practices is an essential milestone and it is only after becoming aware that one can transform their ways to use as little and save as many resources as possible."

The survey was open to students of classes 5 to 12.

Two held for cheating over 100 people at ATMs

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

With the arrest of two men, the police on Monday claimed to have busted a gang of ATM cloners.

The accused – Anil Kumar (26) and Vinod Kumar (39) – have duped over 100 people so far, the police said. On Sunday, when Howrah Rajdhani Express arrived at New Delhi Railway Station at 10.25 a.m., three men on seeing the police started to walk fast. After this, two of them were apprehended while their accomplice Ravi managed to flee.

Items recovered

On checking their bags, 41 ATM cards of different banks and two ATM cloning machines and ₹20,000 were recovered, they said. During interrogation, the accused disclosed that Ravi is the kingpin of the gang.

Man arrested for killing financier to avoid paying loan interest

Victim had started pressuring accused to pay for his friend

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

A 33-year-old man was arrested along with his two accomplices for allegedly killing a financier and later dumping his body in north-east Delhi's Kodhi Colony area, the police said on Monday.

The accused were identified as Waseem (33), Shaqel (24) and Inderjeet Panday (28), they said. The incident took place on July 30.

The body of 27-year-old Sumit Thakur with head injuries and ligature mark was found lying on the ground. His face was covered with tape and polythene while hands and legs were also tied with plastic tape, they said. A case was registered in this regard at Nand Nagri police station, they said.

Deputy Commissioner of Police (North-East) Ved Prakash Surya said that analysis of more than 100 CCTV foot-

ages was done and in one of the footage, Thakur was last seen entering Waseem's house in Dilshad Colony. Call details also raised suspicion on Waseem's involvement.

"Waseem confessed that Thakur was in a business of micro-financing and used to lend money on interest. He had requested Thakur to lend ₹46,000 to his friend Anees and assured him that Anees will pay interest of ₹4,000 on a monthly basis," he said.

Lockdown issue

Owing to the lockdown, Anees was unable to pay the interest. So, Thakur started pressuring Waseem to pay ₹4,000 monthly interest, being mediator of the deal. Feeling tortured and humiliated due to his constant demand, Waseem decided to kill him, the DCP said.

Waseem along with his

brother-in-law Shaqel hatched the plan and executed the killing. Waseem called Thakur to his house around 8.30 p.m. on the pretext of paying the monthly interest. When Thakur visited his house, heated arguments took place between them. While Waseem hit him with a piece of wooden plank on the head, Shaqel also hit him with another wooden plank. When Thakur fell unconscious, they strangled him to death, the officer said.

As per plan, Waseem and Shaqel took the scooter of the deceased to Apsara Border and burnt it. They also threw his mobile and purse in a drain nearby, the police said.

Waseem and Shaqel took the scooter of the deceased to Apsara Border and burnt it. They also threw his mobile and purse in a drain nearby, the police said.

'Recover compensation from offending factories'

NGT directs authorities to be vigilant

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

Following allegations of noise pollution in a residential area in Dwarka, the National Green Tribunal (NGT) has directed Delhi Pollution Control Committee (DPCC) to direct units to not operate and recover compensation from the violators.

A Bench headed by NGT Chairperson Justice Adarsh Kumar Goel directed authorities to ensure that environmental norms are followed before the units are permitted to operate.

Environmental norms

In a report furnished by the DPCC, the pollution committee said that closure notices had been issued to the violating units. "A report has been filed by the DPCC to the effect that violation of environmental norms was established and closure order was passed. Electricity supply has been disconnected

and the unit has been closed," the Bench observed.

Noting that a compensation of ₹4.37 lakh had been assessed, the Bench said, "No further order is necessary except to direct that the units be not allowed to operate again unless necessary compensation is paid and environmental norms are followed."

The directions came when the green panel was hearing a plea moved by petitioner Sapna Mamta and others who alleged that noise pollution was being created by Dwarka Gardens and Shanti Gardens, which were hired for marriage functions.

GOVT. OF NCT OF DELHI	
OFFICE OF THE MEDICAL DIRECTOR	
LOK NAYAK HOSPITAL, NEW DELHI-110002	
(ESTABLISHMENT-III)	
No.F.40./E-III/LNH/	
NOTICE	
Ms. Komal Bhagat, Nursing Officer (Roll. No 02002196), ID.No 151116 is hereby informed that "As per C.C.S rules you are under the probation period of two years from the D.O.A i.e. 01/7/2014". Since 6/8/2014 you have been unauthorized absent to till date without any intimation/information.	
And whereas correspondence has been made by this department through this office Memo date 8/1/2016 & Show Cause Notice dated 1/	

677 COVID-19 cases reported in Punjab

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHANDIGARH

Punjab recorded 677 new COVID-19 cases on Monday and reported 19 more deaths taking the toll to 442, according to an official statement.

The number of positive cases has reached 18,527. The major chunk of new cases, 186 and 118 were reported from Ludhiana and Bathinda districts respectively. The health department said the active cases are 6,203 and 11,882 patients have so far recovered.

654 cases in Haryana
In Haryana, 654 new cases were reported on Monday, taking the total tally of cumulative cases to 37,173. The major chunk of new cases, 170 and 106 were reported from Faridabad and Panipat districts respectively.

Health Minister Balbir Singh Sidhu, Sports Minister Rana Gurmit Singh Sodhi, Food Minister Bharat Bhushan Ashu and Social Security Minister Aruna Chaudhary issued separate statements hitting out at the Akali leaders for blaming the Amarinder Singh government for the tragedy.

Mr. Sodhi said SAD blaming the Amarinder Singh government for the tragedy was nothing but "pot calling the kettle black" as similar incidents had occurred in 2012

Cong., SAD engage in war of words as Punjab hooch toll goes up to 108

Congress leaders defend Amarinder govt.; Akali Dal says 'govt. in panic mode'

VIKAS VASUDEVA
CHANDIGARH

Punjab Cabinet Ministers and Shiromani Akali Dal leaders on Monday were engaged in a war of words over the hooch tragedy that has claimed 108 lives in the State so far.

Health Minister Balbir Singh Sidhu, Sports Minister Rana Gurmit Singh Sodhi, Food Minister Bharat Bhushan Ashu and Social Security Minister Aruna Chaudhary issued separate statements hitting out at the Akali leaders for blaming the Amarinder Singh government for the tragedy.

Mr. Sodhi said SAD blaming the Amarinder Singh government for the tragedy was nothing but "pot calling the kettle black" as similar incidents had occurred in 2012



Grieving family members of a hooch tragedy victim in Amritsar on Monday. ■ AFP

and 2016 in Gurdaspur and Batala respectively during their regime. "These tragedies too claimed several lives during the SAD-BJP government. In the Batala case, neither any FIR was registered nor was any action taken against the main accused."

Mr. Sidhu said the Chief Minister has ordered a crackdown on those involved in

the spurious liquor trade.

Meanwhile, the death toll has gone up to 108, with 82 deaths in Tarn Taran and 13 each in Amritsar and Batala, according to an official statement.

SAD leaders said the government has gone into panic mode. Akali spokesperson and former Minister Daljit Singh Cheema said identical statements have been re-

leased by four Congress Ministers, which indicates that the Chief Minister and his coterie has become jittery as an inquiry by a sitting Judge of the High Court or the CBI would nail them. "This is why four Ministers have launched a false, baseless and politically motivated counter-attack. SAD would not rest till justice was done to the victims," he said.

The Punjab police have apprehended 12 more persons, including two businessmen, and launched a manhunt for a Ludhiana-based paint business owner, Rajesh Joshi, who had initially supplied the three drums of spurious liquor. DGP Dinkar Gupta said the total number of arrests has gone up to 37, including five kingpins of the illicit liquor mafia.

Curfew in Srinagar for two days

Violence feared on anniversary of withdrawal of special status

PEERZADA ASHIQ
SRINAGAR

The Srinagar administration on Monday declared a curfew on August 4 and 5, the first anniversary of withdrawal of Jammu and Kashmir's special status, as it "feared protests and violence".

A series of inputs have been received suggesting that separatists and Pakistan-sponsored groups are planning to observe August 5 as Black Day', therein apprehensions of protests are not ruled out. There are specific inputs about violent protests endangering public life and property," read an order issued by the District Magistrate, Srinagar.

The orders on complete restriction on public movement and a curfew in Srinagar were issued by virtue of powers vested under Section 144.

"In view of the restrictions aimed at COVID-19 containment, mass gathering



CRPF personnel stand guard on a deserted street during lockdown in Srinagar on Monday. ■ NISSAM AHMAD

would be detrimental to efforts related to containment as well," the order added.

Only medical emergencies would be exempted as the restrictions would come into force with immediate effect and continue up to August 5, as per the order.

Sudden restrictions

The Kashmir Valley saw sudden severe restrictions being imposed on Monday. Officials said it was in the wake

of a spike in COVID-19 cases.

"Suddenly, there is heightened security and surveillance in the Valley. Not like non discriminatory COVID virus will be more active in the days approaching 5th August so clearly this is being done to ensure that anger and frustration felt by people here remain hidden,"

tweeted Iltija Mufti, daughter of Peoples Democratic Party president Mehbooba Mufti.

'Murdered' woman turns up at U.P. police station

Bizarre twist to body in suitcase case

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GHAZIABAD

There is a bizarre twist in the murder case where the body of a newlywed woman was found in a suitcase in Ghaziabad on July 27.

The body was identified as that of Varisha, a resident of the Harduaiganj area of Aligarh, by her brother Ismail. But on Monday, Varisha turned up at Gandhi Park police station in Aligarh and said she was alive and was in Noida all this while, police said.

Ismail had lodged the complaint in Bulandshahr's Kotwali police station against her husband Aamir Khan and her in-laws accusing them of murder because of the family's inability to pay dowry. The police had registered an FIR and arrested Aamir and his parents under Prevention of Dowry Act..

Defending the police, Santosh Kumar Singh, Senior Superintendent of Police, Bulandshahr, said, "The body was identified by family members twice. Once in Ghaziabad and second time before the post-mortem in Bulandshahr. However, we still had a doubt so the viscera

was preserved and the DNA sample taken as a precautionary measure," he said.

Mr. Singh said the girl who was now claiming to be Varisha told the Aligarh police that she was tortured by her in-laws because of dowry. "She said one day after being beaten by her husband, she escaped to Bhangel area of Noida where she worked before marriage. When the news of her murder spread, she reached Aligarh, met a police constable, and narrated her story. So, we are dropping only Section 304 (culpable homicide amounting to murder) from the FIR against her husband and her in-laws. The rest of the charges will stay."

Distinct similarity
The SSP said it was a unique case in his career. "The mother and brother were certain that the body was that of Varisha. There is indeed a distinct similarity between Varisha and the deceased. She was wearing a toe ring. When we told that it is Hindu women who usually sport it, her mother insisted that Varisha used to wear them," he said.

Taking no chances



A U.P. Roadways official conducts thermal screening of passengers in a bus in Mathura on Monday. ■ PTI

Search on for virus patients who gave false information

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
LUCKNOW

About 2,300 people, who tested positive for COVID-19 here, had given false information pertaining to their names, mobile numbers and addresses, a health official said on Monday.

While 1,171 people out of those who gave false information have been tracked, a hunt is on for the others.

"2,290 people who had undergone COVID-19 tests at various private and government laboratories between July 23 and July 31 had given false names, mobile numbers and addresses. This came to the fore when our department could not contact them. We have informed the police about it," a senior health official said.

These people are not only from Lucknow but other cities also who were tested in the State capital, he said.

Lucknow Police Commissioner Sujit Pandey said that police immediately swung into action and "we have tracked 1,171 of these people and informed authorities and integrated COVID-19 command and control room."

"Attempts are on to trace the remaining ones," Mr. Pandey said, adding that directives have been issued to hospitals and laboratories to verify mobile numbers before taking samples so that they remain under the vigil of the Health department.

The State capital had witnessed 8,686 cases till Sunday.

Curfew clamped in Assam town after clash

Troops deployed in parts of Silchar

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GUWAHATI

The administration in southern Assam's Cachar district imposed curfew in the Malogram area of Silchar town after a clash between people from two communities.

Trouble broke out on Sunday evening reportedly when some men were putting up posters on the upcoming ceremony for laying the foundation stone of the Ram Temple at Ayodhya in Uttar Pradesh.

"Two groups indulged in pelting stones at each other in the Ghonwala area under Malogram police outpost. Police and paramilitary security personnel helped bring the situation under control," Cachar's Deputy Commissioner Keerthi Jalli said.

The curfew, she added,

was clamped in view of the possibility of breach of public peace and tranquillity.

The district's Superintendent of Police B.L. Meena said the cause of the group clash was being investigated.

"Initial reports say it started as a fight between two boys. No one was injured but an ambulance and two shops were attacked," he said.

No arrests yet
"We have not arrested anyone so far and want to ensure no one gives the clash a communal colour. Apart from Cachar, the adjoining Hailakandi and Karimganj districts have also been alerted," he added.

Officials said troops have been deployed in the Malogram area for confidence-building and deterring the criminal elements.

Imparting education to tribals in their languages won't be hard

Odisha working on multilingual education for two decades

SATYASUNDAR BARIK
BHUBANESWAR

At a time when the new National Education Policy lays emphasis on mother tongue based instructions up to Class 5, Odisha seems to be at an advantage position to make it happen for its diverse tribal communities.

The State has been working on multilingual education (MLE) for more than past two decades.

Unique position
Odisha occupies a unique position in the tribal map of India for having most diverse tribal communities.

The State is home to 62 different tribal communities including 13 particularly vulnerable tribal groups (PVTGs).

These tribes speak 21 languages and 74 dialects. Of the 21 tribal languages, seven have their own scripts. There are total 3,500 tribal language teachers under the MLE programme in the State.

"Academy of Tribal Language and Culture in collaboration with Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Research and Training Institute (SCSTRTI) is probably the only institute in entire country which has prepared supplementary readers in 21 tribal languages for Class 1 to 3," said A. B. Ota, SCSTRTI Director. Besides, the government has come up with lexicons in 21 tribal languages.

Tribal children are now able to read supplementary readers – printed stories or

folklores written in Odia script, but in tribal languages. Supplementary readers are bilingual and pictorial books which are easy to comprehend.

Santhali medium schools

Santhali, a widely spoken tribal language in Mayurbhanj and Keonjhar districts which has been included in Eighth Schedule of the Constitution, is medium of instruction in more than 500 schools primary schools.

Although it is easy to prescribe local language as medium of instruction up to Class 5, it is very difficult to implement it.

"Subject experts should be roped in to prepare text books advised for different classes in local languages," said Dr. Ota.

Centre should repeal ordinances: farmers

They will only result in reduced crop prices and affect seed, food security'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

CHANDIGARH

The All India Kisan Sangharsh Coordination Committee (AIKSCC), an umbrella body of over 250 farmer and farmworkers' organisations, has announced a "Corporates Leave Farming" campaign across the country on August 9 against the Centre's recent ordinances on agriculture and farm services.

Ordinance, 2020 and the Essential Commodities Act (Amendment), 2020 – should be repealed immediately.

These are anti-farmer

and will only result in reduced

crop prices for farmers and

farmers,

will not solve the pro

blems of farmers, instead will exacerbate them.

"We want the Central government to repeal the anti-farmer ordinances. All the three ordinances – the Agricultural Produce, Commerce and Trade (Promotion and Facilitation) Ordinance, 2020; The Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement on Price Assurance and Farm Services Ordinance, 2020 and the Essential Commodities Act (Amendment), 2020 – should be repealed immediately. These are anti-farmer and will only result in reduced crop prices for farmers and farmers," said the letter.

'One nation one MSP'

Jagmohan Singh, general secretary, BKU (Dakunda) in Punjab, who is a part of the AIKSCC, said farmers did not want 'one nation one market,' they seek 'one nation one

MSP'. "In Punjab, we will hold a motorcycle march in support of our demands on August 9. Ensuring remunerative prices should be made a legal right of every farmer. The Electricity (Amendment) Bill, 2020 should be withdrawn," said Mr. Singh.

"We also want the government to compensate farmers for loss of vegetables, fruits, crops, milk and poultry produce due to hailstorms, unseasonal rains and COVID-19 lockdown in February-June, 2020; to reduce diesel price and protect the land and forest resources of tribals and farmers," he added.

820 villages in 15 U.P. districts hit by floods

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
LUCKNOW

As many as 820 villages in 15 districts of Uttar Pradesh have been hit by floods and the district administrations have started all-out relief operations, a Minister said on Monday.

Of these 820 villages, 173 have lost road connectivity and the district administrations have deployed boats, according to Backward Class Welfare Minister Anil Rajbhar. He said it was due to the swelling waters in the Sarayu and Rapti rivers that led to the situation.

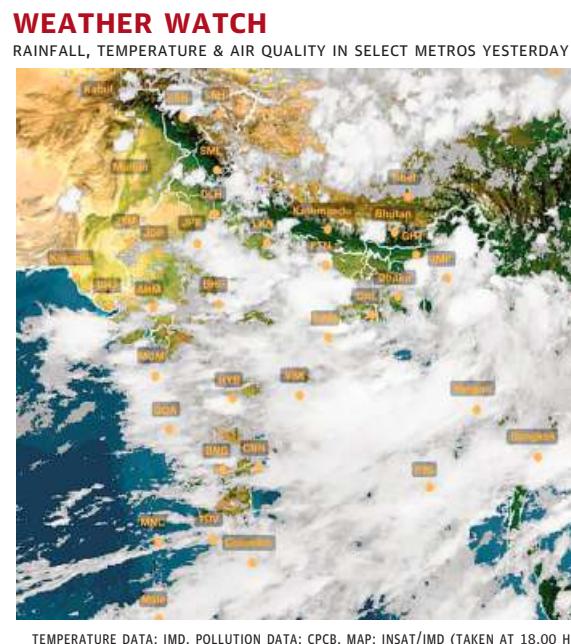
A GREETING TO REMEMBER

Be it an anniversary, a birthday, an academic accomplishment or even a promotion. Now you can surprise your loved ones by wishing them on

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

Forecast for Tuesday: Heavy/very heavy rainfall likely at isolated places over Assam, Manipur, Mizoram, Tripura, Uttarakhand, east Rajasthan, Saurashtra & Kutch, Odisha, coastal Andhra Pradesh, Yanam, Telangana, coastal Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Puducherry, Karaikal, Kerala and Andaman & Nicobar Islands

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	0.7	35.4	28.0	Kozhikode	43.6...	30.2...	23.8
Ahmedabad	-	36.6	27.7	Kurnool	0.6...	35.1...	25.1
Aizawl	-	26.0	21.0	Lucknow	0.4...	32.5...	27.2
Allahabad	15.8	34.2	26.8	Madurai	-	38.7...	26.4
Bengaluru	2.5	26.0	20.4	Mangalore	62.7...	29.5...	22.9
Bhopal	0.1	30.8	25.4	Mumbai	2.6...	32.0...	25.8
Bhubaneswar	-	33.6	25.8	Mysuru	15...	27.0...	20.8
Chandigarh	-	36.0	27.5	New Delhi	-	37.4...	28.4
Chennai	17.8	31.2	24.8	Patna	0.2...	35.0...	27.2
Coimbatore	3.8	31.7	22.8	Pondicherry	91.7...	28.2...	22.9
Dehradoon	4.	33.1	25.7	Puducherry	1.1...	33.0...	24.7
Gangtok	35	25.5	18.5	Pune	0.1...	29.9...	23.8
Goa	45.9	28.6	24.0	Raipur	4...	34.0...	25.6
Guwahati	-	38.0	27.0	Ranchi	4.6...	29.4...	25.2
Hubballi	-	23.0	22.0	Shillong	54.4...	27.3...	19.5
Hyderabad	3	30.8	23.1	Shimla	-	27.6...	20.4
Imphal	-	33.3	23.3	Srinagar	-	33.0...	17.0
Jaipur	34.8	32.0	23.0	Thiruvananthapuram	11.5...	30.2...	22.3
Kochi	32.8	30.6	24.2	Tiruchi	-	34.8...	26.2
Kohima	-	30.6	19.8	Vijayawada	-	32.5...	28.2
Kolkata	-	36.7	28.8	Visakhapatnam	-	33.4...	27.2

(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	27	31	.59	.31	.51	■■■■■
Bengaluru	10	41	.38	-	.44	■■■■■
Chennai	20	13	.90	.72	-	■■■■■
Delhi	-	13	101	.37	.53	■■■■■
Hyderabad	.4	32	.14	.18	-	■■■■■
Kolkata	.9	22	.25	.121	.97	■■■■■
Lucknow	.3	20	.39	.42	.54	■■■■■
Mumbai	59	14	.3	.14	-	■■■■■
Pune	11	.4	.46	.10	.10	■■■■■
Visakhapatnam	12	.32	.29	.54	.54	■■■■■

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

Yesterday

In observation made at 4.00 p.m. in Hisar, Haryana recorded an overall AQI score of 152 indicating a moderate level of pollution. In contrast, Hubballi, Karnataka recorded a healthy AQI score of 14

Two months after Nisarga, all Raigad villages get power back

RAINA ASSAINAR

NAVI MUMBAI

Two months after Cyclone Nisarga wreaked havoc in 1,976 villages of Raigad district, the Maharashtra State Electricity Distribution Company Limited (MSEDCL) has finally restored power supply for 10.73 lakh affected consumers.

The cyclone had made a landfall at Murud on June 3.

Chief engineer Pushpa Chavan, Bhandup zone, said within the first week of the cyclone, they managed to repair the incoming lines at switching substations and restored the power for 50% consumers. "But the challenge was to work on the hil-

ly terrains, where transportation was not possible. Our staff had to carry electric poles on their shoulders. Then came heavy rain which posed another challenge. Besides, many banyan trees had fallen on transformers during the cyclone, damaging supply lines. Exactly after a month, on July 3, electricity for 10.11 lakh consumers from 1,837 villages was restored," she said.

The last village to get the electricity back was Sangwad. Electric poles on a 2.5-km stretch from Thakrodi to Sangwad were damaged. The work of installing 12 poles and one transformer was finished on Sunday.

on Sunday alleged that Mr. Tiwari was "forcibly quarantined" by civic authorities in Mumbai.

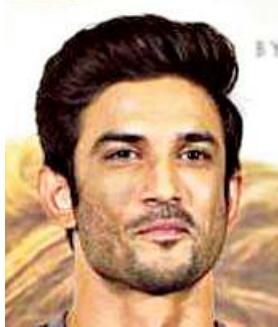
The statement from the BMC said, "The P/South administration received information that the said officer arrived in SRPF group 8 guest house, Goregaon (East). Being a domestic air traveller, he needs to be guided for home quarantine as per the State government guidelines. Accordingly, a P/South ward team approached him at the guest house on Sunday evening." It further said that the team explained to him the whole procedure for domestic air travellers, which includes home quarantine, which is fixed by a State government notification dated May 25.

"He has also been guided to apply to the competent authority of MCGM for ex-

emption in the home quarantine period as per the State government notification," it added.

By Monday evening, Maharashtra Director General of Police (DGP) said on Twitter that the State police have arranged a vehicle for Mr. Tiwari for investigation purpose. "Upon the request of SSP Patna Upendra Kumar Sharma, IPS, SP Central City Patna Vinay Tiwari has been provided accommodation at SRPF Goregaon since Worli Police Mess is closed due to COVID situation. A vehicle has also been arranged for SP Tiwari who is in Mumbai for investigation," he tweeted.

Both Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray and Home Minister Anil Deshmukh have repeatedly said that the State police are competent enough to investigate the actor's death.



Sushant Singh Rajput

lead a Bihar Police team in its investigation into the death of Rajput in Mumbai. Mr. Tiwari was quarantined by the BMC authorities late in the night for 14 days at the State Reserve Police Force (SRPF) guest house in Goregaon, a police official said. His hand was also stamped showing the quarantine period till August 15.

Bihar Director General of Police Gupteshwar Pandey

applied to the competent authority of MCGM for ex-

quested him that a written complaint was mandatory for any inquiry or action.

However, Mr. Singh wanted this to be resolved informally, to which the DCP clearly told him that it was not possible," stated the statement issued by Shahaji Umam, Deputy Commissioner of Police (Operations).

Political slugfest Meanwhile, a delegation of Mumbai BJP leaders on Monday met with Governor Bhagat Singh Koshyari and complained to him about the

movement of officers doing official public service can't be stopped by putting them in quarantine in these testing times."

Joining the chorus was his wife Amruta. She tweeted,

day before he was found dead at his Bandra apartment.

Mr. Singh also said no politician's name has come up during the investigation by the Mumbai Police.

non-cooperation from the Mumbai Police with their Bihar counterparts.

Leader of Opposition Devendra Fadnavis said, "It is really very strange as to why the Maharashtra government is coming under unnecessary suspicion by not allowing the Bihar Police to perform their duties. The movement of officers doing official public service can't be stopped by putting them in quarantine in these testing times."

Joining the chorus was his wife Amruta. She tweeted, "How can she be so ungrateful?" he asked.

The manner in which #SushantSinghRajputDeath-Case is being handled. I feel #Mumbai has lost humanity & is no more safe to live for innocent, self respecting citizens."

The ruling Shiv Sena was quick to attack Ms. Fadnavis, reminding her that she was insulting the same Mumbai Police in front of whom she had performed her songs.

Sena Rajya Sabha MP Priyanka Chaturvedi tweeted, "I challenge these state BJP leaders&their political aspiration bearing family accusing @MumbaiPolice I challenge these state BJP leaders&their political aspiration bearing family accusing."

Yuva Sena secretary Varun Sardesai said that they were the same Mumbai Police who had organised cultural event 'Umang' where Ms. Fadnavis sang and danced. "How can she be so ungrateful?" he asked.

State reports 10,221 recoveries; total cases cross 4.5 lakh mark

8,968 new COVID-19 cases reported; death toll reaches 15,842

SHOUMOJIT BANERJEE
PUNE

For the second consecutive day, Maharashtra reported higher recoveries than fresh cases, with 10,221 people being discharged on Monday, taking the total number of discharged till date to 2,87,030.

As many as 8,968 new COVID-19 cases were reported on Monday as the State's total cases reached 4,50,196. With 266 more deaths, the fatality toll rose to 15,842.

With the State reporting its second-highest single-day recoveries on Monday, the number of active cases has come down to 1,47,018, with the recovery rate rising to 63.76%, said State Health Department officials. The State had recorded its highest single-day discharge of 10,333 patients on July 28.



On the occasion of Raksha Bandhan, a woman from Dharavi tying a rakhi to Dr. Manoj Jain, who works there relentlessly to help residents. ■ VIVEK BENDRE

"Till date, of a total 22,98,723 laboratory samples, 4,41,228 (19.56%) have been tested positive, with nearly 43,000 samples across the State tested in the last 24 hours," State Surveillance Officer Dr. Pradeep Awate said, adding that the State's case fatality rate stands at 3.52%.

Mumbai reported a relatively low surge of 970 cases to take its total case tally to 1,17,406, of whom only 20,528 are active. With 46 more deaths, the city's death toll

has climbed to 6,493.

Pune district reported more than 1,700 new cases, and 60 fatalities as its total cases reached 96,669, while its death toll rose to 2,286. As per the district administration, the number of active cases is less than 29,000.

In the Mumbai Metropolitan Region, Thane district reported 10 deaths, taking the death toll to 1,088. As many as 447 new cases pushed the district's total cases past the 35,000 mark.

The Navi Mumbai civic body reported seven fatalities as its death total climbed to 469. With 322 new cases, its total case tally rose to 18,141.

After days of reporting single-day spikes of more than 400 cases, the Kalyan-Dombivli civic body reported just 247 new cases on Monday as its total tally reached 23,594.

lated to self-employment like plumbers, electricians, pest-control, technicians, garages to mend vehicles, and inter-district movement of persons within the Mumbai Metropolitan Region for essential activities.

While swimming pools will stay closed, outdoor non-team sports like golf, outdoor firing range, outdoor gymnastics, tennis, malkhamb and outdoor badminton is permitted. Taxis, four-wheelers can carry three passengers, while autorickshaws can have two passengers. Two people can ride two-wheelers, with helmet and mask.

Meanwhile, the State government told Bombay High Court that it does not intend to allow street vendors and hawkers as they fall under the unorganised sector and it was difficult to regulate them. (With PTI inputs)

All shops in Mumbai to open from tomorrow

BMC okays counter sales of liquor

ALOK DESHPANDE
MUMBAI

All shops in Mumbai can remain open on all days, on both sides of the road, irrespective of the odd-even formula which was in place, the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) announced on Monday.

While swimming pools will stay closed, outdoor non-team sports like golf, outdoor firing range, outdoor gymnastics, tennis, malkhamb and outdoor badminton is permitted. Taxis, four-wheelers can carry three passengers, while autorickshaws can have two passengers. Two people can ride two-wheelers, with helmet and mask.

Meanwhile, the State government told Bombay High Court that it does not intend to allow street vendors and hawkers as they fall under the unorganised sector and it was difficult to regulate them. (With PTI inputs)

By Aug. 19, Pune to have 2 more jumbo facilities

PUNE DISTRICT COLLECTOR refutes suggestions on unreported deaths



Time to unlock

J&K can return to normalcy only with full Statehood and release of political prisoners

At least two dozen politicians in Jammu and Kashmir remain in detention, some unnoticed, a year after it was deprived of its Statehood and special constitutional status on August 5, 2019. Last week, Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) president and former Chief Minister Mehbooba Mufti's detention was formally extended by another three months under the J&K Public Safety Act, but several others remain restrained within their homes in Kashmir, which is now a Union Territory under the rule of Delhi. Last week again, the administration flat out denied before the Supreme Court that former Union Minister and Congress leader Saifuddin Soz was under detention, though he has been restrained from moving and speaking freely. He was allowed to visit his ailing sister but denied a meeting with his daughter by the police on Friday. Neither the J&K government nor the Centre has released a list or number of leaders who were detained last year. At least 16 National Conference and eight PDP leaders are under house arrest, according to these parties. Former IAS officer and chief of the J&K People's Movement Shah Faesal and Awami Ittehad Party leader Engineer Rashid are in detention too. Peoples Conference (PC) chief Sajad Lone was released after 360 days in detention, last week. Two former Chief Ministers, Farooq Abdullah and Omar Abdullah were released in March.

The 2019 move of the Bharatiya Janata Party government at the Centre went beyond the strident Hindutva position against the special status of J&K by reorganising it as two Union Territories. The wisdom of the decisions remains an open question, though they refurbished the BJP's claims of muscular nationalism. The dubious legislative route that the Centre took and the communication restrictions on the population that followed cast a shadow on India's standing as a constitutional democracy. The judiciary – the J&K High Court and the Supreme Court – has not shown any alacrity to settle the constitutional and legal questions raised before it and in fact, appeared to privilege the Executive's position in the last one year. Some scholars have linked the continuing Chinese aggression in Ladakh to the change in J&K's status. The spirit of Indian federalism has been weakened. Mainstream politics in J&K has become impossible with leaders in detention and those released reportedly undertaking to stay away from any public discussion on J&K's future. This is not a sustainable situation if India wants to protect its global reputation and uphold the faith of its own citizens. There are two steps the Centre can take to start a conversation with the people of J&K – release all political prisoners and restore its Statehood. These will be wise steps towards healing and progress in J&K.

Toxic brew

Liquor tragedies can be prevented if States close the gap for hooch, ensure accountability

Once again, the scourge of illicit liquor has struck, this time in Punjab, killing more than 100 people and leaving many crippled. The victims, in Amritsar, Tarn Taran and Gurdaspur districts, were sold hooch that apparently had a large amount of denatured alcohol. The State government, which is responsible for both excise and law and order, has sanctioned financial relief for the affected families, and suspended some policemen and officials in charge of excise enforcement. Wiser after the fact, the police claim that there was an inter-district racket in operation and made several arrests; on the other hand, the kith and kin of those who died say the illicit brew was peddled virtually in the open by small-time vendors, some of whom have now been arrested. There are echoes in the tragedy of last year's two major incidents involving Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand, and Assam, both witnessing large-scale loss of life. Moreover, there have been fatal outcomes during the COVID-19 pandemic, as people desperate for alcohol consumed hand sanitiser as a substitute, most recently in Andhra Pradesh. Almost every year, India's moonshine market inflicts tremendous destruction in the form of blindness, tissue damage and death, as commercial alcohol becomes expensive for the less affluent, and corrupt bureaucracies allow that void to be filled by illicit liquor vendors who almost invariably use toxic methanol instead of ethanol.

Policies that fail to contain illicit alcohol produce long-term health impacts, as people tend to consume brews that have higher concentrations of alcohol, or toxic substances such as methanol. This should be particularly alarming for Punjab, which continues to simultaneously battle significant levels of narcotic drug use. From a medical viewpoint, the availability of licit spirits that contain lower alcohol levels, combined with a sustained public health campaign to wean people away from the drinking habit and to warn them about the effects of contaminants are key interventions. Health communication about harm from alcohol is particularly relevant during the pandemic, since there is evidence of reduced immunity to viruses among those who are chronic alcohol consumers. As the World Health Organization points out, governments should regulate the quality of legal alcoholic drinks, while actively tracing and tracking illicit alcohol. This can be achieved only through cooperation from the community, particularly from women's groups. Tragically, several States give low priority to revamping the excise administration and policing, paving the way for episodic death and misery. They must show determination to end the flow of toxic brews that kill scores almost every year. The capability of the health system in every district needs to be raised, to reduce the damage from methanol through immediate, simple detoxification therapies.

A year on, Article 370 and Kashmir mythmaking

The August 5 decision has led to a state wherein the very basis of a potential step of conflict resolution has been undone



HAPPYMON JACOB

While the long-standing ideological commitment of the Bharatiya Janata Party to undo Article 370 of the Indian Constitution is why Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) was stripped of its special status as well as Statehood making it a simmering cauldron of discontent, our collective mythmaking about Kashmir is the deeper reason for what the former State has become today.

Kashmir has been a favourite site of our national mythmaking; myths that have over the years assumed larger-than-life manifestations in our collective psyche. Kashmir has most things that popular myths are made of: mesmerising beauty, cross-border terror, deep states and their agents, war and heroism. Clearly, myths about Kashmir are not created by the right wing alone but by successive Indian governments over several decades, enthusiastically embellished by a vibrant, popular culture.

Demonising Kashmir

The most prominent among them is regarding the ills of Articles 370 and 35A of the Indian Constitution. Home Minister Amit Shah's statements last year on the floor of Parliament that Article 370 was the root cause of terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir is a widely accepted sentiment notwithstanding the fact that there is little material basis to it – neither was Article 370 responsible for terrorism in the Valley nor has its removal ensured a reduction in terrorism. If anything,

Article 370 continues to remain very much a part of a solution to the Kashmir conundrum. The constitutional provision is also held responsible for ruining J&K, stalling its development and preventing proper health care and blocking industries. Once again, these arguments lack merit and evidence.

J&K, as a matter of fact, has been doing much better than most other Indian States and one of the reasons for this was the land reforms carried out in the State in the early 1950s which was possible precisely because of the presence of Article 370. For sure, the educational and health sectors in J&K should be further improved (as should be in the rest of the country), but the reason for the under-performance of the educational and health sectors in Kashmir is not Article 370. While private enterprises could set up industries in the former State on leased land, as they have over the years, acquisition of land by public sector enterprises from outside the State was never a problem. Private investors do not set up shop in Kashmir due to militancy which is a product of an existing conflict; not because of Articles 370 or 35A. In any case, Articles 370 or 35A did not start the Kashmir conflict; if anything, they played a role in containing it.

Funding truths

The oft-cited counter-argument is that if J&K is doing better than the other Indian States, it is because of the massive amounts of funds provided by New Delhi. That is the second myth. How subsidised by New Delhi was J&K? Did 'our' taxpayer money actually go into sustaining J&K's relatively better position among the Indian States? Well if it did, it would weaken the argument that 'Kashmir needed to be developed'.



R.V. MOORTHY
The argument is not that Kashmir did not receive funding from New Delhi. It did, but not massive funds as it is often made out to be. Economist and former State Finance Minister of J&K Haseeb Drabu makes a distinction between funds that went to the J&K government and those that went into economic development in the State. The J&K government's revenue deficit has traditionally been taken care of by New Delhi: J&K, for historical reasons, has had a bloated bureaucracy in comparison to other States and their salaries and pensions have been financed by the central government. But that does precious little for the State's economy or the general population. Then there are routine transfers of funds from the Centre to J&K just as transfers take place from New Delhi to other States. Finally, J&K also received funds thanks to its status as a special category State which again is a case with several other Indian States. Put differently, J&K's better performance in comparison to most other Indian States is at least partly because of Article 370, and its well-being is not necessarily a result of New Delhi's economic packages.

Let us take the third myth about Kashmir, one that is repeated by politicians and scholars alike: 'Development can defeat militancy and insurgency.' Notwithstanding the fact that a cash-strapped country such as ours has inherent limi-

tations on how much development assistance it can provide to J&K over other States, the reality may well be that development may not lead to pacification of the conflict in Kashmir. The Kashmir conflict is a function of complex historical grievances, politico-ethnic demands, increasing religious radicalisation, and Pakistan's unrelenting interference in the Kashmir Valley. It would be simplistic to imagine that such a multi-layered and complex conflict can be resolved by the stroke of a pen effecting a constitutional change or providing an economic package. A cursory reading of the vast literature on conflict resolution would testify to that.

The deep impact

This overwhelming mythmaking on Kashmir has had unfortunate implications on how we understand and treat Kashmir and Kashmiris. The rare political unity in the rest of the country supporting the August 5 decision, especially on Article 370, was a function of this mythmaking. The popular cultural articulations about Kashmir and Kashmiris in the media, films, music and other cultural representations have further strengthened these myths. That 'Kashmir needs to be reunited with the rest of India' has been a powerful claim made by such representations and political articulations: no matter Kashmir was easily India's most securitised State with various central institutions and agencies undermining not only what was left of Article 370 prior to August last year but also impeding the elected government's power in the former State.

Yet another popular perception about 'Kashmiris as troublemakers and sympathisers of terror' has led to a noticeable increase in the mistreatment of Kashmiri Muslims

in the rest of the country. How little empathy exists in the country today towards the plight of the Kashmiris (including mainstream politicians) is a direct outcome of such mythmaking.

Hard realities

This mythmaking about Kashmir has today led us to a situation wherein we have undone the very basis of a potential process of conflict resolution in Kashmir. If indeed Article 370 was a stumbling block in bringing Kashmir closer to the rest of India, a source of extremism and separatism in the Kashmir Valley, and an avenue for Pakistan to gain a foothold in the Valley, has the removal of the special status brought Kashmir closer to India, reduced the sources of extremism and separatism, and undermined Pakistani influence in the Valley? Most indicators of violence in Kashmir have shown an uptick despite the double lockdown that Kashmir is under today. Mainstream Kashmiri politicians today are as unhappy and disgruntled as the separatist politicians and the restive youngsters in South Kashmir. And Pakistan has left no stone unturned to aid and abet violence in the Valley. For Rawalpindi, all bets are off on Kashmir. India's national interest hardly benefits from such a toxic situation.

New Delhi's Kashmir policy today is caught between a rock and a hard place: there is no indication that the path that it chose in August 2019 would lead to peace and development in the Valley, nor can it revert to pre-2019 August status quo which would be political suicide for the BJP.

Happymon Jacob teaches national security at the School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi

A change that hit federalism, inclusion

The idea that Article 370 weakened the Indian Union is erroneous and against basic understanding of democracy



M.Y. TARIGAMI

Ever since Article 370 that broadly defined Jammu and Kashmir's relationship with the rest of India was upended and a new framework introduced last year, political activity in the erstwhile State has come to a complete halt.

In the last one year, the reorganisation of the erstwhile State was defended on the ground that it would lead to greater integration of J&K with the rest of the country. In a democracy, the concept of integration has to be evaluated from a multi-faceted system and lens, which includes the emotional aspect as well. And in that respect, sadly, the effect on the ground of the cataclysmic change of August 5, 2019 has yielded the opposite effect. J&K seems to be stuck in a morass.

First, the continued detention of political prisoners, particularly those who have been legislators and sworn in by the Constitution of India, shows that if democratic rights are not even available to the voices that speak on behalf of the Indian Union – voices that were more loyal than the king – how would ordinary people even think of enjoying them? Incidentally, this change was introduced on Au-

gust 5, which also happens to be the birth date of arguably the foremost scholar (and activist) on J&K, Balraj Puri; he passed away in 2014.

The two core ideas that he consistently advocated were: peace would not ensue in J&K without guaranteeing respect for the democratic rights for its people; to ensure that the most important tool would be a rigorous pursuit of federalism within the State. Both of these are particularly salient in the present context.

Key to integration

In his best-selling book, *Kashmir Towards Insurgency*, published in the early 1990s, Balraj Puri presciently wrote that there was a persistent policy of denying Kashmir a right to democracy; one-party rule had been imposed on the State through manipulation of elections; Opposition parties had been prevented from growing, and elementary civil liberties and human rights had been refused to the people. "This refusal to integrate Kashmir within the framework of Indian democracy has proved to be the single greatest block to the process of Kashmir's emotional and political integration with the rest of India." He repeatedly argued that the feeling of hopelessness and a threat to identity exacerbated by political vacuum create a breeding ground for militancy. He emphasised that a prerequisite to emotionally integrate Kashmir with the rest of India was to ensure that the people of the

Lessons of the last seven decades in J&K are crystal clear. The more democratic rights we give to the people of J&K, the more they feel a part of the Indian Union. The present phase of political dormancy reminds me of the early 1990s when the Kashmir Valley was perpetually under curfew. It was only after the channels of communications with everyone were opened that the strength of India's democracy was exhibited. It was also realised that respect for human rights should be a key component of the Kashmir policy, as this and upholding national interest go hand in hand. These lessons were learnt the hard way with a lot of sacrifices, of lives, including those of ordinary Kashmiris and security personnel.

Asymmetry and federalism

The last year should worry the entire country, as the constitutional change was an attack on Indian federalism.

The idea that the presence of Article 370 weakened the Indian Union is erroneous and is



State enjoy the same democratic rights and constitutional protections as the people across the country.

Lessons of the last seven decades in J&K are crystal clear. The more democratic rights we give to the people of J&K, the more they feel a part of the Indian Union. The present phase of political dormancy reminds me of the early 1990s when the Kashmir Valley was perpetually under curfew. It was only after the channels of communications with everyone were opened that the strength of India's democracy was exhibited. It was also realised that respect for human rights should be a key component of the Kashmir policy, as this and upholding national interest go hand in hand. These lessons were learnt the hard way with a lot of sacrifices, of lives, including those of ordinary Kashmiris and security personnel.

On devolution

I have always advocated, drawing from Balraj Puri's life-long advocacy of the same, that the devolution of political power from Centre to J&K should not lead to political hegemony of any one region or political party; rather, it should be accompanied with a devolution of powers within J&K to reflect the former State's divergent regional and ethnic urges. The institutional reconciliation of differences among these various shades of di-

versity is one of the prime components for a harmonious solution to the J&K imbroglio. Any devolution should have adequate federal checks and balances as accountability and transparency are at the heart of any successful federal democracy.

Overcoming the setback

Sadly, the decision, of August 5, by the Indian Parliament has left everyone dissatisfied in J&K, including the people of Kargil within the separated Ladakh. It has only compounded the divide between J&K and the rest of the country that we, as a political class in J&K, had been assiduously trying to bridge for several decades, and at grave risk to our lives.

As we complete a year of this new constitutional reality, the situation in J&K calls for serious introspection from all those who believe in an inclusive and accommodative idea of India. We need multiple bridges including those between J&K and the rest of the country and among the various communities and regions of the former State. In order to build these bridges we will need a greater multi-layered, institutionalised decentralisation and respect for democratic rights for the people of J&K. And in this respect the developments that ensued after August 5, 2019 have run contrary to both.

M.Y. Tarigami is CPI(M) Central Committee Member, four-time Member of the J&K Legislative Assembly from Kulgam Constituency, and President J&K - CITU

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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Confidence is key
There is no doubt that in this global pandemic, it is the synergy of classic economics and human values such as confidence or trust that are needed to overcome this crisis (Editorial page, "Rebuilding India's confidence, revive the economy", August 3). The fact is that today, the most crucial trait of mutual trust is absent; we can see this in international relations between nations or leaders. Even within a country, there are different and contradictory points of view. In his book, *The Speed of Trust: The One Thing that Changes Everything*, Stephen M.R. Covey has talked about the importance of trust in our relationships as well as the criticality of it in a

collaborative and interdependent world. It is welcome that the former Prime Minister, Dr. Manmohan Singh, and his co-writer, Praveen Chakravarthy, have also dwelt extensively on the importance of 'societal confidence and trust in aiding economic revival. Currently, business/economic confidence has been overshadowed by fear which is only aggravating the prevailing uncertainty. Therefore, it is even more important that leaders make that extra effort to exhibit confidence.

TONY AUGUSTINE,
Bengaluru

State of the Congress
It was embarrassing to find former Union Minister and Congress leader Manish

Tiwari straining to underscore the indispensability of the dynasty's leadership for the party (Inside pages, Interview - Manish Tewari, "Cong. needs to have ideological clarity to take on BJP", August 3). His call for elections to appoint a full-time president if the Congress are not inclined to assume responsibility betrays the abject lack of confidence and utter confusion prevailing in the party. When Mr. Tiwari says that "princelings" Jyotiraditya Scindia and Sachin Pilot inherited their fathers' respective Lok Sabha seats, what does he think of the Congress? For the party to have ideological clarity and acquire a new narrative, it must have a paradigm shift

in its functioning. First and foremost is the indispensable need for inner-party democracy. Let a duly elected leader pilot the destiny of the party. The Congress have had more than their share of the cake. Political decency and grace demand that they stand aside and encourage the party to elect another leader. And the onus is on Congresspersons to support such a leader to the hilt and allow things to fall in place.

C.G. KURIKOKE,
Kothamangalam, Kerala

The Grand Old Party of India may have remained one of the major Opposition parties but its own failings, ranging from entrenched nepotism to a prolonged leadership vacuum, are what seem to have been

preventing its electoral resurgence with a bang. More than its successive electoral debacles, it is the failure of party's rank and file to honestly reckon with their own failings which is doing more harm than good to its standing in the eyes of voters. The recent meeting of the party's Rajya Sabha MPs only resulted in a blame game and spared the Congress. Its inherent culture of perceiving office as a privilege and inheritance than as a prize or reward for hard work and perseverance can hardly inspire young voters.

M. JAYARAM,
Sholavandan, Tamil Nadu

Hosted by the UAE
It is beyond comprehension why there is such an effort being made to hold the

Indian Premier League when COVID-19 is showing no sign of abatement ('Sport' page, "IPL in UAE gets provisional govt. nod", August 3). The life of cricketers, from different countries, and support staff involved, would be put to danger by this mindless haste. Whatever be the precautions taken, there is always the danger of contracting a virus. The decision appears to have been taken in the belief that no cricketer would turn down a lucrative tournament, which only shows the attitude of the BCCI. Cannot the time and energy be better utilised to put the economy back on track?

V. SUBRAMANIAN,
Chennai

The conservative challenge to Hindutva

Hindu conservatism is the last bastion that right-wing populism seeks to vanquish effectively



SAJJAN KUMAR

The proposed ceremony to lay the foundation stone for the Ram Mandir in Ayodhya on August 5 has generated three broad responses: euphoria from supporters; outrage from the Left, Ambedkarites and secularists; and strong disapproval on procedural grounds from eminent Hindu saints. While the first two responses were expected, it is dissenting voices emanating from Hindu religious authorities that merit attention. The accusations of the Dharmagurus deal with the emerging process of de-ritualisation of the Hindu religion by Hindutva in the following ways.

One, many Hindu Dharmagurus, including a Shankaracharya, believe that August 5 is an inauspicious day for the ceremony. According to them, astrologically, and in consonance with established religious practices, the second day (Dwitiya) of the dark fortnight (Krishnapaksh) of the Indian month of Bhadrapad (July-August) is considered inauspicious. Besides, gods are supposed to be resting during this month and must not be called upon. Despite this, the Bharatiya Janata Party government has decided to go ahead with the ceremony on this date.

Two, last year, before the Lok Sabha election, in open disregard of established traditions, the Ardh Kumbh was celebrated as the Kumbh in Prayagraj (Allahabad) with fanfare. Prime Minister Narendra Modi performed the populist act of washing the feet of sanitation workers. While the act got broad political applause, the Dharmagurus were pained to see the Kumbh being celebrated without auspicious sanction by un-astrological combinations.

De-ritualising Hinduism

These instances signify the growing process of de-ritualisation of the Hindu religion, primarily by the trustees of Hindutva, thereby pitting Hindutva against a section of religious authorities. Hindutva's response to such criticism has been to invoke the paradigm of subaltern religiosity wherein disregard for the ritual domain is an



AYODHYA - PTI

accepted practice since the Bhakti movement. Doing so not only labels the dissenting Brahmanical religious authorities as obscurantist and ultra-orthodox, but also magnifies Hindutva's appeal among the subaltern masses, the numerical majority.

The popular interplay of religion and politics is not new. Its votaries include Lokmanya Tilak, who started the Ganapati festival for political mobilisation against British rule; M.K. Gandhi, who used religious imagery during the freedom struggle; and Swami Karpati Maharaj of the Ram Rajya Parishad in independent India. On the global level, political Islam does the same. This has been the position of Liberation theology too.

Hindutva seems to follow the above template but transcends it in practice. The issue here is not whether it uses religion in politics or not; rather, it is the status of religion in the political framework of Hindutva.

In the case of old Indian votaries at the national level, and political Islamists and liberation theologians at the global level, the status of religion is either superior to or on a par with the political. Nowhere do we find religion to be inferior to the political in these cases. The old votaries invoked religion in political affairs by reinterpreting the sacred texts, but without questioning their sanctity. However, driven by the incentive and appeal of subaltern religiosity, Hindutva pushes the horizon when the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) argues that texts like the *Ramcharitmanas* and *Manusmriti* should be edited in the light of subaltern sensibilities. For instance, Amir Chand of Sanskar Bharti, an RSS outfit, stated, "In collaboration with the Ministry of Culture, we are debating the removal of

portions from the *Manusmriti* which are anti-Dalit and anti-women and often quoted in arguments against Hindu scriptures." Similarly, Balmukund Pandey, the head of Akhil Bharatiya Itihas Sankalan Yojana, another RSS outfit, announced a plan for modifying the Ramayana to weed out verses that are not in sync with the ideal image of Ram. These endeavours circumvent the traditional Hindu framework of multiple interpretations of texts and traditions. For instance, the *Bhagavad Gita* has undergone radical interpretations at the hands of Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, Tilak, Vivekananda, Gandhi, etc., thus becoming a creative tool to mobilise the masses. However, the sanctity of the text was never sought to be altered; the political game stopped at interpretation. Political Hindutva has no such restraint.

A new hierarchy

This unique characteristic signifies a new hierarchy between religion and politics. Here, religion is not only relegated to an inferior position but has also been effectively vanquished and used as a handmaid by the political. Therefore, the dominant other of Hindutva is not just the secular, the Left, the Ambedkarites and the assertive religious minorities. In fact, in its populist avatar, Hindutva finds it easier to tame these rivals. These oppositional discourses suit its political project. The real other that contemporary Hindutva shies away from acknowledging, but is perpetually wary of, is internal to the discourse: the Dharmacharyas and their devotees. Hindutva seeks to show them their marginal place in the age of subaltern religiosity. However, in doing so it faces a challenge as it ends

up alienating a section of the core support base.

Therefore, the real question in the event at Ayodhya is how far Hindutva is willing to up the ante. The brazenness with which it is proceeding with the programme while disregarding ritual objections ironically places it on the same page as the Ambedkarites, who oppose Brahminical ritualism. Yet, Hindutva is taking this bet because this suits its populist appeal. The more it de-ritualises religion, the stronger is its appeal among the subaltern. The logical end of this quest could only be a religion without rituals – a handmaid which would dance to the tune of the political. In that state, the rational approach of political economy would be on a slippery ground as a religio-cultural framework without the restraints of rituals would be malleable enough to find a resonance with the majority.

This explains the counter-intuitive moves of Hindutva to disregard the dissent of the conservative Dharmacharyas, whose prominence denies the saffron an exclusive claim to the religious sphere. Without marginalising them, Hindutva would neither vanquish the religious, nor employ it popularly to find resonance with the subaltern and the technocratic youth. The latter two are not religiously conservative in orientation. Though it may sound ironical, at present the most formidable challenge that Hindutva faces is not from the secular forces, but rather from the conservative discourse from within. However, Hindu conservatism is on the retreat. This has been primarily due to the addition of two new constituencies within the fold of populist Hindutva: one, a thicker chunk of lower OBCs and Dalits and, two, a post-globalisation middle class looking for rapid disruptive change. The first constituency was never deeply interested in Hindu conservatism as it wasn't a beneficiary of it. The second has actually made a generational shift from a conservative base and, in the words of Danish political scientist Michael Bang Petersen, shares the mindset for a "need for chaos". It seeks disruption while paying lip service to conservatism. Nevertheless, Hindu conservatism is the last bastion that right-wing populism seeks to vanquish effectively.

Sajjan Kumar is a political analyst associated with Peoples Pulse

A big departure from the past

Sri Lankan Tamil political parties have realised that their bargaining power is tied to the economic progress of the Tamils



T. RAMAKRISHNAN

Sri Lanka's parliamentary election, scheduled for August 5, is unique for three reasons. One, there is no festive atmosphere associated with campaigning due to COVID-19-related safety protocols. On the bright side, the restrictions have meant fewer hate speeches, according to the Centre for Monitoring Election Violence, a Colombo-based non-governmental body.

Two, this is perhaps the first time in nearly 70 years that the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) and the United National Party (UNP) are no longer considered the principal forces. The Sri Lanka Podujana Peramuna (SLPP), a four-year-old party headed by Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa, has occupied the space vacated by the SLFP. The UNP, which was in power mostly between January 2015 and November 2019, has suffered a split with large sections of the party rallying around the party's candidate for the 2019 presidential election, Sajith Premadasa, under the banner of the Samagi Jana Balawegaya (United People's Front). This seems to have given the SLPP an advantage, despite the dissatisfaction among some people over the management of the COVID-19 crisis.

Three, importance is being accorded to the economic agenda in the manifestos of the Tamil National Alliance (TNA), led by veteran parliamentarian R. Sampanthan, and the Tamil Makkal Thesiya Koottami (TMTK), Tamil People's National Alliance, led by former Chief Minister of the Northern Province, C.V. Wigneswaran.

There are candidates from other parties in the fray too. In the Northern Province, Fisheries Minister Douglas Devananda, and chief of the Tamil National People's Front, Gajendrakumar Ponnambalam, are seeking re-entry into Parliament through Jaffna. In the Eastern Province, commander-turned-rebel of the LTTE, Vinayagamoorthy Muraleetharan (Karuna Amman), and former Chief Minister of the Province, Sivanethurai Chandranathan (Pillayan), are trying their luck in Ampara and Batticaloa, respectively.

Political empowerment first

At stake in the North and the East are 29 seats of the 196 electable berths in the 225-member-strong Parliament. For long, major parties representing Sri Lankan Tamils preferred to focus on political empowerment of the Tamils instead of socio-economic deve-

lopment of the two Provinces, regardless of the impact of the civil war and its aftermath on livelihoods. Despite reports of rampant drug addiction and alcoholism among Tamil youth in the post-war years, they turned a blind eye to the problem. Though included in the 2015 TNA manifesto, economic issues did not figure prominently. Now, in a significant departure from the past, the TNA and the TMTK have dealt with the economic agenda substantively in their manifestos, without diluting the importance of a political settlement to the ethnic issue. The TNA promises creation of an alternative economic order in the region, revival of cooperative societies, access to India through the Palaly airport and FDI from the Tamil diaspora and the international community. It has underscored the need for tackling drug and alcohol abuse. Apart from proposing the formation of two policy think-tanks and an action plan on education, the TMTK has stated the need to seek Tamil Nadu's help in establishing handlooms and technology parks and conducting industrial innovation skill training.

Pursuing the economic agenda

The TNA and Mr. Wigneswaran, who was with the Alliance till the end of his term in October 2018, have rightly been at the receiving end for their failure on the economic front. When Mr. Wigneswaran was elected Chief Minister of the Northern Province in October 2013, expectations were high that the TNA-led Northern Provincial Council would herald a new beginning. But except for the completion of the first phase of the Palaly airport, renamed the Jaffna International Airport, before the 2019 presidential election, no major project took off in the region. The TNA and Mr. Wigneswaran's priority was on political settlement, Constitution-making, justice and accountability. And in all these areas, progress was extremely modest.

Perhaps, the criticism has forced them to take economic issues seriously. Though the campaign has not seen any major discussion on these issues, all those who get elected as representatives of the Tamils will have to ensure that the development agenda is pursued seriously. After all, the President is, in his own words, willing to be judged by his record on development. It is also up to the representatives to ensure that he honours his words. India too would be interested in participating in major development projects in the region. The Tamil parties should realise that their political bargaining power is tied to the economic progress of the Tamils. Otherwise, the goal of achieving dignity, equality and justice for Tamils will remain elusive.

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Profiteering during a pandemic

Overcharging the public should be made a punishable offence under the Disaster Management Act

M.P. NATHANAEL

Soon after the government imposed a nationwide lockdown to contain the spread of COVID-19, prices of essential items shot up in several places across the country. The sudden demand for masks saw even an ordinary mask being sold at ₹150 a piece, though it turned cheaper weeks later when there was mass production.



times. For transporting patients up to a distance of about 10-15 km, they charged as much as ₹30,000 in Mumbai. For going to a hospital just 7 km away, a patient had to spend ₹8,000 in Pune. In Kolkata, patients were charged as much as ₹8,000 for a distance of 5 km, while in Hyderabad, transportation charges ranged between ₹5,000 and ₹10,000 for a distance up to 10 km.

During the lockdown, poor migrants who wanted to go home had to spend large amounts to hire vehicles. Buses operated by private agencies charged exorbitant fares. Most migrants could not afford these rates and had to trudge hundreds and hundreds of kilometres on foot. Many met with accidents and lost their lives in the process.

Similar scenes of extortion were witnessed in December 1984 when hundreds of residents around the Union Carbide pesticide plant fled Bhopal to escape inhaling the poisonous gas that had leaked from the unit.

Way back in 1897, the British enacted the Epidemic Diseases Act which empowered the government to implement any measures that would prevent the outbreak or spread of any disease. According to the law, anyone disobeying the orders of any public servant can be punished under Section 188 of the Indian Penal Code.

However, this is not enough. Since exploiting the common man in such times has to be sternly dealt with, a provision ought to be incorporated in the Disaster Management Act of 2005 to make overcharging the public a punishable offence. There are several instances of the general public having been subjected to misery and agony in the months following enforcement of the lockdown; I have cited only a few. Denying admission in hospitals, refusing to bury the dead in cemeteries, etc. need to be made punishable offences. The horror stories of this pandemic give us an opportunity to do so.

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

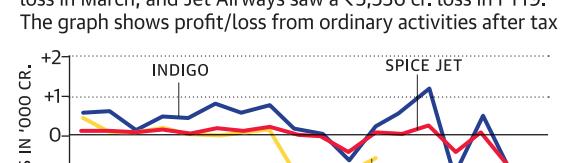
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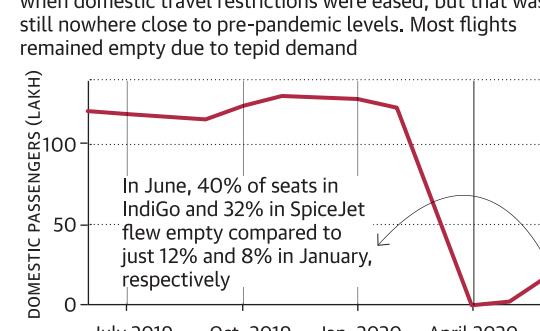
DATA POINT

Deadstick landing

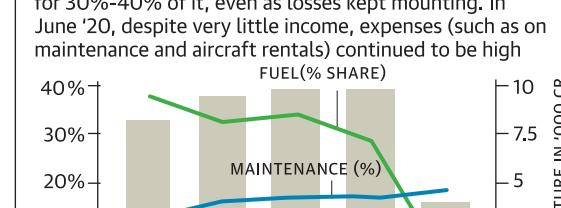
1. RECORD LOSSES | IndiGo posted its highest ever loss of ₹2,844 cr. in the June quarter, SpiceJet reported a ₹807 cr. loss in March, and Jet Airways saw a ₹5,536 cr. loss in FY19. The graph shows profit/loss from ordinary activities after tax



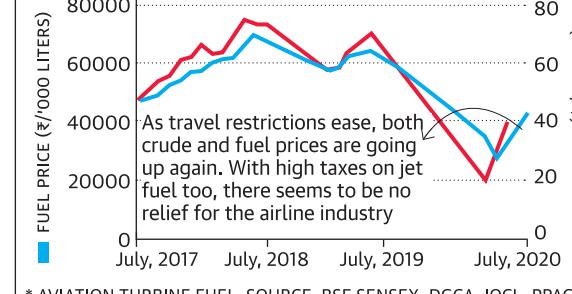
2. EMPTY SKIES | From a peak of about 130 lakh domestic passengers in December 2019, traffic crashed to zero in April 2020. Airlines recorded a marginal revival in June when domestic travel restrictions were eased, but that was still nowhere close to pre-pandemic levels. Most flights remained empty due to tepid demand



3. SPENDING SPLIT | IndiGo's expenditure kept rising from the Jun. '19 to Mar. '20 quarters, with fuel accounting for 30%-40% of it, even as losses kept mounting. In June '20, despite very little income, expenses (such as on maintenance and aircraft rentals) continued to be high



4. FUEL WOES | Due to COVID-19, crude prices crashed and so did ATF*. But as airplanes remained grounded, airlines were not able to take advantage of this price fall



The Hind

FROM THE ARCHIVES

FIFTY YEARS AGO AUGUST 4, 1970

Welcome in Peking

The young French rebels who have been flourishing Mao's red book will not be happy over the warm recognition given to the French Government's delegate in Peking recently. M. Andre Bettencourt, the Minister for Planning, was received by Mao Tse-tung himself and has reported that he found the leader in better health than he was six years ago. It will be recalled that at that time Mao was in the shadows as a result of the failure of the Great Leap Forward and the subsequent famine and that he has since established his supremacy with the help of the Red Guards and their cultural revolution. M. Bettencourt says, however, that he found China's leaders "concerned at the possibility of a new war" and that economic decentralisation had been undertaken with this in mind. The French Minister got the impression that the Chinese wanted to forge new links with France. Mr. Chou Enlai has publicly stated that countries like China were menaced by the superpowers who "always bully the small and the weak and contend for world hegemony." The Chinese feel that, if France continues the foreign policy of General de Gaulle, which they conceive as a policy of independence and neutrality, there would be a basis for co-operation.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO AUGUST 4, 1920

Tagore on education

(From an editorial)

Dr. Rabindranath Tagore, addressing a large gathering of Indian students and others in England under the Presidency of the Right Hon. H.A.L. Fisher, Minister of Education, made an inspiring appeal for the creation of a centre of indigenous culture in India. He frankly criticised the development of our existing universities on the model of the Western ones and pointed out that the Western University is an organic part of European civil

FROM PAGE ONE

Congress factions inch towards a truce

Asked about a possible floor test in the Assembly, Mr. Shaktawat said any decision on voting in favour of the Gehlot government would be taken by Mr. Pilot.

Mr. Shaktawat rejected the Chief Minister's charge that the MLAs supporting Mr. Pilot were in touch with the BJP. "None of us has met with any BJP leader, neither has anyone from the BJP come to meet us. We are staying in Haryana because the COVID-19 epidemic is spreading fast in Delhi," he said.

The MLA said Mr. Pilot and others were still talking to the Congress leadership and were hopeful for finding a solution. He asked why the MLAs supporting Mr. Gehlot were

shifted to Jaisalmer if the government was secure. Mr. Shaktawat also took exception to Mr. Pilot's "unceremonious removal", saying it was only within the power of the Governor to sack a Minister.

The dissident legislators run the risk of being disqualified if they defy the party whip to attend the House proceedings.

They had earlier twice skipped the Congress Legislative Party meetings held in Jaipur, after which the party filed a complaint with the Assembly Speaker. When the Speaker issued them notices, they went to the High Court which has since ordered a status quo on the disqualification proceedings.

As tests dip, so do new cases in Telangana

State daily testing levels drop from 20,000 to 9,443; Kerala registers 962 fresh cases; Karnataka counts 98 new fatalities

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD

Telangana recorded less than 1,000 COVID-19 cases in a day. On August 2, the State reported 983 cases. The case count till July 1 was less than 1,000 a day except on June 27 (1,087 cases), but the daily count was over 1,000 except on August 2.

The drop in cases coincided with a reduction in testing, with only 9,443 tests offered on Sunday. Results of 1,414 samples were awaited. From June 30 to August 1, around 20,000 tests a day were conducted.

Overall, 67,660 cases were recorded till August 2, of which 18,500 were active cases, 48,609 had been discharged, and 551 people died including 11 on Sunday. Meanwhile, in Andhra

Pradesh, 63 deaths and 7,822 new cases were reported on Monday, raising the State's total to 1,66,586 and the overall death toll to 1,537.

Andhra Pradesh had the third highest case load in the country, at nearly 9% of the national tally and the death toll put it at eighth position. There were 76,377 persons undergoing treatment.

East Godavari had 1,113 new cases – the highest – while West Godavari reported 11 deaths, the highest.

So far, 21,10 lakh samples had been tested, 45,516 in the last 24 hours.

While Kerala's cumulative case burden touched 26,873, with 15,282 recoveries, people under treatment in hospitals stood at 11,482. Two more deaths were confirmed as due to COVID-19 by the Health department in Thiruvananthapuram and Alappuzha, taking the toll to 84. Of the 962 new cases, 822

Up in arms

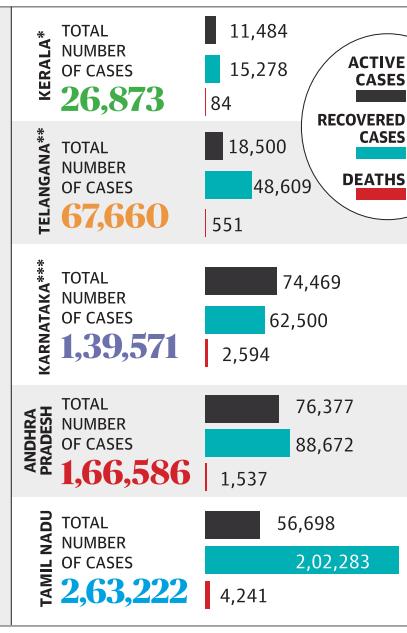
Despite the COVID-19 pandemic, people have found different methods to come together to protest. The graphic shows the spread of COVID-19 in the southern States



*Kerala has a mismatch of 27 cases due to unaccounted deaths, missing persons

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

***Karnataka has 8 non-COVID deaths



COVID-19 deaths in Karnataka stood at 2,594 as 98 new fatalities were reported on Monday. A total of 42% of the total deaths were in Bengaluru. The city also reported 43% of positive cases in the State. On Monday, 4,752 new cases were reported, taking the total to 1.39 lakh.

On a day when Tamil Nadu reported 5,609 new COVID-19 cases, the death of 109 persons over the last eight days was also recorded, while people discharged after treatment crossed two lakh. The overall COVID-19 tally climbed to 2,63,222 on Monday, with 56,698 persons under treatment. The State's toll rose to 4,241.

Samples tested in the last 24 hours came down to 58,211 after topping 60,000 for several days.

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

Modi, Bhagwat will be on stage in Ayodhya

It emphasised that the cards came with security codes that allowed entry only once and were non-transferable.

On Wednesday, Mr. Modi will first offer prayers at the Hanumangarhi temple and follow it up with puja at the present makeshift temple site where the idol of infant Lord Ram is kept and then attend the *bhoomi pujan* and stage event, the Trust said.

The idol of Lord Ram will be clothed in green during the ceremony. Mr. Rai criticised those questioning the choice of colour. He said the dress worn daily by infant Lord Ram idol was picked the head priest, who did not make changes under anyone's influence.

"All trees around us are green, do you see Islam in it? Green is the symbol of prosperity of India and the colour of nature," Mr. Rai said at a press conference. It was not a matter pertaining to the PMO, the CMO or the Trust, he noted.

Design to be retained
Mr. Rai also said that the "original drawing" of the temple would remain "as it is" and only certain por-

tions would be added as the Trust has now got almost 70 acres in possession. When the Ram Janmabhoomi movement started in 1985, they had only 14,000 sq feet of land in mind. "In 1986, we didn't even think in our dreams that we would get 70 acres," he said.

While the design of the main parts of the temple would be retained, two additional domes would be added on the sides while the height of one of the domes and one floor would be increased, he said.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, invites were sent to a limited number of people, the Trust said, adding that those unable to attend were offered personal apologies through telephone after they explained their reasons. Due to age factor and religious constraints of Chaturmas, some people would not be able to attend, Mr. Rai said.

"How can a person over 90 years of age attend? How can [K] Parasaran ji come from Chennai", he asked.

On Wednesday, Mr. Modi would also launch a ₹5 stamp with the image of the Ram temple.

Cut gratuity period to one year: panel

The Labour Ministry had informed the committee that the employee can then approach the Competent Authority. "The Committee is of the considered opinion that such a provision is against the interest of the affected employees/workers who may have to run from pillar to post to get their legitimate dues," the report notes. Instead, the panel has recommended that the Social Security Code should have provisions to hold the employer liable for payment of gratuity to the employees within a stipulated time frame.

"There should not be any leniency, as strong deterrent provisions would reduce wilful default and delinquent negligence on the part of employers in timely payment of gratuity to the needy and deserving em-

ployees," the report stated. On similar lines, the Committee also flagged the concern that the threshold limit of 20 or more employees for EPFO registration can be used by the employers to exclude themselves from EPFO coverage. "The Committee desires that possibilities be explored to make the EPF Act applicable to all the workers, including self-employed," the report has said.

The panel has recommended that the social security code should empower the Central government to reduce the employee's contribution to EPF in exceptional circumstances like disasters in terms of the Disaster Management Act, including pandemics, because this would enable the Government to provide relief to the affected persons in COVID-19 like pandemics.

"There should not be any leniency, as strong deterrent provisions would reduce wilful default and delinquent negligence on the part of employers in timely payment of gratuity to the needy and deserving em-

Govt. sets out rules for yoga classes, gyms

It was essential to restrict the number of those allowed per group fitness class based on the size of the room and nature of the fitness activity and ensuring six feet distance between personal trainer and clients during personal training sessions, wherever feasible, it said.

"Ensure sessions are tailored to include only exercises that do not require physical contact between the trainer and the clients,

including set-up and use of equipment, limit the number of clients per session and ensure adequate spacing amongst all clients while utilising outdoor spaces at the yoga institutes/gymnasiums where available," stated the guidelines.

Persons above 65 years of age, those with co-morbidities, pregnant women and children below the age of 10 are advised not to use gyms in closed spaces, the guidelines said.

The State government has formed a special team, comprising three officers of the Finance Department and an

They will patrol public places to detect violators, slap fines or effect arrests, says Kerala CM

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan on Monday gave the Kerala police sweeping powers to enforce COVID-19 quarantine norms.

They will impose the civic rules and social behaviour code, designed to halt the further spread of the disease. There will be no leniency or dilution of norms, he said.

Physical distancing

Law enforcement would carry out the mandate to maintain physical distancing. It would implement the directive to compulsorily wear face masks in public.

The police would patrol public places and residential neighbourhoods to detect violators of the epidemic control Ordinance and slap

fines or effect arrests, if necessary.

A committee comprising the District Police Chief, District Collector and the District Medical Officer would decide and demarcate containment zones based on the local COVID-19 caseload.

The committee would restrict containment zones to

compact clusters of houses based on the presence of infected persons instead of locking down an entire municipality or panchayat ward.

The police would cut off the mini-containment zones from the rest of the State until the infected persons tested negative for SARS-CoV-2. They would not allow retail

M. Vijayan made the police primarily responsible for tracing infected persons based on their contact history. Law enforcement would deploy its digital tools and plainclothes resources for the task. It would expedite the tracing of primary and secondary contacts.

Mr. Vijayan said breach of

KERALA

trade, travel of people, social gatherings and other outdoor activities in such sectors.

Motorcycle squads and foot patrols would consistently cover the hotspots.

The police would also use drones for surveillance.

Law enforcers, aided by the volunteer force, would ensure containment localities were well supplied. They would care for the locked-in residents.

Mr. Vijayan said he had

KERALA

Tight control: The CM said breach of distancing norms on a mass scale would invite prosecution. ■ THULASI KAKKAT

noticed an incremental slackening of the vigil against the disease in Kerala.

Some people had taken the easing of regulations for granted. They had set a wrong example by organising mass events, the Chief Minister said.

IN BRIEF

Karnataka CM to work from hospital

BENGALURU
Karnataka Chief Minister B. S. Yediyurappa, who has been hospitalised after he tested positive for COVID-19, is set to monitor State administration from the hospital bed through videoconferencing from Manipal Hospital where he is currently put up. Education Minister K. Sudhakar told presspersons on Monday that

"the Chief Minister will have to remain hospitalised for eight to ten days".

Vajubhai Vala tests negative for COVID-19

BENGALURU
Karnataka Governor Vajubhai Vala on Monday tested negative for COVID-19, according to an official release from the Raj Bhavan here. On July 31, Chief Minister B.S. Yediyurappa and Home Minister Basavaraj Bommai met the Governor at Raj Bhavan. "After knowing that the Chief Minister tested positive, the Governor, myself and ADG to the Governor have undergone Corona Ag test and tested as negative done on August 3, 2020 at 12.30 p.m." said the release.

Astrologer given security cover after threat calls

BELAGAVI
The Belagavi police provided security to astrologer Vijayendra Sharma who is said to have fixed August 5 as an auspicious time for the foundation stone-laying ceremony for the Ram temple in Ayodhya. A constable was deputed at his house after he complained that he had received threat calls from unidentified persons. The astrologer submitted a written complaint to Police Commissioner K. Thiagarajan stating that some people were calling him complaining about his work.

Indians stuck in Qatar jail seek help from PM's Office

Unsanitary conditions have raised the threat of virus spread

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
KOZHIKODE

Around 200 Indians languishing in Qatar's central jail for the last five years have sought the intervention of the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) for their release from detention.

Overcrowding and unsanitary conditions have raised the threat of COVID-19 spread among inmates following the outbreak of the disease in the jail.

"Many of those in prison for economic offences have been duped by Qatari investors," Prajeesh Thiruthiyil, president of Indian-Qatar Entrepreneurs Action Council, told *The Hindu*.

The panel has recom-

mended that the social security code should empower the Central government to reduce the employee's contribution to EPF in exceptional circumstances like disasters in terms of the Disaster Management Act, including pandemics, because this would enable the Government to provide relief to the affected persons in COVID-19 like pandemics.

Mr. Faroos said his father, who invested around 35 lakh Qatari riyals on a project to construct labour camps, was cheated by a Qatari who had obtained advance blank cheques.

The case of K. Arun, a hotel manager who returned to Qatar after his marriage a year ago, is similar. "My husband has no idea when some Qatari investors secured a blank cheque from him for starting a company that failed," said Anusmriti, who has appealed to the Department of Non-Resident Keralites Affairs to help him.

Most of those in jail are from north Kerala, and some are from Tamil Nadu.

According to Visakhapatnam Superintendent of Police B. Krishna Rao, the landmine or IEDs were planted targeting the security forces and it indicates that the villagers were not taken into confidence by the Maoists, which is normally

done. As per initial reports, more than one landmine might have exploded and they could have been self-activated IEDs (improvised explosive devices) or pressure activated devices, Mr. Rao said.

Two tribals were killed early on Monday when they stepped on a landmine allegedly planted by Maoists near Chintalaveedu village in the Agency area of Visakhapatnam district.

The deceased were identified as Mondipali Ajay Kumar, 20, and Mondipali Mohan Kumar, 26, both from Chintalaveedu village.

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done. As per initial reports, more than one landmine might have exploded and they could have been self-activated IEDs (improvised explosive devices) or pressure activated devices, Mr. Rao said.

Martyr's Week, being ob-

served by the Maoists from July 28 to August 3, was peaceful till Monday's explosion.

The week is ob-

served by the left wing extremists to commemorate the death of Charu Majumdar the founder and architect of the Naxalite movement. Majumdar died on July 28, 1972, in a police lock-up in West Bengal.

Treasury fraud accused to be sacked

₹2 crore siphoned off from Special Treasury Savings Bank account of Collector

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Laying foundation of a new India, says U.P. CM

Adityanath oversees preparations for ceremony in Ayodhya

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

AYODHYA

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Monday said that the COVID-19 protocol will be strictly followed during the *bhoomi pujan* ceremony for the Ram temple and only those invited should come.

The Chief Minister, who was here to oversee preparations for the August 5 event, said it was a "historic and emotional" moment which will lay the "foundation of a new India".

Slams Congress

The Chief Minister also hit out at the Congress, saying that those who are making negative comments on the event had tried to create obstacles in the construction of



Gearing up: A hoarding of Lord Ram at a crossing near the CM's residence in Lucknow on Monday. ■ PTI

the temple and the people of the country know about them.

"It is not only a historic but also an emotional moment as after 500 years the Ram Temple work will start. It will be the foundation of a new India," he said.

"COVID-19 protocol will

be strictly followed at the event. As the Prime Minister will be here representing 135 crore people, I appeal that only those who have been invited should visit Ayodhya. The rest should remain at their respective places," Mr. Adityanath said, adding no laxity will be allowed.

Ayodhya dispute is over, will attend puja: litigant

Iqbal Ansari says it's Lord Ram's will; he will gift 'Ram nami' stole and *Ramcharitmanas* copy to PM

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

AYODHYA

Iqbal Ansari, who was a litigant in the Ayodhya land dispute case, has decided to gift a 'Ram nami' stole and a copy of the *Ramcharitmanas* to Prime Minister Narendra Modi when he attends the *bhoomi pujan* ceremony for the Ram temple here on Wednesday.

"Yes, I have received the invitation from Shri Ram Janmabhumi Teerth Kshetra Trust for the ceremony. I will certainly attend it. The dispute is over now after the court's verdict," Mr. Ansari, 69, said.



Iqbal Ansari

"Our Prime Minister is coming. I will meet him and give him a 'Ram nami' stole (with Ram's name written on

it) and the *Ramcharitmanas* as a present," Mr. Ansari said.

His father Hashim Ansari, the oldest litigant in the Babri Masjid-Ram Janmabhumi land dispute case, died at the age of 95 in 2016 after which the son started pursuing the case in court.

Fate of Ayodhya

Mr. Ansari said, "I belong to Ayodhya. All this (temple's construction) will change the fate of Ayodhya. We all want our children to get better opportunities."

He added, "I respect sadhus and saints. I am happy to

have received the invitation for the ceremony. I think it is Lord Ram's will that I attend it."

School, hospital

When asked what he would have done had the court decided the case in his favour, Mr. Ansari said he had wanted the construction of a school and a hospital on the disputed land.

"I feel the city needs development. The future of our children should be safe and secure and they should get employment. Dispute in the name of religion should end now and we should let the ci-

ty witness a new beginning," he said.

The Supreme Court had in November last year paved the way for the construction of a Ram temple by a trust at the disputed site of the Babri Masjid's demolition in Ayodhya, and directed the Centre to allot an alternative five-acre plot to the Sunni Waqf Board for building a new mosque at a "prominent" place in the holy town in Uttar Pradesh.

The State government has allotted five acres of land in Dhannipur village in Sohaval tehsil of Ayodhya for the mosque's construction.

'Revoke lockdown on Aug. 5'

BJP says West Bengal government should change the date

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
KOLKATA



Dilip Ghosh

State on certain days in a week to prevent the spread of COVID-19. The dates in August have been changed on several occasions, including on Monday. The Trinamool Congress said the BJP was unnecessarily trying to politicise the issue.

"We respect all religions but the lockdown is in the interest of people. This is not the time to indulge in politics," Minister for Urban Development Firhad Hakim said. The Trinamool said that for an event happening in Ayodhya there was no rationale to revoke the lockdown in West Bengal.

Left parties slam Centre on Kashmir

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Ahead of the first anniversary of abrogation of Article 370 that revoked the special status of Jammu and Kashmir, five Left parties have in a joint statement demanded that all those detained since August 2019 be released, full communications facilities restored and free movement of people allowed in the Union Territory.

The Communist Party of India (Marxist), Communist Party of India, Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist)-Liberation, All-India Forward Bloc and Revolutionary Socialist Party said this was essential both for effectively combating the COVID-19 pandemic and upholding Constitutional guarantees on democratic rights and civil liberties.

"Last year, the Modi Government made many tall promises about what this move would accomplish and how it would benefit India and the people of J&K.

"A year later, the Government's promises stand exposed, betraying the people of J&K who continue to be caged and silenced," the statement said.

Normal applications working without 4G in J&K

L-G's adviser says high-speed Net is available in Valley



A file photo of R.R. Bhatnagar

able on broadband and telephone lines...hospitals, educational institutes etc. all are using the high-speed Internet."

The government's recruitment process had been initiated and lakhs had applied online. He claimed that security forces had shown considerable restraint and "their observance of human rights has been commendable".

On August 5 last year, Union Home Minister Amit Shah moved two Bills in the Rajya Sabha to revoke the special status of J&K under Article 370 of the Constitution and to downgrade and bifurcate the State into UTs - J&K and Ladakh. The erstwhile State was placed under an unprecedented lockdown from August 5 and 4G connectivity is yet to be restored.

Panchayat polls

Mr. Bhatnagar said that the atmosphere was conducive

Militants abduct soldier

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
SRINAGAR

An off-duty Army jawan remained untraced for more than 24 hours on Monday after suspected militants kidnapped him and set his car on fire in south Kashmir's Kulgam. "The security forces

to hold elections for the vacant panchayat seats, except for the various restrictions put in place due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Panchayat polls were held in the former State of J&K in 2018 and there are 12,776 vacant sarpanch and panchayat seats, particularly in south Kashmir, as elections couldn't be held due to security concerns and nil registration by candidates.

A total of 27,281 panchayats and sarpanches were elected then. Some panchayats and sarpanches are still living under police protection in Srinagar hotels.

Mr. Bhatnagar said a security assessment of the panchayat functionaries had been made and measures put in place.

He noted that political activity in J&K had resumed, though the COVID-19 guidelines have to be followed. "Political leaders/activists have nearly all been re-

leased. Since March this year, there have been 250 releases of PSA [Public Safety Act] detainees," the former Director General of the Central Reserve Police Force said.

Soz's charges

On the allegations of Congress leader Saifuddin Soz, who has been placed under house arrest without any formal orders, he said, "Whatever detention has been done is as per law. As far as Mr. Soz is concerned, there are certain security protocols to be followed by the protectee and at present COVID-19 restrictions are also in place."

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Last week, Mr. Soz, 82, a former Union Minister, scaled a pillar at his Srinagar residence to speak to media persons at his gate when policemen kept warning him.

Mr. Soz's wife had moved the Supreme Court against the "illegal" detention but

the top court accepted the administration's statement that he was not under detention and closed the case.

Mr. Bhatnagar said the number of local youths joining terrorist ranks post August 5, compared to the previous years, showed a drop of 42% and steps were being taken to counter glorification and idolisation of terrorists.

"Of course, any youth joining terrorist ranks is always a matter of concern and so we are addressing all factors which impact recruitment into terrorist ranks... around dozen youths were stopped from joining the terrorists. Stone pelting incidents are down by two-thirds," he said.

"There has been no civilian casualty in police firing [except in terrorist induced encounters and injuries are also down by nearly a half... close watch and legal action has been taken against the separatists who are also not getting public support. Bandh/Hartal calls have had practically no public response."

One hundred and forty-eight terrorists, including top commanders, were killed this year and terrorist initiated incidents were down by 60%. There was decline in the number of security forces killed this year - 40, compared to 117 last year, he said.



Festive spirit: Army personnel celebrating Raksha Bandhan in Ladakh on Monday. ■ PTI

Govt. to review outcome of military talks at LAC

India, China held talks for fifth time

DINAKAR PERI
NEW DELHI

The government is scheduled to review the outcome of Sunday's fifth round of Corps Commander-level talks between India and China.

The high-powered China Study Group is expected to meet on Tuesday to discuss the outcome of the talks that are meant to take forward the stalled process of disengagement on the Line of Actual Control, a defence source said on Monday.

The talks which began around 11 a.m. on the Chinese side at Moldo opposite Chushul went on till 9.30 p.m., the source said. Details on its outcome are expected on Tuesday after the government takes stock of

the developments, it has been learnt.

The disengagement has not moved beyond the incomplete first phase despite four rounds of talks and both sides having worked out the details. India has consistently demanded *status quo ante* of pre-May positions along the LAC.

China has amassed troops along the LAC, which have also moved inside Indian held territory at several places. Under the first phase, only limited disengagement has been undertaken at Patrolling Point 17A in Gogra-Hot springs, and Chinese troops continue to occupy the ridgelines of Finger 4, about 8 km inside from Finger 8, upto which India's claim extends to.

HC notice to Facebook on student's plea

She has complained that her pictures were illegally lifted from Instagram and posted on porn sites

SOIBAM ROCKY SINGH
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court has issued notice to Facebook Inc., which owns photo and video sharing social networking platform Instagram, on a petition seeking the removal of pictures of a college student, which were lifted from Instagram, from porn sites.

A Bench of Justice Anup Jairam Bhambhani also ordered the Delhi police's Cyber Prevention Awareness and

Detection Unit (CyPAD) to submit a status report on the investigation.

The order came on a petition of the student, currently studying in Bengaluru, complaining that pictures that she posted on Instagram and Facebook had mischievously and illegally been lifted and placed on a pornographic website, along with derogatory captions.

Advocate Sarthak Maggon, appearing for the victim, said this was causing his

client "deep distress, anguish and embarrassment".

Delhi government's senior standing counsel Rahul Mehra said the complaint had been transferred to the CyPAD. He said immediate steps were taken to remove the photographs from the errant website. Notices under Section 79(3)(b) of the Information Technology Act, 2000, were sent to all 21 Internet Service Providers to block the offending content.

He, however, stated that

on follow-up, it was found that the content had been redirected to other websites and platforms.

Deputy Commissioner of Police, CyPAD, Anyesh Roy, who joined the hearing through videoconference, said personal content of other students had also been illegally re-posted. He added that investigation was going on in Bengaluru.

Mr. Roy underscored the "technological impediment" in completely effacing of

fending content from the World Wide Web, as it is easy to change the 'hash value' that is the "identifying element" of any content, when it is forwarded or moved from one platform to another.

This makes it impossible to identify and remove content from all places. However, Mr. Roy assured the court that efforts to remove the offending content relating to the petitioner, as and where it surfaces, would go on.

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ONLINE INTERVIEW		NOTIFICATION No. PS-03/2020	
Position & Stipend	Essential Qualification	Age limit	Date of interview
Senior Research Fellow (P) ₹.35,000/-p.m. + HRA (01 Position)	M.Sc. in Physics / Chemistry with 55% marks and one publication in Journal and should have completed at least two years		



Prasad in quarantine at home

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Union Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad on Monday said he has gone into self-isolation as per protocol after Home Minister Amit Shah tested positive for COVID-19.

Mr. Prasad, who holds the portfolio of Law, IT and Telecom, met Mr. Shah on Saturday.

"Friends! I'm absolutely fine. To follow protocol I've isolated myself at home for few days as I had met Amit Shah Ji on Saturday evening for a official meeting. I'm working from home & following daily routine including Yoga & exercise. Also reading books & enjoying classical music," Mr. Prasad tweeted

Rahul takes a dig at Modi over rising virus cases

Reminds PM of his earlier statement



Another grim milestone: Health workers taking a break during COVID-19 checks in Mumbai on Monday. ■REUTERS

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

As the COVID-19 cases crossed the 18-lakh mark, former Congress president Rahul Gandhi on Monday took a dig at Prime Minister Narendra Modi by reminding him of his earlier statement of India being better off than other nations because of timely action.

Mr. Gandhi, on twitter, shared a graph that showed India at the top among 10 countries that saw the highest number of infections in the past 24 hours.

India has surpassed the U.S. and Brazil, according to the graph.

Expression of opinion is not contempt'

Prashant Bhushan was responding to action initiated against him on his tweets

KRISHNADAS RAJAGOPAL
NEW DELHI

Expressing opinion or *bona fide* anguish, however outspoken, disagreeable or unpalatable, cannot constitute contempt amounting to scandalising the court, noted civil rights lawyer Prashant Bhushan has said in a reply to a contempt notice issued to him by the Supreme Court.

Mr. Bhushan was responding to *suo motu* contempt action initiated against him on his tweets – one concerning a photograph of Chief Justice of India Sharad A. Bobde on a motorcycle and the other about the functioning of the Supreme Court in the past six years under four Chief Justices.

A three-judge Bench led by Justice Arun Mishra issued the contempt notice on July 22, saying the tweets undermined the dignity and authority of the court and the office of the CJI.

"Chief Justice is not the court, and raising issues of concern regarding the manner in which a CJI conducts himself during 'court vacations', or raising issues of grave concern regarding the manner in which four CJIs have used, or failed to use,

Pune firm gets nod for vaccine trials

Serum Institute of India will conduct phase 2 and 3 clinical trials of Oxford University vaccine

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Drugs Controller General of India (DCGI) has given approval to the Serum Institute of India (SII), Pune, to conduct Phase 2 and 3 clinical trials of the Oxford University-AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine (COVISHIELD).

"This will hasten the development of the COVID-19 vaccine," said a senior Health Ministry official on Monday.

The Ministry said in a statement that while the country reported over 50,000 new cases in the past 24 hours, the case fatality rate (CFR) continued to be low.

Low fatality rate

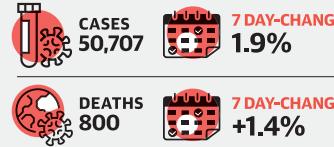
"India currently has a CFR of 2.11%, which is among the lowest in the world. This can be attributed to the well-conceived and effectively implemented strategy of 'test, track and treat', which has guided the COVID management in the country," it noted.

As per figures released by the Ministry on Monday, the

Viral tracker

With 50,707 COVID-19 cases recorded on Monday, India's tally stood at 18,55,264. As many as 800 deaths were added, taking India's toll to 38,965. The drop in new cases was recorded after the number of samples tested fell to 3,81,027

NEW CASES AND DEATHS



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 red; if they are lower, then dropping green; if they are similar, then cases/deaths are flattening orange in that State

country has seen more than 40,574 patients recovering in 24 hours, which takes the total recoveries to 11,86,203 and the recovery rate to 65.77%.

"With improving daily recovery numbers, the gap between the recovered cases and the active cases has increased to more than 6 lakh.

Presently, it is 6,06,846. This means the actual active case load is 5,79,357 and all are under medical supervision," the statement said.

The Health Ministry also announced the use of the Electronic Vaccine Intelligence Network (eVIN), an innovative technological solution aimed at strengthening

immunisation supply chain systems across the country.

"This is being implemented under the National Health Mission (NHM), to get real-time information on vaccine stocks and flows, and storage temperatures across all cold chain points in the country. This system has been used with the requisite customiza-

Govt. issues draft policy to ramp up defence exports

Aim is to achieve manufacturing turnover of ₹1,75,000 cr.

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

With the aim of achieving a manufacturing turnover of \$25 bn or ₹1,75,000 crore, including exports of \$5 bn in aerospace and defence goods and services by 2025, the Ministry of Defence (MoD) on Monday put out a draft 'Defence Production & Export Promotion Policy (DPEPP) 2020' for public feedback.

"The DPEPP 2020 is envisaged as overarching guiding document of MoD to provide a focused, structured and significant thrust to defence production capabilities of the country for self-reliance and exports," the Ministry said in a statement. Inputs and comments on the draft policy can be sent up to August 17.

"The share of domestic procurement in overall defence procurement is about 60%. In order to enhance procurement from domestic industry, it is incumbent that procurement is doubled from the current ₹70,000 crore to ₹1,40,000 crore by

2025," the draft document states.

On increasing defence exports, the policy states that Defence Attachés have been mandated and are supported to promote export of indigenous defence equipment abroad. This effort would be supplemented by selected Defence Public Sector Undertakings (DPSUs), which would work as export promotion agencies for certain countries with earnings linked to success fee, to promote export of defence products abroad. "Subject to strategic considerations, domestically manufactured defence products will be promoted through Govern-

ment to Government agreements and Lines of Credit/Funding."

Aerospace industry
The opportunities in the aerospace industry have been identified in the following segments – aircraft build work, aircraft Maintenance, Repair and Overhaul (MRO), helicopters, engine manufacturing and MRO work, line replaceable units, Unmanned Aerial Vehicles and upgrades and retrofits.

A Project Management Unit will be set up for estimation of development and production lead times specifications and technologies involved.

The companies mentioned in the FIRs include R.S.S. Traders, Swarnaraj Project Infra Limited, Purusattam Infotech Industries Limited, Ratdin Marketing Private Limited, Maharani Gayatri Devi Parva Project Private Limited and Real Bhumi Agro Development International Limited.

The promoters and directors of these companies have been accused of collecting investments on the promise of huge returns. However, they did not repay the investors. Several accused persons have vanished from the scene. The CBI has registered more than 1,000 cases against the accused persons for allegedly cheating the investors in West Bengal, Odisha and other States.

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All the tenders issued by CIL and its Subsidiaries for procurement of Goods, Works and Services are available on websites of Coal India Ltd. www.coalindia.in/ respective Subsidiary Company (CCL, www.centralcoalfields.in/), CIL e-procurement portal <https://coalindependents.nic.in/> and Central Public Procurement Portal <https://eprocure.gov.in/>, in addition, procurement is also done through GeM portal <https://gem.gov.in/>.

SOUTHERN RAILWAY
(CONSTRUCTION ORGANISATION)
E-TENDER NOTICE NO.

CPI's Bihar secretary dies of COVID-19

S.N. Singh was MLA for two terms

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Communist Party of India's secretary of the Bihar State council Satya Narayan Singh died of COVID-19 on Sunday night.

Condoling his death, party general secretary D. Raja said it was a great loss for the Left movement in general and CPI in particular, at a time when the State was heading for Assembly elections.

Mr. Singh, a two-time MLA, was born in 1942 at Dewka Kaithi village in Kharagpur district of Bihar. He



Satya Narayan Singh

joined the CPI after resigning from Jagjivan Ram College where he was working as lecturer. He was to complete his second term as State secretary of the Bihar party in a few months.

No leave for M.P. police personnel, says DGP

'They are not following COVID SOPs'

STAFF REPORTER
BHOPAL

Madhya Pradesh Director General of Police Vivek Johri has asked senior officials to cease approval of leave applications requiring personnel to step outside the headquarters in view of spiralling cases within the service.

In a letter to senior police officials, Mr. Johri said the personnel were negligent in following COVID-19 standard operating procedures (SOP) he had forwarded to units on June 12. As a result, he said, until August 1, there had been 255 active cases in the service and around four times that number in quarantine.

"Police officials are not strictly following the SOP and taking enough precautions during duty," he wrote. During leave, the personnel were not taking precautions while travelling and at their place of stay. In addition, after return-



ing to their place of duty from leave, they were not quarantining themselves as required. "COVID-19 infection is also spreading because of this," he wrote.

He said immediate cessation had come into force to approvals of leave applications requiring personnel to leave headquarters.

"It must be ensured that the leaves are approved only in case of family and health-related emergencies," he wrote.

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(CONSTRUCTION ORGANISATION)
E-TENDER NOTICE NO.

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For and on behalf of The President of India, the Deputy Chief Engineer II, Construction, Southern Railway, Thiycaud. Thiruvananthapuram - 695 014 invites e-tender for the following works as per Notice Inviting Tender (NIT) in the portal www.reps.gov.in/. Tenderers/ Contractors intending to apply for the tender needs to get enrolled in the portal www.reps.gov.in/ and only online tenders will be accepted. The cost of the tender form and Earnest Money Deposit (EMD) should be made through online payment gateway available on the website by the way of multiple banks' net banking, debit and credit card.

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Deputy Chief Engineer (Construction), Thiruvananthapuram.

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TENDER NOTIFICATION

(e-Procurement)

IN BRIEF



Rajya Sabha member Amar Singh cremated

NEW DELHI

Rajya Sabha member Amar Singh was cremated at the Chhatarpur crematorium here in the presence of family members and relatives on Monday. His two daughters consigned his mortal remains to flames. Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, BJP Rajya Sabha member Jyotiraditya Scindia and Jay Prada paid floral tributes to the former SP leader. PTI

Couple found murdered in Uttar Pradesh

KANPUR

A couple was found murdered at their home in Rail Bazar area here on Monday and the police are trying to find out if there was an attempt to sexually assault the woman, an official said. Vishnu Nishad (23) was reportedly battered to death while his wife was strangled, Superintendent of Police (East) Raj Kumar Agarwal said. PTI

Police officer's post on Id triggers controversy

LUCKNOW

A police officer in Chandauli district of eastern Uttar Pradesh triggered a controversy after she allegedly posted derogatory messages on Id-ul-Azha. The post was made from the Facebook account of SHO Sakaldeha Vandana Singh on August 2. However, the Chandauli police on Monday said Ms. Singh had claimed her account had been hacked when the post was made. The matter is being investigated.

West Bengal Minister flags concerns on NEP

KOLKATA

West Bengal Education Minister Partha Chatterjee on Monday expressed "serious reservations" against the new National Education Policy (NEP) and said it was not possible to implement it in five years. Mr. Chatterjee said the State had set up a six-member committee to look into the recommendations made in the policy. The committee would send a report to the Centre by August 15.

MGNREGS running out of funds

50% of allocation already used up; monsoon affects work availability

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

One-third of the way through the financial year, government data show that the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) scheme has used up almost half its allocated funds, spending more than ₹48,500 crore out of the expanded ₹1 lakh crore allocation announced following the COVID-19 outbreak.



Long road ahead: Workers engaged in an MGNREGA project at Nabarangpur district in Odisha. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

MITTED WORK LIMIT TO 200 DAYS PER HOUSEHOLD

New projects needed

"The Gram Panchayats' shelf of projects will likely end by August 2020. Therefore, a quick process of creating further sets of projects is urgently needed. In several Gram Panchayats, the approved projects have already been exhausted," said the APF study, based on ground reports from partner organisations.

However, it commended

the Odisha government for investing the pradhans of its Gram Panchayats with ministerial authorities for efficient decision-making concerning the implementation and making payments under MGNREGA. "The entire process cycle of implementation needs to be eased at this time of distress to respond to the current needs for work and payments," it said.

"Despite kharif operations, the demand for work is still very high; but workers in several States have been

given the impression that MGNREGA work is suspended during the monsoon season," said the report.

It named Bihar, Chhattisgarh and Gujarat as States where the monsoon has reduced available work, despite high demand. The Jharkhand government, on the other hand, has taken up 20,000 acres of land for fruit plantation work under MGNREGA, which is work that can continue to benefit workers through the monsoon as well.

"Ground observations suggest the payments are more or less in time where banking correspondents are in place," said the report. It added that payments through banks continue to be inefficient as "rural branches of banks have limited capacity and infrastructure, and are often overwhelmed by the overcrowding."

The study noted that wages in the scheme are 25-30% lower than the minimum wages for agricultural workers in most States. President Kovind, who was given *rakhis* by members of the nursing community, described them as "front line COVID warriors who are risking their own lives in the line of duty to save others".

"Traditionally, Raksha Bandhan symbolises the love between brothers and sisters and whenever sisters face any difficulty, brothers are supposed to protect her. Today, in times of corona, sisters like you are not seeking protection but the brothers are lending a helping hand to all of you. I congratulate all of you for the change that has come about in your roles and the way you are performing it," President Kovind told the nursing professionals.

President Kovind, who was given *rakhis* by members of the nursing community, described them as "front line COVID warriors who are risking their own lives in the line of duty to save others".

A short video clip of his interaction has been listed on the official Twitter handle of the Rashtrapati Bhavan.

The President thanked the nursing fraternity for their dedication during the pandemic, and referred to two members of the Military Nursing Service who tested positive while dealing with patients but resumed duty soon after recovering.

While narrating their experiences, each nurse had her own story to tell but all were unanimous that "patients suffer severe mental stress due to wrong impressions about the disease and this needs to be addressed medically and through counselling".

Among those who called on the President were members of the representatives of the Trained Nurses' Association of India, the Military Nursing Service and the President's Estate Clinic, the statement said.

President celebrates Raksha Bandhan with nurses

He thanked the nursing fraternity for their COVID-19 work



In solidarity: President Ram Nath Kovind celebrating Raksha Bandhan with nurses at Rashtrapati Bhavan. ■ PTI

Mumbai police know their job well: NCP leader

'Sushant's death is being politicised'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

PUNE

Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) leader and MLA Rohit Pawar on Monday said the death of actor Sushant Singh Rajput was being "heavily politicised" and that the Mumbai police were more than competent in handling the case.

Mr. Pawar, who is the grand-nephew of NCP chief Sharad Pawar, attributed the reason for the politics over the actor's death to the coming Bihar Assembly elections, scheduled in October this year.

The BJP, which is in opposition in the State, had put a question mark on the Mumbai police's investigation into

Let CBI probe actor's death: Bihar MLAs

Lawmakers across party lines echo call in Assembly

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

PATNA

Bihar legislators across party lines on Monday demanded a CBI probe into the death of Bollywood actor Sushant Singh Rajput. The Bihar legislature session was held at Patna's Gyan Bhawan for just a day due to the surging COVID-19 numbers in the state.

BJP MLA Neeraj Kumar Singh 'Bablu', a cousin of the deceased actor, first raised the issue and demanded a probe by the central agency.

"It is evident from news reports that Mumbai police is trying to put hurdles in investigation of the case by the Bihar police team who are



Sushant Singh

currently in Mumbai...so the State government should hand over the case to CBI," Mr Singh said.

He cited the fact that an IPS officer from Bihar was "forcibly quarantined" soon after he reached Mumbai for investigation into the case.

His wife Nutan Singh, a

ED records CA's statement

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Monday recorded the statement of actor Sushant Singh Rajput's chartered accountant in connection with the money laundering probe initiated on the basis of a criminal case lodged by his father.

"The statement of San-

deep Sridhar, who was Sushant's chartered accountant, is being recorded under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act," said a senior ED official, adding that other persons related to the case would also be summoned soon. The ED is scrutinising the financial transactions made through the bank accounts of Sushant.

BJP MLC also raised the issue in the Legislative Council.

Later, Leader of the Opposition Tejashwi Yadav said the Rashtriya Janata Dal was first to have demanded a CBI probe.

Mr. Yadav requested the State government to name

the upcoming film city at Rajgir after the actor. Congress Legislator Party leader Sadanand Singh suggested that a resolution be passed for a CBI inquiry.

Chief Minister Nitish Kumar condemned the quarantining of the State police official.

"The applicant shall also tender ₹5,000 to the son of the complainant for purchase of clothes and sweets," the order said.

The court directed the accused to take photographs and receipts of payment made to the complainant and her son, which should be filed through his lawyer for placing on record of the case before the Registry.

The complainant, a resident of Ujjain district, had alleged that her neighbour, Vikram Bagri, entered her house and sexually harassed her on April 20.

The lawyer for the accused has contended that his client was being falsely implicated as he had asked the husband of the complainant to pay back a loan.

SC helps Brazilian accused break language barrier

Trial in the drugs case will be moved to Delhi, where a Portuguese translator will be made available

KRISHNADAS RAJAGOPAL

NEW DELHI

For Brazilian national Jailson Manoel da Silva, who speaks only Portuguese, language is a barrier to a fair trial.

For four years and nearly 90 court hearings, he was unable to follow a single word said in a Chennai court during his trial in a narcotics case.

His lawyers in Chennai did not speak Portuguese and were unable to help the man. Brazilian embassy offi-

cials who visited da Silva found a distressed man whose mental and physical health were "far from satisfactory". He will face 20 years in prison if found guilty.

The Brazilian, represented by advocates Raghenth Basant, M.F. Philip and Purvima Krishna, finally appealed to the top court.

The Supreme Court, in turn, has decided to uphold his fundamental right to a fair trial. Justice Hrishikesh



Roy ordered the case to be transferred to Delhi, where the Brazilian embassy has assured da Silva the services of a translator.

"I have considered the cir-

cumstances of the case and also the fact that the trial has not made much progress in the Chennai court since last four years primarily because of the communication problem. If the case is transferred to the court in Delhi, the Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB), who is the prosecutor in this case, will have no difficulty, as their officers and lawyers are available in Delhi," Justice Roy observed in a recent order.

Mr. Basant and Mr. Philip

both argued that their client had been in custody since September 17, 2016. Only one witness has been examined in the past four years of trial. "Shockingly, on some occasions, hearings have been held in the absence of a translator... The Government of Brazil does not have any establishment in Chennai nor is it feasible for them to send a translator to Chennai for each and every hearing," they had contended in the hearing.

The MPs said there were "illegal distilleries" in Patiala, home district of Chief Mi-

Punjab MPs seek inquiry into illegal distilleries

They accuse CM of ignoring them

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

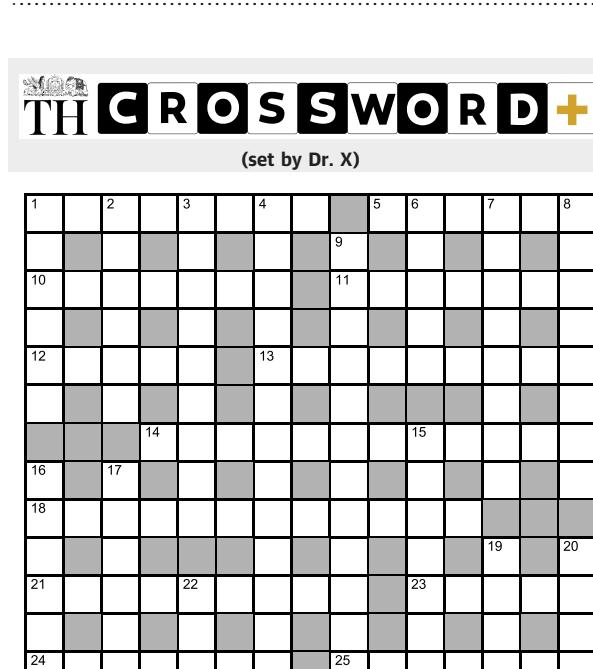
nister Captain Amarinder Singh and the Lok Sabha constituency of his wife Preneet Kaur.

The MPs said, "It speaks volumes of lawlessness and administrative failure of the government." They also accused the Chief Minister of ignoring them when they raised the issues of "spurious liquor and smuggling". The letter follows the recent Hooch tragedy in Punjab.

The court directed the accused to take photographs and receipts of payment made to the complainant and her son, which should be filed through his lawyer for placing on record of the case before the Registry.

The complainant, a resident of Ujjain district, had alleged that her neighbour, Vikram Bagri, entered her house and sexually harassed her on April 20.

The lawyer for the accused has contended that his client was being falsely implicated as he had asked the husband of the complainant to pay back a loan.



ACROSS

- Verifies about right book for aphorisms (8)
- Turning vehicle swiftly around, miscreant ultimately escapes trouble (6)
- Suspect decided to admit blunder largely (7)
- Bob kills wife in bizarre crime (7)
- Surveillance nags pervert concealing girl in lofty house (5)
- Most irritable when cut by invigilator primarily in examination (9)

DOWN

- Provoke when stumped in match (6)
- Fixing error by end of day in clockwork model of solar system (6)
- I'm a leper with primarily debilitating problem relating to cuticle (9)
- Brief respite in oxygen chamber perhaps? (9,5)
- Gag characters in secret chamber (5)
- Escapade around hotel concerning escort (8)
- Most attractive women in show on screen (8)
- Jumping to and fro to keep trim, begin to gain power generally (3,3,4,4)
- Force is out to capture revolting crook fast (9)
- A base to accommodate workers making support for arch (8)
- Decline to flog revolutionary in field (8)
- Got busy picking up rubbish in cave (6)
- Cancel permit to enter river (6)
- Member of Genghis Khan's horde in onslaught at Armenia (5)

SOLUTION TO PUZZLE 13004

SOLUTION TO YESTERDAY'S SUDOKU



FAITH

Bhagavata explains creation

The version of creation presented by Maitreya to Vidura in the Bhagavata Purana is according to the word of scriptures which state that Srishti, Stiti and Pralaya are His Sankalpa and keep recurring through time. Since creation always exists in the Lord, at times latent and at times manifest, it is at variance with the theory of evolution, pointed out Sri R. Krishnamurthy Sastrigal in a discourse. The Supreme Lord is the source of all dharma and is the eternal truth, and His swaroopa is the essence of Sat-Chit-Ananda.

Prior to creation, He alone exists and holds within Himself all the subtle bodies of all beings animate and inanimate. He is described as lying on Adisesha, His couch. His eyes are closed as if in deep meditation, having withdrawn from the activities of creation, preservation and dissolution. He is in Yoga Nidra, appearing to be asleep; yet, He is ever awake with His omniscience, omnipotence and omnipresence intact. At the appropriate time at the end of Pralaya, the Lord decides that creation should manifest and then from His Prakriti, the Mahat tattva, the ahamkara, the subtle and gross elements, the senses and their deities and Tamas are all created. Then, by His Will, Brahma is created and also endowed with the ability and jnana to engage in the rest of creation of the world and beings in it. Brahma becomes the creator of the plant and animal world, the human species, and of the celestial beings and sages.

All the beings in creation including Brahma are subject to the Kala Chakra or cyclic progress of time and have different life spans. Krishna says in the Gita that though Arjuna is to fight the war and kill his opponents, He is only a nimitta karana in the Lord's grand design. So too, though Brahma is seen as a creator, he is only an instrument of the Lord.

■ STAFF REPORTER BHOPAL

Calls to a closer horizon

Thinking of having those long-haul video-chats on a home-grown app? We lay out the ones worth a gander



PRIYADESHINI S

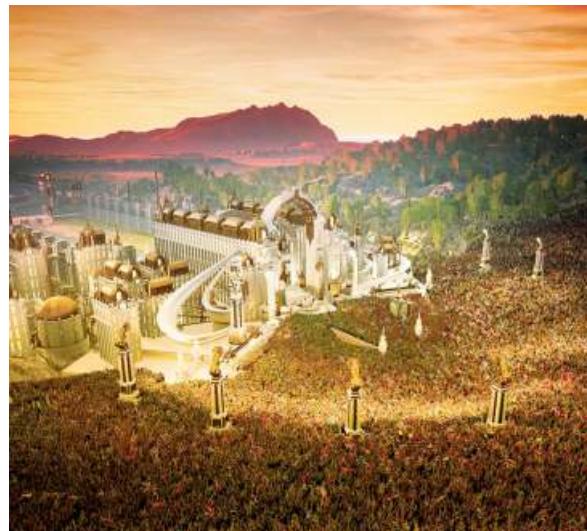
The whole of last week I have been sitting outside digital waiting rooms trying out Made In India video-chatting apps, alternatives to Zoom which saw 6,700% growth in free user sign ups in India between January and April 2020. The meetings, on entry, I must confess, have been revelatory and exciting. If the global COVID-19 pandemic pushed us into the virtual meeting space, the banning of 59 Chinese apps by the Government of India steered the flow towards founding and use of this new breed of locally-made apps – largely because many companies, governments, individuals and the Ministry of Home Affairs protested against US-founded Zoom for the fact that its data servers were in China.

Suddenly, there are a number of apps to choose from and as many questions regarding them. Do these video platforms need to be installed? Can they be used large scale? Are users keen to use an Indian-made app right away, as the first two years in an app's life cycle is still a trial-and-error period?

We give a low-down on a few Made In India video-chatting applications that are not only offering a competitive choice but also giving Indians pride in using a home-grown app.



Packed to the rafters



On beat Virtual Tomorrowland 2020 • SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

As global music festivals, sporting tournaments and matches make a slow comeback, the reality of fans attending these events is still uncertain. That is why CGI animators are working on creating virtual crowds. Crowds provide important visual cues to viewers, allowing them to get a sense of scale in a scene. But if CGI artists do their work well, crowds simply blend into the background, says a report in *Protocol*.

At the end of July, Fox Sports aired the first Major League Baseball games of the new, shortened season, and it filled parts of the stadium with digital people, as the pandemic kept the real ones at home. Adding to the illusion are Artificial Intelligence algorithms that allow these virtual fans to respond to cues from the game. Fan behaviour in a baseball stadium is very predictable, with viewers sitting on their chairs for much of the game, only to jump up and cheer when someone hits a home run.

The same happened with the virtual leg of music festival Tomorrowland, which saw over one million fans pay to 'attend' but the footage of the show featured enthusiastic bots in the crowds. Artists were filmed performing live in four specially designed studios in Belgium, Los Angeles, São Paulo and Sydney using 4K high-definition cameras. According to the Tomorrowland team, 300 terabytes – or a trillion bytes – of raw footage was recorded, which took multiple render engines around four weeks to process.

CGI animators have seen a flood of incoming requests to generate crowds for sports events and concerts alike, and there are hypotheses that the trend could provide the industry with new opportunities even after COVID-19 subsides.

CM YK

GAMESPOT



Immersive star damage

Amid the pandemic, this vibrant remaster of a blast-from-the-past alien invasion game offers some catharsis

JULIAN ALMEIDA

The 1950s in the United States was a time known for its alien fever, with the supposed Area 51 experiments and the subsequent B-grade science-fiction pop culture.

While *Fallout* was inspired by the technology and nuclear paranoia of the '50s, a little game called *Destroy All Humans!* which hit PlayStation 2 in 2005 was an homage to the alien fever of that era. This game let you play as an alien-invading army to bring the wrath of the stars upon us puny humans.

Now there is a remaster of this classic. Cue the eerie *X-Files* alien music.

You play as Cryptosporo-



dium-137, shortened to just Crypto, an evil – and quite cute – extraterrestrial clone sent down in his flying saucer to rescue his i36 counterpart who was captured by humans. And yes, there is plenty of hi-jinx, as you destroy everything in your path and suck out the human brain stems to power

your gadgetry. *Destroy All Humans!* is hilarious as you power through story missions on your quest to take over this blue planet with the singular objective of draining humans' DNA so that Crypto's species may survive. The story is simple, and is designed to be fun, complete with cam-

py cutscenes. *Crypto-137* is wildly unhinged and brings some fun one-liners to the table in witty banter with the overlord Orthopox-13.

Other-worldly invasion

Think of *Destroy All Humans!* as *Grand Theft Auto*, that is more cartooney with other-wordly layers, where, instead of jumping into cars, you have a flying saucer, a jet-pack and a host of energy and psionic weapons at your disposal.

You are given specific missions to complete, most of which involve wanton destruction in small open world sandboxes where you can either choose to go all-out and destroy everything in sight, or stealthily read humans' thoughts and slip by in flimsy disguises.

The emphasis of the game, though, is to blow everything up and that is

Invasions galore Screenshots from the video game

• SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT



tuned to let you have a lot of mindless fun, ideal for these frustrating home-bound times.

The remake of *Destroy All Humans!* looks leaps and bounds better than the 2005 game, which did not age well. The colours are vibrant and, while the animations are not that great, they do work with the art style. *Crypto* is a hard protagonist to like, which was an issue with even the original design. The voice acting of the original carries over to the 2020 remake. While the mission structure remains the same, the gameplay is tweaked with mission challenges and more.

The bottom line is, it could have used a lot more fine tuning to close the gaps of time. If you were a fan of the original, the updated graphics will be a good walk down memory lane. However, the 2020 *Destroy All Humans!* works a lot more like a reboot, bringing new generations into the fold, as there is hopefully a brand new sequel in the works.

The writer is a tech and gaming enthusiast who hopes to one day finish his sci-fi novel

the humans retaliate, as per the game's AI.

The third-person shooter mechanics are smooth, and while the flying saucer mechanics are stiff, the 2020 version makes the run and gun smooth and the destruction satisfying. Everything in the game is fine

■ ILLUSTRATION:
M ARIVARASU

UDo Now

A bootstrapped company, UDo Now, was launched in 2019 by Hyderabad-based leadership development consultant, Tejas Gudluru.

Pre-COVID-19, UDo Now was a one-to-one, expert advice freelancing app that enabled freelancers to connect with a wider range of clients. Its predominant users were professional freelancers such as doctors, lawyers, and educators; and its user-base count was roughly between 15,000 to 20,000. Now, post-COVID-19, UDo Now opened itself to multiple users in a single meeting and hosted one of the first webinars. It also integrated payments into video conferencing, through its events feature that lets any one registered as expert on the app create live sessions/events/classes on the app and monetise it.

One lakh users have signed up till August with almost 200 calls facilitated daily. It meets all security levels required by the industry. No meetings are recorded by the vendors, and the user can record meetings according to payment plans. It can live stream or broadcast to 3,000 people at a given point in time. It witnessed a surge of upto 60,000 users post COVID-19. With plans to go international, the app is free till September, after which use for experts will cost ₹300 for a month of unlimited usage.

Fokuz

A Kerala-based tech start-up Skyislimit Technologies, helmed by Manodh Mohan, founded Fokuz, an advanced, secure and flexible video conferencing platform. It was developed in four months foreseeing the demand for a safe platform during the ongoing pandemic.

Improving on its 2016 SalesFokuz, a data-driven customer management software, Fokuz features user experiences such as live-streaming options to social media handles, screen shares, built-in recording features, remote support, and unlimited participants. It also has provision of automated meeting report generation via email which includes username, browser details, IP address, and location of every participant. According to the team at Fokuz, the platform sees almost 3,800 users on a daily basis and 6,000-plus registered users from all platforms. Fokuz is available across Android and iOS devices as well as Windows and macOS computers and features the option of unlimited participants. In the next two months, it will be available free of cost and can be accessed globally.

Say Namaste

Say Namaste is a secure audio and video conferencing app designed for meetings or catchups. It was developed by Mumbai-based Inscripts, which is also fully compliant with 9001:2015 certification. The beta launch for Say Namaste was on April 17, 2020. The first versions were only available to Google Chrome

browser but Inscripts has made the app available on iOS and Android in recent weeks.

According to Say Namaste's website, they "do not store any conversations or videos on [their] servers." [They] are developing a version to cater to the needs of SMBs and large enterprises."

You can use Say Namaste for one-on-one conversations as

well as group audio and video conferences, which support 50 participants in one call as well as screen-sharing. The entire platform infrastructure as well as all data transmission is on servers located in India. All customer data is encrypted in-transit and at-rest. At the moment, Say Namaste has been downloaded by over one lakh users through the Google Play store, and has an average 4.5-star rating on both Play store and App store.

Jio Meet

There are currently many memes about how JioMeet, by Reliance Industries, seems to be a UX carbon copy of Zoom. This platform is a network and device agnostic solution, offering up to 24 hours of free video-conferencing that are encrypted and password-protected. Such features are ideal for tapping into the fast-emerging virtual wedding market space. One can also look forward to a safety feature that gives the conference host sovereignty to restrict guests from joining a meeting without signing in and disclosing their identity.



VideoMeet

Developed by Data Ingenious Global under the guidance of founder, Ajay Data, VideoMeet received a Certificate of Appreciation from Ministry of Electronics and IT, Government of India in 'Made in India Video Conferencing Innovation Challenge' in July 2020. VideoMeet provides no restriction on the number of people participating in the meeting. It can support 2,000-plus people specially designed keeping in mind the structure of Indian businesses ranging from MSMEs to big corporations, and the platform, for now, is available free of cost.

VideoMeet keeps the data stored within the country, as it is hosted locally, and hence ensures complete data security. It allows users to initiate and experience high-definition (HD), multi-point audio/video collaboration without dedicated telecom networks. A smartphone without the SIM card with only a Wi-Fi connection can attend the meeting easily via this platform. Plus, for corporate functioning, the entire VideoMeet solution can also be customised as per the needs of the corporate. Participants' email addresses will not be shared.

There is a versatility to this app too; live-streaming on Facebook and YouTube is integrated, and users can look forward to customised branding features also available for hosting events, webinars, intra and inter-office meetings. Data compression technology helps in optimising the data used per conference call. It is a perfect fit for hosting multiple meetings in a single day, without worrying about the data usage. The feature of music/audio share apart from microphone has also been recently incorporated in the application, making it ideal to host concerts, jam sessions, and music classes.



Immersive star damage

Amid the pandemic, this vibrant remaster of a blast-from-the-past alien invasion game offers some catharsis

JULIAN ALMEIDA

The 1950s in the United States was a time known for its alien fever, with the supposed Area 51 experiments and the subsequent B-grade science-fiction pop culture.

While *Fallout* was inspired by the technology and nuclear paranoia of the '50s, a little game called *Destroy All Humans!* which hit PlayStation 2 in 2005 was an homage to the alien fever of that era. This game let you play as an alien-invading army to bring the wrath of the stars upon us puny humans.

Now there is a remaster of this classic. Cue the eerie *X-Files* alien music.

You play as Cryptosporo-



dium-137, shortened to just Crypto, an evil – and quite cute – extraterrestrial clone sent down in his flying saucer to rescue his i36 counterpart who was captured by humans. And yes, there is plenty of hi-jinx, as you destroy everything in your path and suck out the human brain stems to power

your gadgetry. *Destroy All Humans!* is hilarious as you power through story missions on your quest to take over this blue planet with the singular objective of draining humans' DNA so that Crypto's species may survive. The story is simple, and is designed to be fun, complete with cam-

py cutscenes. *Crypto-137* is wildly unhinged and brings some fun one-liners to the table in witty banter with the overlord Orthopox-13.

Other-worldly invasion

Think of *Destroy All Humans!* as *Grand Theft Auto*, that is more cartooney with other-wordly layers, where, instead of jumping into cars, you have a flying saucer, a jet-pack and a host of energy and psionic weapons at your disposal.

You are given specific missions to complete, most of which involve wanton destruction in small open world sandboxes where you can either choose to go all-out and destroy everything in sight, or stealthily read humans' thoughts and slip by in flimsy disguises.

The emphasis of the game, though, is to blow everything up and that is

tuned to let you have a lot of mindless fun, ideal for these frustrating home-bound times.

The remake of *Destroy All Humans!* looks leaps and bounds better than the 2005 game, which did not age well. The colours are vibrant and, while the animations are not that great, they do work with the art style. *Crypto* is a hard protagonist to like, which was an issue with even the original design. The voice acting of the original carries over to the 2020 remake. While the mission structure remains the same, the gameplay is tweaked with mission challenges and more.

The bottom line is, it could have used a lot more fine tuning to close the gaps of time. If you were a fan of the original, the updated graphics will be a good walk down memory lane. However, the 2020 *Destroy All Humans!* works a lot more like a reboot, bringing new generations into the fold, as there is hopefully a brand new sequel in the works.

The writer is a tech and gaming enthusiast who hopes to one day finish his sci-fi novel

CM YK

A NDE

Pakistani filmmaker Asim Abbasi discusses directing the web series *Churails* for an Indian production house, and the possibilities of future cross-culture collaborations



Art that matters
A still from *Churails*; (left)
Asim Abbasi
■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

SRIVATSAN S

If there is anything filmmaker Francis Ford Coppola has taught us about the human condition, it is this seemingly-ordinary quote from *Apocalypse Now*, "Every man has got a breaking point."

For Asim Abbasi, that decisive moment arrived when he turned 30 and realised he was unhappy with his career: he had been employed in banking for over 10 years.

If not for his wife, he would not have had the "courage" to pursue cinema wholeheartedly.

Asim went to SOAS University of London in 2010 for his Master's in

Film Theory. His exposure to Iranian and Japanese cinema were a lesson in realism, influencing him to better appreciate his perception he developed on Pakistan cinema, after having grown up on a steady diet of mainstream Hindi movies during his formative years in Karachi.

"Emotions are full on and linger for far too long in our movies [both in India and Pakistan]. I learnt a lot from Japanese films on how to connect with the audience and underplay the emotion," says Asim, over a WhatsApp call from London, where he lives.

Even though an unsuccessful contender for the Oscars, Asim's 2018 directorial debut *Cake* was



ASIM'S WATCHLIST

World cinema: *Persona* (Ingmar Bergman), *In the Mood for Love* (Wong Kar-Wai), *Mirror* (Andrei Tarkovsky), *Circle* (Jafar Panahi) and *Mahanagar* (Satyajit Ray).

Cinema from Pakistan: *Manto* (Sarmad Khoosat) and *Ramchand Pakistani* (Mehreen Jabbar).

praised for his ability to write characters with subtlety and poignancy by national and international publications.

Asim is now entering the web series space with *Churails*, a 10-episode show with a runtime of 55 minutes each.

His narratives mostly centre around strong female characters, largely reflective of the women in his family – a realisation that occurred to him only recently.

Churails, for instance, is led by an all-woman team of four that operates a detective agency to expose cheating husbands in Karachi. They also rescue women from the clutches of men who have abused or mistreated them.

The series touches upon subjects of patriarchy, exploitation, child abuse and racial discrimination. "I have always resisted the alpha male trope because I feel it perpetuates toxic masculinity at some level. Which is why, even in *Cake*, you see softer men such as Romeo or the father character," he says.

Trail blazer

What makes it special, perhaps important in the political context, is the fact that the show marks the first Pakistani-original commissioned by an Indian streaming service – Zee5 under its Zindagi brand.

When the conversation veers towards Pakistani cinema, we not only get a sense of how culturally aligned India and Pakistan are, but also get a larger picture of the command Hindi cinema has on its relatively smaller cousin.

"Our industry is still at a nascent stage. For we lost some of our cinema, and our filmmaking completely went under Bollywood movies from '80s and '90s," he says, adding that his earliest memory was watching *Jambaaz* on television.

Asim distinctly remembers one point in the '80s when the number

of movies produced in Pakistan dropped to zero, thanks to Bollywood's towering influence with VHS selling like hot cakes. Eventually, when the industry did pick up, the voices that emerged too succumbed to the pressure to emulate stereotypical Hindi cinema, he observes.

The mimicking of mainstream Hindi cinema resulted in two kinds of movies – the big, fat studio production, taking inspiration from Karan Johar and indie work following in Anurag Kashyap's world.

"Though we don't work with that kind of budget, we do have Karan Johar-like productions, for a lesser price," he laughs.

Drawing audiences to theatres is a challenge. "Tickets are so expensive here that movie watching is not a weekly affair like in India. The average family saves up money to do a family trip once a month. So, they would want to watch the big scale movie coming from Bollywood."

Cake saw a collaboration with editor Aarti Bajaj. In fact, the news of the film's existence was brought to light, at least in India, when filmmaker Anurag Kashyap posted a tweet, calling it a "powerful film". Two years later, Asim has a web series made for and by an Indian company.

On the artistic front, are we in a better space to cultivate and nurture cross-border associations, regardless of the political climate? "I can't speak for politics. But I do believe it is important to take our industries forward by working together. The political situations, for instance, don't affect South Asians living in the UK. We do not discuss how different we are, but how similar."

After all, artistes are the harbinger of change – "Something politicians aren't doing at the moment."

Churails will stream on Zee5 starting August 11

Musical musketeers

Shankar-Ehsaan-Loy on their work in *Bandish Bandits*, which, they believe, is a musical representation of their creative association



The digital path Ehsaan Noorani, Loy Mendonsa and Shankar Mahadevan
■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

SIRINIVASA RAMANUJAM

The composer trio Shankar-Ehsaan-Loy, or SEL as they are popularly called as, have always wanted variety in their projects. With a film discography that starts from 1997 and continues till date, variety has been their focus.

With *Bandish Bandits*, created by Amritpal Singh Bindra and directed by Anand Tiwari, they believe that their canvas got larger. In this romantic musical drama, the groovy 'Chedkhaniyaan' co-exists with the meditative 'Viraah'.

"Whether it's a jingle or a film, the process is the same," says Shankar Mahadevan, over a Zoom call from Mumbai. "But, the canvas with a web-series is bigger, longer and much more detailed. When you compose something for the first episode, you need to keep in mind what's going to happen in the eighth episode. It's like doing three feature films at a stretch."

Bandish Bandits revolves around the stories of a classical musician and a pop star. "Each of the songs is a part of the narrative. Music is its core, so it has a stronger force to it," says Mendonsa.

Working on the 11 tracks and the background score was a process of joining the dots. "The dots are further away, unlike a film. The challenge was to make sure everything sits correctly and balances out. Apart from the songs, there were various other bits of music

'ARR IS OUR BROTHER'

Shankar Mahadevan has worked extensively with AR Rahman in the capacity of a singer. He has contributed to the success of songs like 'Sandhana Thendralae' ('Kandukondein Kandukondein'), 'Thaniye' ('Rhythm') and 'Uppu Karuvaad' ('Mudhalvan'). Parallelly, he has achieved success in Bollywood, having composed the tunes of big films like 'Dil Chahta Hai', 'My Name Is Khan', 'Lakshya' and 'Raazi'. On the recent controversy about Rahman stating that there was a 'gang' working against him in Bollywood, Shankar says, "AR Rahman is our brother, and after achieving so much, if he is speaking something out to the media, I'm sure there should be some reason and truth to it."

that we created since the lead characters play musicians."

That is perhaps why the trio is over the top about this digital tryst. "Very rarely does a composer get a project like this, in which you are able to explore so many genres," adds Shankar, "The music of *Bandish Bandits* is a representation of Shankar-Ehsaan-Loy."

Bandish Bandits is an album that gets its classical flavours from Pt. Ajay Chakraborty and a carefree spirit from Armaan Malik. There is also Shankar Mahadevan.

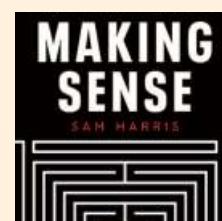
Bandish Bandits, an Amazon Original Series, will stream on Amazon Prime starting today

HOMING IN



■ PRAVEEN SUDEVAN

In Spotify's Life Gone Wrong, stand-up comedian **Sundeep Rao**, who is partially blind, shares inspiring stories of people with disabilities. Here, he shares some of his favourite **Podcasts**



Episode length: Over an hour (on average)

Available on: Google Podcast, Apple Podcast, samharris.org and more

Making sense with Sam Harris

In India, most of the podcasts deal with, say, about 10 topics. It is always comedy or someone talking about success. And, this podcast explores topics that we don't think about in our daily lives. It talks about the future of genetics, climate change, cyber-tech, medicine... I can't pick one favourite episode because all of them are intriguing.



The Joe Rogan experience

This is another podcast I can sit through several episodes in one stretch. Though it is just a comedian interviewing guests from various fields, we receive in-depth knowledge on various subjects. And, the conversation between Rogan and the guest is casual and fun. So, even two-hour episodes are easy to listen to.

Episode length: Over two hours (on average)

Available on: Google Podcast, Apple Podcast and more (on Spotify from September)

TED Radio Hour

What I like about the TED Hour is they club talks by some of the world's leading experts on different topics into one episode. So, you get a 360-degree view on a single subject. This is a podcast that teaches us about different aspects of science and tech, mental health and overall, helps us live better.

Episode length: 30 to 60 minutes

Available on: Google Podcast, Apple Podcast, NPR and more

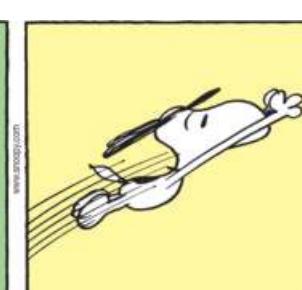


We would love to know how you are keeping busy at home. Tell us what you are listening to at metro@thehindu.co.in

POOCH CAFE



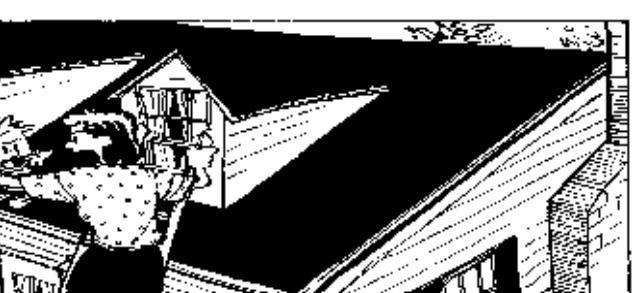
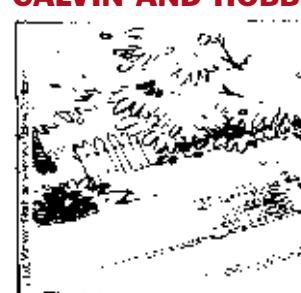
PEANUTS



HAGAR THE HORRIBLE



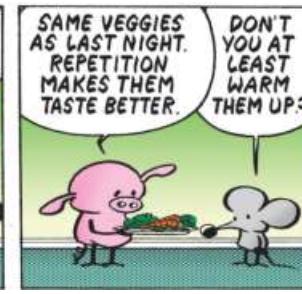
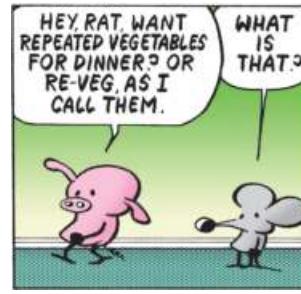
CALVIN AND HOBBES



TIGER



PEARLS BEFORE SWINE



29 killed in IS raid on Afghan prison

The facility houses some 1,700 inmates; attackers remain holed up in a building near the jail

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

JALALABAD

At least 29 people have been killed in a raid on an Afghan prison claimed by the Islamic State group, officials said Monday, as the country waited to see if a government ceasefire with the Taliban would rupture after its formal expiration.

Fighting was still raging at the jail in the eastern city of Jalalabad, where some 1,700 IS and Taliban inmates were being held.

The IS's news outlet Amaq said its fighters were behind the raid, which saw hundreds of inmates escape before many of them were recaptured.

IS not part of truce

The ongoing attack was Afghanistan's most violent incident since the Taliban and Afghan security forces held a three-day ceasefire over the Id festival which ended on Sunday.

The IS was not part of that truce which Afghan authorities hope will pave the way for peace talks with the Taliban as soon as this week.



Clearing operations: Afghan security personnel on Monday taking positions on a building where the attackers were hiding after an attack on a jail compound in Jalalabad. ■REUTERS

Under a deal signed by the Taliban and the United States in February, the "intra-Afghan" talks were slated to start in March, but were delayed amid political infighting in Kabul and as an agreed prisoner swap dragged on.

Both Kabul and the Taliban have signalled they could be ready to start talks after Id, and the Afghan government on Sunday offered to extend the ceasefire. The biggest hurdle to talks starting is a contentious pri-

soner swap stipulated under the U.S.-Taliban deal.

Under the exchange, Kabul is meant to free around 5,000 Taliban prisoners in return for 1,000 Afghan security personnel held captive by the insurgents.

The National Security Council said Sunday that more than 4,900 inmates have been freed, and the Taliban last week said they had already met their side of the commitment.

Afghan authorities however have refused to free hun-

dreds of Taliban inmates accused of serious crimes. A gathering of Afghan elders will decide their fate on August 7 in Kabul, President Ashraf Ghani's spokesman said.

In Jalalabad, Nangarhar Governor's spokesman Attaullah Khogyani said that gunman remained holed up at the prison a day after the raid began.

He said 29 people had been killed so far, though the toll was expected to rise.

He said that special forces

had so far cleared four floors of a five-storey building outside the prison where several attackers had been holed up since Sunday night.

Killing of commander

The raid came a day after the country's intelligence agency announced the killing of a top IS commander near Jalalabad.

Assadullah Orakzai was involved in several deadly attacks against Afghan security forces, the National Director of Security said on Saturday.

Nangarhar province has seen some deadly IS attacks this year including a May 12 suicide bomb that killed 32 mourners at a funeral for a police commander.

The IS attacks continue despite government officials claiming last year that the group's Afghan branch had been completely defeated in Nangarhar.

Some local officials have, however, cautioned that elements of the group remained.

The province provided IS with its first foothold in the country in 2015.

There may never be a silver bullet for COVID-19: WHO

'Stopping outbreaks comes down to basics of public health'

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

GENEVA

The World Health Organization warned Monday that there might never be a "silver bullet" for COVID-19, despite the rush to discover effective vaccines.

The WHO urged governments and citizens to focus on doing the known basics, such as testing, contact tracing, maintaining physical distancing and wearing a mask in order to suppress the pandemic, which has upended normal life around the globe and triggered a devastating economic crisis.

"We all hope to have a number of effective vaccines that can help prevent people from infection," WHO director-general Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus told a virtual press conference.

"However, there's no silver bullet at the moment – and there might never be."

"For now, stopping outbreaks comes down to the basics of public health and



A worker at a Vietnam firm checking a ventilator. ■AFP

gist and an animal health specialist to Beijing on July 10 to lay the groundwork for a probe aimed at identifying how the virus entered the human species. Their scoping mission is now complete, said Mr. Tedros.

"The WHO advance team that travelled to China has now concluded their mission to lay the groundwork for further joint efforts to identify the virus origins," he said. "WHO and Chinese experts have drafted the terms of reference for the studies and programme of work for an international team, led by WHO. "The international team will include leading scientists and researchers from China and around the world.

"Epidemiological studies will begin in Wuhan to identify the potential source of infection of the early cases. "Evidence and hypotheses generated through this work will lay the ground for further, longer-term studies."

U.S. harassing Chinese researchers: Beijing

Comments follow the denial of bail request for a student in California

ASSOCIATED PRESS

BEIJING

China on Monday accused the United States of "monitoring, harassing and willfully detaining" Chinese students and researchers in the United States.

Foreign Ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin's comments follow the denial of a bail request in California for a university researcher accused of lying about her ties to China's military and go-

vernment Communist Party to gain access to the U.S.

Mr. Wang also criticised the Trump administration for imposing sanctions on a major paramilitary organisation in the country's western Xinjiang region and on two officials for alleged human rights abuses against ethnic and religious minorities.

Mr. Wang said China had no intention of helping Juan Tang escape from the United States but did not comment

on the charges against her.

"For some time, the U.S., with ideological prejudice, keeps monitoring, harassing and willfully detaining Chinese students and researchers, and making presumptions of guilt against Chinese researchers," Mr. Wang said.

"The U.S. actions have seriously violated the legitimate rights and interests of Chinese citizens and severely disrupted the normal cultural and personnel ex-

changes between China and the U.S., which amounts to outright political persecution," he said.

In denying bail, U.S. Magistrate Judge Deborah Barnes said Ms. Tang, 37, would have reason to leave the country if released.

Ms. Tang has been held without bail since July 23 when she was arrested after she left the Chinese Consulate in San Francisco to seek medical care for her asthma.

Mass production of vaccine in 2021: Russia

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

MOSCOW

Russia said Monday that it aims to launch mass production of a COVID-19 vaccine next month and turn out "several million" doses per month by next year.

The country is pushing ahead with several vaccine prototypes and one trialled by the Gamaleya Institute in Moscow has reached advanced stages of development and is about to pass state registration, officials said. "We are very much

counting on starting mass production in September," Industry Minister Denis Manturov said in an interview published by state news agency TASS. "We will be able to ensure production volumes of several hundred thousand a month, with an eventual increase to several million by the start of next year," he said, adding that one developer is preparing production technology at three locations in central Russia.

The head of the Russian Direct Investment Fund, which finances the trials, said he expects official registration of the vaccine to be completed "within ten days." "If this happens in the next ten days, we will be ahead not just of the United States but other countries too, it will be the first registered coronavirus vaccine," RDIF chief Kirill Dmitriev said in televised remarks.

Gamaleya's vaccine is based on the adenovirus, a similar technology to the vaccine prototype developed by China's CanSino, currently in the advanced stage of clinical trials.

China suspends treaty with New Zealand

Row over Hong Kong law continues

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

BEIJING

China suspended Hong Kong's extradition treaty with New Zealand on Monday amid a row with Western nations protesting against a tough new security law that Beijing imposed on the city.

New Zealand is the latest to join a string of Western powers – including Canada, Britain, Australia and Germany – that have suspended extradition treaties with Hong Kong since the controversial law was introduced in late June.

China has already hit back by suspending Hong Kong's extradition treaties with Canada, Britain and Australia. "New Zealand's practices... grossly interfere

in China's internal affairs," Foreign Ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin said, announcing Beijing's decision to suspend any judicial cooperation with Wellington. New Zealand has also tightened restrictions on military and dual-use exports to Hong Kong.

Its latest travel advice to Kiwi citizens in the territory said the security law had led to an increased risk of arrest for activities such as protests, with the possibility of being removed to mainland China to face a maximum penalty of life imprisonment.

The United States has decided to rescind Hong Kong's special trading privileges after the new law was enacted.

Trump gives Microsoft 45 days to clinch deal

Tech giant's proposal to buy the American arm of TikTok causes outcry in China

REUTERS

BEIJING/HONG KONG



A potential shotgun wedding to Microsoft Corp for TikTok's U.S. operations provoked an outcry on Chinese social media as well as criticism from a prominent Chinese investor in TikTok owner ByteDance.

The U.S. tech giant formally declared its interest on Sunday after President Donald Trump, who has cited national security risks posed by the Chinese-owned short video app, reversed course on a planned ban and gave the two firms 45 days to come to a deal.

The proposed acquisition of parts of TikTok, which boasts 100 million U.S. users, would offer Microsoft a rare opportunity to become a major competitor to social media giants such as Face-

book Inc and Snap Inc. Microsoft which owns the social media network LinkedIn for professional workers, is also seeking to buy TikTok's Canadian, Australian and New Zealand interests.

Crumbling bilateral ties

ByteDance has not publicly confirmed the sale talks. But in an internal letter to staff

on Monday seen by Reuters, the company's founder and CEO Zhang Yiming said the firm had started talks with a tech company it did not identify to clear the way "for us to continue offering the TikTok app in the U.S." But clinching a deal – potentially worth billions of dollars and a lightning rod for crumpling U.S.-China relations – that

will satisfy all parties will be a tall order. Mr. Zhang's letter to staff also said ByteDance did not agree with the stance taken by the Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States (CFIUS), which scrutinizes deals for national security risks, that it must fully divest TikTok's U.S. operations. "We disagree with this CFIUS conclusion," the letter said but added: "...we understand the decision in the current macro environment."

The United States has been "stretching the concept of national security", presuming that companies are guilty without evidence, China's Foreign Ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin told a briefing after being asked about U.S. actions against Chinese software companies.

'Smuggler' cat escapes Sri Lanka' prison

It was in custody since Saturday

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

COLOMBO



The 'smuggler' cat that was detained at Welikada Prison in Colombo. ■AFP

A cat detained at Sri Lanka's main prison while allegedly trying to smuggle drugs and cell phone SIM cards has escaped, media reports said on Monday. The feline was detected by jail intelligence officials on Saturday at the high-security Welikada Prison, a police official said.

He said nearly 2 g of heroin, two SIM cards and a memory chip were found in a small plastic bag tied around the cat's neck. But it escaped on Sunday from a prison room where it was kept, the Aruna newspaper said.

The prison had reported an increase in incidents of people throwing small packets of drugs, cell phones and

phone chargers over the walls in recent weeks. Sri Lanka is battling a major drug problem, with some anti-narcotics detectives also implicated in selling confiscated drugs. Police last week seized an eagle, allegedly used by drug traffickers to distribute narcotics in a suburb of Colombo.

N. Irish Nobel winner John Hume dead

He helped forge the Good Friday agreement that ended decades of bloody strife

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

LONDON



Man of peace: John Hume, right, receiving his Nobel Peace Prize diploma in Oslo in 1998. ■AP

John Hume, the Northern Irish politician who won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1998 for his pivotal role in ending decades of violence in the British province, has died aged 83, his family announced on Monday.

Mr. Hume, the former leader of the mainly Catholic Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP), shared the Nobel with David Trimble of the Ulster Unionist Party after the pair helped forge the 1998 Good Friday peace agreement. It helped to end three decades of bloody strife in Northern Ireland between the largely Catholic nationalist community who want to reunify with Ireland and Protestant unionists who want to remain part of Britain.

A moderate voice

Mr. Hume had been suffering from dementia and had been in the care of a nursing home

in the late 1960s as Catholics demanded equality in housing, voting and other issues.

As elected representative

He was elected to Northern Ireland's Parliament as an independent lawmaker, becoming a founding member of the SDLP in 1970, before later serving as a member of the European Parliament and then Britain's House of Commons. As the province's peace process began to progress in the 1990s with several ceasefires by the Irish Republican Army (IRA), Mr. Hume worked to engage U.S. politicians.

"The answer to difference is to respect it," he summarised in his Nobel acceptance speech in December 1998. "I want to see Ireland as an example to men and women everywhere of what can be achieved by living for ideals, rather than fighting for them, and by viewing each and every person as worthy of honour."

Benedict XVI, former Pope, is seriously ill, says German paper

He is suffering from shingles, says biographer Seewald

REUTERS

VATICAN CITY

Former Pope Benedict XVI

Georg Ratzinger died on July 1 aged 96. The two brothers were ordained priests on the same day in 1951.

Benedict, who was elected in 2005 to succeed the widely popular Pope John Paul II after a reign of nearly 27 years, shocked the world and even his closest aides on February 11, 2013, when he announced in Latin he was stepping down. He told a gathering of cardinals that he was too old and frail to lead an institution with more than 1.3 billion members. At the time of Benedict's resignation the Vatican was mired in a raft of financial woes, sexual abuse scandals, and infighting among bureaucrats that led to leaks of important documents. Benedict said his resignation was due exclusively to health reasons.

Mr. Seewald said Benedict's voice is barely audible – echoing something other visitors have said for months – and that the former Pope told him he might pick up writing again if he regains his strength. In June, Benedict, who has been in frail health for some time, was now suffering from shingles, a viral infection that causes pain rashes and is common among older people.

Facebook said on Monday it had permanently banned French comedian Dieudonné, a convicted anti-Semite, from its platform and from Instagram for content it said mocked Holocaust victims. It also said some of his posts used "dehumanising terms against Jews". The comedian had his YouTube channel cut off for similar reasons in June by Google. ■AFP

Girl killed in drive-by shooting in Sweden

STOCKHOLM

The shooting at the weekend of a 12-year-old girl in Stockholm sparked outrage on Monday and reignited a debate around a rise in gang-related violence. According to reports, the girl was not the target

MARKET WATCH

	PRICE	CHANGE
Sensex	36,940	-1.77
US Dollar	75.01	-0.27
Gold	54,678	0.26
Brent oil	43.87	1.69

NIFTY 50

	PRICE	CHANGE
Adani Ports	311.35	-3.85
Asian Paints	1705.50	-10.00
Axis Bank	417.35	-14.30
Bajaj Auto	2917.45	-87.50
Bajaj Finserv	6103.15	-102.75
Bajaj Finance	3174.50	-76.80
Bharti Airtel	547.35	-7.50
BPCL	417.80	-4.00
Britannia Ind	3776.20	-47.40
Cipla	710.40	-9.75
Coal India	128.40	-0.85
Dr Reddys Lab	4527.45	-6.40
Eicher Motors	20782.15	143.45
GAIL (India)	94.10	-2.55
Grasim Ind	633.50	0.45
HCL Tech	705.95	0.75
HDFC	1739.80	-42.15
HDFC Bank	1000.00	-30.80
HDFC Life	603.00	-24.10
Hero MotoCorp	2631.30	-45.20
Hindustan	161.35	-1.75
Hind Unilever	2204.50	-5.40
ICICI Bank	343.25	-3.55
IndusInd Bank	503.05	-20.70
Bharti Infratel	189.20	-2.90
Infosys	956.90	-9.10
Indian Oil Corp	86.20	-2.25
ITC	192.60	-1.55
JSW Steel	220.55	-0.30
Kotak Bank	1308.55	-57.20
L&T	915.90	-2.45
M&M	597.15	-9.30
Maruti Suzuki	6165.20	-97.55
Nestle India Ltd.	16524.80	2.60
NTPC	85.60	-1.40
ONGC	75.90	-2.40
PowerGrid Corp	178.55	0.25
Reliance Ind	2009.00	-58.10
State Bank	192.25	0.80
Shree Cement	21747.25	36.10
Sun Pharma	519.40	-12.30
Tata Motors	113.05	8.40
Tata Steel	373.50	7.20
TCS	2254.15	-27.25
Tech Mahindra	673.60	-8.05
Titan	1077.35	34.10
UltraTech Cement	4045.55	-71.75
UPL	452.15	-26.00
Wipro	281.55	0.60
Zee Entertainment	134.95	-3.80

EXCHANGE RATES

INDICATIVE DIRECT RATES IN RUPEES A UNIT EXCEPT YEN AT 4 P.M. ON AUGUST 03
CURRENCY TT BUY TT SELL
US Dollar..... 74.81 75.13
Euro..... 87.77 88.15
British Pound..... 97.43 97.85
Japanese Yen (100)..... 70.56 70.86
Chinese Yuan..... 10.72 10.76
Swiss Franc..... 81.51 81.86
Singapore Dollar..... 54.33 54.57
Canadian Dollar..... 55.69 55.93
Malaysian Ringgit..... 17.71 17.81
Australian Dollar..... 53.17 53.40

Source: Indian Bank

IN BRIEF

NMDC iron ore output for July climbs 13%

HYDERABAD Mining major NMDC has posted a 12.9% rise in iron ore production and 6.63% higher sales in July from a year earlier. Total production was 2.19 million tonne (1.94 MT) with mines in Chhattisgarh contributing 1.56 MT (1.16 MT). In Karnataka, output was lower at 0.63 MT (0.78 MT), a pattern also reflected in sales. Of the 2.57 MT (2.41 MT) sales, Chhattisgarh's share was 1.9 MT (1.6 MT), while Karnataka's was 0.67 MT (0.81 MT).

Manufacturing contracts for fourth straight month: July PMI

Contraction quickens on muted demand amid prolonged closures, survey shows

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI India's manufacturing sector activity contracted at a slightly faster pace in July as demand conditions remained subdued amid prolonged closures, following which firms reduced both staff numbers as well as purchasing activity, a monthly survey showed on Monday.

The headline seasonally adjusted IHS Markit India Manufacturing Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) stood at 46 in July, down from 47.2 in June.

This is the fourth straight month of contraction for the Indian manufacturing sector. In April, the index had slipped into contraction mode, after remaining in growth territory for 32 consecutive months. In PMI parlance, a print above 50 means expansion, while a score below that denotes



Dip, dip, dip: The survey showed a re-acceleration of declines in the key indices of output and new orders. ■ K. PICHUMANI

contraction.

"Latest PMI data from Indian manufacturers shed more light on the state of economic conditions in one of the countries worst affected by the COVID-19 pandemic," Eliot Kerr, economist at IHS Markit, said.

The survey showed a re-acceleration of declines in the key indices of output and

new orders, undermining the trend towards stabilisation seen over the past two months, Mr. Kerr said.

"Anecdotal evidence indicated that firms were struggling to obtain work, with some of their clients remaining in lockdown, suggesting that we won't see a pick-up in activity until infection rates are quelled and restric-

tions can be further removed," he added.

Output contracted at a slightly faster pace than in June as demand conditions remained subdued with some businesses still closed amid lockdown extensions.

Export orders fall

Moreover, export orders also witnessed a decline.

Deteriorating demand conditions led manufacturers to continue cutting staff numbers during July.

On the cost front, manufacturers reported another decrease in input prices, IHS Markit said, adding that subdued demand for most goods more than offset the inflationary effects of shortages in some raw materials.

However, despite the ongoing negative impact of COVID-19, sentiment towards future activity improved for the second month running.

Bank of India net triples to ₹844 cr., NPAs decline

Muted loan growth causes dip in NIM

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

MUMBAI

Bank of India on Monday reported a more than three-fold jump in first-quarter net profit to ₹844 crore, from ₹243 crore a year earlier.

"Having a feet-on-the-street model, we could deliver good numbers during the quarter," said A.K. Das, MD and CEO. "This has given hope for the future. We look at the next two quarters with optimism."

Adequate capital Mr. Das said the bank was adequately capitalised and, depending on the requirement, would raise more capital. The bank had made a total provision of ₹1,035 crore for COVID-19-related defaults.

Gross NPAs declined to ₹57,788 crore, from ₹62,068 crore in June 2019, while net NPAs also shrank to ₹13,275 crore, from ₹19,288 crore. Gross NPA ratio improved to



13.9%, from 16.5%, while the net NPA ratio came down from 5.79% to 3.58%. The Provision Coverage Ratio improved to 84.9%, from 77.2% in June 2019.

Net interest income was little changed at ₹3,485 crore in the latest quarter. Non-interest income increased 42.9% to ₹1,707 crore. Net interest margin (NIM) (global) was 2.48% in June 2020, against 2.67% in June 2019. The decline in the NIM, a key metric for banks, was attributed to muted growth in the lender's loan book.

After 2 months of gains, fuel demand slips

REUTERS

NEW DELHI

Refined fuel consumption in July slipped from June, according to preliminary data, indicating slower industrial activity as high retail prices, floods and renewed COVID-19 lockdowns in parts of India dented demand.

Local fuel sales – a proxy for oil demand – plunged to historic lows in April when India imposed a country-wide lockdown.

State refiners' diesel sales, which account for a fifth of overall refined fuel sales in India, fell by 13% to 4.85 million tonnes in July from June, and by about 21% from a year earlier, Indian Oil Corporation's (IOC) data showed.

Falling local sales and subdued refining margins have forced refiners to curtail crude processing. IOC, India's top refiner, doesn't see fuel sales recovering to pre-COVID-19 levels in the near future.

According to them, "loan flow is a whopping 106% lower than last year, since the first lockdown was lifted

in mid-May" and both low credit demand and high real lending rates are constraining the recovery.

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

MUMBAI

Even after the Reserve Bank slashed key interest rates by 135 basis points (bps) since February this year, the real lending rates have gone up by 44 bps in spite of the nominal lending rates falling by 105 bps during the same period, says a report.

According to the house economists at BofA Securities India, this high lending rate is the main reason for the steeply falling credit flows, which conversely also point to a deeper GDP contraction, accentuated by the pandemic.

The brokerage had last month pencilled in 5.75% contraction in GDP this fiscal, saying each month of lockdown had shaved off 100 bps of the economy.

According to them, "loan flow is a whopping 106% lower than last year, since the first lockdown was lifted

in mid-May" and both low credit demand and high real lending rates are constraining the recovery.

Money supply

A saving grace is that rising M3 (money supply) growth creates room for lending rate cuts to the tune of 100 bps more before March, they say.

"High real lending rates, adjusted for core WPI as a proxy for pricing power, still constrains recovery beyond the pandemic shock. While nominal MCLR has come off by 105 bps since March 2019 on RBI easing, the real MCLR has jumped by 44 bps, with core WPI inflation dropping to 0.8% in June from 2.3% in March 2019.

"Similarly, since March 2019, the weighted average lending rate (WALR) has eased 37 bps in nominal terms in May, the real WALR has shot up 147 bps," they say and point out that this is



test pace in nearly a decade as domestic demand improved, a survey showed, suggesting the world's second-largest economy would help cushion the blow to global growth.

The Caixin/Markit Manufacturing PMI rose to 52.8.

Asia stabilises

Japan and South Korea saw factory activity shrink at a much slower pace, a sign pressures on manufacturers were easing.

Taiwan's manufacturing activity also rose above the 50-mark, suggesting increased demand for work-from-home equipment is underpinning chip sales.

"While the broad steady decline in the PMI prints across the region point towards further stabilisation in regional manufacturing... the path ahead remains a rocky one," said Wellian Wiranto, an economist at OCBC Bank.

Manufacturing activity in China expanded at the fas-

Rising real lending rate roiling RBI rate cuts: report

Resultant fall in credit flow reflects GDP contraction: BofA

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

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The production will be undertaken at the drugmaker's CP Pharmaceuticals unit in Wrexham, North Wales. Wockhardt did not share details on the contract's value.

The company has reserved fill and finish production capacity to allow for the supply of multiple vaccines to the U.K. Government. This includes

all our factories, warehouses and offices from March 23. We lost sales for the last week of March 2020 as dispatches could not happen due to lockdown. In spite of this, we ended the quarter Jan.-March 2020 on a positive growth of 2%, overall. April was a washout for everyone. During May, we restarted our engine and

ended with 40% recovery of pre-COVID-19 levels. June was much better with more markets opening up.

Do you see demand bouncing back?

With over 60% of our 15,000 outlets re-opening, we could see the demand coming back strongly. We restarted manufacturing with all safety norms. Overall, we see demand for our brands to touch 100% of pre-COVID levels by September. We are confident of returning to growth in revenue by October/November as festival season ushers in more demand.

TECH COACH Junior

TV PICKS

NBA: Sony Six (SD & HD), 6.30 a.m. & 4 a.m. (Wednesday)
England vs Ireland: 3rd ODI, Sony Six (SD & HD), 6.30 p.m.
Magnus Carlsen Chess Tour: Final, Eurosport (SD & HD), 7.30 p.m.

IN BRIEF



Thomas wins WGC title and World No. 1 ranking

WASHINGTON
Justin Thomas reclaimed the World No. 1 ranking on Sunday, out-duelling defending champion Brooks Koepka to win the WGC St. Jude Invitational by three strokes. He fired a five-under 65 final round (13-under 267 overall) to clinch the title. AFP

Werenski takes title; Atwal finishes T-53

TRUCKEE (US)
Arjun Atwal finished T-53 after adding another round of +4 points on the final day of the Barracuda Championship here on Sunday. Richy Werenski took the title with a one-point victory over Troy Merritt. Matthias Schwab and Fabian Gomez tied for third with 37 points. PTI



Kang is queen of LPGA-return event

WASHINGTON
Danielle Kang held off France's Celine Boutier over the final holes on Sunday to win the LPGA Drive On Championship, the Tour's first event after the COVID-19 shutdown. It was the fourth title for Kang who finished at 7-under 209, one stroke better than Boutier. AFP

Chawrasia tests COVID positive

KOLKATA
Four-time European Tour winner S.S.P. Chawrasia has tested positive for the coronavirus. The 42-year-old city-based golfer, who went through a COVID-19 test prior to leaving to compete in the UK, has confirmed his positive test. Chawrasia, who got the test result on Friday, has been in home quarantine.



Westbrook and Harden boost Rockets

ORLANDO
Russell Westbrook (31 points) and James Harden (24) helped Houston Rockets prevail over NBA overall leader Milwaukee Bucks 120-116 on Sunday. **The results:** Rockets bt Bucks 120-116; Celtics bt Trail Blazers 128-124; Spurs bt Grizzlies 108-106; Suns bt Mavericks 117-115; Nets bt Wizards 118-110; Magic bt Kings 132-116.

Genoa survives in Serie A; Lecce relegated

GENOA
Genoa, Italy's oldest professional club, beat Hellas Verona 3-0 to guarantee its Serie A survival on Sunday while Lecce became the final team to be relegated after losing 4-3 at home to Parma. **The results:** SPAL 1 lost to Fiorentina 3; Bologna 1 drew with Torino 1; Genoa 3 bt Hellas Verona 0; Lecce 3 lost to Parma 4; Sassuolo 0 lost to Udinese 1. AFP



Trott appointed batting coach for Pakistan series

LONDON
Former batsman Jonathan Trott has been appointed England's batting coach for the three-Test series against Pakistan. The 39-year-old will be joined by former New Zealand spinner Jeetan Patel and Warwickshire seamer Graeme Welch, the BBC reported.

Three COVID-19 tests within a week of arrival in the UAE

Players, support staff can enter bio-bubble only if all results are negative

IPL 2020

AMOL KARHADKAR
MUMBAI

The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) is planning to conduct three COVID-19 tests on every player and support staff member of all eight Indian Premier League (IPL) teams within a week of arriving in the United Arab Emirates for the league's rescheduled edition starting September 19.

The Hindu has learnt that according to the standard operating procedures (SOPs) – the final draft is set to be shared with the franchises later this week – in addition to a mandatory PCR test "within 96 hours preceding departure", every player and support staff member will have to get three negative test results during the week-long quarantine in the UAE to be allowed into the bio-secure bubble.



Ready for boarding: Chennai Super Kings could be the first team to leave for the UAE. ■ FILE PHOTO: B. JOTHI RAMALINGAM

"There will be three tests: on the day of arrival, on the third and the sixth day. Once you get the third negative result, only then will an individual be allowed to enter the bubble," revealed an IPL insider. "After that, everyone in the bubble will be tested every fifth day till the tournament is over."

The BCCI is planning to make training facilities available to all eight teams for pre-tournament camps in the UAE from August 27. Barings Chennai Super Kings, cricketers from other teams confirmed to *The Hindu* that they have been instructed to be prepared for departure on August 19 or 20. Only CSK

cricketers have been informed "to be ready to leave on August 10", should the need arise.

The date of departure for most teams is in sync with serving the mandatory week-long quarantine before beginning on-field preparations on August 27.

It is understood that the SOPs and fixtures will be formally shared with the franchises only after the BCCI receives the Central government's letter of approval, which is expected "any time". The operational rules – specifying the training schedule, meticulously prepared by IPL staff in association with the event management partner – will also be sent to all the franchises.

"We just hope that there will be no favouritism when it comes to stuff like the number of training sessions under lights allotted to teams," said a franchise official.

Pandit, Ghavri, Whatmore and Arun Lal face uncertain times

SOPs 'discourage' coaches over 60 or with major ailments

AMOL KARHADKAR
MUMBAI

State cricket associations will now have to adopt a cautious approach when engaging coaches and support staff who suffer from major ailments or are over the age of 60.

This follows the BCCI on Sunday issuing a 100-page document 'Guidelines for resumption of cricket activities', which details the standard operating procedures (SOPs) for State associations and the National Cricket Academy (NCA) in the wake of COVID-19.

Rahul Dravid, Head of Cricket, NCA, is likely to head the COVID-19 Task Force.

activities until suitable guidelines [from] the Government," states the document.

"Individuals who are over 60 ... support staff, umpires, ground staff, and those ... with underlying medical conditions such as diabetes, lung disease, weakened immunity, etc. should be considered vulnerable ... All such individuals should be discouraged from participating in camp



sue in detail about whether to ask Whatmore to join the camp should we decide to resume," Baroda CA joint secretary Ajit Lele told *The Hindu* on Monday.

Age-fudging issue

The BCCI has offered amnesty for cricketers who voluntarily disclose by September 15 that they have tampered with their birthdate proof. It also announced that it will bar cricketers from age-group tournaments in India if found guilty of age-fudging "either by the State association or BCCI".

"Age fraud is a serious matter and is detrimental to the health of the sport. Many youngsters who are supposed to be playing in a particular age group fail to make it owing to age fraud," Dravid said in a statement. "With the BCCI taking stern actions to curb this, it is only advisable for the players to come forward and abide by the directives."

CAB hopes curbs are temporary

Feels that the guidelines may be changed from time to time

Y.B. SARANGI
KOLKATA

The Cricket Association of Bengal (CAB) on Monday hoped that the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) Standard Operating Procedure (SOP), restricting individuals above 60 years from taking part in training camps, would be a temporary one.

Direct impact

In Bengal's context, the SOP will have a direct impact on the participation of elite men's team head coach Arun Lal (65-year-old) – who guided Bengal to the Ranji Trophy final last season – in camp activities.

The CAB hoped that the SOP would remain only for a limited period.

For their safety

"It is presumed that the restrictions for individuals above a certain age or with underlying medical conditions mentioned in the advisory is of a temporary nature considering the current situation and are taken in the interest of persons beyond a certain age for their safety."

"This is because the document clearly states that all such individuals should be discouraged from participating in the camp activities until suitable guidelines are issued by the government,"

said CAB president Avishek Dalmiya.

"However, this may change in due course of time since in the SOP itself, it is mentioned that the guidelines, may be amended from time to time as may be required depending on the existing COVID-19 situation in the country and the guidelines issued by the government at appropriate times."

Monitor players

Dalmiya said the coaches would continue to monitor players via video conferences and "no decision pertaining to change of support staff is being considered at present."

BCCI invites bids for kit sponsor

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI

The Board of Control for Cricket in India has invited bids for the National team's official kit sponsor and merchandising partner. Nike, the apparel sponsor, has been the official kit sponsor for the last 14 years. Nike's deal, worth ₹370 crore for four years, is set to expire on Sept. 30.

It would be interesting to see whether Nike enters the bidding race again. The bid document can be bought online till August 26.

Indian women's team pulls out of World c'ship

SQUASH

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI

India has withdrawn from the women's world team championship scheduled in Kuala Lumpur from December 15 to 20, citing "lack of preparation, time and match-readiness" of its players, according to a press release from the Squash Rackets Federation of India (SRFI) here on Monday.

"Due to uncertainties regarding guidelines for the safe travel of our athletes and staff for national & international tournaments – yet to be obtained from the Ministry of Youth Affairs &

Sports (MYAS) & Sports Authority of India (SAI) – coupled with lack of preparation time & match readiness of athletes, and after consulting our top players, the SRFI has decided to withdraw from the championship," said Cyrus Poncha, SRFI secretary.

Training resumes

Meanwhile, practice resumed on Monday at the Indian Squash Academy here for the elite athletes with SOPs as laid out by the TN government and SDATN.

Joshna Chinappa, Velavan Senthilkumar, Abhay Singh and a few others trained for nearly one and half hours.

Carlsen draws first blood

RAKESH RAO
NEW DELHI

Having let Ian Nepomniachtchi off the hook once, Magnus Carlsen came hard at the Russian when he got another chance and delivered a crushing blow in a complex opening game of the final of chess24 Legends of Chess on Monday.

Nepomniachtchi, who survived several anxious moments before beating Anish Giri 3.5-2.5 in the final set for a 2-1 victory in the semifinal on Sunday, had his chances with white pieces against Carlsen but missed them to lose in 48 moves.

The result: Final: Set One (Game One): Ian Nepomniachtchi (Rus) lost to Magnus Carlsen (Nor). **Semifinal:** Set Three: Nepomniachtchi bt Anish Giri (Ned) 3.5-2.5.

Good draw for India in Uber, Thomas Cups

RAKESH RAO
NEW DELHI

India stands a good chance of reaching the quarterfinals of the Thomas Cup and Uber Cup team badminton championships in Aarhus, Denmark, from October 3 to 11.

Following the draw made in Kuala Lumpur on Monday, India is in Group C with host Denmark, Germany and Algeria in the Thomas Cup.

In the Uber Cup, the Indian women are in Group D in the company of China, France and Germany.

Since two from each of the four groups advance to the last eight, India will be the favourite against two lower-ranked teams in its group matches, in both sections.

Naresh for Dronacharya award

Nagaraj and Chandra Bhushan also in nominations list



KAMESH SRINIVASAN
NEW DELHI
It is a very pleasant surprise for former Davis Cup captain Naresh Kumar, who has been nominated for the Dronacharya award under the 'lifetime' category.

Laying the foundation
The 91-year-old Naresh was responsible for laying the foundation for Leander Paes to emerge as a Davis Cup hero during his captaincy till he quit after the semifinals against Australia in Chandigarh, in 1993.

He kept guiding Paes till he gained a firm foothold on the world stage.

C.V. Nagraj, Vishnu Vardhan and Saketh Myneni's coach, has also been nominated under the 'lifetime' section.

With Chandra Bhushan, the coach of the Deaflympics team that delivered a medal in mixed doubles, also



among the nominees under the regular category, tennis has three vying for the Dronacharya award. The sport, however, is yet to get a Dronacharya award since its inception in 1985.

Another seasoned coach, Nandan Bal, is in line for the Dhyani Chand award, meant for contribution to the sport over the years, along with Olympian Rushmi Chakravarthi.

The Arjuna Award nomination list has Asian Games

Ministry forms talent hunt committees

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

Sports Minister Kiren Rijiju on Monday said the government is riding on "mainstay" football to make India a sporting powerhouse and announced the formation of five zonal committees to hunt talent across the country.

Rijiju said the initiative, to be funded by the Sports Authority of India under the Khelo India Programme, in partnership with the All India Football Federation, will be the "most aggressive exercise" ever done. "We will form five talent scouting committees in the next few months, one for each zone," Rijiju said during a virtual programme organised by Football Delhi to mark the 36th birthday of India captain Sunil Chhetri.

Honoured

"I am really honoured to have my birthday celebrated as Delhi Football Day. It is

Delhi clubs soon in I-League: Praful Patel

Sunil Chhetri's birthday celebrated as Delhi Football Day

UTHRA GANESAN
NEW DELHI

Even as domestic football continues to struggle against uncertainty, AIFF president Praful Patel has indicated that Delhi might soon have representation in the I-League.

"Clubs from Delhi will be a reality soon in the Hero I-league and there may be two teams from Delhi. I am personally looking into this," Patel said during an e-summit organised by Football Delhi on Monday to celebrate Sunil Chhetri's birthday as Delhi Football Day.

The Indian skipper turned 36 on August 3.

Elite gathering

The e-summit saw participation from football and industry experts including sports minister Kiren Rijiju, Praful Patel and AFC general secretary Windsor John.

I may not be going back to India'

Scottish jockey David Allan expresses doubts on funding



VINAYAK M. ZODGE
MUMBAI
Scottish jockey David Allan, who has been riding with great success in India for more than a decade, expressed his concerns about Indian racing in an interview to *Racing Post*, a British daily on horse racing, on Monday.

"It's not looking good and it doesn't look like I'll be going back. I've been keeping on top of it and some of the tracks are trying to get going again, but I can't see where the funding is going to come from," added Allan.

"There are no betting shops, like we have here, and they're trying to get racing online, but the Government

Derbies (2011, 2016 and 2017). He has enjoyed great fan-following during his winter spell at racing centres like Mumbai, Bangalore, Hyderabad and Kolkata.

Clubs' finances affected

Already facing severe financial issues due to the high Goods and Services Tax of 28% imposed since 2017, the horse racing industry has taken a massive hit for last four months post the COVID-19 outbreak, worsening the situation for race clubs.

With many countries in Europe and America having re-started racing, clubs here are waiting for the necessary permissions to resume racing activity.

While the quadrennial tiger survey is the centre-piece of the WII and environment ministry-coordinated undertaking, the exercise also estimates the population of other animals by relying on camera trap images.</p