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NEARBY



Virus cases cross 4K for
fifth day in a row in Delhi
NEW DELHI
The number of new COVID-19 cases in Delhi crossed the 4,000 mark for the fifth day in a row, with 4,235 fresh infections reported on Sunday. The tally now stands at 2,18,304. In the past 24 hours, 29 fatalities have also been reported, taking the death toll to 4,744.

CITY ▶ PAGE 3

33-year-old man shot
dead in east Delhi
NEW DELHI

A 33-year-old man was shot dead by three men on a bike in east Delhi's Madhu Vihar on Sunday. The victim, Yogesh, was a resident of Dakshinpuri and was involved in a murder case in 2011. An eyewitness said three men on a bike fired at the victim while he was sitting in his car.

CITY ▶ PAGE 2

SAD wants Centre to
go-slow on ordinances
CHANDIGARH

With the Centre set to table Bills replacing agriculture-related ordinances in the monsoon session of Parliament, the Shiromani Akali Dal has appealed to the government not to present the Bills until all reservations of farmers are addressed.

NORTH & EAST ▶ PAGE 4

EDUCATIONPLUS ▶ PAGE 11

Status quo on LAC after Jaishankar-Wang meet

No change in troop positions, strength at Pangong Tso

VIJAYA SINGH

NEW DELHI

There is a freeze on all movement and activities along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in eastern Ladakh after External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar met his Chinese counterpart, Wang Yi, in Moscow on September 10 and agreed on a five-point solution to ease the border tension.

A senior government official told *The Hindu* that status quo is being maintained by the Indian and Chinese troops on the north and south banks of Pangong Tso (lake), which saw renewed mobilisation of troops, vehicles and weapons in the past few days.

The south bank witnessed firing on August 30 and September 7, the first time since 1975 that shots were fired along the LAC. Here, Indian forces are dominating and are occupying the heights and ridges; at many spots, the two sides are just about 200 metres apart.

There has been no additional deployment in the Finger area on the north bank after a massive build-up by China on September 8. "After the Foreign Ministers met, there has been a visible reduction in activity on north and south banks of Pangong. In the present con-



Tense situation: India and China are engaged in a stand-off since April-May. Here, Army vehicles are moving in Leh. ■ ANI

text, when we say status quo is maintained, the point of reference is positions maintained in the past one week and no subsequent addition in the past 3-4 days. We have been demanding that China restore status quo ante before April," the official said.

The official said the future course of action would depend on the decision conveyed by New Delhi.

More meetings
The ground commanders have been meeting daily in all the disputed sectors to discuss confidence building measures.

The dates and agenda for the resumption of the Corps Commander-level talks, the highest level of military-level dialogue between India and China, is yet to be decided.

The Corps Commanders

have met five times. India might insist on a change in the Chinese delegation for the talks.

India and China have been engaged in a stand-off since April-May when China massed huge troops in Depsang, Gogra-Hotsprings, Galwan and Pangong Tso. On June 15, 20 Indian soldiers were killed in clashes in Galwan.

The official said that in areas such as Depsang, Hot Springs or Galwan, no major activity or mobilisation has been seen since July.

India has accused China of not adhering to the disengagement and de-escalation plan as agreed during the military and diplomatic-level talks.

In many sectors, Chinese forces are within India's perception of the LAC.

Monsoon session set for stormy start

Houses to sit in alternate shifts of four hours each

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The monsoon session of Parliament, delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, will get under way on Monday with strict safety protocols in place.

The 18-day session is expected to be stormy, with the Opposition eager to corner the government on its handling of the India-China border issue, the pandemic and the naming of senior Left leaders as co-conspirators in the Delhi riots case by the Delhi police.



Gearing up: Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla outside Parliament House on Sunday. ■ SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

The session, with four-hour sittings for each House in shifts, including on weekends, will not only see the government lining up 11 ordinances, which were cleared during the lockdown, but also tabling up to 45 Bills in

both Houses for approval.

While Question Hour has been removed from the business of the day, questions that require written answers will be tabled, and a 30-minute Zero Hour for MPs to raise issues of importance

'PM owes an explanation'

The Congress expressed hope that PM Narendra Modi would be present in both Houses of Parliament. Senior leader Jairam Ramesh said Mr. Modi owed an explanation for his remarks on China. ▶ PAGE 9

.....

has been added. Some ambiguity prevailed over whether the government would allow a full fledged discussion over the India-China face-off.

DEBATE ON STAND-OFF ▶ PAGE 9

Front-line workers will get vaccine first: Vardhan

It may be ready by first quarter of 2021, says Union Health Minister



Harsh Vardhan

BINDU SHAJAN PERAPPADAN

NEW DELHI

Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan on Sunday said front-line health workers, senior citizens and those with comorbidities would be administered the COVID-19 vaccine first when it becomes available.

"The government is considering emergency authorisation of COVID-19 vaccination especially in the case of

He said while no date had been fixed for the vaccine launch, it may be ready by the first quarter of 2021.

To allay fears regarding the safety of the vaccine, the Minister said he would volunteer to take the first shot if "people have a trust deficit".

"Issues like vaccine security, cost, equity, cold-chain requirements, production timelines, etc. are also being discussed intensely," he said and assured that the vaccine will be first made available to those who need it the most, irrespective of their paying capacity.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

85-90% attendance at NEET, says NTA



Safety concerns: A policeman assists a candidate amid rain outside a NEET centre in Kochi on Sunday. ■ THULASI KAKKAT

16 lakh students registered for exam

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The National Eligibility cum Entrance Test (NEET) for admission to undergraduate medical and dental courses recorded an attendance rate of "around 85%-90%" on Sunday, according to initial data from the National Testing Agency, which conducted the examination. Almost 16 lakh students had registered to write the examination, which was postponed twice from the initial May date due to the pandemic.

"NTA informed me that around 85-90% students appeared in NEET today," Education Minister Ramesh Pokhriyal Nishank tweeted. "I sincerely thank all Chief Ministers and the Director General of NTA for proper arrangements made to facilitate

student participation. NEET participation reflects the tenacity and grit of young AtmaNirbhar Bharat."

Random sampling

The attendance figure is based on random sampling at centres across States, said a senior NTA official, adding that more accurate data would be available on Monday. The percentage of registered students who appeared for the examination may be slightly lower than the 92.85% recorded in 2019.

Students said the examination was of "moderate" difficulty, with several who attempted the examination for the second time noting that it was easier than last year.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

Riots case: police echoing govt's position, says Apoorvanand

DU professor among prominent personalities named in FIR

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

Delhi University professor Apoorvanand on Sunday said the government's "political position" on those protesting against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA) or the National Register of Citizens (NRC) was being parroted as legal offence in Delhi police's chargesheet in the north-east Delhi riots cases.

He cited an FIR registered in connection with the death of one Amaan, in which Mr. Apoorvanand's name was mentioned in the supplementary chargesheet together with that of documentary filmmaker Rahul Roy, Umar Khalid, economist Jayati

position, surprisingly being parroted in the supplementary CS as a legal offence," his statement read.

He said the investigation seemed to have focussed on "delegitimising the protests and in trying to make the protesters indirectly responsible for Amaan's death".

Creating a controversy

The Delhi police said in its response, "...some are taking out few lines out of the chargesheets filed in the courts out of context in order to create a controversy..."

Their assertion is not true and instead, motivated..."

SEE ALSO ▶ PAGE 3 & 9

+ Former Union Minister
Raghuvansh
Prasad dead

NISTULA HEBBAR
NEW DELHI
Former Union Minister Raghuvansh Prasad Singh, 74, passed away on Sunday in Delhi after a prolonged illness. He was admitted to AIIMS in the second week of August with post-COVID-19 complications.

He was under treatment for a lung infection and was put on ventilator on September 6. He is survived by three children.

The five-time Lok Sabha MP had been in the news recently for expressing his disenchantment with the way his party, the RJD, was being run for 32 years.

DETAILS ON ▶ PAGE 9

Death and hunger stalk village in Agra

Loss of livelihood due to the lockdown has devastated a group of artisans



Hunger pangs: A physically challenged woman with her children at Nagla Vidhichand village in Agra district. ■ SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

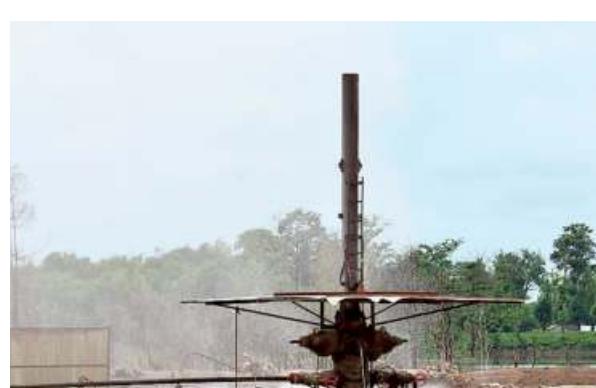
lagers have no source of income.

A few doors from Sonia's home, 16-year-old Aarti, is lying on bed with a glucose drip attached to her arm. Health workers from a private clinic had administered the drip after she complained of dysentery and dehydration. Aarti says her sister had also been administered a glucose drip for 48 hours just two days earlier. Their father Bharat Singh, a daily wager, attributes their condition to a lack of food. "The last time I brought some money home was a month back, when I was able to earn ₹300 to ₹400 over a few weeks. We buy a little dal for ₹2 and sometimes for ₹5 and use it with rice from PDS ration to prepare khichdi," Mr. Singh said. He added that the family has not had vegetables, fruits or milk in a long time.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

Gas well fire put out 110 days after blowout

OIL, foreign experts succeed in diverting flow of gas; well to be plugged soon



Long battle: The Baghjan gas well in Assam's Tinsukia district after the firefighting operation. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GUWAHATI
The flame atop the Baghjan well no. 5 in Tinsukia district of eastern Assam has been tamed, 110 days after it had a disastrous blowout.

A blowout is an uncontrolled escape of gas at great speeds, usually due to equipment failure.

Oil India Ltd. (OIL) and foreign experts on Sunday managed to divert the gas to two controlled flare pits. This cut off the supply to the well head and the fire died out.

Complex process'

"This was a complex process for reducing the surface-level well head pressure. Simply put, the fire was doused by successfully diverting the gas coming out of the blowout well head. Because there is no fuel, there is no fire," OIL spokesperson Tridiv Hazarika said from the exploration ma-

jor's headquarters at Dibrugarh.

"This is a temporary relief till we are able to kill the well," he said.

The gas was diverted to the flare pits at 8.40 a.m. after closing the blowout preventer — a device vital for killing a crude oil or gas well — that was placed on the

said.

The killing of the well entails injecting the killing fluid — a viscous cement mud — through the inlet of the blowout preventer to a depth of 3.5 km. The fluid is expected to plug subterranean perforations and block the surge of natural gas.

Well no. 5, one of the 22 crude oil and natural gas wells in the Baghjan oilfield close to the Dibrugarh-Dailekh highway, had a blowout on May 27. It burst into flames on June 9.

Three deaths

The accident has so far killed three OIL employees — two firemen who died fighting the flame and a 25-year-old electrical engineer who was electrocuted while checking cables at the site.

Three of the six foreign experts engaged for disaster control had also sustained injuries during a failed capping operation.

SPECIAL
While the district administration attributes Sonia's death to vomiting and diarrhoea and denies any case of starvation in the village, the overall deprivation is hard to accept.

Denying that Sonia was ill before she died, Pooja says Sonia was very weak. "The only time we had food was when our neighbours would give us something to eat," she says.

Till Sonia's death last month, the family of five did

well head on August 17 for a successful capping after a few failed attempts.

"Well head pressures and related parameters are being monitored and once the whole system is stabilised, the next line of action will be undertaken for well-killing operation," an expert engaged in disaster control

AN-ND-E

Timings

DELHI

MONDAY, SEP. 14
RISE 06:06 SET 18:27
RISE 02:21 SET 16:32
TUESDAY, SEP. 15
RISE 06:06 SET 18:26
RISE 03:26 SET 17:19
WEDNESDAY, SEP. 16
RISE 06:07 SET 18:25
RISE 04:33 SET 18:01

Delhi Weather	max min
Delhi City	37 27
Safdarjung	37 27
Palam	36 28

Delhi Palam Today
37°C Comfortable morning turns very warm day with partly cloudy sky and gentle winds.

Delhi Palam Tomorrow
37°C Dry and warm day with light winds. Mainly partly cloudy sky likely.

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THE HINDU
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YMCA pays tribute to medical fraternity

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The YMCA on Saturday night paid musical tributes to the medical fraternity in the Capital for their untiring efforts in the fight against COVID-19.

The event had several doctors and paramedics joining the virtual meeting. Several doctors complimented the YMCA for running a COVID-19 centre at its 250-bed Tourist Hostel for three months.

The New Delhi YMCA had earlier hosted a similar musical performance for Delhi Police. It said that it was conducting such programmes to thank COVID-19 warriors.

"Kapil Suri, HOD Radiology at Safdarjung Hospital, took the audience back to the 1980s with Kishore Kumar numbers, while Sumathi Muralidhar a Consultant Microbiologist at Safdarjung Hospital belted out kids by American singer Karen Carpenter," the YMCA said.

It added that doctors from Lady Hardinge Medical College and Kalavati Saran sang a group song on COVID-19.

Virus cases in the Capital cross 4,000 mark for fifth day in a row

With 4,235 fresh cases on Sunday, COVID-19 tally in Delhi now stands at 2,18,304

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The number of fresh COVID-19 cases in the Capital continued to stay above the 4,000 mark for the fifth day in a row, after Sunday's tally of 4,235 cases.

In the past 24 hours, 29 people died due to the virus while 3,403 people recovered, a health bulletin from the Delhi government said. It said that the total number of cases in the Capital now stands at 2,18,304 with a total of 4,744 deaths and 1,84,748 recoveries.

The bulletin added that 56,656 tests were conducted during the same period with a positivity rate of 7.48%. The death rate, it said, based on the data compiled in the last 10 days was 0.68%. Of the total tests, 10,116 were RT-PCR tests, while 46,540 were rapid antigen tests.

The Delhi government said that the cumulative positivity rate is now at 10.20% and the fatality rate is 2.17%.

The city now has 1,488 containment zones and 15,946



A government bulletin said that 56,656 tests were conducted in Delhi in the past 24 hours. ■ FILE PHOTO: SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

people are under home isolation. The government's patient management system shows that out of the 14,377 available hospital beds, 7,874 are vacant. Health Minister Satyendra Jain said that while there were enough ICU beds in State-run and Centre-run hospitals, there was a shortage in the number of ICU beds in private hospitals due to the surge in cases.

He said that the government has passed orders for 28 private hospitals to reserve 80% of their total ICU/HUDU beds for COVID-19 patients. These hospitals, he said, are also allowed to temporarily increase their total bed capacity up to 30% to be utilised by COVID-19 patients. There are five private hospitals that are entirely COVID-19 hospitals.

Asked if the Delhi government was planning to enforce another lockdown due to the rise in the number of cases, Mr. Jain said: "The time for enforcing a lockdown has ended. We have gained enough experience through the lockdown and know that wearing masks is an effective way to fight the infection. We are creating awareness about wearing masks and social distancing," he said.

Delhi's biggest single-day jump was reported on Saturday.

Virus spread

Total number of COVID-19 cases
2,18,304

Total deaths
4,744

New cases in the past 24 hours
4,235

New deaths in the past 24 hours
29

SOURCE: DELHI GOVERNMENT HEALTH BULLETIN

day when 4,321 fresh cases were recorded. The Capital has seen a spurt in cases but the government has said that the increase is due to the fact that it has increased testing from 15,000-20,000 a day to up to 60,000 a day.

The Minister said that by ramping up testing, even those who do not have symptoms but are infected will be isolated so that they do not spread it. "If you test positive without symptoms, we will be able to isolate you in time and prevent the infection from spreading. The number might be increasing at this point but this will help in containing the virus," he added.

Second phase of DU open book exam starts today

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

The second phase of the open book examinations (OBE) held by DU for students in the final semesters will commence on Monday. This time, apart from attempting the question at home, students have also been given the option to take the examination at centres in Delhi.

Colleges and departments have been directed to make various provisions to ensure social distancing and that the examinations remain as "touch-free" as possible, a DU advisory stated. Students attempting the exam have already been given details of seating arrangement and rooms.

Candidates are required to submit a self declaration form before entering the centre. Persons with disabilities who wish to improve their marks and students who could not take exams during the first phase of the OBE or were unable to upload answer scripts can take the exams.



second week of October.

The results of the entrance exams held between September 7 and 11 are likely to be announced around the first week of October, but had not been finalised either.

Currently, for students applying for UG courses, the university has opened an edit option for details submitted in their forms. It will remain open till October 5. An edit option for PG programmes will be released on a later date following the completion of UG examinations this month, officials said.

Woman arrested for killing daughter

Body discovered in Palwal, say police

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
FARIDABAD

The police and Crime Branch teams interrogated the family. During probe, they saw the girl going out with her mother. Next, they found the mother's behaviour suspicious.

They said the woman practised occult and told the police that she had been possessed by an evil spirit since 2001. The woman from Sanjay Colony here, took the girl to Bhagola village in Palwal and allegedly murdered her. She then returned to Faridabad, leaving the body at the spot.

The girl's father lodged a missing complaint at Mugesar police station on Thursday.

The police and Crime Branch teams interrogated the family. During probe, they saw the girl going out with her mother. Next, they found the mother's behaviour suspicious.

During sustained interrogation, the woman confessed to the crime. She told the police that she had earlier also made an attempt to kill the girl by drowning her in a water tank on the terrace but her sons came to the spot at the same moment. The girl's family originally belongs to Pratappur in Uttar Pradesh.

The body has been discovered at the instance of the woman, the police added.

CAIT warns of collapse of small businesses

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

Traders body, Confederation of All India Traders (CAIT), on Sunday warned that nearly 1.75 crore small business were on the verge of closure as a consequence of COVID-19 and related restrictions.

The pandemic had brought traders in the country to their knees with no sign of respite in the near future, given that there was no support from Central or State governments, CAIT said in a statement.

The body also hit out at banks for not extending formal finance to small businesses as a consequence of which most traders were dependent on informal sources to meet their requirements. What pinches traders is that all other sectors of the economy were considered worthy of being included in the financial package despite ensuring smooth supply of goods during the lockdown, said CAIT president Praveen Khandelwal.

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THE HINDU

India's National Newspaper

Case study: technical glitches, financial crunch and evading clients

Many lawyers in the Capital are affected by the pandemic with reduced cases and technical challenges induced by virtual hearings

SOIBAM ROCKY SINGH
NEW DELHI

From facing financial difficulties to overcoming technical problems, many advocates practising in the Capital had to adapt to the unprecedented challenges thrust by the COVID-19 pandemic.

With the imposition of the first lockdown in March, the Delhi High Court and its subordinate courts have been conducting hearings mainly through videoconferencing.

While standard operating procedures (SOPs) for the videoconference hearing have since been chalked out, and even limited physical hearing resumed recently, it has been a bumpy ride for lawyers who are just starting their career.

Advocate Rajnish Kumar Jha, who began practising from 2012, stressed many lawyers do not have access to technology for virtual court hearing. "There are many who don't have a smartphone. They never needed one earlier," he said.



Lawyers and litigants being screened as a precautionary measure at the Supreme Court ahead of the lockdown. ■ FILE PHOTO: R.V. MOORTHY

SAD wants Centre to go-slow on ordinances

Cong., AAP hit out at Badals for 'U-turn' on their stand, call it 'cheap gimmick' to hoodwink farmers

VIKAS VASUDEV
CHANDIGARH

With the NDA government at the Centre all set to table the Bills replacing the agriculture-related ordinances in the monsoon session of the Parliament, slated to begin on September 14, the Shiromani Akali Dal, one of its constituents, has appealed to the government not to present the ordinances until all reservations expressed by farmers are addressed.

The Akali Dal's appeal has given the Congress and the Aam Aadmi Party fresh ammunition to target the Badal family. SAD has so far been favouring the ordinances, asserting them to be benefiting the farmers.

Congress State president Sunil Jakhar on Sunday said it was on account of their vested interests and to safeguard their position in the

Central government that the Badal family had been in favour of the ordinances.

'Vested interests'

"But now after facing farmers in villages, the party workers and other leaders have realised that the party's political survival is at stake, and hence they have confronted the leadership of Sukhbir Singh Badal. The collective will of other leaders has prevailed on Mr. Sukhbir, forcing the party to take a U-turn on the ordinances' issue. They (Badal family) were blinded by the need for power at the Centre by undermining the farmers' interests. But now people and their party leaders have shown them the mirror and they had to change their stand," Mr. Jakhar told *The Hindu*.

"Also, this clearly indicates that Mr. Sukhbir is los-



Sukhbir Badal ■ FILE PHOTO

ing his grip over the party. This is the beginning of his fall and very soon, he will face stiff challenge to his authority in the party," he said.

'Quit Central govt.'

Terming the Akali Dal's U-turn on the farm ordinances as 'a cheap gimmick' to hoodwink the farming community, Chief Minister Ama-

rinder Singh challenged Mr. Sukhbir to quit the BJP-led Central government to prove his party's sincerity.

A statement, issued after a meeting on September 12 of the Akali Dal's core committee presided over by Mr. Sukhbir, said it was felt that the party has a responsibility to take up the farmers' issues with the Union government and get them addressed.

The committee had pointed out that the SAD leadership had met farmers' organisations and their representatives during the last few days.

Also, it held discussions with farm experts besides taking the view of party's grassroots workers and senior leadership, said the statement.

It added that "a considered view had emerged that the Union government

should not rush through with passing of the three Central ordinances till the apprehensions conveyed to the SAD were addressed".

'Test for Punjab MPs'

Hitting out at the Akali Dal, the Aam Aadmi Party's Punjab president and Member of Parliament Bhagwant Mann said this session of Parliament would test all the MPs of Punjab whether they stand with or against the farmers of the State.

"On the day of the introduction of the agriculture ordinance, the eyes of the people of Punjab will be on Sukhbir Singh Badal and Harsimrat Kaur Badal," he said.

Mr. Mann said Akali Dal's latest stand on the issue had highlighted the fact that the 'Badal family' has been disturbed by the ground realities.

U.P. books Mukhtar Ansari's wife under Gangsters Act

Family alleges BJP govt. diverting attention from its failures

OMAR RASHID
LUCKNOW

The Uttar Pradesh police have booked the wife of jailed MLA from Purvanchal Mukhtar Ansari and her two brothers under the Gangsters Act for allegedly trespassing on land attached by the government and obtaining official contracts with forged documents.



Mukhtar Ansari ■ FILE PHOTO

The latest case by the BJP government follows a sequence of penal measures taken against the politician and his family in the last two months. The MLA's family has alleged that the government was targeting them to entangle them in criminal cases and to divert attention of people from its failures.

A case under Section 2/3 (I) of the U.P. Gangsters and Anti-Social Prevention Act

was lodged against the MLA's wife Afza Ansari and her two brothers - Sharjeel Raza and Anwar Shahzad - in Ghazipur district. The police have accused them of illegal possession of land that was already attached by it and obtaining government contracts with forged documents.

The three committed "crime like an organised cri-

minal gang", the Ghazipur police claimed in a statement. SP Ghazipur Om Prakash Singh said the Gangsters Act was invoked against the three to put a leash on their 'acts of embezzlement of funds and illegal trespass on property'. Chargesheets had been filed in the cases which were lodged in 2019, he added.

Afzal Ansari, BSP MP from Ghazipur and brother of Mr. Mukhtar, accused the State government of vindictive action against the family to "divert attention of people from its failures and main issues". "It is a clear misuse of power," he told *The Hindu* on phone. "It appears like this is being done in a planned manner," Mr. Afzal said on the cases against the family.

Six Odisha Ministers infected

SATYASUNDAR BARIK
BHUBANESWAR

Six Ministers and 20 MLAs of Odisha have contracted the novel coronavirus as the State has added 50,000 cases in the past two weeks.

Odisha on Sunday crossed the 1.50 lakh-mark in 183 days. On August 30, it had gone past the 1 lakh-mark. For the past two weeks, the daily positive cases have been consecutively exceed-

ing 3,000. The fatalities are 626 though the rate is one of the lowest in the country.

Handlooms, Textiles and Handicrafts Minister Padmini Dian was the latest to be admitted to a COVID-19 hospital along with her husband after they felt uneasy. Earlier, Agriculture and Farmers' Empowerment Minister Arun Kumar Sahoo, Rural Development Minister Susanta Singh, Women and

Child Development Minister Tukuni Sahu and Food Supplies and Consumer Welfare Minister Ranendra Pratap Swain had taken to social networking sites to announce their infection. Mr. Swain's brother and an SP-ranked officer Ajay Pratap Swain had also tested positive.

Odisha is placed at the 10th spot in the count. The last one lakh cases were reported in just 32 days.

INTERVIEW | KUMARI SELJA

'BJP-JJP govt. has been rocked by scandals'

Whimsical and fanciful decisions of the Haryana government do not cut ice with the masses...

ASHOK KUMAR

Former Union Cabinet Minister Kumari Selja completes one year as the first woman president of the Haryana Pradesh Congress Committee this month. She speaks on a host of issues ranging from the party's defeat in the Assembly election last year to challenges before the party to the performance of the BJP-JJP government in Haryana and, of course, the recent controversy over the letter by a few senior party leaders to Congress president Sonia Gandhi.



I believe personal ambitions need to be put aside and genuine and hard working people should get a chance

The BJP gave a slogan of "Abki Baar, 75 Paar" in 2019 Assembly election, but failed to get even a simple majority. It was clearly a vote for change in Haryana. But the Congress failed to make the most of it. Where do you think the party faltered?

■ There was a change in the organisational set-up of Haryana just a few weeks before polling. Just four months before it, the Congress had lead in only ten Assembly segments during the Lok Sabha election. After the change in organisation, we barely had a month. We came from behind and managed to get 31 seats. We lost a few seats by very thin margins. The BJP aimed for more than 75, but got just 40. I think that is more remarkable than to say that the Congress did not do well. The Congress did really well. The Congress defied everybody.

Do you think there was a delay in making a change in the State leadership. Had it been done earlier, could the results have been different?

■ These are questions asked later with hindsight. Political decisions are taken when they are. The result is the fact. People were not willing to give the Congress even a dozen seats, but we got 31. We were confident of forming the government. We knew the BJP was nowhere close to what it was claiming. But unfortunately, they

managed to create an atmosphere with the media and other resources at their command and people believed them. They had won all the 10 Lok Sabha seats just before the Assembly poll. All this helped them reach the 40-seat mark.

The Congress does not have an organisational set-up at the district and block levels in Haryana for the past six years. You have been at the helm of affairs in the State for a year now. What's causing the delay?

■ There are multiple factors. The spread of the deadly virus over the past few months has put certain constraints on our political activities. I will admit that this is the main factor. I will try to be more active in the days to come. It is high time that people committed to the ideology of the party and its leadership are given positions in the organisation.

Do you have any deadline in mind for it?

■ No deadline as such, but we are discussing with the central leadership. The process is on at every level. We will do it in the near future.

Your predecessor Ashok Tanwar left the party alleging that certain leaders had hijacked the party. Do you feel free to take decisions as party chief?

■ It is not like that. We do

issues remain, hospital care issues remain and post-COVID care issues remain. They say one thing one day and take it back the next day. They were going to shut down all shops over the weekend, there was a massive protest. Then they said, no we would do it on Mondays and Tuesdays. What is the logic behind this? Logic should dictate that, not whims. Such whimsical and fanciful decisions of the government do not cut ice with the masses.

Haryana being an agricultural State, there is this issue of three ordinances. Haryana's agriculture sector depends on farmers, labours and commission agents. They want to do away with this time-tested system which has served the people. MSP is a major lifeline for the farmers. You throw open the market, as you have done in every sector to benefit a handful of big houses. You don't think of those at the bottom of the pyramid.

The Congress claims that there is resentment in every section of society in the State. But the party is not seen on the ground. Your comments?

■ Firstly, the tall claims of the BJP in power for five years during the first term came to a naught when they failed to muster a majority on their own and were forced to form the government with the help of a party which had opposed them. But I suppose political exigency dictated the terms when they came together. Now in the past one year, this government has been rocked by scandal after scandal. Where is the delivery? And then on top of all this was the COVID-19 situation and the lockdown. This government was always found grappling with situations.

Even after the lockdown, health issues remain, testing

leaders wrote to party president Sonia Gandhi seeking revamp of the Congress and the need for visible and full-time leadership. What is your take on it?

■ Despite the constraints, the most visible opposition to the government's anti-people policies is from the Congress and our leadership. I think the way Rahul Gandhi ji takes them on, no other Opposition leader in the country puts them on the mat. He does it with facts and figures and the realities of the day. Be it economy, the border dispute, or any other issue. Ms. Gandhi showed a lot of magnanimity to allow six hours' discussion on it in the Congress Working Committee meeting. Being responsible soldiers of the party what we utter should strengthen the party and not weaken it. We have to fight the BJP and its nefarious designs. So for some leaders to suddenly raise this banner seemed unfortunate.

The Congress' political graph is on the decline since 2014. What do you think is the way forward for the party?

■ The Congress has seen ups and downs. But our workers are not deterred by poll reversals. The Congress is a mass-based party. It will become strong again because it reflects the will of the people. It is not like the BJP that tries to destabilise the government after losing the elections and buys MLAs. The Congress takes poll reversal in its stride and all of us get together and work hard. I wish all our friends will do that. It is time for us to work at grassroots level and not to question the leadership.

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Date of Filling of Nomination Form: 20.09.2020

Scrutiny of Nomination Form 25.09.2020

Date of Withdrawal of Nomination Form : 30.09.2020

Date of Election & Declaration of Result after the Election: 05.10.2020

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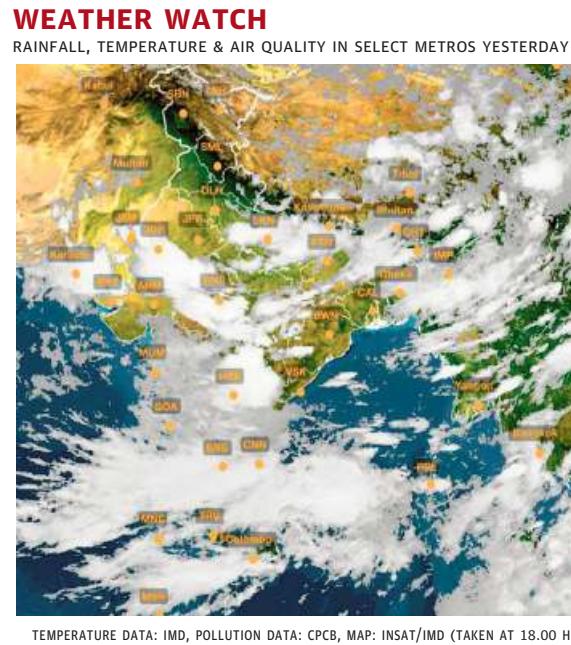
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TEMPERATURE DATA: IMD; POLLUTION DATA: CPCB; MAP: INSAT/MD (TAKEN AT 18.00 HRS)

Forecast for Monday: Heavy rainfall likely at isolated places over Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Meghalaya, Sikkim, West Bengal, Bihar, Odisha, Chhattisgarh, Vidarbha, central Maharashtra, Marathwada, Konkan & Goa, Rayalseema, coastal Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Puducherry, Kerala and Andaman & Nicobar Islands

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	21.2	32.5	27.0	Kozhikode	73.3	26.2	23.0
Ahmedabad	14.5	33.8	25.9	Kurnool	2...	27.1...	23.3
Aizawl	-	28.3	21.7	Lucknow	-	35.9...	27.6
Allahabad	15.8	34.3	26.9	Madurai	-	33.6...	25.6
Bengaluru	17.6	25.4	19.7	Mangaluru	54.2	26.7...	22.4
Bhopal	-	33.8	25.2	Mumbai	25.7	31.7...	25.0
Bhubaneswar	1.2	34.0	26.5	Mysuru	1...	27.9...	21.1
Chandigarh	-	36.1	27.3	New Delhi	-	37.0...	26.6
Chennai	0.6	28.6	26.1	Patna	0.5	31.5...	20.5
Coimbatore	-	26.3	22.2	Pond Blair	0.9	29.4...	25.2
Dehradoon	30.6	31.0	23.1	Puducherry	5.8	28.7...	21.8
Gangtok	8.2	-	17.6	Pune	-	34.6...	26.4
Goa	51.6	27.7	21.3	Raipur	-	30.7...	24.8
Guwahati	-	33.4	25.6	Ranchi	-	31.0...	24.2
Hubballi	-	29.0	26.0	Shillong	0.8	25.4...	18.5
Hyderabad	29.1	28.1	21.6	Shimla	-	26.2...	20.0
Imphal	7.5	30.6	20.3	Srinagar	-	29.7...	13.2
Jaipur	-	26.1	26.4	Thiruvananthapuram	3.4...	29.8...	24.0
Kochi	29	28.2	23.6	Tiruchi	-	30.7...	24.8
Kohima	7.2	24.8	17.6	Vijayawada	4...	29.2...	25.4
Kolkata	2.6	35.6	27.3	Visakhapatnam	2...	33.5...	27.4

(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	17	42	26	...31	...52	...
Bengaluru	25	16	26	268	225	...
Chennai	13	35	51	44	-	...
Delhi	11	12	43	258	143	...
Hyderabad	.5	46	10	24	25	...
Kolkata	.5	14	68	11	19	...
Lucknow	6	95	31	103	138	...
Mumbai	23	8	16	32	62	...
Pune	26	10	44	21	22	...
Visakhapatnam	9	20	14	21	34	...

Air Quality Code: ■ Poor ■ Moderate ■ Good (Readings indicate average AQI)

SO₂: Sulphur Dioxide. Short-term exposure can harm the respiratory system, making breathing difficult. It can affect visibility by reacting with other air particles to form haze and stain culturally important objects such as statues and monuments.

NO_x: Nitrogen Dioxide. Aggravated respiratory illness, causes haze to form by reacting with other air particles, causes acid rain, pollutes coastal waters.

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

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

Yesterday

In observation made at 4.00 p.m., Amritsar, Punjab recorded an average air quality index (AQI) score of 256 indicating an unhealthy level of pollution. In contrast, Kalaburagi, Karnataka recorded a healthy AQI score of 6

As a result, the court has now put a stay on the implementation of the Maratha quota law. Our [BJP] government had fought hard to first get the Bill passed in the Maharashtra legislature, and then make sure that the law endured in the Bombay High Court," said Mr. Patil.

Rattled by the *muk morchas* (silent rallies) in the State in the latter half of 2016, the Devendra Fadnavis-led BJP government had finally managed to get the Maratha quota Bill passed in the Assembly in 2018 to pacify the restive community.

Mr. Patil also alleged that

the then Congress-NCP government had proposed reservation for the Maratha and Muslim communities in the State, proved that it had always been serious about both communities getting their due rights.

Senior Congressman Mohan Joshi criticised the BJP State chief over the pandemic situation in Pune, remarking that despite several BJP leaders occupying positions of power in the Pune civic body and the city, not one had contributed anything significant to alleviate the health crisis.

Political stunts'

"The BJP has 100 corporators in the Pune civic body. The Mayor is from the BJP. Mr. Patil is an MLA from Pune's Kothrud area. Union Prakash Javadekar, who is considered Prime Modi's 'right hand', hails from the city. Yet, all these bigwigs have only indulged in political stunts instead of boosting the city's medical infrastructure," Mr. Joshi said.

He also rebuked Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar for

hinting at fresh transfers of IAS officers unless the grim COVID-19 situation in Pune was brought under control.

Mr. Patil said the Deputy Chief Minister himself ought to monitor the situation daily if he wanted results rather than hectoring or browbeating officials.

Indulging in idle politics' Countering him, a Congress leader from Pune said Mr. Patil was merely indulging in "idle politics" and the fact

LJP chief sought President's Rule in Maharashtra

crimes' under the Nitish Kumar-led State government in which his party is an ally.

Mr. Pawar's comments came a day after Mr. Paswan demanded the imposition of President's Rule in Maharashtra as its law and order situation was deteriorating.

Mr. Paswan had referred to the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation's action of demolishing illegal alterations at actor Kangana Ranaut's house in Bandra and

said Mumbaikars were worried about their safety.

Mr. Pawar said he was using actor Sushant Singh Rajput's death to create ill will against Maharashtra. He said Mr. Paswan by speaking in the tone of an actress who is trying to launch her political career. Mr. Pawar said, "It is difficult to improve basic infrastructure by taking responsibility for the existing situation. Sad that you are choosing the easy path for

your politics."

Mr. Pawar reminded Mr. Paswan, who has been an actor in Bollywood, that he too must be having an affinity to Mumbai. He said, "The people of Maharashtra will never tolerate you throwing mud on Maharashtra only for your political interests."

Mr. Pawar said, "I heard that you are worried about the law and order situation in Maharashtra and demanding the Governor to impose

President's Rule in Maharashtra. If you are so supportive of law and order, then why didn't you demand this for Bihar at the time when crimes against girls in the Muzaffarpur shelter home were unearthed in 2018. You had said that such cases are coming out from many other districts in the State. You did not even demand Nitish [Kumar] ji's resignation."

The MLA said the National Crime Records Bureau data

show that Bihar's capital Patna has the top murder rate among 19 big cities. "Patna's murder rate is 4.4 and is also at the top in killings of our sisters over dowry. In 2018 alone, five senior Right to Information activists were murdered. Many journalists were also killed. Incidents of people being killed by land mafia, and burning of houses are common in Bihar. Wonder why your party is still in the ruling alliance?" he said.

Rohit Pawar tells Chirag Paswan to focus on reducing crimes in Bihar

A Lok Sabha member from Bihar, Rohit Pawar on Sunday asked Lok Janshakti Party's (LJP) national president Chirag Paswan to first improve the law and order situation in Bihar, which is witnessing a 'rise in the number of

crimes' under the Nitish Kumar-led State government in which his party is an ally.

Mr. Pawar's comments came a day after Mr. Paswan demanded the imposition of President's Rule in Maharashtra as its law and order situation was deteriorating.

Mr. Paswan had referred to the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation's action of demolishing illegal alterations at her bungalow in Bandra. Claiming she has nothing to do with politics as she is not a politician, Ms. Ranaut said she started the

meeting with Maharashtra Governor Bhagat Singh Koshyari ji to apprise him about the injustice meted out to me. I told him how I was treated and that I hope I will get justice so that the faith of people, especially of women, in the system is restored," Ms. Ranaut said.

The meeting took place days after the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation demolished alleged illegal alterations at her bungalow in Bandra. Claiming she has nothing to do with politics as she is not a politician, Ms. Ranaut said she started the

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The second chair

Convention of electing the Deputy Speaker from the Opposition should be upheld

More than a year after the 17th Lok Sabha was constituted, the constitutionally mandated post of Deputy Speaker is lying vacant. This unusual situation is in the spotlight as the monsoon session of Parliament begins on Monday and the Rajya Sabha is scheduled to elect a Deputy Chairman. The vacancy of Deputy Speaker appears to be less of a lapse, and more a calculated delay by the ruling BJP. On September 9, the Congress leader in the Lok Sabha, Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury, wrote to Speaker Om Birla to initiate the process, by election or consensus. Mr. Chowdhury also recalled the convention of offering the post to the Opposition. Mr. Birla has been non-committal in his public comments on the issue, and the BJP has remained silent. Soon after the 2019 general election, the government had made some effort to fill the position. It had approached the YSR Congress, which reportedly turned it down since it would have been difficult to align their protest against the government for not acceding special status to Andhra Pradesh with occupying the post. While the Congress has been forceful in raising the issue, other Opposition parties have been less enthusiastic. In the Rajya Sabha, the JDU's Harivansh, who has been reelected to the House, is seeking reelection as Deputy Chairman as the ruling combine's candidate. He had defeated Congress leader B.K. Hariprasad – 125-105 votes – in elections in August 2018.

The ruling combine, despite not having a simple majority, has managed to win crucial votes several times over in the past in the Upper House. This time around, BJP leaders have claimed the support of 140 members for Mr. Harivansh. The RJD's Manoj Jha, an erudite member in the Opposition, is the joint candidate of 12 parties for the post. There was confusion within the Opposition ranks on whether this contest was worth it. Several of their senior members are likely to skip the session, considering the risk of COVID-19 infection. The BSP, which has remained a reluctant Opposition party, is unlikely to be different this time. The BJP has taken its overwhelming parliamentary majority as a justification for disregarding not only the Opposition but also parliamentary conventions. Its refusal to engage the Opposition in electing a Deputy Speaker is further eroding the common ground that India sorely requires to deal with the multitude of its current challenges. The BJP's pre-eminence has also devastated the Opposition which is struggling to muster a coherent and united response. Election by consensus of an Opposition MP as Deputy Speaker of Lok Sabha will be a course correction. The government should be magnanimous and the Opposition creative in dealing with this issue.

Long haul ahead

Demand-supportive fiscal policies alone can end the lockdown-induced slowdown

Factory output continued to contract in July, albeit marginally slower than in June, reflecting the depressed economic conditions as the pandemic rages on. Quick estimates for the IIP show output across the three sectoral components of the index – mining, manufacturing and electricity – all shrank, dragging the overall index to a 10.4% year-on-year contraction. While this is slower than June's 15.8% shrinkage, a closer look reveals that the rebound in momentum witnessed in the fiscal first quarter's last month – when the economy reopened and the contraction narrowed sharply from May's 33.9% fall – has dissipated appreciably. The most telltale sign of this flattening is the more than halved pace of growth in the solitary use-based industrial activity of the IIP's six product groups, in which output had turned positive in June. Growth in consumer non-durables – it includes essential household consumables – slid back to 6.7% from the preceding month's 14.3%, betraying the abiding weakness in private consumption spending. The other five groups posted double-digit contractions, with consumer durables and capital goods shrinking 23.6% and 22.8%, respectively. If the trend in durables attests to the RBI's evaluation last month that "private consumption has lost its discretionary elements across the board", the capital goods data point to a dismal picture on the investment front. With demand-starved companies operating their factories well below capacity, there is little indication that the protracted six-quarter slump in this key sector, which encompasses the plants and machinery that manufacturers order when expanding or starting new ventures, is anywhere close to reversing momentum.

Electricity generation, however, provides some relief, with the contraction narrowing to 2.5% in July from June's 10%. A deeper look at the 23 subcategories of manufacturing shows that only tobacco products and pharmaceuticals posted expansions in July, with the latter benefitting from the increased global demand for medicines, including generic drugs, in the wake of the pandemic. The manufacture of pharmaceuticals, medicinal chemical and botanical products climbed 22% in July, making it the solitary product to post an expansion of 1.8% over April-July. Textiles and garment manufacturing, employment intensive segments shrank to 14.8% and 28.7%, respectively. To be sure, the IIP data come with a lag of six weeks and a few more recent indicators give room for some guarded hope. For one, the latest IHS Markit India Manufacturing PMI survey-based outlook signals that the sector likely posted some expansion for the first time in five months in August. And auto makers reported growth in shipments of passenger vehicles to dealers last month in anticipation of festive season demand. Still, to help sustain any incipient revival, the Centre will need to enact demand-supportive fiscal policies or risk seeing the slowdown prolong.

In LAC talks, from peace to conflict prevention

There seem to be irreconcilable differences between India and China over fundamentals of the key border agreements



D.S. HOODA

The ongoing crisis in eastern Ladakh has raised many issues on the range and trajectory of India-China relations. Among these is the future relevance of various agreements that were signed between the two countries to maintain peace and tranquillity along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) that serves as a de facto border.

Agreements over the years

Some experts argue that the genesis of the current problem lies in the first agreement signed between India and China in 1993. They say India should not have accepted the term 'LAC' in this agreement as there was no clarity as to where this line lay on the ground, and this ambiguity has forced India to adopt a policy of appeasement on the LAC. The absence of a delineated LAC is undoubtedly problematic, but it would also be appropriate to put the various agreements in a historical context, and dispassionately analyse their impact and their future relevance.

After the 1962 war, the India-China border was loosely controlled by both sides, with a fairly sparse deployment of troops. That did not mean that border claims were diluted by either side, as witnessed in the bloody clash at Nathu La in 1967. The China Study Group, established in 1976, gave clarity to India's claims by laying down the patrolling points and guiding the scope of military activity along the LAC.

A significant change in border management occurred after the Chinese occupation of a post in the Sumdorong Chu Valley in 1986.

The massive response by the Indian Army sparked realisation on both sides that the boundary issue needed to be brought to the fore, and pending a settlement, some mechanism must be evolved to keep peace along the LAC.

I was posted as a young Major in the China desk of the Military Operations Directorate when Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi made the breakthrough visit to Beijing in 1988. After his visit, we had started working on a number of drafts on confidence-building measures along the LAC. Many of these recommendations were incorporated in the Agreement on the Maintenance of Peace and Tranquillity along the Line of Actual Control in the India-China Border Areas, signed in 1993 (<https://bit.ly/3k5HNi2>).

The 1993 agreement formalised the LAC concept. However, understanding that there were differing perceptions, it called for creating a group of diplomatic and military experts for "resolution of differences between the two sides on the alignment of the line of actual control". The agreement eschewed the use of force to settle the boundary issue and, as part of confidence-building measures, restricted military exercises and air activity close to the LAC. An essential part of the agreement was a reduction in "military forces along the line of actual control in conformity with the requirements of the principle of mutual and equal security to ceilings to be mutually agreed".

This was followed by the 1996 Agreement Between the Government of the Republic of India and the Government of the People's Republic of China on Confidence-Building Measures in the Military Field Along the Line of Actual Control in the India-China Border Areas (<https://bit.ly/2GXXkQD>). It called for reducing or limiting military forces to minimum levels and limiting the deployment of major armaments such as tanks, artillery



guns, and missiles to mutually agreed levels. A 2005 protocol (<https://bit.ly/3hy3Hje>), or the Protocol between the Government of the Republic of India and the Government of the People's Republic of China on Modalities for the Implementation of Confidence Building Measures in the Military Field Along the Line of Actual Control in the India-China Border Areas, added more confidence-building measures outlining the procedure to be adopted when soldiers of the two sides came to a face-to-face situation while patrolling areas where there was a differing perception of the LAC. The protocol also agreed to the mechanism of border meeting points and exchanges between the two militaries. Interestingly, there was no mention of a reduction in military forces.

Unimplemented aspects

Did these agreements serve a useful purpose? Undoubtedly, they resulted in an extended period of calm along the LAC and ensured that not a shot was fired. However, two unimplemented aspects of the agreements, combined with a shift in military posture by both sides, has led to an erosion of confidence-building measures between the two armies in the past few years.

First, the differences in the alignment of the LAC could not be resolved. Attempts were made, and maps were exchanged of the Central sector, but there were apparent irreconcilable differences

over the Western sector, and the process stalled in 2002. Second, the agreement on reducing military forces along the LAC to the minimum was neither seriously discussed nor implemented.

In the late 1980s, when rapprochement with China was being considered, the Indian Army looked towards Pakistan as the major threat. However, even at that time, papers produced by my superiors in the Military Operations Directorate stated that in about 15 years, India's primary adversary would be China. By the mid-2000s, the northern borders came into increasing focus of the military and the government.

In 2006, a decision was taken to build 73 strategic roads along the LAC. In 2010, two new divisions were raised to strengthen deployment in Arunachal Pradesh, and additional formations were deployed in Ladakh. In 2013, the Indian government sanctioned the raising of a Mountain Strike Corps for the Northern border. As infrastructure improved on the Indian side and larger forces were available for patrolling the LAC, face-offs with Chinese patrols increased. In many cases, the Chinese soldiers complained that they were being prevented from going up to areas that they had traditionally patrolled, but India was defending its perception of the LAC more robustly.

There is also a mistaken notion that the LAC is some fuzzy and unclear line. India's perception of the LAC is clearly marked on its military maps, and while the soldiers understand that there are areas of differing perception, there is no ambiguity about the line that they are tasked to defend. Some media reports point out that the Indian Army had not been patrolling in the Dapsang area after the 2013 intrusion by the Chinese. I will only briefly state that this is not true.

As face-offs between the two armies became more frequent, protocols weakened. The first manif-

estation of this came in the Dapsang intrusion in 2013, and the attempted intrusion at Chumar in 2014. In between Dapsang and Chumar, both countries signed the Border Defence Cooperation Agreement, or the Agreement between the Government of the Republic of India and the Government of the People's Republic of China on Border Defence Cooperation (<https://bit.ly/3c5yBaN>), but it had little impact on the ground.

After Doklam

Even after Chumar, although protocols had weakened, they were still holding, and held out till the Doklam incident of 2017. It was after Doklam that we saw greater aggression by both sides. On August 15, 2017, videos were flashed all over the media of Indian and Chinese soldiers at Pangong Tso involved in stone-throwing. Today, the brutality of deaths along the LAC, the complete loss of trust, and disregard for the LAC by China have left all agreements in tatters.

Can we go back to a situation where both sides revert to respecting the past agreements? I think it is no longer possible because two fundamentals of the agreements – resolution of the differing perceptions of the LAC and reduction of military forces – which have been ignored over the years stand unimplemented. There seem to be irreconcilable differences over these fundamentals.

This reality is reflected in the five-point consensus arrived at in the recent meeting between the two Foreign Ministers. The two sides have agreed to "conclude new Confidence Building Measures to maintain and enhance peace and tranquillity in the border areas". This is a good step forward, although we should no longer be talking about peace and tranquillity along the LAC, but conflict prevention.

Lt. Gen. D.S. Hooda (retd.) is a former Northern Army Commander

Coronavirus fears and preconception advice

With widespread community transmission, women in particular face a risk; a health advisory is essential



M.S. SESADRI & T. JACOB JOHN

In our preoccupation with managing the COVID-19 pandemic, we should not lose sight of special issues that may pose problems for women in the reproductive age group. The special issues are of two kinds: one that relates to medical management of pregnancy and newborn care. The World Health Organization (WHO) and the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) have provided guidelines to address this issue.

The second relates to the advisability of deliberately delaying pregnancy until the epidemic wanes and the disease becomes endemic. All available guidelines are silent on this issue. Is there a need for exercising a choice of timing of pregnancy? What should be a wise policy for the Government of India, or for that matter any government, the ICMR and WHO on this matter?

Need for protocols, follow-up
The SARS-CoV-2 virus that causes COVID-19 has a special predilection for the cells that form the inner lining of blood vessels. Therefore, organs that have a large number of blood vessels are particularly at risk. The placenta, a unique organ in pregnancy – the source of nourishment for the growing foetus – is highly vascular.

It has been clearly demonstrated that in mothers infected close to the time of delivery, the virus can infect the placenta. A small percentage of newborn babies



now, but if subtle, by the time the effects on the foetus are recognised, it may be too late. Therefore, there is a need to anticipate this eventuality and be prepared for it. In the epidemic context, it is wiser to be cautious and advise effective contraception to postpone pregnancies till the probability of maternal viral infection is minimal.

Cutting infection threat

What are the advantages in adopting such a policy? If women adopt contraception, they will not need antenatal clinic visits which, during epidemic times, pose a risk of contracting infection in the clinic. Antenatal women constitute a large proportion of subjects who need to visit hospitals regularly and considerable proportions of health-care workers at the primary and secondary levels are occupied with their care. If this demand is less because women in reproductive age group practise contraception, the risk of contracting infection in the clinic.

These health-care workers can be deployed for the much-needed care of COVID-19 patients, non-COVID illness and, more importantly, the ensuing COVID-19 vaccination programme, a mammoth task in India.

The lower birth rate till the epi-

demic wanes will ensure that there will be fewer children in the post-epidemic phase for economically distressed families to care for and curtail disease transmission through children.

Every day about 748,000 babies are born in India. Since the outcome is unsuccessful in about half the pregnancies (embryo/foetal loss), the daily new pregnancies in India would be more than 15,00,000. With the widespread community transmission in India now, a large number of women who conceive are likely to be exposed to the virus.

A proportion of those exposed will get infected and nearly 80% of those infected will be asymptomatic or have only trivial transient symptoms. They may not come to medical attention unless a family contact has RT-PCR positive symptomatic disease. At present, in city maternity hospitals, RT-PCR positivity in the first trimester is about 10% of all infected pregnant women and likely to increase rapidly as the epidemic in India approaches the peak. Infected women should have a more intensive follow-up during their ante-natal period to identify and document any fetal abnormality. Analysis of these results will be vital to state clearly whether any abnormality is attributable to the viral infection.

The risk of exposure of the developing foetus is not just in those who come to hospital but also in all those asymptomatic or minimally symptomatic pregnant women with the viral infection. It is important, therefore, to advise all women in the reproductive age group to practise effective contraception over the next several months in order to prevent coronavirus infection during pregnancy and its potential impact on the

foetus. The ICMR and the professional bodies concerned will do well to formulate policy on this matter and inform the profession and the public. Women who happen to conceive in spite of the advice may have to cocoon (reverse quarantine) themselves at least for the first trimester of pregnancy in order to avoid infection.

On vaccination

It is predicted that this virus will not go away but will stay on as an endemic problem after the fury of the epidemic is over. When this occurs and when an effective and safe vaccine is available, women in the reproductive age group who have not already acquired the infection and those who do not have circulating IgG antibody to indicate that they may have had asymptomatic infection, will have to be considered for priority vaccination prior to conception.

Finally, while this problem will be huge in countries with a high birth rate such as India and China, it will also be a public health problem in countries with a low birth rate, where governments are concerned about 'population wealth'. The ICMR and governments globally would do well to assess the situation, review all available scientific evidence and formulate and circulate an appropriate health advisory. India has the challenge and opportunity of adopting this policy and voicing its opinion in WHO.

M.S. Seshadri is former Professor and HOD, Clinical Endocrinology Department, CMC Hospital, Vellore, and is currently Medical Director, Thirumalai Mission Hospital, Ranipet, Tamil Nadu. T. Jacob John is former Professor and HOD, Clinical Virology Department, CMC Hospital, Vellore and former President, Indian Academy of Pediatrics

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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

Victims of slander
The Supreme Court judge, Justice N.V. Ramana, is right in his concern (Inside pages, "Judges are becoming victims of gossip," September 13). Such malicious acts will definitely tell upon the morale of judges and also on the entire judiciary. Unfortunately, many political parties and anti-social elements use social platforms to further their

agendas and fan hatred. It is an irony that the language, gestures, threats, and insinuations used by these forces have nothing "social" about them. As a corollary, our democratic and secular fabric will, in the long run, be affected by this. Imposing a blanket ban on these social media arms may not be the only solution. But before holding big events such as the general election, a ban may

become necessary.
M. SOMASEKHAR PRASAD, Hyderabad

I can only recollect the Editorial page article (<https://bit.ly/32qoQRb>) in *The Hindu*, titled Judicial appointments & disappointments" (August 18, 2012), by eminent jurist, Justice V.R. Krishna Iyer. It is a piece most appropriate. D.A. ARUL, Chennai

Media's role
The media must be held accountable for its work and narratives. Debate and discussion, especially on television, appear to be based on mere gossip and speculation. Even in the midst of a pandemic, journalists seem to be breaking norms as if TRP is the prime goal. The delivery of justice is the duty of the state and the judiciary and a media trial

is most unfair. The fourth estate is supposed to deliver facts in an unbiased manner and leave it to the audience to interpret it in whichever way it wants. The media should take care to follow the 'norms of

journalistic conduct' given its power and influence. But with great power also comes great responsibility.

SOUMYA ACHAMMA THOMAS, Pathanamthitta, Kerala

CORRECTIONS & CLARIFICATIONS:
An article titled "A counter-coalition of Eurasian powers" (Profiles' page, Sept. 13, 2020) erroneously gave the year of admission of India and Pakistan into the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation as 2015. It should have been 2017.

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Exploiting the Chinese exit

In the absence of Chinese tech, the primary Indian IT objective must shift to providing for Indians



SIDDHARTH PAI

The current India-China border stand-off has expanded watchful Indian eyes into cyberspace; but the Chinese put up blinding shields on their own Internet territory more than a decade ago. The Chinese government began erecting censorship barriers (what I like to call the Great Internet Wall of China) and banned several popular Western websites and applications years ago.

In January 2010, Google announced that in response to a hacking attack from within China on it and dozens of other U.S. companies, it was no longer willing to censor searches in China and would pull out of the country completely. Meanwhile, in the intervening years since Google and others were forced out, the Chinese Internet market exploded, and has grown to over 900 million users, most of them on mobile (paradoxically via Google's Android) from just over 300 million in early 2010. This is according to the China Internet Network Information Center, a branch of the country's Ministry of Industry and Information Technology.

China's lead

In hindsight, China's censors look like superb long-range economic planners and technology strategists. The Great Internet Wall did not filter and screen Western content so much as it insulated Chinese entrepreneurs from Big Tech in Silicon Valley. The Chinese web market was left with substantial appetites for Internet-based social, commerce, and lifestyle services which Big Tech could not fulfil. Home-grown firms such as WeChat and Alibaba had a field day building apps that were at first faithful reproductions of Silicon Valley, but soon morphed into distinctly Chinese applications tailored solely to the home market.

Baidu has replaced Google in China. Youku Tudou is YouTube, and Xiaohongshu is a version of Instagram from which users can shop for goods directly. WeChat began as a



simple messaging app, but is now many things for the Chinese (social media, news, messaging, payments, and digital commerce).

As far back as 2016, U.S. President Barack Obama released a strategic plan which addressed many issues, but the most striking part of this report is that it appeared the Chinese had learnt their lesson from failing to make themselves an IT outsourcing services superpower like India had.

According to the 2016 White House report, the Chinese have leapfrogged even the U.S. in AI research, especially in the components of "neural networks" and "deep learning". In this case, the intellectual property being produced actually belongs to China and is not a faithful duplicate of someone else's product or technology. This has far-reaching implications. Current affairs show us that the U.S. is likely to follow India's lead by banning Chinese apps and technology companies.

With the rise of Jio, and the response from its competitors, the widening reach of Internet connection across the country will provide hundreds of millions of non-urban Indians with fluid access to the Internet. India now has the lowest Internet data costs in the world. In its attempt to dominate the rest of the world, the Chinese Internet industry desperately needs India's freshly minted 500-plus million netizens to continue to act as a training ground for the AI algorithms they put together. China's Internet ecosystem is entirely self-created, self-run, and self-serviced, yet it exports the newly banned apps such as Tik Tok and PUBG worldwide – adding to the user base of 900-plus million Chinese netizens whose data they already have exclusive access to.

The decision to ban such apps in India is not only a geopolitical move but also a strategic trade manoeuvre that can have significant economic impact. Banning these Chinese websites and applications to the Indian public effectively allows our home-grown IT talent to focus on the newly arrived Internet user. Big tech firms from Silicon Valley and China in both hardware and software have been in a tussle over the Indian consumer, but India's focus remains on exporting IT services while paying little attention to servicing our own nation's tech market.

Most alarmingly, while we have spent the last two decades exporting the bulk of our technology services to developed countries in the West, the vacuum created as the Indian Internet grew has been filled by American Big Tech and by the Chinese. After the removal of more than 118 Chinese apps, Indian techies have started trying to fill the holes with copycat replacement websites and applications. But faithful copies are not enough for us to make full use of China's exit.

The primary Indian IT objective must shift from servicing others to providing for ourselves. In the absence of Chinese tech, Indian entrepreneurs should not simply look to replace what the exiting firms have so far been providing. They should focus instead on providing services and products of high quality that will be used by everyday Indians across the country. The aim of providing netizens with the same services across diverse markets is overarching – regional barriers created by language exist within our own nation. These provide an accretion of excellent smaller markets, with opportunities for specialised Internet services

created for a local community, by the community itself.

The fundamental focus of the new digital products that plan to emerge in the growing market should be to provide for hyper-regional necessities and preferences. With this in mind, there are several commercial opportunities available. For example, apps and services that provide specific market prices, local train and bus routes, allow for non-traditional banking and lending, education, health, online sales, classified advertising, and so on.

It's hyper-local, hyper-regional

Accessibility is also crucial. With the rise in migrant work and labour all over the country, a news or banking app with, say, an Odia interface should work everywhere that Odia-speaking people migrate to. However, national accessibility on its own will not make an app a game changer. Indians are savvy enough to know what a world class app is.

If we create hyper-local and hyper-regional services of high quality and great accessibility that are also portable across our linguistic diversity, we are far more likely to succeed in creating one of the strongest Internet markets in the world, rather than creating copycat apps or apps that only cater to English speakers.

Technology companies all over the world have focused their efforts on the 15% of the world's population with deep pockets while largely ignoring the other six billion denizens of the world's population. Some sympathetic noises about "emerging" markets are made, but the waters remain largely untested.

If we go forward with the aim of servicing our own, India's experiences as a modernising power are of great use to the bulk of the world's population, which lives in penury when compared to its western counterparts. We can export our "India stack" to other countries in the "south", such as those in Africa and Latin America. We have successfully done this before with our outstanding railway technology. There is no reason we cannot pull off the same achievement with our home-grown Internet power.

Siddharth Pai is founder of Siana Capital, a venture capital firm focused on Indian Deep Tech and Science

FROM THE READERS' EDITOR

Those subversive lines

Cartoonists have been a critical voice throughout contemporary history



A.S. PANNEERSELVAN

Like every other professional, I too learn from best practices. I have learnt a lot from the work of Michael Getler, a former ombudsman at *The Washington Post* and at the Public Broadcasting Service, in handling various complaints from readers. He once said, "An ombudsman shows that the press can take a punch, if necessary, not just deliver one, and that there is also an independent voice to counter the daily claims of 'fake news' and to defend, when appropriate, against the sea of unfair and inaccurate criticism."

Complaints about two cartoons

I was reminded of Getler's wise counsel when I received two complaints within a span of 20 minutes about cartoons published in *The Hindu* over the past week. The first complaint was from Dr. P. Rajagopal from Mylapore, Chennai. He wrote, "I am shocked and outraged beyond belief by two cartoons – one involving the Prime Minister dooming democracy to death and the other showing the NSA [National Security Adviser] as an attack dog rounding up innocents, criminals, activists and journalists with [the] Home Minister (like a Nazi) holding the leash, which were published in the September 7th and 8th issues, respectively, of your newspaper." He went on to suggest that the cartoons should have been aimed only at former Prime Minister Indira Gandhi and her son Sanjay Gandhi and not at the present Prime Minister or the Home Minister.

Vijay S. Raghavan, a regular writer from Navi Mumbai, wrote: "I wish to take objections to two cartoons by Surendra in *The Hindu* in the last few days. In one cartoon, Mr. Modi is shown cutting off the hook link from which a rope is hanging down and held tightly at the other end by a lady illustrated as Democracy. However hard the media, including *The Hindu*, tries to show the Modi government as anti-democratic and dictatorial, [what is seen] by the public is the other way round." The cartoon in question was drawn by Satwik Gade and not by Mr. Surendra. Mr. Raghavan also took exception to the cartoon that criticised the way the NSA is being used to silence dissent. He wrote: "Just because some official steps were taken to

control law and order, it does not mean that Mr. Modi is acting against democratic norms."

Talking truth to power

Readers must remember that the excesses of one era do not justify the excesses of another. Cartoonists have been a critical voice throughout contemporary history. For instance, Abu Abraham drew some really subversive cartoons, including one that showed the President of India busy signing documents from his bathtub during the Emergency, which were later compiled as an anthology titled *The Games of Emergency*. When V.C. Shukla, the Information and Broadcasting Minister during the Emergency, justified censorship and said "it was needed to stop the spread of rumour", Abraham famously retorted: "But why stop the spread of humour?" It is true that, in the words of another Information and Broadcasting Minister, Lal Krishna Advani, some journalists were "told to bend, but they chose to crawl" during the Emergency. The question before us is clear: do we want Abu Abrahams or those who choose to crawl when asked to bend?

C. Rammanohar Reddy, a senior journalist and a former news ombudsman, has a very positive take on Mr. Surendra's cartoons. On Mr. Surendra's cartoon on the media trial of actor Rhea Chakraborty, Mr. Reddy tweeted: "A picture tells 10,000 words not a 1,000 words. Shame on Indian journalism. @surendracart's a biting comment."

It is important that we not only understand the role of a cartoonist in our democratic space but also internalise it. In his excellent exposition on cartoons and cartoonists, Jonathan Moreno del Rio said: "Cartoonists are more than mere journalists who explore news and current affairs through their illustrations. They are not a source of information for the public; instead they are participants in public debate and engaged in commenting rather than reporting." Taking a historical look at political cartoons, Harry Katz, former Head Curator of Prints and Photographs at the Library of Congress, said: "In an age when reality is defined by sound bites and spin doctors, pandering pundits and partisan politics, political cartoonists must remain relevant and above the fray, talking truth to power in all its forms and clarifying with insight, intelligence and accuracy the difficult, complex issues and events shaping our daily lives."

I think Mr. Surendra's cartoons live up to Mr. Katz's prescription.

readerseditor@thehindu.co.in

Reducing India's cancer burden

We need to focus on risk reduction, early detection, and programmatic and policy solutions

BALRAM BHARGAVA & PRASHANT MATHUR

that there is greater access to screening and vaccination, early detection, and timely, affordable treatment.

The importance of data

Population health approaches are also relevant for large-scale impact. Programmatic and policy-level solutions need to be driven by data. The information collected through the National Cancer Registry Programme has been used effectively over the years to advocate for better access to screening, early detection, referral, treatment and palliative care services. It has also helped shape cancer research in the country, which is of crucial importance to guide our efforts on cancer prevention and control.

Making cancer a notifiable disease could be one of the ways to help drive this research further by providing greater access to accurate, relevant data that can drive policy decisions.

India is committed to achieving a one-third reduction in cancer-related deaths by 2030 as part of the Sustainable Development Goals, and it has made considerable progress. India has improved in some areas, such as personal hygiene, which are distant drivers of cancer. Government programmes such as Ayushman Bharat, Swasthya Bharat, Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, Poshan Abhiyaan and Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Janashashakti Parivojana and initiatives such as FSSAI's new labelling and display regulations and drug price control can encourage inter-sectoral and multi-sectoral action. Other initiatives such as the National Health Policy, the National Tobacco Control Programme, and the National Programme for Prevention and Control of Cancer, Diabetes, Cardiovascular Diseases and Stroke are also paving the way for progress.

Our approach should not simply focus on diagnostics, treatment modalities and vaccines, but emphasise inclusivity in thinking and action for equitable solutions that can greatly reduce the impact of cancer across all socioeconomic levels in the country.

Dr. Balram Bhargava is Director General, ICMR, and Secretary, Department of Health Research; and Dr. Prashant Mathur is Director, ICMR-NCDIR, Bengaluru



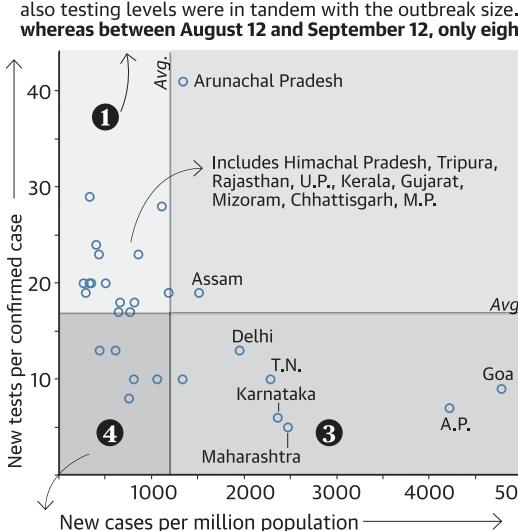
DATA POINT

Falling behind

1. BETWEEN JULY AND AUGUST

The first chart depicts the new cases per million population and the number of new tests conducted per confirmed case between July 12 and August 12.

1 In the States in this section of the graph, the cases per million population were lower than the national average, while the tests conducted per confirmed case were relatively higher. This means that in these States, not only were the cases fewer, but also testing levels were in tandem with the outbreak size. **Between July 12 and August 12, 15 States out of 29 fell in this section, whereas between August 12 and September 12, only 8 States featured**



2. BETWEEN AUGUST AND SEPTEMBER The second chart depicts the new cases per million population and the number of new tests conducted per confirmed case between August 12 and September 12.

1 In the States in this section of the graph, while the new cases per million were higher than the national average, the new tests conducted per confirmed case were relatively lower. This means that though the cases are increasing in these States, the tests conducted are not keeping up with the size of the outbreak. **Seven such States fall in this section in both the first and second charts**

3. ANTIGEN RATIO The other factor to be considered in the analysis is the increasing use of Rapid Antigen Detection Tests (RADT). RADTs can register as many as 50% 'false negatives'. In Delhi, Chhattisgarh, West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka, more than 40% of the tests conducted in the past one month were RADTs

The Hindu

FROM THE ARCHIVES

FIFTY YEARS AGO SEPTEMBER 14, 1970

Karunanidhi's reply

Mr. M. Karunanidhi, Tamil Nadu Chief Minister said here to-day [Madras, September 13] that States could hope to solve their many problems only by getting greater autonomy. In his concluding remarks at the two-day State autonomy conference, sponsored by the D.M.K., Mr. Karunanidhi denied that his party was trying to divert people's attention from the burning problems facing the State by holding a conference of this type. He said the Congress (O) was doing propaganda that the conference had been convened to hide the D.M.K.'s inability to solve the unemployment problem or check the rise in prices of essential articles. The aim of the conference was to show how they were unable to solve these problems because of concentration of power at the Centre. The Chief Minister asked the D.M.K. volunteers to tour villages and enlist the support of the people to their demand for greater powers for States. He hailed the meeting as a great success in view of participation of leaders from different parts of the country. He requested these leaders to take steps in their respective States to get the backing of the people. No longer could any one say that this demand was made only by the D.M.K.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO SEPT. 14, 1920

Land revenue and administration (From an editorial)

The report on the settlement of Land Revenue in the Madras Presidency for 1918-1919 is as arid a record as any similar annual issued by a department of Government. On account of a tradition which is more logical than useful, the annual reports of Governmental operations continue to be presented in a form which repels every one except the unwary statistician. With a little more care chronicles of facts and figures might be made to evoke general attention so that they would serve to educate the average citizen as to the ways and means of Government. Apart from the uninspiring form, the report under reference comes out so late after the respective period has passed that it would merit a comment but for its proving another proverbial characteristic of departmental documents. Going into the body of the report, we find that the total area under crops during the year under report showed a considerable decrease from the normal. The Board of Revenue attributes the fall to the season, which was generally unfavourable from an agricultural point of view.

FROM PAGE ONE

Front-line workers to get vaccine first: Vardhan

Elaborating on the vaccine candidates and their development in India, the Minister said the Department of Biotechnology and the Indian Council of Medical Research have been pro-active in responding to the emerging situation to support the advancement of the candidates.

The Minister said India is actively partnering with the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI) and trials at different

phases are ongoing with respect to several vaccines in Indian laboratories (private and public) and hospitals.

He said a safe and effective vaccine would help in establishing immunity at a much faster pace as compared to the natural infection.

"It is hoped that a consensus will emerge in the next few months over the desired level of protective herd immunity in any community."

Death and hunger stalk village in Agra

Circumstances were only marginally better before the lockdown when he could find work for upto three days in a week. "I sometimes drive a cycle rickshaw or work at construction sites. But increasingly, I have no energy to pull a rickshaw," he says.

Mr. Singh's family has seven members, but only six are mentioned in the ration card. While they are entitled to 2 kilos of wheat and 3 kilos of rice per person, or 12 kilos of wheat and 18 kilos of rice overall, they receive only a meagre 9 kg of wheat and 4 kg rice.

According to the Divisional Commissioner Anil Kumar, Nagla Vidhichand village is part of the gram panchayat of Nainana Jat, with a population of 12,900, or 3,698 families. There are 1,918 ration cards issued covering 8,400 beneficiaries. According to Mr. Kumar, during the lockdown, 1,153 free ration kits were distributed by the district administration. 159 Ayushman Bharat cards have been distributed across the gram panchayat.

Journalist and Dalit activist Chandra Bhan Prasad says artisanal communities are among the most vulnerable and have been hard hit by the lockdown.

"Dalits are usually the last to be addressed. Those living near cities have lost touch with farming and go to cities for work. Artisans like shoemakers, weavers, and locksmiths, depend entirely on daily wages. Unlike migrant labourers who can return to their villages and

rely on their agriculture land for subsistence, these artisans have no fall back. Moreover, due to their artisan status, they are not entitled to MNREGA work. No one in the government has thought of the impact that the lockdown will have on such category of people. Lockdown is a man-made disaster, and the government must urgently devise ways to rescue people from it like it does during floods and earthquakes."

52-year-old Radhey Lal and his wife, survive on 6 kilos of wheat and 3 kilos of rice a month from PDS ration. A typical meal consists of chapattis with chilli paste. Mr. Lal suffers from paralysis in his right shoulder and is unable to work. The wife is a ragpicker.

None of the families *The Hindu* spoke to had an Ayushman Bharat card, which covers medical expenses upto ₹5 lakh for poor families.

"The situation depicts the abject failure of the State government to ensure the right to food, health and more broadly, the right to life with dignity," says development economist and social scientist Reetika Khera.

"When hunger-related deaths occur, governments often evade responsibility by saying that the death was due to an illness, as if ensuring the right to health is not their responsibility. Watchdogs such as the NHRC or the National Commission for SC/STs should seek an explanation and hold district and State functionaries accountable," she says.

85-90% attendance at NEET, says NTA

They are competing for about one lakh MBBS and BDS seats in government and private institutions across the country.

Although students who showed symptoms such as an elevated temperature or coughing at the examination centres were allowed to write the test in a separate isolated room, those who had actually tested positive for COVID-19 were barred from appearing. Such candidates will be allowed to take the test at a later date, said the NTA. Last minute changes in the allocation of some centres, especially in Assam, Gujarat and Maharashtra, caused a few students to miss the examination although information was provided ahead of time.

A section of students and parents had demanded further postponement of NEET due to the spike in COVID-19 cases and difficulties in transportation following local lockdown. Despite wi-

despread social media protests, court cases and objections by several State governments, the examination was held as scheduled.

More centres
The number of centres was expanded to 3,843 this year, in order to prevent crowding and allow the number of students per room to be halved to just 12, and an exhaustive safety protocol, with disposable masks, gloves and sanitisers, was put in place to protect students from infection.

Students across the country reported that these norms were largely followed within the examination hall, although distancing in many places was two feet rather than the recommended six feet. However, it was a different story outside, with images and videos from a number of cities showing crowding and jostling of parents and students outside venues.

Clash at AIADMK meeting

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
TIRUCHI

Rival groups of AIADMK disrupted a party meeting here on Sunday as they clashed with each other in the presence of Backward Classes and Minority Welfare Minister S. Valarmathi. According to an eyewitness, commotion was caused by a group of about 50 carrying flags of a "Mutharaiyar" outfit after en-

tering a private marriage hall in Srirangam where the meeting of "Ilaigner and Ilampengal Pasarai" of AIADMK's Tiruchi district (rural north) was underway to take stock of the party's preparedness for the upcoming Assembly elections. Members of the group rushed to the dais, raised slogans, indulged in vandalism and verbally abused those present.

At 9,894 cases, Karnataka witnesses new high

A.P. maintains sub-10,000 trend for fresh cases; 2,216 more test positive in Telangana; Kerala reports 3,139 cases

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD

For the third day in a row, Andhra Pradesh reported less than 10,000 COVID-19 infections and fewer deaths on Sunday.

There were 66 more fatalities, and the toll was close to the 5,000-mark at 4,912. New cases registered stood at 9,536.

A Health Department bulletin said the number of ac-

COVID-19

tive cases was 95,072.

The positivity rate of the 45.99 lakh tests done was 12.33%. In the last one day, 72,233 samples were tested, achieving a tests per million ratio of 86,139. Confirmed cases per million were 10,629. The daily positivity rate dropped to 13.82% from about 17% a fortnight ago.

Sunday's incidence in Kar-

nataka was 9,894 cases, the highest daily number so far, breaking the previous record of 9,860 cases on September 2. With 104 new deaths, the toll rose to 7,265.

Bengaluru Urban reported 3,479 cases and 45 of the 104 deaths.

On testing, 67,955 tests were conducted in the State including 31,657 rapid antigen tests.

On Saturday, 2,216 more cases were detected in Telangana. The death toll so far stood at 961 with 11 more fatalities recorded. While 56,217 samples were tested on September 12, the results of 2,345 samples were awaited.

New infections included 341 from Greater Hyderabad, 210 from Rangareddy, 148 from Medchal Malkajgiri, 119 from Karimnagar, 126 from Nalgonda, 105 from Khammam and 102 from Warangal Urban. In the overall tally,

Team work

As people flout COVID-19 norms after lockdown norms were eased, campaigns are being conducted to spread awareness. The graphs show the spread of the pandemic in the southern States



Reaching out: A team of volunteers going around in PPE suits to spread awareness about maintaining physical distancing and wearing masks, in Visakhapatnam, on Sunday. ■ K.R. DEEPAK

*Kerala has a mismatch of 68 cases due to unaccounted deaths, missing persons. **Telangana numbers are as of 8 p.m. on Saturday

***Karnataka has 19 non-COVID-19 deaths

31,607 were active cases.

Kerala on Sunday reported 3,139 new cases of COVID-19 and 1,855 recoveries; samples tested in 24 hours came to 34,786.

The number of patients being treated was 30,072.

Another 14 deaths were added to the "provisional" death list, taking the toll to 439. These deaths occurred

between August 17 and September 9.

Eight of these deaths were reported from Thiruvananthapuram, two each from Kollam and Ernakulam and

one each from Thrissur and Palakkad. Of the new cases, 94% were locally acquired infections and included infections reported among 56 health-care workers. Thiruvananthapuram reported 412 cases, Kozhikode 399, Malappuram 378, Ernakulam 326, Alappuzha 252, Kannur 234, Palakkad 233, Kollam 205, Kottayam 196, Thrissur 182, Kasaragod 124, Pathanamthitta 102, Wayanad 56 and Idukki 40 cases.

Crossing the five-lakh mark on Sunday, Tamil Nadu recorded 5,02,759 positive cases, with 5,693 more people testing positive for COVID-19.

The State reported 47,012 active cases on Sunday. Meanwhile, the State also recorded 74 deaths, taking the tally to 8,381.

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

Trash threat



Littered front: The famed beachfront at Fort Kochi in Kerala is littered with garbage, despite tourism agencies deploying people to clean the area. ■ H. VIBHU

Tight security at places of worship

STAFF REPORTER
VIJAYAWADA

Director General of Police D. Gautam Sawang on Sunday said security had been stepped up at places of worship and Commissioners and Superintendents of Police had been told to have geo-tagging of shrines across Andhra Pradesh.

The managements of the shrines had been requested to provide surveillance cameras, arrange proper lighting and conduct safety audit with the help of fire services and electricity officials.

He said the loss of the chariot in a fire at Sri Lakshmi Narasimha Swamy temple at Antarvedi was unfortunate. Management should cooperate with the Police, Fire and Revenue departments in providing security.

Students across the country reported that these norms were largely followed within the examination hall, although distancing in many places was two feet rather than the recommended six feet. However, it was a different story outside, with images and videos from a number of cities showing crowding and jostling of parents and students outside venues.

My hands are clean, says Jaleel

Kerala Minister says he was quizzed by ED on distribution of religious books

K.S. SUDHI
KOCHI

The distribution of Korans provided by the United Arab Emirates (UAE) consulate in Kerala needs to be viewed as a cultural and religious transaction and there is nothing more to it, says Minister K.T. Jaleel, who was questioned by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) here last week in connection with the controversy surrounding the diplomatic baggage imports.

The Opposition parties had mounted pressure for the resignation of Mr. Jaleel after the interrogation. Several youth organisations took to streets raising the demand.

"They sought to know about the distribution of Korans made available by the UAE consulate and whether I accepted any gift or money



Pitched battle: The police using a water cannon on Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad activists on Sunday. ■ K. RAGESH

from them. I did not take any favours from them and no financial transactions were involved in the distribution of Ramzan kits or Koran. My hands are clean," Mr. Jaleel told *The Hindu* in a telephone interview.

'Goodwill not affected'

While maintaining that his

being questioned had not lowered the goodwill of the ruling LDF government, Mr. Jaleel said neither the CPI(M) nor the Chief Minister had sought any explanation from him. "If your hands are clean, the Chief Minister will stand by you like a rock and protect you at any cost. If you are at fault, you can nev-

er expect any help from him," he said.

Issue in Parliament

The agitation by the Congress to put the Left Democratic Front (LDF) government in the dock in connection with the gold smuggling case is set to resurface in Parliament.

Leader of the Opposition Ramesh Chennithala told *The Hindu* that Congress MPs from Kerala would move an adjournment motion in the House to discuss the various national security implications of the offence.

The BJP is also set to raise the issue in Parliament.

Protests against Mr. Jaleel continued, with the BJP and its student wing, Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad, taking out marches to the Minister's house at Valanchery.

Rains to continue for four more days in A.P.

The low pressure area formed over the West Central Bay of Bengal off north Andhra Pradesh coast on Sunday and its associated cyclonic circulation triggered rainfall across the State. The low pressure is likely to become more marked and the IMD has warned of rainfall across the coast and Rayalaseema districts in the next four days.

Now, take a virtual tour of water lily fields in Kottayam

Tourism authorities filming pink blooms in backwater villages to ensure people around the world connect to the destinations

HIRAN UNNIKRISHNAN
KOTTAYAM

The pink vista that covers the backwater villages of Kottayam every monsoon is now going online. With just a few weeks left for the water lily blooms to fade, tourism authorities are now capturing the flowers in peak season for online tours. The initiative is part of the efforts by the authorities to make sure that people around the world are connected to these destinations despite the existing travel restrictions.

As part of it, agencies including the India Tourism, Kerala Tourism and the Malarikkal

Tourism Society have filmed guided tours of the flowering locations and other activities in the region. These videos will be streamed online through official websites of these agencies over the coming days.

e-festival
Plans are also afoot to host an e-festival of water lily along the lines of the online Onam celebrations organised by the Kerala Tourism last month. "At this moment, the mode is plain survival. But, in the longer run, a better framework is needed to ensure local cooperation to draw more



Pink carpet: Kottayam's water lily fields became a famous attraction during the previous monsoon. ■ VISHNU PRATHAP

visitors to these destinations," said an official associated with the project. Besides the flowers, the tourism departments are shooting videos on the village life experience and backwater tourism

tourist attractions of Kerala during the previous monsoon. These locations were expecting a jump in tourist arrivals when the raging COVID-19 made the destination out of bounds for visitors.

Still hopeful

Only a couple of weeks are left for these flowers to be replaced with paddy saplings. "Depending on the government plans to lift the restrictions from September 21, we are looking to bring in a limited number of tourists through the Pazhukkani water route," said K. Anil Kumar, convener, Meenachil-Meenanthara-Koodoor river re-linking

programme. As long as there were flowers in bloom, the Malarikkal tourism society planned to keep making videos to share through its social media page, he added.

As per estimates, around 80,000 people visited Malarikkal during the flowering season last year and the 120 boat rowers, who ferried these visitors, together earned ₹12 lakh. The State government too announced plans to organise a pink water lily festival on the lines of the Tulip Festival in Amsterdam and identified 15 locations for tourism promotion. However, tourists have not arrived since then.

IN BRIEF



Yogi gives ₹15 lakh to road mishap victim's kin

LUCKNOW
Family members of Sudiksha Bhati, who died in a road accident, met U.P. Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath at his official residence here on Sunday. Bhati, who hailed from Gautam Buddha Nagar's Dadri, died on August 10 in a road crash in Bulandshahr district while she was pillion riding a motorcycle with her cousin. Mr. Adityanath gave a financial assistance of ₹15 lakh to the family and also announced that a library and a memorial will be built in the memory of Bhati. PTI

Left parties plan protests against Centre's policies

NEW DELHI
The CPI has called for a protest on Monday while the CPI(M) will hold a nationwide campaign from September 17 to 22. CPI(M) general secretary Sitaram Yechury said issues such as growing communal polarisation, attacks on democratic rights and civil liberties, 'loot' of national assets through privatisation and scrapping of labour laws will be highlighted. The CPI is demanding the resignation of Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman.

Operation on against militants in Pulwama

SRINAGAR
Security forces on Sunday launched an operation in south Kashmir's Pulwama after an Army patrol came under fire from militants. An Army spokesman said militants fired on the security forces on Sunday afternoon when a cordon was being laid in Parigam area. "A joint operation is on," the Army said. The Internet was also snappened in Pulwama as a "precautionary measure".

Odisha looks to repeal 699 redundant laws

BHUBANESWAR
The Odisha government has proposed to come up with a Bill to repeal 699 redundant Acts and amendments. Departments have been asked to offer their views on the Odisha Repealing Bill, 2020, for repealing redundant Acts and amendments enacted between 1974 and 2016. The highest were identified in the Revenue and Disaster Management department.

Congress to raise LAC row, farm reforms

Party says Prime Minister owes an explanation for 'denying' any Chinese incursion had taken place

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Expressing hope that Prime Minister Narendra Modi will be present in both the Houses of Parliament as the monsoon session gets underway on Monday, senior Congress leader Jairam Ramesh said on Sunday that Mr. Modi's statement to political parties that there was no Chinese incursion had weakened India's position.

"The greatest damage to our cause has been caused by the Prime Minister's own statement. He owes an explanation why he made that statement. It has single-handedly weakened India's case and the status quo ante on LAC has not been restored," he said.

During the session, the Congress plans to raise issues related to COVID-19, economy, job losses, poverty and airport privatisation. The party will oppose the Bills for replacing three agri-



All set: Paramilitary personnel outside Parliament on the eve of the monsoon session on Sunday. ■ SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

culture-related ordinances and one that brought cooperative banks under RBI supervision.

Mr. Ramesh said two of the ordinances pertained to agri-marketing and the third was linked to the Essential Commodities Act.

Mr. Ramesh said the ordinances, to the disadvantage of farmers, promoted con-

tract and corporate farming, and would hit the revenues of the States, apart from destroying the mechanisms of the minimum support price and public procurement, thereby weakening food security.

On the Banking Regulation Act, he said the Congress had five specific objections.

"Cooperative banks are part of the structure of cooperatives and ought to be regulated by the State governments and not by the Central government. If the ordinance becomes law, all key financial intermediaries will come under the control of the Central government, there will be more centralisation. The Congress stands for decentralisation and empowering the States," he said.

Mr. Ramesh said the ordinance gave power to the Centre to change the membership structure of a cooperative. For instance, a farmer-promoted district cooperative bank could be transferred to the hands of non-farmers. "The RBI is being vested with more regulatory responsibilities. Its record of regulating banks in some NBFCs [non-banking finance companies] is mixed," he said.

Two other ordinances were for a 30% deduction in

the salaries of MPs and Ministers. The Congress would not oppose them, but would raise questions on the proposed spending of about ₹25,000 crore on the Central Vista project at a time when the economy was in disarray. The party would also oppose the two-year freeze on MPLADs.

PM CARES

Mr. Ramesh said the PM CARES Fund had no transparency as it did not come under the jurisdiction of the Comptroller and Auditor-General and the Right to Information Act. Some news reports suggested that certain Chinese firms had also contributed to the fund.

Mr. Ramesh said the six-month relief from payments provided through the proposed amendment to the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, which could be extended to a year, was not in the interest of the MSMEs.

Rajya Sabha to take up LAC, economy

11 ordinances on agenda of session

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Rajya Sabha Chairman M. Venkaiah Naidu chaired a meeting of the Business Advisory Committee on Sunday evening ahead of the 18-day monsoon session beginning on Monday.

Congress leaders Ghulam Nabi Azad and Jairam Ramesh, Trinamool Congress leader Derek O'Brien, and DMK leader Tiruchi Siva and others attended the meeting. From the BJP, Bhupender Yadav and Shiv Pratap Shukla participated.

According to sources, the Chairman agreed on having a debate on contentious issues of the state of the economy post-COVID-19 and the stand-off on the LAC. A detailed debate on the pandemic and health infrastructure will be taken up.

Eleven ordinances are on the agenda. The three agricultural ordinances, which the Congress and even the NDA ally Akali Dal are opposed to, have been allotted seven hours.

Union Parliamentary Affairs Minister Pralhad Joshi said the "government was ready to discuss all issues", and "appealed to all parties for cooperation".

Considering the sensitivities of the Indo-China matter, a meeting of leaders from both Houses will be held on Tuesday," he said.

A second Business Advisory Committee meeting for the Lok Sabha will also be held on Tuesday to decide the time allocation for various debates.

Opposition lawmakers, already at loggerheads with the government over scrapping of Question Hour, said they would be pushing for

discussions on the economy, the plight of migrant workers, and unemployment.

Among the ordinances coming up before both Houses would be what the government had termed its trio of Bills for agricultural reform – the Farmers' Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Ordinance, 2020, the Farmers' Empowerment and Protection Agreement of Price Assurance and Farm Services Bill, 2020, and the amendments to the Essential Commodities Act.

The election of the Deputy Chairperson of the Rajya Sabha will take place on September 14, with the NDA renominating Harivansh of the Janata Dal (U) and the Opposition putting up Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) leader Manoj Jha.

Seating changes
Many COVID-19-induced changes have been made to the conduct of business.

The Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha will sit alternately in four-hour shifts (9 a.m. to 2 p.m. and 3 p.m. to 7p.m.), apart from a host of measures to ensure that physical distancing is maintained. Each seat in the Lok Sabha and individual rows have been separated by polycarbonate sheets. Only 257 members will be allowed inside the Lok Sabha chambers, with another 172 allowed in other galleries. A total of 111 Lok Sabha members will be seated in the Rajya Sabha and participate via electronic communication. LED screens in both Houses will display real time transmission from the other House.

CPI(M) flays 'blatant abuse' of police, Central agencies

Party urges govt. to desist from criminalising protests

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Former Union Finance Minister P. Chidambaram said on Sunday that the Delhi police had brought the criminal justice system to ridicule by naming CPI(M) leader Sitaram Yechury and other scholars and activists in a supplementary chargesheet in the Delhi riots case.

"The law cannot be such an ass that, if an accused mentions a name in her statement, that person will be named as an accused in the chargesheet. Has the Delhi Police forgotten that between information and chargesheet there are important steps called investigation and corroboration?" tweeted Mr. Chidambaram.

The Polit Bureau of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) said it was shocked by the "brazenness" with which the Delhi police tried to implicate prominent political leadership, academics, cultural personalities and activists in connection with the February violence in northeast Delhi.

Mr. Chidambaram said: "I am glad that Mr. Julio Ribeiro has upbraided the Delhi Police for its biased handling of the Delhi riots case. Will the Delhi Police listen to this iconic police officer?"



Sitaram Yechury aged the protesters as part of a 'plan,' the party said in a statement. It added that this action was in line with the growing pattern of the most blatant abuse of the police and other Central agencies such as the CBI, the NIA and the ED to frame prominent opponents and demonise them.

The CPI(M) said it condemned this "obnoxious action" by the Delhi police to further the narrative of

their political masters, and urged the government to desist from such acts of criminalising peaceful political protests.

CPI(ML) Liberation general secretary, Dipankar Bhattacharya said the Delhi police's investigation is becoming more vindictive and farcical. He added that in all their chargesheets, the police had refused to act on evidence that Kapil Mishra, Anurag Thakur and other BJP leaders instigated violence against anti-CAA protesters.

"It was reported yesterday that a supplementary chargesheet filed by the Delhi police comprises largely of 'disclosure' statements attributed to feminist student activists of Pinjra Tod. These so-called 'disclosure' statements amount to custodial confessions, and are inadmissible as evidence in court," the CPI(ML) said.

FIR lodged over 'Hizb threat letter'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
SRINAGAR

The J&K police on Sunday lodged an FIR over a letter received by Congress leader Raman Bhalla, purportedly from the Hizbul Mujahideen, in which top BJP leaders were also named.

A DSP rank officer has been appointed for the case. "We received the envelope on September 12 at the Congress headquarters at Shaheed Chowk. It was a threatening letter in Urdu language on the letter pad of Hizbul Mujahideen," Mr. Bhalla said.

MADRASI DISTRICT COOPERATIVE MILK PRODUCERS' UNION LIMITED, MADRASI - 625202

TENDER NOTICE
Sealed Tenders are invited under two Cover System (Technical Bid & Commercial Bid) by the General Manager, A.1301, Madurai District Cooperative Milk Producers' Union Limited, Madurai-20 for plying of 10 Van (2.0 to 3.0 M.T. capacity), 2 Mini Lorry (3.1 to 5.0 M.T. capacity) to collect milk from Villages of Madurai District to Madurai Main Dairy, 3 Taxes for Input Activities, one taxi for Agm (P.t) in Madurai District, and one Goods Vehicle (closed body) (1.45 to 2.0 M.T. capacity) for Frozen semen straws, Liquid Nitrogen, and mineral mixture to the societies in Madurai union. The tender is for the period 2020-2022 (Two year from the date of awarding contract).
1. Earnest Money Deposit - Rs. 500/- (For Van / Mini lorry / Taxi / Goods Vehicles) by Demand Draft in favour of The General Manager, MDCMPULTD, Madurai.
2. Sale of Tender Forms - All Working days from 14.09.2020 to 28.10.2020 - 11.00 AM to 3.00 PM at MDCMPULTD, Madurai.
3. Cost of Tender Form - Re.500/- in Person & Rs. 550/- by post.
4. Submission of Tender Forms - 29.10.2020 - 12.00 noon.
5. Pre Bid Meeting Date - 25.09.2020 Morning 11.00 AM at MDCMPULTD, Madurai.
6. Opening of Tender Forms - 29.10.2020 - 12.30 PM at MDCMPULTD, Madurai.
CONDITIONS: All the information regarding the tender forms and the tender condition will be clarified in the office in person. The tender forms can be downloaded from the Website : www.tenders.tn.gov.in
14.09.2020 to 28.10.2020 at free of cost.

DIPR/3412/TENDER/2020

GENERAL MANAGER

ONGC Petro additions Limited

CIN No.: U23209GJ2006PLC06282
Regd. Office: 4th Floor, 35, Nutan Bharat Co-operative Housing Society Limited, R.C. Dutt Road, Alkapuri, Vadodara - 390007, Gujarat. Website: www.opalindia.in

NOTIFICATION REGARDING TENDERS OF OPAL

The Notice Inviting Tenders (NIT) / the tender requirements of ONGC Petro additions Limited (OPAL) will not be henceforth published in newspapers. All the concerned are hereby notified that the tender enquiry of OPAL will be published on OPAL website www.opalindia.in & e-tender SRM portal <http://etender.opalindia.in:50300/irj/portal>

All interested bidders are requested to regularly refer aforesaid website and portal of OPAL

GOVERNMENT OF PUDUCHERRY PUDUCHERRY REAL ESTATE REGULATORY AUTHORITY OFFICE OF THE TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING DEPARTMENT

INVITATION FOR APPLICATION FOR APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRPERSON AND MEMBERS IN PUDUCHERRY REAL ESTATE REGULATORY AUTHORITY

The Government of Puducherry as mandated under section 20 of the Real Estate (Regulation and Development) Act, 2016 (No 16 of 2016) hereby invites applications for appointment of one Chairperson and one Member in Puducherry Real Estate Regulatory Authority. Complete information on qualification, eligibility criteria, application format and other details may be obtained from the website of Town and Country Planning Department (<https://tcpd.srbi.gov.in>). Application in the prescribed format alongwith supporting documents should reach the office of Town and Country Planning Department, Puducherry on or before 9th October 2020 at 5.45 PM. * Filling up of the post of Member is subject to the outcome of the W.P.No.8430 of 2020.

Nodal Officer-Cum-Chief Town Planner

Town and Country Planning Department

Jawahar Nagar, Boomiapet,

Puducherry- 605 005

No.189/DIP/AD/Press/2020-21

No.189/DIP/AD/Press/2020-21

NOTICE IN THE HIGH COURT OF ANDHRA PRADESH AT AMARAVATI COMMERCIAL SUIT NO.1 OF 2019.

Piraeus Bank S.A.(also known as Piraeus Bank A.E.) ...Plaintiff Vs. 1. M.V.EVANGELIA M & 27 others ...Defendants

Notice is hereby given that pursuant to the order dated 9th September, 2019, 24th October, 2019, 21st December 2019, 31st January 2020, 11th March 2020 and 21st August 2020 passed by His Lordship Justice M.Venkata Ramana of the Hon'ble High Court of Andhra Pradesh, Amaravati in I.A.No.18 and 19 of 2019 in COMMERCIAL SUIT NO.1 OF 2019 respectively, the Registrar (Judicial), High Court of Andhra Pradesh has been directed to auction the vessel M.V.EVANGELIA M (IMO No.9506708) described in schedule hereunder, lying at the port of Kakinada, Andhra Pradesh, by inviting bids in sealed covers in US Dollars at his office situated on the second floor of the High Court of Andhra Pradesh, Nelapadu, Amaravati-522237.

The vessel will be sold on "as is where is, what is there is" basis. The intending bidders may give their offer(s) in sealed envelope along with Earnest Money Deposit of \$41,852 (USD Forty-one thousand eight hundred and fifty-two) by way of wire transfer (foreign inward remittance) to State Bank of India, Guntur Main Branch, Account Number SBNINB8181, routing number SBN0000844 (excluding bank charges) in favour of Registrar (Judicial), High Court of Andhra Pradesh and obtain tender forms indicating the sale conditions, from the office of the Assistant Registrar (Sri R.Karthikyan), High Court of Andhra Pradesh, Amaravati on all working days till 4.15 pm between 16th September 2020 to 26th September 2020 and can also be downloaded from the website of the Kakinada Port (www.kakinadaseaports.in). The sealed tenders will be submitted to the Registrar (Judicial) in-person or by post till 2.00 pm on 28th September, 2020. The offer in sealed covers will be placed for opening, before the Hon'ble Admiralty Judge (Civil admissions) of the Hon'ble High Court of Andhra Pradesh on 05.10.2020 at 02.15 pm or on such adjourned date as the Court may fix.

The bidder(s)/offer(s) shall remain present before the Hon'ble Admiralty Judge (Civil admissions) of the Hon'ble High Court, Andhra Pradesh on 05.10.2020 at 2.15 pm. The successful bidder shall pay the balance consideration by 19.10.2020.

The specifications of the vessel are given below :

Name of the vessel: "EVANGELIA M"

1. Call sign "D5GB2/16409"
2. Year of Built/Place: 2010/Yangzhou Guoyu Shipping Co.Ltd, China
3. IMO Number: 9506708
4. LOA: 189.99 metres
5. Breadth: 32.26 metres
6. Depth: 18.00 metres
7. Summer Dead weight: 56723.99 metric tons
8. Main Engine: Wartzla 6RT-Flex 50B Diesel Engine 9480 bhp @ 124 rpm
9. Cargo Capacity: 71634 m³
10. Classification Society – Bureau Veritas-B.V.
11. Type of vessel: Bulk carrier
12. Bunkers on board – Fuel Oil-86 metric ton
Diesel Oil-4 Metric ton
Lube Oil-N1
Bilges-Contain water and oil mixture.

13. P & I Club - Hydor AS
14. Net Tonnage – 19,231 tonnes
15. Gross Tonnage – 33,005 tonnes
16. Owner of the Ship – SEA MAJESTY INC.

17. Flag – Liberia
18. Port of Registry – NEW YORK, USA.

Recovered patients facing difficulties

In first post-COVID-19 management protocol, Health Ministry lists warning signs after testing negative

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

After acute COVID-19 illness, recovered patients may continue to report a wide variety of signs and symptoms, including fatigue, body ache, cough, sore throat, and difficulty in breathing, the Union Health Ministry has said, admitting that as of now, there is limited evidence of post-COVID-19 sequelae and further research is required.

It adds that the recovery period is likely to be longer for patients who suffered from a more severe form of the disease and those with pre-existing illness.

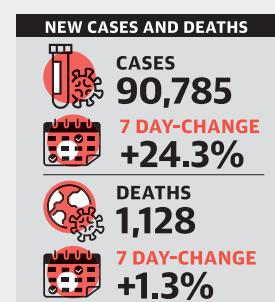
In its post-COVID-19 management protocol released here on Sunday, the Ministry says that the first follow-up visit (physical/telephonic) for a recovered patient should be within seven days after discharge, preferably at the hospital where treatment was taken.

Avoid multiple drugs' Subsequent treatment/follow-up visits may be with the nearest qualified allopathic/Ayush practitioner/medical facility of other systems of medicine. Poly-therapy (use of multiple medications) is to be avoided due to potential for unknown drug-drug interaction, which may lead to serious adverse events and adverse effects.

The patients who have undergone home isolation, if

Viral tracker

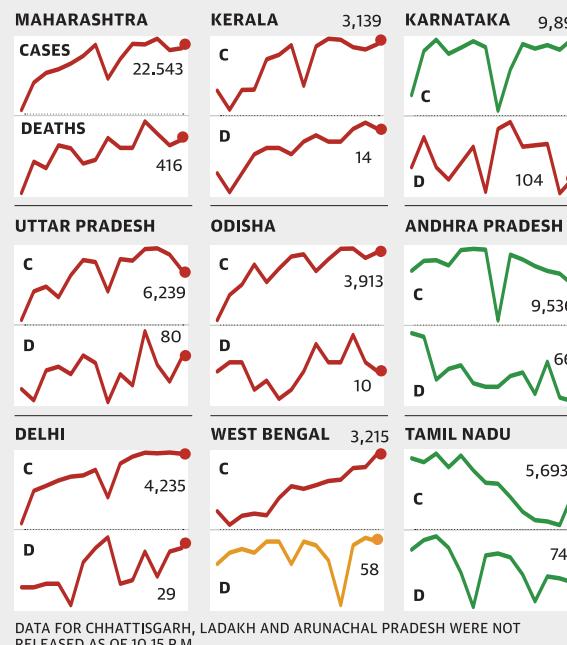
With 90,785 cases recorded on Sunday, India's COVID-19 tally rose to 48,42,584. As many as 1,128 new deaths were recorded, taking the toll to 79,762. The graphs depict new cases and deaths in the last 14 days across select States which are classified based on where cases or deaths are rising — falling; or showing a mixed trend.



they complain of persisting symptoms, will have to visit the nearest health facility, and severe cases requiring critical care support will require more stringent follow-up.

Holistic approach It has also advocated a holistic approach for follow-up care and well-being of all post-COVID-19 recovering patients.

Offering an integrated holistic approach for managing patients who have recovered enough from COVID-19 or care at home, the Ministry



notes that "It is also suggested by the Ministry of AYUSH that the use of Chyawanprash in the morning (1 teaspoonful) with lukewarm water/milk is highly recommended (under the direction of registered ayurveda physician) as in the clinical practice, Chyawanprash is believed to be effective in post-recovery period."

"Immunity promoting AYUSH medicine (to be prescribed only by practitioners permitted under law for prescribing the medicine/therapy under specific stream) including Ayush Kwath,

Samshamani vati, or Giloy powder, Ashwagandha, amla fruit one daily/amlaki powder etc., have also been recommended," the Ministry says.

COVID-19 caused by SARS-CoV-2 is a relatively new disease, with fresh information being known on a dynamic basis about the natural history of the disease, especially in terms of post-recovery events, it says.

"This latest document is not meant to be used as preventive/curative therapy. Post-COVID, continue using mask, hand & respiratory hygiene, physical distancing,

drink adequate amount of warm water (if not contraindicated) and if health permits, regular household work to be done. Professional work to be resumed in graded manner," notes the document.

Recovered patients should look for early warning signs such as high-grade fever, breathlessness, drop in oxygen levels, unexplained chest pain, new onset of confusion and focal weakness, it said.

Mental health support

The Ministry has also added that at a community level, recovered individuals should share their positive experiences with their friends and relatives through social media, community leaders, opinion leaders, religious leaders for creating awareness, dispelling myths and stigma.

"Take support of community-based self-help groups, civil society organisations, and qualified professionals for recovery and rehabilitation process (medical, social, occupational, livelihood). Seek psycho-social support from peers, community health workers, counsellors. If required, seek mental health support service and participate in group sessions of yoga, meditation etc, while taking all due precautions like physical distancing," said the Ministry.

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

R

estaurant and pub exposure were cited as important risk factors associated with SARS-CoV-2 infection, according to an analysis by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (U.S. CDC).

The study published last week cautioned that while it is well established that community and close contact exposures contribute to the spread of COVID-19, close contact with persons with known COVID-19 or going to locations that offer on-site eating and drinking options were associated with COVID-19 positivity. The study is significant as India eases restrictions including on restaurants, dining out and weddings.

Adults with positive SARS-CoV-2 test results were approximately twice as likely to have reported dining at a restaurant 14 days prior to getting the infection than were those with negative results, says the study.

The study suggests that efforts should be made to reduce possible exposure to situations where mask use and social distancing are difficult to maintain, such as when eating and drinking. This should be considered to protect customers, employees, and communities.

The CDC report states that reports of exposures in

restaurants have been linked to air circulation too. Direction, ventilation, and intensity of airflow might affect virus transmission, even if social distancing measures and mask use are implemented according to current guidance. Masks cannot be effectively worn while eating and drinking, whereas shopping and numerous other indoor activities do not preclude mask use," it says.

The study was conducted by researchers from the CDC's Epidemic Intelligence Service, along with those from Vanderbilt University Medical Center, Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center, Wake Forest University Baptist Medical Center, and Hennepin County Medical Center, among others.

SARS-CoV-2 test result. Continued assessment of various activities and exposures as communities, schools, and workplaces reopen is important. Exposures and activities where mask use and social distancing are difficult to maintain, including going to locations that offer on-site eating and drinking, might be important risk factors for COVID," said the study.

The study suggests that efforts should be made to reduce possible exposure to situations where mask use and social distancing are difficult to maintain, such as when eating and drinking. This should be considered to protect customers, employees, and communities.

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The



You'll never WALK ALONE

Former Surgeon-General of the United States of America, Dr Vivek H Murthy, discusses his book *Together* and the far-reaching consequences of leaving a 'loneliness pandemic' undetected

PRADEEP KUMAR

'Picture yourself marooned on a deserted island; who would you like to be with?' From school-crush conversations to magazine quizzes, the question runs through life. Somewhere we know that without social connection, we probably would not be able to survive. Even Tom Hanks' Chuck Noland needed his Wilson to stay sane in *Cast Away*.

Often unacknowledged and easily dismissed as 'a passing phase', studies suggest that the impact of loneliness on the human psyche and well-being can be manifold. And for the majority of this year, COVID-19 has kept families apart and erased social connections.

Recognising the necessity of keeping hold of and developing our social bonds further, Dr Vivek H Murthy, the 19th Surgeon-General of the United States of America, penned his book *Together: The Healing Power of Human Connection in a Sometimes Lonely World* (Profile Books, distributed in India by Hachette India). Loneliness is the centrepiece of this quasi-memoir style compilation.

"COVID-19 has certainly exacerbated [loneliness] in our communities. When people struggle with loneliness, it can also lead to a greater risk of heart disease, depression, dementia, anxiety, and sleep disturbances. If we do nothing differently, we may see the physical distancing that is prescribed to combat the virus translate into social distancing. We will become lonelier," says Dr Murthy, con-

nected over a Zoom call from his home in Miami, Florida. "But we can choose to use this moment to step back and take stock of our lives to recognise how important and powerful our relationships are. There is a chance we could come out of this pandemic stronger, more connected and fulfilled than before."

Edited excerpts from the chat:

Separating stigma from mental health-related issues can be a task. Is it one reason why loneliness is less acknowledged?

● There is an unfortunate stigma around loneliness. People think that if someone is lonely then something is wrong with them, or they are not likeable or loveable, or worse, that they are broken in some way. For these reasons, loneliness carries a sense of shame that makes it hard to talk about. We look around and it seems like we are the only one experiencing loneliness because nobody else is talking about what they are going through, and that further isolates us. So, loneliness begets loneliness.

Human connection is no different from hunger or thirst. We don't feel ashamed when our body signals us that it is thirsty; we reach for a glass of water. So, one of the ways to de-stigmatise is by helping people un-

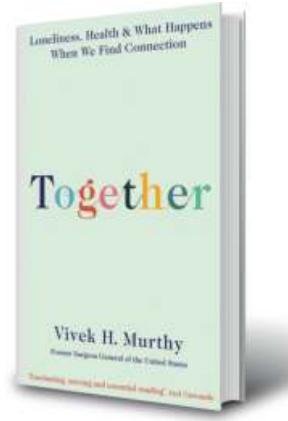
derstand that it is common and a natural signal that our body sends us.

Another powerful way to de-stigmatise any condition is by sharing our personal experiences with it. Every time someone stands up in a room to say they have been struggling with a problem, they may be met with silence. But that is not people judging you, it is them reflecting on their own lives.

Convincing policy makers of this being a public health crisis can be a gargantuan task...

● Around the world, there is a growing recognition that loneliness is a health and economic priority. Some of the data has been compelling for policy makers when they see it. That is an important caveat. In many countries, policy makers are not hearing about it, they are not seeing the data, and they don't necessarily recognise how deeply connected issues like loneliness are to their front page issues we are reading about every day, whether it is addiction crisis or challenges with depression, anxiety and suicide, or even the deeper problems we face in workplaces and schools. But when they are given the data, when they start to see what other governments are doing around the world, then it makes a

In touch Together talks about loneliness and its impact on individuals and society, (inset) Dr Vivek H Murthy • MEREDITH NIEMAN AND GETTYIMAGES/ISTOCK



compelling case for the policy makers to take action.

You quote research that suggests our 'default social setting', whether someone is an introvert or extrovert, is to socialise...

● Our biology and study of human connections tell us that we are hard-wired to connect with each other. So, the difference between introverts and extroverts is not in whether or not you need people, it is in how you prefer to interact with people and how much alone time you need. Introverts prefer to interact with people one-on-one and in small groups. They need more time in solitude. Extroverts gather energy from their interactions with other people and they often seek out and enjoy being a part of large groups.

Over the past two decades has there been less emphasis on developing quality human connections?

● It is defensible to say that in modern society because it asks us to achieve more, go to the best schools, get the best jobs and earn the greatest awards.

In people-centred lives, we put people and relationships first when we are making decisions about where we need to put our time, effort and attention. In a people-centred society, we design our curricula in schools to give children the tools to build healthy relationships in the earliest of ages. We design our workplaces to support social connections and we examine public policy to understand what impact it will have on communities. It is no coincidence that we see an extraordinary degree of political polarisation in countries around the world at a time when we are also experiencing a deterioration in relationships and an increase in loneliness.

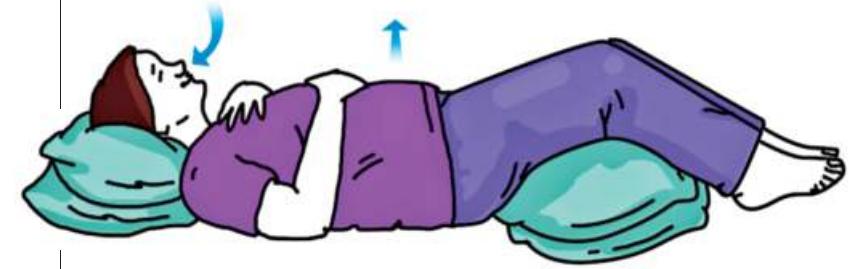
What is the impact of social media on connection?

● Like all technology, social media can strengthen or weaken our connections depending on how it is used. The challenge is the ways we are using it now contribute to a sense of isolation. I want to challenge the new generation of techpreneurs to think about how they can build products and services that can enhance human connections, recognising that it is the foundation on which we build everything else.

HOW TO... Breathe.

SUNALINI MATHEW

Unless we have asthma or a lung infection, we take breathing for granted. But according to Dr Sundeep Salvi, pulmonologist in Pune, "Breathing nourishes our body with oxygen that generates 90% of the body's energy; only 10% comes from the food we eat and the water we drink." The main problem, he says, is that we forget our natural way of breathing as we age, and breathe shallowly.



If you have a respiratory condition

Breathing techniques fall into inspiratory or those that focus on increasing lung volume, and expiratory, or those that focus on expiration to clear secretions, according to a review of 25 types of breathing techniques.

Inspiratory exercises are useful in restrictive lung disorders such as obesity hyperventilation syndrome. Expiratory exercises are useful in obstructive lung disorders (COPD, asthma, bronchiolitis).

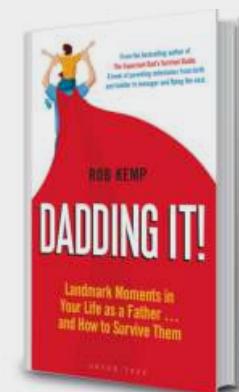
Subin Solomen, a scientific assistant in the Department of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation,

Government Medical College, Kottayam, who led the narrative review, says for those susceptible to COVID-19, inspiratory exercises, such as diaphragmatic and deep breathing (taking in air through the nose and blowing out of the mouth), as well as alternate nostril (anulom vilom) are important. If you have asthma or COPD and are experiencing difficulty climbing up stairs, he suggests pursed lip breathing, where you purse your lips (imagine you've got a pencil in your mouth) and focus on breathing out.

In this column, we introduce you to or remind you of basic wellness hacks

Practically speaking

The Cleveland Clinic, on its website, suggests a way of conscious diaphragmatic breathing. The idea is to strengthen the diaphragm (it's a muscle, remember!). Lie on your back, knees bent, a pillow under the head and knees. Place one hand on the upper part of the chest and another just below the rib cage. Breathe in through your nose, and feel your stomach rise. Drop the muscles of your stomach inward, and feel the breath move out of the body. The chest should not rise or fall. Practise for 5-10 minutes, three or four times a day. In time, you can also do this sitting up.

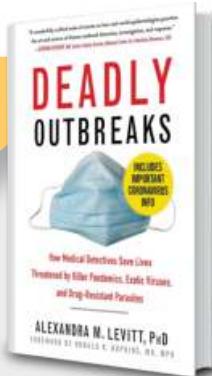


Dadding It: Landmark Moments In Your Life As A Father and How to Survive Them

By Rob Kemp, Bloomsbury India

COVID-19 may have pressed the pause button in our lives but we need to move on, albeit with necessary precautions. Under today's unusual circumstances, many new parents have perhaps missed a support system. Parenting author Rob Kemp's book is a timely self-help guide to navigate a child's milestones. Kids do not come with an instruction manual, says the author, and provides fathers valuable tips to play a lasting and impactful role in their children's lives. The book talks of defining moments and helps to discover the joys of parenthood, along with a realistic idea of how life changes course after the arrival of a child.

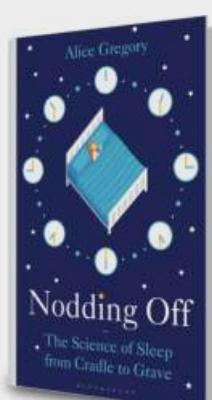
WORDS OF WISDOM



Deadly Outbreaks: How Medical Detectives Save Lives Threatened by Killer Pandemics, Exotic Viruses, and Drug-Resistant Parasites

By Alexandra M Levitt, Skyhorse Publishing

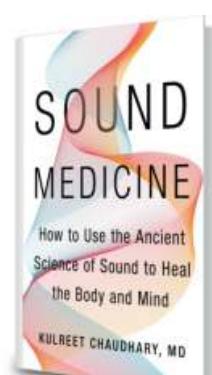
This book dwells on the scientific adventures of a group of people trying to figure out how to stop epidemics. It's a detective-thriller-meets-medical-investigations read, with the team working on exhausting every possible source of contamination. The author is an expert on emerging diseases and public health threats. From her work experience she shares insider accounts about data collection and analysis, alarming statistics, the unexplained spike in cases, mysterious deaths, and much more.



Nodding Off: The Science of Sleep From Cradle to Grave

By Alice Gregory, Bloomsbury

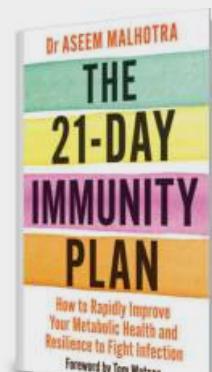
Sleep helps the body to heal, repair, and recover. The science of slumber and why we need to pay more attention to our sleeping patterns is the theme of the book. Alice Gregory has compiled two decades of research based on interviews with people who struggle to get enough sleep and experts who tell us how and why sleep is essential for learning, memory, mental health, and physical well-being. The author leads us on a fascinating journey exploring sleep as it evolves from birth to old age.



Sound Medicine: How to Use The Ancient Science of Sound to Heal the Body and Mind

By Kulreet Chaudhary, Harper Collins

Ever wondered why sound evokes primal and deep feelings? When a baby cries, the mother gets stressed. A song playing on the radio stirs up emotions. It is because sound has hidden powers that are still being investigated by modern medicine. The book explains the structure of the mouth, ears, and brain to help us understand how sound is translated from acoustic vibrations into meaningful neurological impulses. Neuroscientist and Ayurveda expert Dr Kulreet Chaudhary traces the history of sound therapy and how the combination of mantras and music can be of therapeutic value for common ailments.



The 21-Day Immunity Plan

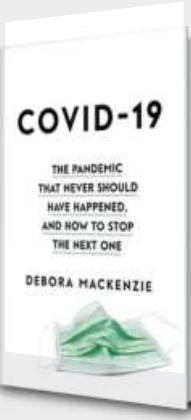
By Dr Aseem Malhotra, Hatchette India

With focus on immunity boosters now, NHS trained cardiologist Dr Aseem Malhotra has come up with a 21-day plan that he says helps to improve the metabolic health and immune function. The book is a handy guide to understand how underlying risk factors that exacerbate infections can be reversed. With evidence-based science backing his plan, the doctor has introduced simple changes to daily diet and claims it will put Type 2 diabetes into remission, reduce risk factors for heart diseases, decrease weight, enhance vitality, improve quality of life and minimise unnecessary sufferings.

By Debora MacKenzie, Hachette India

At a time when the WHO chief has asked countries to invest in their public health systems and be better prepared for the next pandemic even as COVID-19 runs amok with 27 million cases and 9,00,000 deaths worldwide, science journalist

Deborah MacKenzie has published what is perhaps the first post-mortem of the disease. It is a gripping eye-opener that lays out the shocking spread of the coronavirus, the accumulated knowledge of our failings, and a number of opinions to protect humanity from worse threats in the future. MacKenzie, who has been at the frontline reporting on SARS, Ebola, rabies and AIDS in the last three decades tries to chart a way forward by learning from past crises. Making optimistic arguments, she hopes the world will galvanise itself to stop the viruses in their tracks and prevent future pandemics.



COVID-19: The Pandemic That Never Should Have Happened and How to Stop the Next One

By Debora MacKenzie, Hachette India

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HARIKUMAR JS

Four years ago, E Balakrishnan planted a few cacti in his terrace garden among other common house-plants. But little did the sexagenarian from Kozhikode in Kerala know that the thorny beauties would captivate him. He started potting cuttings of cacti varieties gathered from local sources. Gradually, his collection grew. Today, his cactus garden boasts over 2,500 individual plants comprising more than 200 different species, many of which are imported ones.

"There is something about cacti that fascinates me. This enthusiasm was fired up once I started learning more about the plant to beautify my garden," says Balakrishnan who runs a printing press.

He maintains the plants on the terrace of his house and press. While *Mammillaria*, a bulbous ornamental variety that is a popular house-plant, are aplenty, rarer ones such as *Euphorbia abdulkuri damask*, *Copiapoa* and *Euphorbia trigona* (also known as African milk tree) find pride of place on his terrace. Balakrishnan, a native of Thiruthiyad, says he sourced many of the imported varieties through eBay from nurseries afar. "For instance, I brought in the pinkish-boasted *Euphorbia* from Brazil, while the small-sized *Copiapoa* came from New Zealand. I collected many other species from Thailand, Japan, and Indonesia. It's a rather expensive hobby," he says with a laugh. A few "crested" varieties of the thor-

A green thumb Balakrishnan's garden has 2,500 plants of 200 species ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

ny plant too adorn his garden.

Balakrishnan acknowledges the goodwill of other gardeners in his hometown who have been happy to contribute to his collection. He propagates the plants himself through grafting, while some species are easily grown from stem cuttings. "I rarely use seeds for propagation since seed development is not conducive in this blow-hot-and-cold Kerala climate, which otherwise facilitates good growth," he says.

Balakrishnan says it is helpful that cacti demand less attention, unlike many other ornamental plants. "I water them only once a week or so. Cacti are quite resilient.

Though they need less water, it is important to ensure that there is no water retention or stagnation in the pot, which may damage the plant," he points out. He has also erected a rain shelter on the terrace.

The 65-year-old, however, checks on them every day, mainly for worms. "I water the plants only after the medium or surface is dry. Cacti need a bit of sunlight but overexposure is not advisable. Depending on the growth, I prune them once in a while. In any case, cacti do not tend to grow too large," he says, adding that he uses cow dung powder as fertiliser. Balakrishnan says sometimes maintenance of the garden becomes a family affair, with his wife, Devi, and sons Rahul and Gokul, lending a helping hand.



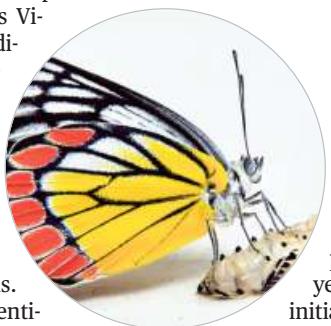
SOMA BASU

Everybody loves to chase butterflies. With mesmerising colours and patterns on their wings, when even one flits about near us, we experience joy. India is home to the most number of diverse species (1,400-plus and rising), says Vijay Barve, Biodiversity Informatics Researcher, Florida Museum of Natural History, and an active member of biodiversity portals. To have one identified as a national icon, like we have our national animal, flower and bird, is the best celebration of butterflies, he says.

Considering the ecological importance, conservation significance and growing popularity of

A vote for India's national butterfly

A first-of-its kind online public campaign is underway to choose from a list of seven winged wonders nominated by experts. The butterfly poll will end on October 7



butterflies among people in the recent years, it was time we initiated the selection driven by citizens, adds Krushnamegh Kunte, Associate Professor, National Centre for Biological Sciences, Bengaluru.

Several other butterfly enthusiasts, experts, researchers and scientists like them shared the

thought and came together during lockdown to start the process of choosing the country's national butterfly.

The last three weeks were spent in hours of online discussion before 50 of them from across the country collated a list of three recommendations each.

Since it was going to be a symbolic representative of the country's



SEARCH IS ON The most liked butterfly's name will likely be out by early next year ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT



natural abundance, the list was next shortened to 50, based on several criteria such as the species being neither rare nor too common and be fairly distributed across the landscape.

The butterfly should not have multiple forms but be easily identified, observed and remembered by the public due to some inherently attractive aspect such as its name, colours or charisma.

"Once chosen, these characteristics would help to define the cultural, ecological and conservation significance for the country and even attract tourism in later years," says Amol Patwardhan, a Mumbai-based professor of Zoology.

In the next round, an internal polling was done by a core group of experts to draw up a list of seven finalists. The seven species

that made it are the Krishna Peacock, Common Jezebel, Orange Oakleaf, Fivebar Sword Tail, Common Nawab, Yellow Gorgon and Northern Jungle Queen.

Butterflies are ambassadors of Nature conservation and important biological indicators that reflect the health of our environment, says Sharam Venkatesh, founder of Rhopalocera and Odonata Association of Rajapalayam, Tamil Nadu. It is important to have a national butterfly as it will help generate awareness about Nature and how these beautiful insects warn us about changes in the environment [like pollution and global warming], he says.

The panel is expecting more than a lakh people, if not more, to state their first choice in the online poll that was thrown open on Friday. The poll will end on October 7 coinciding with the culmination of Wildlife Week. Participants are required to fill a Google form that gives basic details

and photographs of the seven + nominated butterflies.

With this national campaign, butterflies will hopefully get the place of importance they deserve, says Kunte. "They are not just attractive to watch but are crucial indicators of a healthy ecosystem."

A national butterfly will represent all that a country wants to be identified with, adds Amol.

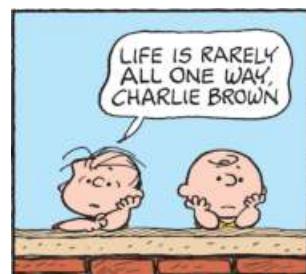
By mid-October, the proposal with the top three ranking butterfly species from public polling will be submitted to the Ministry of Environment & Forests. It has already been apprised of the matter verbally and after the necessary protocols, the name is likely to be announced by early 2021. "We are hoping in the new year, we will have a national butterfly," says Barve.

Those willing to participate can click on the link: <https://forms.gle/u7WgCuuGSY9AgLG6>

POOCHE CAFE



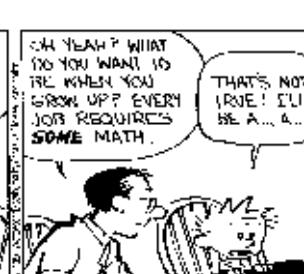
PEANUTS



HAGAR THE HORRIBLE



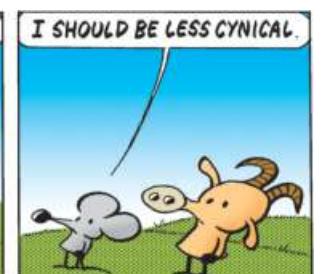
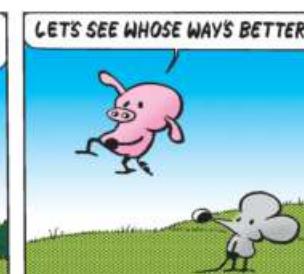
CALVIN AND HOBBES



TIGER



PEARLS BEFORE SWINE



No EU plot to destabilise the U.K.: Ireland

Johnson's claim that the bloc is planning to choke off food supplies post-Brexit is not true: Irish Minister

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
LONDON

Ireland on Sunday rejected an incendiary claim by Prime Minister Boris Johnson that the EU is plotting to destabilise the U.K., as another week of Brexit high drama beckoned ahead of a stormy parliamentary debate in London.

A war of words escalated about a new British government Bill that London admits is in violation of its EU divorce treaty.

Mr. Johnson's contention that the European Union is plotting to choke off food supplies with destabilising new trade barriers between Britain and Northern Ireland is "simply not the case," Irish Justice Minister Helen McEntee told Sky News.

"Any suggestion that this is going to create a new border is simply not true," she said, while Irish Foreign Minister Simon Coveney dismissed Johnson's claim as "spin".

McEntee said that a protocol on Northern Ireland in the EU withdrawal treaty was agreed by both sides to ensure fair competition after



Souring relations: Boris Johnson holding a virtual press conference at Downing Street on September 9. • AP

Brexit, and to comply with a 1998 peace pact that ended three decades of unrest in the province.

The treaty also "ensures the integrity of Northern Ireland as part of the U.K.", she said, and it "ensures we do not see any kind of a border re-emerging".

Resignation talk

Writing in Saturday's *Daily Telegraph* newspaper, Mr. Johnson had accused the EU of threatening to tear the U.K. apart by imposing a food "blockade" between Britain and Northern Ire-

land, which is meant to enjoy a special status with the EU after Brexit.

Johnson said the EU's stance justified his government's introduction of the new legislation to regulate the UK's internal market, after a post-Brexit transition period expires at the end of this year.

But writing in *Le Parisien* newspaper, French European Affairs Minister Clement Beaune said it was "inconceivable" that a "great democracy" like the U.K. would break its word.

Charles Michel, who

Former PMs slam Johnson

ASSOCIATED PRESS
LONDON

Two former British Prime Ministers who played crucial roles in bringing peace to Northern Ireland joined forces on Sunday to urge lawmakers to reject Boris Johnson government's plans to override the Brexit deal with the European Union, arguing that it imperils that peace and damages the

U.K.'s reputation.

In an article in *The Sunday Times*, John Major and Tony Blair slammed the government for "shaming" the country with legislation that, in places, goes against the very deal it signed to allow for the U.K.'s smooth departure from the EU. "This government's action is embarrassing our nation," they said.

heads the EU Council of governments, said Britain's "international credibility" was at stake as both sides battle to unwind nearly 50 years of economic integration.

He insisted Mr. Johnson's government live up to its binding promises.

Parliament debate

The Bill will come up for its first debate in the House of Commons on Monday, and mutinous MPs are demanding its withdrawal along with pressing for Justice Secretary Robert Buckland to resign. "If I see the rule of law being

broken in a way I find unacceptable then of course I will go," Mr. Buckland told BBC television.

"I don't believe we're going to get to that stage," he added.

The main opposition Labour party demanded the PM get his priorities right, four years after he led the hugely divisive campaign to quit the EU in a hard-fought referendum. "Get on with Brexit and defeat the virus. That should be the government's mantra," Labour leader Keir Starmer wrote in *The Sunday Telegraph*.



A woman casting her ballot in Tomsk, Russia, on Sunday. • REUTERS

as a dry run for next September's parliamentary elections.

United Russia, which backs President Vladimir Putin, dominates politics across 11 time zones, but the elections come at a time of public frustration over years of falling wages and the government's handling of the pandemic.

The regional polls, which will elect 18 Governors and an array of local Parliaments, city councils and municipal bodies, are seen

by supporters competing in Tomsk.

One voter, a student from Tomsk, said he had voted for Ksenia Fadeyeva, a Navalny candidate there.

"I think it's the same in all the regions. I doubt it's different anywhere. People want something new," he said.

Mr. Navalny's allies have pressed ahead with the Kremlin critic's "smart voting" strategy, naming more than a thousand politicians on the ballots they think can beat ruling party candidates and telling their supporters to vote for them.

The strategy aims to disrupt a political system that often bars the Kremlin's staunchest foes from running. Mr. Navalny has been unable to set up his own party.

Early results coming in from Russia's Far East showed two Kremlin-backed regional Governors winning election by a landslide in Kamchatka and the Jewish Autonomous Region.

Landslips in Nepal kills 12, 21 missing

REUTERS
KATHMANDU

Landslides triggered by torrential rain swept through two villages in Nepal on Sunday, killing at least 12 people, a government official said.

Ten people were killed and 21 are missing after a massive landslide swept away homes and people in Barabise, 100 km east of Kathmandu near the border with the Tibet region of China, Nepali government official Murari Wasti said.

Two others died in a landslide in Baglung in the northwest. Both landslides struck the villages before dawn and people could not escape to safety, rescuers said.

The latest fatalities took the death toll from landslides and flash floods in the June-September Monsoon season to 314.

Turkey pulls back vessel from Mediterranean Sea

Greece calls move conducive for talks

REUTERS
ISTANBUL/ATHENS

Turkey on Sunday abruptly postponed the trial of British-Iranian woman Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe, who has spent more than four years in jail or under house arrest since being arrested while visiting relatives with her young daughter in 2016. She had denied charges of sedition. AFP

Pakistan detains suspect in highway rape case

PAKISTAN
LAHORE
Pakistan police on Sunday said they have arrested one of two suspects in the rape of a woman, who was dragged from her car and attacked in front of her children, after her car broke down on a desolate highway in central Punjab province. The assault drew widespread condemnation. AP

prus and Turkey.

Turkey's Navy had issued an advisory earlier this month saying that the Oruc Reis would continue operations in the area until September 12.

Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu had said the ship would continue exploratory operations for longer but no extension to the advisory was issued so far.

But Turkish Defence Minister Hulusi Akar played down the significance of the move, saying the ship had returned to shore as part of scheduled plans.

"The return of Oruc Reis is a positive first step, I hope there will be continuity. We want to talk with Turkey but in a climate without provocations," he told reporters.

Ankara faces potential sanctions from the European Union, which fully supports member states Greece and Cyprus, due to the dispute.

Trump questions integrity of election

U.S. President repeats his claim that mail-in ballots would taint the poll result

ASSOCIATED PRESS
MINDEN

Kicking off a Western swing, President Donald Trump barreled into Nevada for the weekend, looking to expand his path to victory while unleashing a torrent of unsubstantiated claims that Democrats were trying to steal the election.

Mr. Trump defied local authorities by holding a Saturday night rally in Minden after his initial plan to hold one in Reno was stopped out of concern it would have violated COVID-19 health guidelines.

Unleashing 90-plus minutes of grievances and attacks, Mr. Trump claimed the State's Democratic Governor tried to block him and repeated his false claim that mail-in ballots would taint the election result.

"This is the guy we are entrusting with millions of bal-

lots, unsolicited ballots, and we're supposed to win these States. Who the hell is going to trust him?" Mr. Trump said of Governor Steve Sisolak.

"The only way the Democrats can win the election is if they rig it."

As part of his ongoing crusade against mail-in voting, lawyers for the President's reelection campaign are urg-

ing a federal judge in Las Vegas to block a state law and prevent mail-in ballots from going to all active Nevada voters less than eight weeks before the election.

Kamala Harris attacked
The President expressed his condolences to the victims but, declaring that "I don't have to be nice anymore," focused on tearing into his

Democratic opponent, Joe Biden. Mr. Trump claimed that the Democrat's running mate, Senator Kamala Harris, would be President "in about a month" if Mr. Biden won, asserting that the former Vice-President would be but a figurehead and that Ms. Harris would hold power.

Mr. Trump also mocked Mr. Biden's slower travel schedule. "You know where he is now? He is in his damn basement again!"

And, for good measure, Mr. Trump invoked his 2016 opponent, Hillary Clinton, leading the crowd to launch into its traditional "Lock Her Up!" chant. The President claimed he usually tried to stop the chant but on Saturday declared, "I don't care if you say it anymore" and, breaking yet another norm of the office, suggested that Ms. Clinton "should be in jail."

Donald Trump at a rally in Minden on Saturday. • AP

Tamhane's *The Disciple* wins best screenplay at Venice fest

Chloe Zhao's *Nomadland* takes home the Golden Lion

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

Director Chaitanya Tamhane won the best screenplay award for his Marathi-language feature *The Disciple* at the Venice Film Festival that saw Chinese-American filmmaker Chloe Zhao bagging the top prize of the coveted Golden Lion for her drama *Nomadland*.

The winners of the main competition were announced by the festival jury during the closing ceremony, held on Saturday and live-streamed globally.

Headed by two-time Oscar winner Cate Blanchett, the jury also included directors Joanna Hogg, Christian Petzold and Veronika Franz,



Chaitanya Tamhane

novelist Nicola Lagioia and actors Ludivine Sagnier and Matt Dillon.

Mr. Tamhane, the wunderkind filmmaker of Indian cinema, became the first director from the country to compete in the main category of a European film festival

after Mira Nair. Her film *Monsoon Wedding* won the Golden Lion at the festival in 2001.

The Disciple looks at the world of classical musicians on the fringes of success. It follows Sharad Nerulkar, played by Aditya Modak, an Indian classical vocalist trying to achieve purity in his work as he has been raised on the stories of his father and guru about the masters of the past.

"Writing 'The Disciple' was by far the most challenging and painful endeavour I have ever undertaken. This honour means a lot to me and it will encourage me to keep pushing my own boundaries even further."

"With the start of intra-Afghan talks we were expecting the Taliban to reduce the number of their attacks, but unfortunately their attacks are still going in high num-

Afghan forces, Taliban clash as peace talks start

No talk about truce by militant group

REUTERS
KABUL

Taliban and Afghan government forces clashed across Afghanistan hours after the start of long-awaited peace talks in Doha on Saturday, officials said, underscoring the uphill challenge of settling a 19-year insurgency.

Talks between the two sides were to begin shortly after a U.S.-Taliban agreement in February, but began only over the weekend after months of delays, caused in part by continuing Taliban offensives in the war-torn country.

The Taliban did not say anything about a possible ceasefire at the ceremony.

Achieving a significant reduction in violence and how to get to a permanent ceasefire would be among the first issues the sides would discuss when they meet on Sunday, the head of Afghanistan's peace council, Abdulrahman Abdullah, told Reuters on Saturday.

"With the start of intra-Afghan talks we were expecting the Taliban to reduce the number of their attacks, but unfortunately their attacks are still going in high num-

bers," Fawad Aman, a spokesman for the Afghan Defence Ministry, said.

Representatives from a number of countries who spoke at the inauguration of the peace talks called on the Taliban to announce an immediate ceasefire before negotiators sat down to find a way to end decades of war in Afghanistan.

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Smoke chokes U.S. West Coast as wildfire rages on

Trump to meet emergency workers in California as toll from the fires in three states rises to 31

ASSOCIATED PRESS
SALEM

Wildfire smoke that posed a health hazard to millions choked the West Coast on Saturday as firefighters battled deadly blazes that obliterated some towns and displaced tens of thousands of people, the latest in a series of calamities this year.

For people already enduring the coronavirus pandemic, the resulting economic fallout and political tensions

evident in the Black Lives Matter protests and far-right counter protests, the fires added a new layer of misery.

"What's next? You have the protests, coronavirus pandemic, now the wildfires. What else can go wrong?" lamented Danielle Oliver, 40, of Happy Valley, southeast of Portland.

The death toll from the fires in California, Oregon and Washington stood at 31 and was expected to rise

sharply. Most of the fatalities were in California and Oregon.

Oregon's emergency management director said officials were preparing for a possible "mass fatality event" if many more bodies turn up in the ash. And the state fire marshal resigned after abruptly being placed on administrative leave. The state police superintendent said the crisis demanded an urgent response that re-

quired a leadership change.

Fires along Oregon's Cascade Range grew Saturday, but at a slower rate than earlier in the week, when strong easterly winds acted like a bellows, pushing two large fires – the Beachie Creek Fire and the Riverside Fire – toward each other and the state's major population centers, including Portland's southeastern suburbs.

In California, a total of 28 active major fires have

burned 4,375 square miles, and 16,000 firefighters are trying to suppress the flames, California Fire Assistant Deputy Director Daniel Berlant said. Large wildfires continued to burn in northwestern Washington state too.

President Donald Trump said he will meet emergency services in California on Monday.

In all, 22 people have died in California.

Russia votes in test of Putin's grip amid Navalny's 'poisoning'

It is seen as a dry run before 2021 Parliamentary elections

REUTERS
MOSCOW/TOMSK

Russians went to the polls on Sunday in local elections being scrutinised for signs of discontent with the ruling United Russia party following the suspected poisoning of Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny.



A woman casting her ballot in Tomsk, Russia, on Sunday. • REUTERS

as a dry run for next September's parliamentary elections.

United Russia, which backs President Vladimir Putin, dominates politics across 11 time zones, but the elections come at a time of public frustration over years of falling wages and the government's handling of the pandemic.

The main opposition Labour party demanded the PM get his

ASK US

N. SREE KANTH

Q. As per Sec. 234B of the I-T Act, senior citizens without professional income are not liable to pay advance tax. As of now, banks are deducting 10% tax on fixed deposit interest earned in the case of senior citizens also. This tax deduction is tantamount to compulsory deduction of advance tax payment. Could you help clarify this?

P.S. KALYANARAMAN

A. As per Section 208 of the I-T Act, every person whose estimated tax liability for the year is ₹10,000 or more, tax in the form of 'advance tax' is liable to be remitted to the government as per the due dates and the corresponding percentage of tax that is to be remitted.

A resident senior citizen is not liable to pay advance tax if he does not have income from business or profession. Sections 234B and 234C provide for the interest due to the government in case the tax is not remitted in accordance with section 208 during the year.

Section 194A of the Act deals with TDS with respect to payments made in the form of interest from other than securities. This is essentially the interest received from banks from fixed deposits, among others. Banks and co-operative societies are required to deduct tax at 10% if the aggregate interest payouts in a year exceeds ₹40,000 (₹50,000) for senior citizens.

In case of senior citizens to whom tax is being deducted in the form of Section 194A, they may submit a declaration through Form 15H to their respective banks where deposits are held each year wherein their income for that particular year is less than the basic exemption limit thus avoiding TDS for the year and removing difficulties by creating more monies in the hands of such individuals.

The spirit of exempting senior citizens from paying advance tax is to relieve senior citizens from the task of working out the taxes based on the provisions of the act on their own and remitting taxes on due dates. Only senior citizens carrying out business or profession are not relieved as it is believed by the lawmakers that such persons employ various resources in the form of staff, advisers, consultants, among others.

The inclusion of TDS provisions for various-natured inward remittances from remitters, even for senior citizens, is to achieve the dual purpose of creating liquidity in the hands of the government for performance of its sovereign duties and at the same time, relieving the hardships from senior citizens of performing the task of working out the taxes and remitting the same.

Advance tax and TDS provisions are complementary and do not undermine each other's purpose.

Q. I am a government employee. I have invested ₹80,000 in NPS tier I account via salary deduction. My total Section 80C savings is about ₹2 lakh. Can I claim the rebate of ₹2 lakh by bifurcating the amount into ₹1.50 lakh for 80C and ₹50,000 for 80CCD1B? Or, will I have to invest ₹50,000 more to claim rebate under 80CCD 1B?

SAURABH PAHUJA

A. Amounts contributed by your employer towards NPS is covered under 80CCD(1) and 80CCD(2) towards employee and employer contributions respectively through salary disbursement.

Any voluntary contribution towards NPS shall only be covered under 80CCD(1B), thus the additional ₹50,000 benefit prescribed cannot be claimed by you under 80CCD(1B) as no voluntary contribution has been done by you.

Section 80CCD(1) is covered under the limit of 80CCE of ₹1.50 lakh and as mentioned by you, it is exhausted. With respect to 80CCD(2), you may claim a maximum deduction of 14% of basic plus DA (for central government staff) or 10% of basic plus DA (for non-central government staff) and the same is outside the purview of ₹1.50 lakh (80CCE) and ₹50,000 (80CCD 1B).

Kindly contact your human resources department to ascertain the break-up of contributions towards NPS under 80CCD(1) and 80CCD(2). If felt necessary, an additional amount can be invested voluntarily under 80CCD(1B) to claim deduction of up to ₹50,000.

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

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

Riding the roller-coaster market

As indices surge, investors must adopt a balanced approach and invest in frontline firms

G.R. BALAJI

The quote attributed variously to Charles Darwin as well as to American lawyer Clarence Darrow would probably stand investors in good stead today: "It is not the strongest of the species that survives, nor the most intelligent, but rather the one most adaptable to change."

In the last six months, investors have seen an extreme roller coaster ride, first on the downside and now, on the upside. Many records were broken on the downside, when we saw the sharpest fall of the last decade in a month's time and the unusual sight of oil trading in the negative, and the like.

These six months have turned out to be a nightmare for even veteran investors when it came to predicting market movement. As markets in the west have already achieved their highs and ours are close to doing so, what can we learn from the fall and rise

so that we can try to apply this learning to future crises and to better our returns?

No one knows where the market is headed in the short term. As the famous saying goes, the market is a voting machine in the short term and a weighing machine in the long term. We, as investors, acted late when it came to the gravity of the problem and conveniently ignored both the pandemic and the economic slowdown.

Suddenly, the market realised the severity of the issue leading to panic selling in every segment – large, mid, and small caps. The fall was severe when the Nifty plunged from 12,000 to about 8,000. At that point, the perception of risk was higher than the actual risk.

Even though news flow was extremely negative, there was an opportunity waiting to be taken, had we paid attention to the valuation multiple. On March 23, when the mar-

ket reached the recent bottom, the valuation of 30 out of 50 Nifty stocks were 30% lower than their five-year historical average versus 15 stocks before the fall started. Even on the basis of market cap to GDP ratio, it had hit about 56%, which was considered to be the lower bound for the broader market valuation in the last 10 years.

It was one great opportunity to buy good businesses as if at a sale. The perception of risk was already priced into the stock. As investors, we should avoid double counting the risk.

Perils of past winners

The current underperformer (banking) had the largest exposure in the investor portfolio and current outperformer (pharma) had the least exposure. For example, weightage for banks in the Nifty Fifty has risen from 25% in FY10 to 30% in FY15 to 36% FY20. At the same time, pharma weight has

fallen from 7.35% in FY15 to 2.71% in March 2020.

An investor has the natural tendency to choose sectors that have done well in recent years due to the recency effect and familiarity with the sectors. Post the market correction, huge interest was seen in the banking/NBFC sector as they had done well in the last five years.

But the investor might fail to appreciate that this pandemic has placed severe stress on the already stressed banking segment. As per RBI, our banking sector GNPA (gross non-performing assets) was already as high as 8.5% at the end of FY20 and is expected to reach 12.5% on a base case scenario for FY21 and 14.7% under a severely-stressed scenario.

For any lending business, moratorium on loans should ring alarm bells as it signals increased business risk. An investor who wants to take exposure to the banking sector should take cognisance of the new reality.

In the last

five months, even though the market saw a strong rally banking has been an underperformer. On the contrary, the best performing sector pharmaceuticals did not elicit high investor interest. To reduce sector risk, an in-

crease in

market levels should aid the investor in capturing the forward, higher returns.

As the fear of risk was high

evolving, the risk for fixed income was getting higher due to lower future return while the risk for equity was coming down due to lower valuation risk.

On an average, in the last five months, BSE 500 companies had delivered about 69% return which, in fixed income, would take at least 10-plus years. It is not about one versus the other but about having the right asset allocation, and allocating capital based on long-term risk appetite of the investor and forward returns of the asset.

The current market mood should not determine the incremental capital allocation.

To conclude, we initially overreacted to the crisis and pushed valuations lower but now we might be under-reacting to the problem as we are yet to find a vaccine or a sure cure for the virus, and there is no economic growth in sight. Taking a balanced approach to markets and investing regularly in frontline companies should help the investor attain satisfactory and sustainable returns.

Source: ACE Equity, RBI Financial Stability Report and Motilal Oswal Valuation Report
(The author is head of research and co-fund manager at iThought Financial Consulting)

COVER NOTE: INTERMEDIARY

One intermediary, many insurers

A customer can purchase different policies from various insurers through the same broker

K. NITYA KALYANI

The agent who is a family friend, a corporate agent with whom you may already have dealings... we saw the role they play in your insurance journey.

Enter the insurance broker, a relatively new entity in personal insurance in India.

The difference between an agent (including corporate agent) and a broker is that the former represents the company, but the latter represents the customer. He can represent every insurance company in India, if he wants to, and so, you can have different policies with different insurers, all purchased from and serviced by the same entity.

Two decades ago, the insurance broker was confined to reinsurance, a business-to-business product for insurance companies to cover their risks and offered by firms in India and abroad.

After the insurance sector reforms in 1999 when the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority (IRDA), as it was

then named) came into being, direct insurance brokers were registered to help customers buy products of multiple insurers.

Checking authenticity

All registered brokers should have company names with the words 'Insurance Broker,' 'Insurance Brokers' or 'Insurance Broking.' You can also look up www.irda.gov.in for a list of registered insurance brokers, numbering over 700 now, to check the authenticity of any entity you may be thinking of dealing with.

Regulations specify financial, qualification and compliance requirements for setting up a broking company, the functions of a broker and code of conduct which help protect the customer.

For example, a direct broker should have a share capital (or contribution if it is a limited liability partnership, LLP) of ₹75 lakh. This capital has to be from own funds of the promoters/shareholders and the shares/contribution should not be en-

called composite brokers. Any broking company should carry on an insurance broking business exclusively.

CHECKING AUTHENTICITY

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For example, a direct broker should have a share capital (or contribution if it is a limited liability partnership, LLP) of ₹75 lakh. This capital has to be from own funds of the promoters/shareholders and the shares/contribution should not be en-



Worthy of trust: Norms specify the functions of a broker and a code of conduct to help protect customers. ■ GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCK

cumbered by way of pledging and the like. The net worth at any point should not fall below ₹50 lakh. He should also maintain a deposit of ₹10 lakh with a scheduled bank that IRDAI has a lien on and should also have a professional indemnity insurance cover. The objective is to ensure the financial health of the intermediary for the benefit

of all stakeholders.

An important point is an insurance broker cannot indulge in multi-level marketing. So, do be wary of anyone approaching you with such a proposal.

The direct insurance broker's functions also include assisting in the negotiation of claims and maintaining proper records of claims. He should al-

so help in opening of e-insurance accounts and in issuing e-insurance policies. Should you have a grievance, he should respond and resolve it within 14 days of receipt. Apart from care, diligence and confidentiality, your broker is also supposed to be insurer-neutral when he advises you, not favouring any particular firm but based on your requirement.

At the time of a claim, the code of conduct specifies the broker should forward information from you to the insurer and advise you on the latter's decision and 'give all reasonable assistance to the customer in pursuing a claim.'

Direct insurance brokers can also sell through the Internet (web aggregators), via the telephone (telemarketers) and through distance marketing. The regulations apply to all of them too and there are additional points on the code of conduct that applies to them.

The writer is a business journalist specialising in insurance & corporate history

LOOSE CHANGE

RAVIKANTH



Name of Lender	Interest rate (%)	PERSONAL LOAN - RATES AND CHARGES	
		EMI (Rs 5 lakh)	EMI (Rs 1 lakh)
State Bank of India	9.60-13.85	10,525-11,595	2,105-2,319
Citi Bank	9.99-16.49	10,621-12,290	2,124-2,458
HDFC Bank	10.75-21.30	10,809-13,611	2,162-2,722
Bank of Baroda	10.25-15.60	10,685-12,053	2,137-2,411
Axis Bank	12.00-24.00	11,122-14,384	2,224-2,877
ICICI Bank	11.25-21.00	10,934-13,527	2,187-2,705
Indian Bank	9.20-13.65	10,428-11,544	2,086-2,309
Tata Capital	10.99 onwards	10,869 onwards	2,174 onwards
Kotak Mahindra Bank	10.75-24.00	10,809-14,384	2,162-2,877
Bank of India	9.35-12.35	10,464-11,211	2,093-2,242
Canara Bank	10.20-13.90	10,673-11,608	2,135-2,322
Punjab National Bank	8.95-11.80	10,367-11,072	2,073-2,214
HSBC Bank	10.50-17.84	10,747-12,653	2,149-2,531
Federal Bank	11.49-17.99	10,994-12,694	2,199-2,539
Punjab & Sind Bank	11.10	10,896	2,179

Rates and charges as on September 9

Name of Bank	Interest rate (%)	NEW CAR LOAN - RATES AND CHARGES	
		Loan amount 5 lakh	Processing fee (% of loan amount)
Punjab & Sind Bank	7.10-7.45	9,924-10,007	Nil
Union Bank of India	7.15-7.50	9,936-10,019	Rs 1,000
Bank of Baroda	7.		

