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Amar Singh passes
away in Singapore
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U.P. govt. ignoring
Brahmins, says Cong.
leader Jinji Prasada
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Gross GST revenue in
July falls to ₹87,422 cr.
from ₹1 lakh crore
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Will ban TikTok in
the U.S., says President
Donald Trump
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NEARBY



Second serosurvey begins in Delhi

NEW DELHI
A second serological survey, in which blood samples of random people will be taken to check how many have developed antibodies against COVID-19, began in the city on Saturday. A similar survey conducted from June 27 to July 5 had shown antibodies in 23.4% of the population.

CITY ▶ PAGE 3

Sisodia asks Shah to allow hotels, weekly markets

NEW DELHI
Delhi's Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia on Saturday wrote to Union Home Minister Amit Shah asking him to direct Lieutenant-Governor Anil Baijal to allow hotels and weekly markets to function in the city. "I request you to direct L-G sir to immediately approve the CM's proposal," he wrote.

CITY ▶ PAGE 3

Punjab spurious liquor death toll rises to 86

CHANDIGARH
The death toll in the hooch tragedy in three Punjab districts – Tarn Taran, Amritsar (Rural) and Gurdaspur – has risen to 86, Chief Minister Amarinder Singh said on Saturday. He ordered an inquiry into the tragedy.

NORTH & EAST ▶ PAGE 4

Missing lawyer's body found in tiles godown

GAZIABAD
The body of a lawyer who went missing from Khurja town in Bulandshahr on July 25 was recovered from a tiles godown in the town on Friday night, the police said. Three persons, including the unit owner, have been arrested.

NORTH & EAST ▶ PAGE 4

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Only 1.7% of 35K domestic workers test positive in city

They were selected randomly; officials say it's a 'good sign'.

NIKHIL M BABU NEW DELHI

As many as 35,022 domestic and daily wage workers in the city have been tested randomly for COVID-19 so far and only 597 of them have been found to be infected – a rate of 1.7% – according to the Delhi government data accessed by *The Hindu*. Officials say the positivity rate is

"low" and a "good sign".

'Revised plan'

The Aam Aadmi Party government had on July 8 released a 'Revised Delhi COVID Response Plan (Modified)' under which drivers, domestic workers, plumbers, electricians, carpenters, mechanics among others were enlisted under special surveillance group (SSG) and tested.

Another group enlisted under the plan were people above 65 years of age and with comorbidities, termed as high-risk group (HRG), and they showed a higher rate of infection. Of the 12,457 elderly people tested for the virus, 525 were found COVID-19-positive, a rate of 4.2%, till July 29.

A total of 64,649 people were enlisted under HRG and 51,376 people under SSG.

Also, the modified plan directed officials to identify areas where isolated cases were being reported and 844 such areas were identified and more than 10.01 lakh pe-

ople living there were screened.

"Districts shall strive to undertake the screening of SSG wherever possible. Major points of conglomeration of SSG to be compulsorily covered," the plan said.

"These workers interact with a larger number of people on a daily basis and if someone like them tests positive then the infection can spread. This was our idea behind putting them under a special group and testing them," a health department

official said.

"Their low positivity shows that we are well placed in terms of our fight against the virus." The district officials have so far organised camps in markets and other areas and people falling under SSG have been tested using rapid antigen tests.

Commenting on the slightly higher positivity of senior citizens, the official said, "These people are more prone to get infections. So, considering that, it is also not a very high percentage."

The scheme had re-

ceived feedback especially from non-banking financial companies that a large section of their clientele included such people, who had taken loans under their own names for business needs.

"Given that there was further headroom available, it was decided to expand the scheme. We expect that ₹1 lakh crore can be sanctioned to additional beneficiaries due to the expansion," said

Senior officials told *The Hindu* that over the past year, consultations had been held between the Ministries of Human Resource Development and External Affairs, due to security concerns over teaching Mandarin to Indian students.

The government had received feedback especially from non-banking financial companies that a large section of their clientele included such people, who had taken loans under their own names for business needs.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 6

The Emergency Credit Line Guarantee Scheme was rolled out in May as part of the Centre's Aatmanirbhar package in response to the COVID-19 crisis. It has a corpus of ₹41,600 crore and provides fully guaranteed additional funding of up to

₹3 lakh crore. Eligible MSMEs had to have an annual turnover up to ₹100 crore, with outstanding loans of up to ₹25 crore as on February 29, 2020.

₹87,000 crore disbursed So far, banks have approved ₹1.36 lakh crore worth of loans to 40 lakh MSME units under the scheme. Over ₹87,000 crore had already been disbursed, Financial Services Secretary Debasish Panda told journalists.

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Divine duty: Muslims offer prayers on the occasion of Id-ul-Zuhra at Jama Masjid (left) in the Walled City; and at the ruins of the Feroz Shah Kotla Mosque on Saturday. ■ SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA



Air Quality of Delhi-NCR			
Delhi	81	Gurugram	74
Ghaziabad	66	Faridabad	79
Noida	98	Greater Noida	49
Good	■	Satisfactory	■
Poor	■	Moderate	■
201-300	51-100	101-200	
301-400	301-400	>400	
Air Quality Index at 4 pm yesterday (Average of past 24 hours) [Source: CPCB]			

IN BRIEF

Police officers suspended for reporting late to work

NEW DELHI Thirty-six Delhi police officers were suspended on Saturday for not reporting for duty on time in north-west Delhi. This came after Deputy Commissioner of Police (North-West) Vijayanta Arya went to check arrangement for Id-ul-Zuhra early morning and found the officers missing at their duty points at 6.30 a.m. when they were expected to report at 5 a.m.

Police chief launches tree plantation drive

NEW DELHI Delhi Police Commissioner S.N. Srivastava on Saturday launched a tree plantation drive to increase the city's green cover. He planted saplings at the police headquarters in Jai Singh Road, an official said, adding that the event was organised by Land and Building unit of Delhi Police. The plantation drive will be carried out in all police buildings, police stations and residential areas, he said. PTI

Boutique owner held for injuring 4

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI A 29-year-old boutique owner was arrested for allegedly injuring four persons, including an ice cream vendor in Amar Colony on Friday night, the police said.

DCP (South-East) R.P. Meena said that the accused has been identified as Roshni Arora, a resident of Faridabad. The injured has been identified as Mukesh Kumar, Sapna Kumari, Guddu and Harshit Kaur. The police said that Mukesh told them that he was buying ice cream when the luxury car hit them.

The accused allegedly told police that she was having ice cream while sitting in the car with her dog when it jumped and the gear changed leading to the accident.

Gymnasiums work out rules to keep clients safe from virus

Owners to increase slots, cap number of members once they reopen from Aug. 5

SHINJINI GHOSH

NEW DELHI From increasing the number of slots to capping the number of members in each slot, and asking clients to carry their own basic gear, gyms and fitness centres across the city have drawn up a host of measures to be followed once they reopen under Unlock 3 guidelines.

Even as standard operating procedures (SOPs) regarding functioning of gyms are awaited, several gym owners said that members will be asked to train with the same group of people to check transmission of the deadly COVID-19.

The Ministry of Home Affairs on July 29 had said that yoga institutes and gyms will be allowed to function from August 5 for which the SOPs would be released by the Health Ministry.

Siddharth Singh of Cross-train Fight Club said, "We have decided to limit the number of people to eight per batch and the same eight will be training together every day. We want to reduce exposure, hence, members will get different slots. They



Warm up: A worker in a PPE suit sanitises gym equipment ahead of reopening in the Capital. ■ FILE PHOTO

will need to be part of the same group throughout. Earlier, there were two batches of 40 people but that has to be discontinued now."

New sign-ups on hold

As a precautionary measure, new memberships will also be put on hold for the meantime, Mr. Singh said. "We are limiting new sign-ups and will start with the existing members only. Earlier, there were provisions of communal boxing gloves and other gears but now people need to get their own gears," he added.

While some fitness centres said that they were waiting for the government to release the guidelines, several said that tentative protocols to be followed within the gyms had been formulated by the management.

Akhil Mehra of BoxFit, said, "We will take a call on the capping of members once the government issues guidelines on the capacity which can be functional. But apart from this, record of every person training in the gym will be maintained so that tracking is possible, if

the need arises."

Fumigation drive

Partial fumigation and installation of blasters are some of the other measures to be taken, said Mr. Mehra. "Trainees will have to sanitise every half an hour. The classes which were earlier for an hour each will be reduced to 40 or 45 minutes, depending on the number of people allowed to train at one go, so that sanitisation can be carried out in between two classes. We will not be opening for group classes initially and will concentrate on personal training only," said Mr. Mehra.

At 'The Spark Unisex Gym' in Malviya Nagar, members will be reduced by half for each slot, said Vipin Gupta.

"Earlier, there were 25 to 30 people in each slot but now there will be only 10 to 15 members. Apart from sanitisation, members will also be asked to bring their own bottles, among other stuff and they will not be allowed to use the common water dispenser, which was there earlier," said Mr. Gupta.

SC comes to rescue of DU law student

Tells university to declare her results

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court has stepped in to fulfil the ambition of Ankita Meena to finish her legal studies and have a shot at a career in law.

Necessary attendance

A three-judge Bench led by Chief Justice of India Sharad A. Bobde made an urgent intervention in her favour and directed the University of Delhi to declare her results for two semesters.

The results had been withheld for a year by the university because she did not have the necessary attendance due to her pregnancy.

Ms. Meena, represented by senior advocate Menaka Guruswamy and a team of advocates Vivek Paul Oriel, Himanshu Dhuper, Ashish Virmani and Ruchiira Goel, urged parity for their client.

They said the exams results for others had been declared way back in July 2019 itself. Only Ms. Meena has been left behind.

"She will miss a chance to complete her education and lose her precious time

in her career," Ms. Guruswamy argued in a virtual court hearing on July 28.

The denial of her results of two semesters just because she did not make the necessary cut in attendance due to her pregnancy at the time is a violation of her fundamental rights

LAWYERS OF ANKITA MEENA

Umar Khalid questioned in connection with riots

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

Former Jawaharlal Nehru University student Umar Khalid was questioned by Delhi Police Special Cell on Friday in connection with communal riots that broke out in February. Sources said his phone has been seized for examination.

Mr. Khalid's name appeared in the chargesheet submitted by the police against suspended AAP councillor Tahir Hussain.

The chargesheet states that on January 8, Mr. Hussain met Mr. Khalid and United Against Hate co-founder Khalid Saifi at Shaheen Bagh during an anti-CAA protest, where "Umar Khalid told him to be prepared for something big/riots at the time of the visit of U.S. President".

The police mentioned that Mr. Saifi also gave Mr. Hussain money to prepare.

Responding to the chargesheet, Mr. Khalid had said, "It is an upside down world that we are living in, in which these organisations and individuals that have worked for communal harmony are being implicated".

JNUTA writes to Centre over violation of reservation policy

Teachers' union seeks intervention in faculty recruitment

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

The Jawaharlal Nehru University Teachers' Association (JNUTA) has written to the Ministry of Human Resource Development flagging issues pertaining to violation of reservation policy in faculty recruitment at the university and appealed for intervention.

SC/ST candidates.

In the letter to MHRD Secretary Amit Khare, the teachers' body said that there had been a "drastic reduction and exclusion in the number of positions meant to be reserved for SC and ST candidates.

Referring to a letter written in March this year, the JNUTA said, "We had pointed



on this matter till date and we certainly have not received a response to our request."

'Done in haste'

The JNUTA also said that the appointment process was being "done in haste" during the prevailing COVID-19 pandemic through online methods.

"The implications for the future of reservation policy of what JNU is practising are dangerous, regressive and far reaching, especially if the MHRD takes no action to check it. These implications are not limited to the potentially irreversible effects of permanent appointments that are in violation of statutory reservation provisions," the letter read.

Carefree days



Children enjoy themselves on a waterlogged road after a pipeline burst in west Delhi on Saturday. ■ SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

Seven held for robbing jewellery shop

They had also allegedly planned a heist on Id-ul-Zuhra

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

The Delhi police on Saturday said that seven people were arrested for allegedly robbing a jewellery shop in Dwarka. The accused had allegedly planned a heist on Id-ul-Zuhra in Chandni Chowk, they said.

Deputy Commissioner of Police (Dwarka) Anto Alphonse said that the accused have been identified as Govind alias Dabbu, Dileep, Akash, Gandharv alias Sunny, Amit Shukla, Raju alias Mus-

tafa and Vijay Kamal.

The police said that they received information on Thursday that armed criminals have robbed a jewellery shop in Uttam Nagar on gunpoint. The shop owner said that the robbers took 750 gm of gold, 15 kg silver, ₹1.33 lakh cash and mobile phones.

Phone leads to clues

During investigation, the police found a phone which was accidentally dropped by one of the accused. This

gave the team clues for other accused persons who were then apprehended and interrogated. All seven were arrested on Friday, the police said.

During interrogation, it was revealed that they are all friends and were overconfident that the police would not be able to trace them. "On sustained interrogation, it was disclosed that they had planned to carry out a big robbery in Chandni Chowk on Id," Mr. Alphonse said.

Man arrested for duping people on pretext of job

He and his accomplice had fooled several people in Capital and other States

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

A 42-year-old man was arrested on Saturday for allegedly duping several people on the pretext of providing them jobs at AIIMS. "She asked him to come to Delhi and meet Sumanta Chatterjee for further proceedings. He came to Delhi and met Chatterjee who kept fooling him and making fake promises and stories," Mr. Thakur said.

Deputy Commissioner of Police (South) Atul Thakur said that the accused has been identified as Sumanta Chatterjee, from West Bengal who worked as a guard in Noida. The police said that a complainant, a resident of Dehradun, alleged that he

had come in contact with one Neha Sharma who duped him of ₹30,000 on the pretext of providing a job at AIIMS.

"She asked him to come to Delhi and meet Sumanta Chatterjee for further proceedings. He came to Delhi and met Chatterjee who kept fooling him and making fake promises and stories," Mr. Thakur said.

When the complainant felt something was amiss, he reached AIIMS. "The complainant found out that there were many others there who

were also cheated by Chatterjee," the officer said.

Case of cheating

Based on the complaint, a case on charges of cheating and detailing of the accused were collected. With the help of technical surveillance, Chatterjee was arrested.

During interrogation, he allegedly told the police that he and his accomplice Neha had duped several in the Capital and other States, using the same modus operan-

di. "They collected money from the victims by stating several reasons like fee for application form, fees for online registration, verification fee, medical fee, etc," Mr. Thakur said, adding that it was also revealed that the accused forged signatures of officials and used fake stamp to make movement passes on AIIMS letterhead and also arranged for victims' stay in Delhi if they come from another place.

The police said that Neha is absconding.

City gets fresh spell of rain

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI

A fresh spell of rain in the national capital on Saturday kept the mercury within comfortable levels.

The Safdarjung Observatory recorded a maximum of 36.3 degrees Celsius and 6.7 mm rainfall.

The Ayanagar and Palam weather stations recorded 20.2 mm and 5.6 mm precipitation, respectively. The mercury remained between 34 and 36 degrees Celsius at most places.

Timings

DELHI

SUNDAY, AUG. 02	
RISE 05:44	SET 19:12
RISE 18:29	SET 04:06
MONDAY, AUG. 03	
RISE 05:45	SET 19:11
RISE 19:16	SET 05:05
TUESDAY, AUG. 04	
RISE 05:45	SET 19:10
RISE 19:58	SET 06:04

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

Delhi Palam Today
36°C Warm and humid day with partly cloudy sky. Short spell light rain may occur.

Delhi Palam Tomorrow
37°C Uneasy warm and humid afternoon likely. Short spell rain and thunderstorm likely over few places.

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Head Constable dies of virus

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

A policeman here died of COVID-19 at a city hospital on Friday, said officials on Saturday. Deputy Commissioner of Police (South) Atul Thakur said Head Constable Leela Dhar was posted at Defence Colony police station.

On July 11, Dhar had reported about mild fever after which he was taken to Nehru Homeopathic College and Hospital in Defence Colony. When tested, his results came positive for COVID-19.

Thereafter, he was shifted to Rajiv Gandhi Super Specialty Hospital in Tahirpur where his condition worsened on July 19 and he shifted to the intensive care unit. He was given plasma therapy, the police said.

More than 2,500 Delhi Police personnel have been infected with the virus so far. Of these, more than 2,100 have recovered and resumed their duties, while over a dozen succumbed to the virus.

Bidhuri raises alarm over sale of 'adulterated' potatoes

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Leader of the Opposition in the Delhi Assembly, Ramvir Singh Bidhuri, on Saturday expressed concern over the alleged sale of "dangerous, chemical-adulterated potatoes" in Delhi and demanded strict action from Lieutenant-Governor Anil Baijal against those involved in the trade.

In a letter to the L-G, Mr. Bidhuri alleged that profiteers were mixing dangerous chemicals in bad potatoes and selling them as "new hill potatoes" at expensive prices.

Doctors and experts are of the view that this adulteration of potatoes may cause harm to the liver, kidney and other vital organs and is likely to cause fatal diseases like cancer as well," Mr. Bidhuri stated. He also demanded an investigation be carried out by the Crime Branch of the Delhi Police so that those involved in this dangerous business could be exposed.

He also expressed surprise that the Delhi government had not taken any initiative in this regard despite the fact that such adulteration had come to light in Azadpur Mandi, which is administered by the government.

Second serosurvey begins

City sees 1,118 new COVID-19 cases, taking tally to 1,36,716; 10,596 active cases

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

As many as 1,118 new COVID-19 cases were reported in Delhi in the past 24 hours, taking the total to 1,36,716, according to a health bulletin released by the Delhi government on Saturday.

Also, 26 more deaths have been reported, taking the toll to 3,989. Of the total cases, 1,22,131 people have recovered and there are now 10,596 active cases.

A second serological survey, in which blood samples of random people from across the city will be taken to check how many have developed antibodies against COVID-19, began on Saturday. "The survey began in five districts on Saturday morning. It will start in the remaining six districts from Sunday," a health department official said.

The result of a similar survey done from June 27-July 5, in which around 22,000 samples were taken, had shown that 23.4% of the population



People waiting in line for rapid antigen tests at Adarsh Nagar in north Delhi. ■ SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

had developed antibodies.

The number of new cases has been dropping ever since it touched almost 4,000 – highest so far – on June 23. Daily new cases have been less than 1,500 for the past 16 consecutive days.

The active cases have also been decreasing; from 27,007 on July 1 to 10,596 on Saturday – a drop of 60.8%.

Out of the total 18,154 tests done in the past 24 hours, 71.6% were rapid antigen tests, which have shown low

Virus spread

Total number of COVID-19 cases	Total deaths
1,36,716	3,989
New cases in the past 24 hours	New deaths
1,118	26

SOURCE: DELHI GOVERNMENT HEALTH BULLETIN

positivity in the city compared to RT-PCR tests.

The number of people admitted to COVID-19 hospitals has also been decreasing, from 5,892 on July 1 to 2,979 on Saturday.

In the same period, the number of patients in home isolation has decreased from 16,703 to 5,660.

The positivity rate, which is the percentage of people who test positive for the virus, has dropped from 12.2% to 6.1%.

The number of containment zones decreased to 496 on Saturday following a reassessment this week.

CM reviews situation in sealed areas

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Saturday reviewed the status of containment zones in Delhi, which have recently been scaled down from 715 to 496.

Mr. Kejriwal told officials that situation in containment zones must be analysed at regular intervals.

According to the Delhi government, the review meeting came after Mr. Kejriwal expressed concern over large size of zones restricting the movement of a large number of people.

"On July 27, 3,48,099 people were contained across Delhi; this came down to 1,06,211 people on July 31," the government said.

There are now 39 containment zones in Central district, 50 in East, 39 in New Delhi, 59 in North, 24 in North East, 28 in North West, seven in Shahdara, 50 in South, 30 in South East, 109 in South West, and 61 in West.

'Allow hotels, weekly markets to reopen'

Manish Sisodia writes to Amit Shah

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

Chief Minister Manish Sisodia on Saturday wrote to Union Home Minister Amit Shah asking him to direct Lieutenant-Governor Anil Baijal to allow hotels and weekly markets to function in the city.

'Will send file again'

"I request you to change your decision and direct LG sir to immediately approve the Chief Minister's proposal. The government will again send a file on this matter to him on Tuesday, please ask LG not to stop it [sic]," Mr. Sisodia wrote.

On Friday, Mr. Baijal had rejected the AAP government's decision to restart their business, the decision of closure is unfair to Delhi's economic situation and also to the hopes of lakhs of people," Mr. Sisodia said in the letter.



Manish Sisodia

jecting the decision.

"Due to hotels not being open, Delhi's business and employment is down. Due to weekly markets being shut, five lakh families are sitting at home for the past four months. Now when they are hopeful that coronavirus is under control in Delhi and they will get an opportunity to restart their business, the decision of closure is unfair to Delhi's economic situation and also to the hopes of lakhs of people," Mr. Sisodia said.

On Friday, Mr. Baijal had rejected the AAP government's decision to restart their business, the decision of closure is unfair to Delhi's economic situation and also to the hopes of lakhs of people," Mr. Sisodia said.

'Govt. taking false credit for giving ration to 72L people'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The Opposition BJP on Saturday accused the Delhi government of attempting to take false credit for providing ration to 72 lakh cardholders in the city.

This was actually being provided under the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana and the National Food Security Act by the BJP-led Centre, said Delhi BJP president Adesh Gupta.

The Kejriwal government is also claiming this scheme as its own. The only job of the Kejriwal government is to make false propaganda and then seek false accolades. Under the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyana Anna Yojana, at the cost of ₹303 crore per month, 72 lakh cardholders under Delhi were given 4 kg of wheat, 1 kg of rice, 1 kg of gram or pulses every month," he said.



How narcotics and mobile phones were sold inside Bhondsi jail

Deputy Superintendent acted as conduit between inmates and drug suppliers

phones and SIMs for them, Dharambir's job was to hand over the stuff to the inmates," said sources.

Unlike his two counterparts in charge of the security inside the jail, Dharambir handled the affairs of the manufacturing unit inside the premises and thus had easy access to the inmates. Mr. Sangwan said the jail official, being next only to the Superintendent, took advantage of his position to

While Ravi remained in touch with the inmates over phone and procured drugs,

phones were sold for ₹1.5 lakh. The 4G SIMs to access social media would cost ₹20,000.

The lion's share

"The inmates would procure the stuff through Dharambir and supplied it further to fellow inmates. Every contact point in the supply chain had a cut, but Dharambir had a lion's share. For instance, he would charge ₹5,000 for the supply of 10g marijuana, which was sold for ₹10,000. He had sold the phones in February and March this year in return for

₹25,000 and ₹50,000," said Station House Officer, Bhondsi police station, Inspector Bhartender.

The duo has so far named Praveen, a murder convict in Bhondsi jail, as their contact inside the premises and his interrogation would throw more light on the case.

"So far, we have not come across the involvement of any jail official except Dharambir but the matter is under investigation," said Mr.



Dharambir indulged in the supply of phones and drugs in Bhondsi jail during his earlier posting in 2014-16 as well and also during his stints in other jails across the State

Sanwan.

Though suspected to be involved in supplying illegal items to the inmates for years now, the Deputy Superintendent's luck ran out on July 23 when a Crime Branch team chasing Ravi, following a tip-off that he was carrying marijuana to supply inside the jail, ended up at the doorstep of the jail official and caught the two with the narcotics.

In a recent development, Dharambir's son Ravi was arrested on August 1 for threatening the jail staff with dire consequences. In an audio recording, which went viral, Ravi claimed that he was in touch with gangsters in Haryana and neighbouring States and soon commit a criminal incident in the jail.

Apart from a case under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, 1985, the police mull invoking the Prevention of the Corruption Act against Dharambir as well. A police officer at Bhondsi police station said it was unlikely for the jail official to act in isolation without the active collusion of the staff and what the investigation revealed so far could only be a "tip of an iceberg".

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THE HINDU

India's National Newspaper

Noida reports one death; active cases on the rise

129 people test positive for COVID-19

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NOIDA

Uttar Pradesh's Gautam Buddha Nagar recorded one more fatality linked to COVID-19 on Saturday, pushing the death toll in the district to 43.

The district's case count rose to 5,328 as 129 more people tested positive for COVID-19, according to the data released by the State Health Department.

The number of active cases in the district climbed to 846. There has been a steady rise in the number of active cases in the district from 679 on Wednesday, 730 on Thursday and 796 on Friday, it showed.

In terms of active cases, Gautam Buddha Nagar (846) stands 11th among the districts in the State.

Noida building collapse: owner held over death of two workers

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NOIDA

The owner of an under-construction building in Noida was arrested on Saturday, a day after two people were killed after a portion of the structure collapsed.

Five workers were rescued from the debris after the front portion of the three-storey building located in F Block of Sector 11 collapsed on them at 7.30 p.m. on Friday. Two of them, a contractor and a plumber, died during treatment, while the rest are still hospitalised, the police said.

"Raj Kumar Bharadwaj has been arrested in connection with the case," an officer said.

The Indian Institutes of Management (IIMs) will conduct a computer-based Common Admission Test (CAT 2020) on November 29, 2020 in two sessions.

Detailed information on CAT 2020 may be obtained from the CAT website.

CAT website: www.iimcat.ac.in

CAT 2020 is a pre-requisite for admission to various Post Graduate and Fellow programmes of IIMs. CAT 2020 scores are allowed to be used by listed non-IIM member institutions. A list of such institutions is provided on the CAT website. IIMs have no role in the selection process of non-IIM institutions.

CAT 2020

Punjab spurious liquor death toll rises to 86

CM suspends excise and police officers; 25 people arrested in the case so far

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHANDIGARH

The death toll in the hooch tragedy in three Punjab districts – Tarn Taran, Amritsar (Rural) and Gurdaspur – has risen to 86 so far, Chief Minister Amarinder Singh said on Saturday.

Captain Amarinder ordered the suspension of, and inquiry against, seven Excise and Taxation officers and Inspectors, along with two Deputy Superintendents of Police (DSPs) and four Station House Officers (SHOs) of the Punjab police, in connection with the tragedy.

He has also announced ₹2 lakh ex gratia compensation to each of the families of the deceased, most of whom are from Tarn Taran, which accounts for 63 deaths, fol-



Grieving family members of a hooch tragedy victim in Amritsar on Saturday. ■ PTI

lowed by Amritsar (Rural) 12 and Gurdaspur (Batala) 11.

"Strict action will be taken against any public servant or others found complicit in the case," said the Chief Minister, describing the police and Excise Department failure to check the manufacturing and sale of spurious liquor as shame-

ful. Capt. Amarinder was speaking during a Facebook Live interaction event.

17 more arrested

Director General of Police Dinkar Gupta said the police on Saturday arrested 17 more persons in connection with the case through more than 100 raids in the three

affected districts, along with several other places in and around Rajpura and Shambhu border.

"The total number of arrests in the case has gone up to 25. A mafia mastermind, a woman kingpin, a transport company owner, a wanted criminal and owners-managers of various dhabas from where the illicit liquor was being supplied are among those arrested," said Mr. Gupta. A government statement said that according to the Excise Commissioner, though reports of the chemical analysis of the material seized in yesterday's raids were yet to come, a superficial check showed that the material was denatured spirit, generally used in the paint-hardware industry.

He added that the Chief Minister should take immediate steps to "protect the people of Punjab", and rebuild the trust in the administration by taking proac-

tive steps.

Taking to Twitter, former Deputy CM and Shiromani Akali Dal chief Sukhbir Singh Badal said this tragedy was waiting to happen. He said the Akali Dal had warned the government that ENA (Extra Neutral Alcohol) was being used indiscriminately to manufacture spurious liquor, still the State government not only turned a blind eye to these revelations but also allowed loss of several crores to the State exchequer. "Since the Excise Department is with him (Capt. Amarinder), he must submit his resignation immediately. It is time for him to go," said Mr. Badal.

Capt. Amarinder, meanwhile, urged Mr. Sukhbir Badal not to politicise the tragedy.

Missing lawyer's body found

Three persons, including a tiles unit owner, arrested: police

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GHAZIABAD

The body of the lawyer who went missing from Khurja town of Bulandshahr district on July 25 was recovered from a tiles godown in the town on Friday night, the police said. Three persons, including the owner of the ceramic tiles unit, have been arrested.

Dharmendra Chaudhary had gone missing from Gulshan Vihar Colony of Khurja. His motorcycle was found abandoned in Khabra village adjoining a jungle.

In what seems like a pre-meditated murder, the police said, Dharmendra was invited to the tiles godown for a party and was strangled to death over a financial dispute. The body was then buried in a brick-lined, nine-foot-deep pit in the godown. The godown is situated behind a police post, and all



Dharmendra Chaudhary. ■
SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT.

this while the police were pressing drones and a dog squad in the sugarcane fields adjoining the Khabra village.

Bulandshahr Senior Superintendent of Police Santosh Kumar Singh said the investigation revealed that the owner of Mahalaxmi Timber and Tiles factory owed money to Dharmendra and when he could not return it, hatched a plan to kill his 'friend'. "We have arrested Vicky Lala, the owner of the unit, and two of his aides."

Mr. Singh said they found a diary belonging to Dharmendra in which there were details of money, approximately ₹70-₹80 lakh, lent to Vicky. "As the loan was not legitimate, family didn't raise any doubts. There was no direct evidence against Vicky. CCTV footage indicated that Dharmendra entered his showroom at 8.30 p.m. but didn't come out," Mr. Singh told *The Hindu*.

The police asked Vicky to take a lie detector test. He initially agreed, but later backed out citing health reasons. "This almost confirmed our doubt," said Mr. Singh. When the team searched the godown, they sensed the stench of a rotting body. "The body was found buried in a pit," Mr. Singh said, adding Vicky has admitted to his crime. "He said he used his *gamchha* (stole) to strangle the deceased."

'Schools, colleges to restart from Sept.'

Plan depends on Centre's approval, says Assam Minister

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GUWAHATI

The Assam government is "mentally prepared" to reopen educational institutions from September 1 but will wait for the Centre's nod, Education Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said.

The schools, he told journalists on Saturday, will not be allowed to let in students up to Class 4 while restarting higher classes will entail riders such as "mandatory" COVID-19 tests for all teachers and staff before August 30.

The other conditions include conducting Classes 5-8 at a village field or an open space with a maximum of 15 students in attendance at a time. "What we envisage is the ancient gurukul system that students living far away can also attend," Dr. Sarma said.

The government was also working on a model where



Himanta Biswa Sarma. ■ FILE PHOTO

the educated youth can volunteer to assist teachers in taking classes.

"Such aides will be provided with a certificate that can help them in the long run," he said without elaborating.

Classes on school premises will only be for students of Classes 9 to 12. While 9 and 11 students will have classes twice a week, 10 and 12 students will have four days-a-week classes.

"There will be two shifts of three hours each and a maximum of 15 students will be allowed to sit in one room. The timings would be such that the students of two classes would not meet each other," Dr. Sarma said.

The private schools could also take classes following the guidelines, he added, insisting it would be a voluntary exercise initiated in the government institutions.

For final semester

In colleges, classes will be held for only the final semester students. "We will make arrangement for students who study elsewhere but are stranded at home to attend classes in nearby colleges," the Minister said.

The Vice-Chancellors have been advised to decided on when and how to conduct classes in their universities.

Fresh demand for autonomy raises hackles in Arunachal

Nyishis' body accuses CM of patronising MAR movement

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GUWAHATI

The renewed demand for creation of autonomous councils in the two regions of Arunachal Pradesh - Mon Autonomous Region in the west and Patkai Autonomous Council in the east - has raised hackles in the State. The All Arunachal Pradesh Students' Union (AAPSU) and the Nyishis, one of the largest ethnic communities that inhabit the areas in between, have slammed the demands.

The Nyishi Elite Society (NES) has blamed Chief Minister Pema Khandu for "orchestrating and patronising" the MAR movement that seeks the autonomous council comprising Tawang and West Kameng districts. Tawang is Mr. Khandu's home turf.



Pema Khandu. ■ FILE PHOTO

The organisations have also snuffed external designs behind these demands.

While MAR is seen as an "encouragement for China" to be more vocal about claims over Arunachal Pradesh, the Isak-Muivah faction of the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN) is believed to be fuelling the PAC movement to eventually make the Patkai region, comprising Tawang, Changlang and Longdu

districts, a part of "Greater Nagaland".

All NSCN factions are active in the areas under the proposed PAC. "The Assembly had in 2004 adopted a resolution for the creation of autonomous district councils... We have reminded the government of the lack of any follow-up action," said a spokesperson of the MAR Demand Committee.

The committee has called for tripartite talks and could boycott the upcoming panchayat elections if its demand is not looked into.

"The demand for MAR and PAC is bound to open the floodgates for similar movements from various parts of the State," AAPSU general secretary Tobom Dai said. The NES went a step further, accusing Mr. Khandu of stirring the movement.

5 clades of COVID-19 found in Odisha

SATYASUNDAR BARIK
BHUBANESWAR

Scientists have found presence of five clades of COVID-19 in Odisha where Europe and Southeast Asia are analysed to be two major routes of disease transmission.

In order to understand disease dynamics through genomics studies, Institute of Life Sciences (ILS), Bhubaneswar, an autonomous institute of Department of Biotechnology, in collaboration with Regional Medical Research Centre, an ICMR institute, had analysed 225 viral genomes of COVID-19 positive patients who migrated from 13 Indian States. The samples for sequencing were collected during March and July 2020.

The sequencing, data analysis and interpretation were carried out by the team led

by Dr. Sunil Raghav of ILS and Dr. Jyotirmayee Turuk of RMRC using advanced sequencing facility at ILS.

"Analysis of Odisha samples showed the presence of all five reported clades 19A, 19B, 20A, 20B and 20C of COVID-19 genome. Clade 19B was found to be much more prevalent in analysed samples (17%)," said the ILS Director Ajay Parida.

According to a statement, the study showed parallel evolution of 19A and 19B. "Majority of the 19A and 19B clades were present in cases that migrated from Gujarat suggesting it to be one of the major initial points of disease transmission during March and April," it said.

Clades 20A and 20B, which evolved quite rapidly in the Indian population, were major source of disease transmission in the country,

said the two institutes.

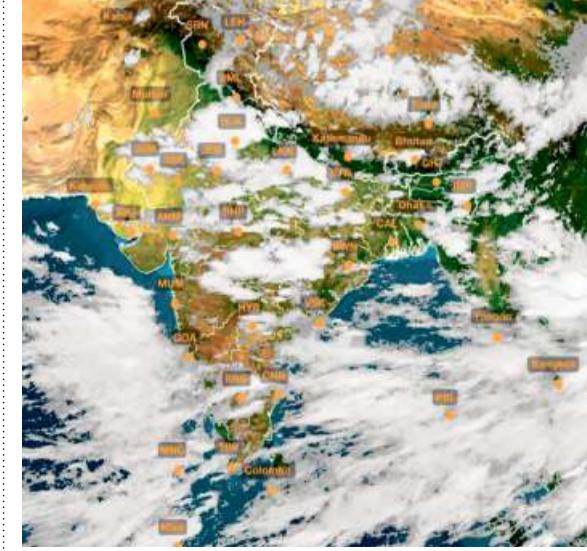
Union Minister of Science and Technology Harsh Vardhan had announced the completion of 1,000 COVID-19 viral genomes by the autonomous institutes of the Department of Biotechnology.

Different institutes had carried out analysis on 1,062 genomes from 18 Indian States. Initial results indicate that multiple lineages of SARS-CoV-2 are circulating in India, probably introduced by travel from Europe, the U.S. and South East Asia. "We have been able to sequence 225 viral genomes at a relatively short period of time and the findings will pave way for new avenues of research on COVID-19," said Dr. Parida.

He added that further sequencing of virus genome was being carried out at ILS using recent samples.

WEATHER WATCH

RAINFALL, TEMPERATURE & AIR QUALITY IN SELECT METROS YESTERDAY



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

Forecast for Sunday: Heavy to very heavy rainfall likely at isolated places over Andaman and Nicobar Islands, ghat areas of central Maharashtra, Goa, Uttarakhand, east Uttar Pradesh, west Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, sub-Himalayan West Bengal, Odisha, Gujarat, coastal Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Kerala

CITY	RAIN	MAX	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	
Agartala	14.1	34.9	26.3	Kozhikode	50.4	30.2	24.0
Ahmedabad	—	36.7	26.7	Kurnool	1.2	31.0	25.5
Aizawl	—	25.0	19.0	Lucknow	—	33.2	26.3
Allahabad	22.3	34.2	26.3	Madurai	—	38.0	26.7
Bengaluru	2...	29.6	20.4	Mangalore	63.5	28.0	22.4
Bhopal	—	35.2	25.4	Mumbai	0.6	33.5	26.1
Bhubaneswar	—	35.0	26.6	Mysuru	—	27.9	20.8
Chandigarh	—	32.0	26.6	New Delhi	—	36.3	26.8
Chennai	—	35.0	28.2	Patna	—	33.0	26.4
Coimbatore	1.4	33.0	22.8	Port Blair	41.9	29.0	23.6
Dehradun	0.2	28.0	23.6	Puducherry	—	37.0	25.6
Gangtok	34...	22.6	18.2	Pune	9	32.8	22.6
Goa	23.8	28.0	24.3	Raipur	—	34.8	26.6
Guwahati	3.1	36.0	25.2	Ranchi	—	32.8	24.0
Hubballi	—	27.0	22.0	Shillong	10	26.0	17.6
Hyderabad	30.2	32.8	23.5	Shimla	—	25.6	20.1
Imphal	—	32.0	25.2	Srinagar	—	32.8	18.9
Jaipur	—	35.0	28.1	Thiruvananthapuram	1.4	30.2	24.5
Kochi	62...	29.4	23.8	Tiruchi	31.6	37.0	24.4
Kohima	7.6	26.0	18.6	Vijayawada	4.6	31.0	25.6
Kolkata	0.5	34.6	21.3	Visakhapatnam	—	33.0	28.6

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)

Pollutants in the air you are breathing

Yesterday

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

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

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

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||

400 suspected
virus deaths
unaccounted
for: Mayor

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
PUNE

Pune Mayor Murlidhar Mohol has alleged that at least 400 suspected COVID-19 deaths have gone unaccounted for in the city in the month of July.

Mr. Mohol said he raised the issue during his meeting with Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray on Thursday, when the latter was in the city to take stock of the COVID-19 situation.

Speaking on Friday, the Mayor said every month there are 400-500 deaths of suspected COVID-19 patients that are going unaccounted for in Sassoon General Hospital and private hospitals in the city.

He said that while raising the issue with the CM, he sought steps to stop such deaths. "Early tracing of patients should be done so that they can be given timely treatment," he said.

Following the allegations, Collector Naval Kishore Ram said an inquiry will be conducted into the issue and a report has been sought from Sassoon hospital. "The staff of the district administration keeps visiting Sassoon hospital and goes through the records. It is unlikely that there is any misreporting or under-reporting in Pune," he said.

Cong. disputes election of CEO by Fadnavis govt.

Baldev Singh facing inquiry due to irregularities in SEEPZ'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MUMBAI

The Maharashtra Congress has questioned the appointment of Baldev Singh as the State Chief Electoral Officer (CEO), alleging that a probe on the directions of the Central Vigilance Commission (CVC) was going on for the alleged irregularities in Santacruz Electronics Export Processing Zone (SEEPZ) when he was heading it.

Mr. Singh, however, rubbished the allegations saying that the case referred to is from the period before he took charge at SEEPZ. Addressing a press conference on Friday, State Congress spokesperson Sachin Sawant



Sachin Sawant

alleged that Mr. Singh was facing an inquiry initiated by the CVC and the Ministry of Industry and Commerce was probing allegations of irregularity in SEEPZ Special Economic Zone..

"Despite the ongoing probe, the Devendra Fadnavis government appointed

Mr. Singh as the CEO of Maharashtra in July 2019, just ahead of the Assembly polls. This has raised serious questions about the role of the Election Commission," Mr. Sawant said.

The Congressman asked why the credentials of the CEO were not cross-checked while appointing him and sought to know if there was any "pressure from the Bhartiya Janata Party".

However, the CEO Maharashtra official Twitter handle said, "It is very sad, mischievous and misleading, the way facts are tried to be presented. These are absolutely false and untrue and incorrect allegations."

Rice worth ₹33 lakh seized from Panvel

RAINA ASSAINAR
NAVI MUMBAI

The Panvel City police have seized 110 tonnes of rice worth ₹33 lakh, meant for distribution to the needy, from a godown in Palaspa, Panvel.

Based on a tip-off, police and revenue officials raided Take Care Logistic in Palaspa on July 31, where they found 2,220 sacks of rice with the labels – Asian Rice, Food Corporation of India, Govern-

ment of Punjab, and Government of Haryana.

The accused, who are absconding, have been identified as Bhimashankar Rangnath Khade, Iqbal Kazi and Lakshman Chandra Patel. "They got the stock from Solapur and had planned to export it," senior police inspector Ajay Landge said.

Mr. Khade, who hails from Barshi in Solapur, would get the stock while Mr. Kazi, a re-

sident of Panvel who is the director of the warehouse, used to store the stock. Mr. Patel was responsible for exporting the rice. Deputy Commissioner of Police, Zone II, Ashok Dudhe, said, invoices found indicate it was to be exported on Monday and Tuesday.

Police said the rice was purchased at ₹3 per kg and sold at ₹30. The accused have been booked under the Essential Commodities Act.

Shoma Sen spends birthday in jail for third year

The professor was arrested in June 2018 for involvement in Elgaar Parishad case

SONAM SAIGAL
MUMBAI

Prof. Shoma Sen, former head of department, English, at the Nagpur University, and one of the accused in the Elgaar Parishad-Bhima Koregaon cases, turned 63 on Saturday. She has been lodged in Byculla jail in Mumbai since February this year, when the case was transferred to the National Investigation Agency (NIA).

Ms. Sen was in Yerwada jail in Pune since her arrest on June 6, 2018, and this was her third birthday in jail.

Ms. Sen has been a part of Stree Chetna at Nagpur that deals with issues such as violence against women and dowry deaths. She has also been associated with the Committee for the Protection of Democratic Rights.

Her daughter Koel Sen,



Happier times: Shoma Sen with her family. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

who is with her father at Nagpur, told *The Hindu*, "Due to COVID-19, everyone is with their families and it's really sad that we are not together. For her, being in confinement is like a double lockdown."

Ms. Sen's first bail application was rejected on November 2, 2018, on grounds that there was material linking her involvement in alleged

unlawful activities inimical to the country's security.

On March 31 this year, after the nationwide lockdown was imposed, Ms. Sen's plea for interim medical bail, as a precaution against COVID-19, was rejected by the special NIA judge D.E. Kothalkar.

Her application said she suffered from multiple ailments including osteoarthritis.

tis, glaucoma and high blood pressure which could make her vulnerable to the novel coronavirus.

On July 26, the same court again rejected her interim medical bail on grounds of age and ailments. The court said, "that she is suffering from 'some disease' cannot be a ground for her release."

Soon after her arrest in 2018, the Joint Commissioner of Police (Pune), Ravindra Kadam, had in response to a question from *The Hindu* said, "I won't elaborate about the material I have against Dr. Sen. I won't say anything about the e-mails that I have, but we have definite evidence against her and her involvement in Maoist activities and that she supports Elgaar Parishad. I also have material to prove that she supports a banned organisation."

Scholars urge govt. to release Hany Babu

DU professor was arrested by NIA last week

SONAM SAIGAL
MUMBAI

National and international anti-caste scholars and activists have urged the Indian government to release Delhi University's Prof. Hany Babu

democratic values and human rights.

In a statement released on Saturday, they have said, "This is the latest example of the current Indian Government's attempt to annihilate dissent and freedom of life for its vocal public."

It further said, "The arrest of Prof. Babu is the continuation of an almost year-long harassment which began

in the interest of preserving

September 2019. The Pune Police, who claimed the raid

was in connection with the Bhima-Koregaon case, confiscated his laptop and mobile phones as well as barred him from using his social media handles. Prof. Babu

has clearly stated that he has

no connection in any way whatsoever with the incidents at Bhima-Koregaon."

The statement, signed by

said, "He is the 12th person to be arrested in relation to the case. The framing of Prof. Babu, a tireless anti-caste intellectual and activist, is an attempt to penalise Dalit bahujans for raising their voice against casteist practices."

On July 24, Mr. Babu was summoned to the National Investigation Agency office in Mumbai as a witness and arrested after five days of questioning.

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MARRIAGE BUREAUS

WEDDING ARRANGEMENTS

MATRIMONIAL

BRIDEGROOMS WANTED

INDEX OF MATRIMONIAL

BRIDES WANTED

BRIDES & GROOMS WANTED

Classification common for Brides, Bridegrooms, Brides & Grooms

Assamese

Awadhi

Bengali

Bhojpuri

Bihari

Chhattisgarhi

English

Gujarati

Haryanvi

Hindi

Kannada

Kashmiri

Konkani

Malayalam

Manipuri

Marathi

Marwari

Nepali

Oriya

Parsi

Punjabi

Saurashtra

Sindhi

Tamil

Telugu

Tulu

Urdu

Advocate

Business

Defence

Doctor

Engineer

Finance/ Banking

Government/ Quasi-Govt.

IAS/ Allied Services

FROM PAGE ONE

ICMR fast-tracks nod for Israeli research

The Delhi government has also waived the mandatory seven-day quarantine for the 35-member the Israeli team.

In a statement issued on Friday, the Israeli Embassy said the trials are being conducted on a large sample of patients in India and if the results validate the effectiveness of the tests, they would be mass manufactured in India and marketed to the world by Israel and India jointly.

NEP drops 'Chinese' from language list

"A choice of foreign language(s) (e.g. French, German, Spanish, Chinese, Japanese) would be offered and available to interested students to choose as elective(s) during secondary school," said the draft Policy document. Mandarin is the language most commonly spoken in China.

Over the course of a year of rising India-China tensions, that sentence was changed. "In addition to high quality offerings in Indian languages and English, foreign languages, such as Korean, Japanese, Thai, French, German, Spanish, Portuguese, and Russian, will also be offered at the secondary level...," says the final version.

Higher Education Secretary Amit Khare played down the change, pointing out that it is only a set of examples, not an exhaustive list of allowed languages. Schools are free to offer other languages, he said.

Mandarin is not on the list of foreign languages offered at the Class X or Class XII level by the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE), which currently includes Tibetan, Thai, and Japanese, along with European languages such as Russian, Spanish, French and German. Other languages may be offered by schools as a third language option in Classes VI to VIII.

The MEA did not respond to a query on whether it had initiated any move to drop Mandarin from the CBSE curriculum. However, an official aware of the conversations on the subject told *The Hindu* that the MHRD has

The statement said the trial of four different kinds of technologies that have the potential to detect coronavirus in as less as 30 seconds have started.

As reported by *The Hindu*, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Israeli counterpart Benjamin Netanyahu have held three telephonic conversations since the outbreak of the pandemic to discuss mutual assistance in dealing with the virus.

had discussions with the MEA and the Indian Council for Cultural Relations over the past year and sought inputs on which languages were most important to retain in the curriculum. According to another official, there have been security concerns involving Mandarin language instruction in Indian institutions.

Exchange programme

The plan for teaching Mandarin in Indian schools and Hindi language instruction in Chinese schools was part of an Education Exchange Programme signed by both countries in 2006, which was renewed by Prime Minister Modi during his visit to China in 2015. The plan included a Memorandum of Understanding signed in 2012 by the then Indian Ambassador to Beijing (current External Affairs Minister) S. Jaishankar with Hanban, the official Chinese organisation that oversees Mandarin studies abroad. In 2014, the CBSE then introduced Mandarin in some schools, but the plan floundered due to unavailability of Chinese language teachers.

"Since 2017, the government has systematically curbed annual scholarship programmes with China as well," said Jawaharlal Nehru University Professor Hemant Adlakha. "All countries which consider relations with China crucial and/or important have learning of Mandarin at all levels," he added, citing examples of the U.S., Australia, Japan and South Korea that offer Chinese at school level.

July sales hint at auto sector revival

Mr Goel added that with the festive season coming up, the company is quite positive about the industry getting back on track gradually.

Homegrown Mahindra and Mahindra posted a decline of 35% in total domestic sales at 24,211 units. While sales of passenger vehicles was down 34% to 11,025 units, that of commercial vehicles fell 18% to 13,103 units.

"At Mahindra, we are happy to see a growing trend in our overall vehicle sales. It is encouraging to see that the enquiry and booking levels in July are significantly higher compared to June, both for Utility Vehicles and Small Commercial Vehicles," Veejay Nakra, Chief Executive Officer, Automotive Division, M&M Ltd. said. The company had sold 8,075 passenger vehicles and 10,417 commercial vehicles in June.

Likewise, TKM posted a 48% decline in domestic vehicle sales to 5,386 units in July as against 10,423 units in the same month last year. However, compared to June 2020, the sales were up 40% from 3866 units.

Naveen Soni, Sr. Vice President, Sales & Service, TKM said, "Despite various challenges, the month of July witnessed better sales when compared to June."

However, he added that in July, as a result of sporadic

lockdowns and extensions being imposed in several parts of the country, led to a situation wherein business was closed in upto 20% of the market, in and around mid-July.

Component supplies hit MG Motor India posted a 40% increase in retail sales at 2,105 units, up from 1,508 units in July 2019. Rakesh Sidana, Director-Sales, MG Motor India, said, "The overall market environment continues to be challenging with uncertainties due to variable lockdowns in various phases. The component supplies continue to remain impacted especially from the Chennai region..."

In the two-wheeler segment, Hero MotoCorp sold over 5.14 lakh units in July 2020. "Despite the prevailing economic slowdown on account of the Covid-19 pandemic, the Company registered a sequential growth of 14% over the previous month (June 2020) and reached more than 95% of wholesale dispatch numbers of the corresponding month in the previous year (July 2019)," it said.

Rival Honda Motorcycle & Scooter India said its total July dispatches stood at over 3.21 lakh units due to increasing demand for personal mobility. In July 2019, however, the company had sold over 4.89 lakh units.

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IN BRIEF



Kamal Nath welcomes Ram temple construction

BHOPAL The Ram temple in Ayodhya is being constructed with the consent of every Indian, former Madhya Pradesh Congress chief Kamal Nath said on Saturday, ahead of the foundation laying ceremony on August 5. Another senior Congress leader, Digvijaya Singh, said former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi had wanted a temple to come up. PTI

NEP needs closer scrutiny: K.V. Thomas

NEW DELHI Senior Congress leader K.V. Thomas has called for a closer scrutiny of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, on which so far the Congress has not spoken out officially, apart from independent views of few leaders. Mr. Thomas, in a letter to Congress president Sonia Gandhi, has urged her to form a committee, which can study the policy and come up with the party's own vision document. He wrote that NEP 2020 requires closer scrutiny in terms of its implications for the "marginalised, disciplinary spaces, autonomy, and constitutional values", among other things.

V.R Chaudhari appointed Western Air Commander

NEW DELHI Air Marshal V.R. Chaudhari on Saturday took over as the Air Officer Commanding-in-Chief of the Indian Air Force (IAF). He took over command from Air Marshal B. Suresh, who superannuated from service on July 31. Air Marshal Chaudhari was commissioned into the Fighter Stream of the IAF on December 29, 1982. "He has flying experience of more than 3800 hours, including operational flying on MiG-21, MiG-23 MF, MiG 29 and Su-30 MKI fighter aircraft," the IAF said in a statement.

4 former Ministers defend UPA-II govt.

Congress MP Rajeev Satav suggests introspection on how the party fell

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Four former Union Ministers – Manish Tewari, Shashi Tharoor, Anand Sharma and Milind Deora, have come out in defence of former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and the UPA-II government following the recent comments of the Congress's Rajya Sabha member Rajeev Satav.

The four warned that party leaders should not play into the hands of ideological opponents.

At a meeting of the party's Rajya Sabha members with its president Sonia Gandhi, Mr. Satav suggested that introspection in the party should begin from the UPA-2 period.

He countered former Union Minister Kapil Sibal's sug-

gestion for an introspection and argued that introspection should begin from the UPA-2 period to analyse how the party fell to 44 Lok Sabha seats in 2014.

Close to Rahul

Mr. Satav is considered close to former party chief Rahul Gandhi and his comments are seen as a symptom of the deep divide between the old guard and the young that has nearly crippled the party.

Mr. Tewari, who held the Information and Broadcasting portfolio in UPA-2, said in a tweet on Friday, that while the question, "was UPA responsible for decline in fortunes of Congress in 2014?", valid, an equally valid one to ask was if there was an internal sabotage, considering no charge against UPA has stood

In Congress, unfortunately some ill-informed ones would rather take swipes at Dr. Manmohan Singh led UPA government than fight NDA/BJP

MANISH TEWARI

There's plenty to learn from our defeats and much to be done to revive Congress. But not by playing into the hands of our ideological enemies

SHASHI THAROOR

Congressmen must be proud of the UPA's legacy. No party disowns or discredits its legacy

ANAND SHARMA

the test of law six years on.

"BJP was out of power for 10 yrs 2004-14. Not once did they ever blame Vajpayee or his Govt for their predicaments. In Congress, unfor-

vide," he said.

Mr. Deora said while demitting office in 2014, Dr. Singh noted that "history will be kinder to me". "Could he [Manmohan Singh] have ever imagined that some from his own party would dismiss his years of service to the nation and seek to destroy his legacy - that, too, in his presence?" he asked.

Mr. Tharoor said, "UPA's transformative ten years were distorted and traduced by a motivated and malicious narrative. There's plenty to learn from our defeats and much to be done to revive Congress. But not by playing into the hands of our ideological enemies."

Mr. Sharma said "Congressmen must be proud of the UPA's legacy. No party disowns or discredits its legacy. Nobody expects the BJP to be charitable and give us credit but our own should respect and not forget."



Could he [Manmohan Singh] have ever imagined that some from his own party would dismiss his years of service to the nation and seek to destroy his legacy - that, too, in his presence?

MILIND DEORA

tunately some ill-informed ones would rather take swipes at Dr. Manmohan Singh-led UPA government than fight NDA/BJP. When unity is required they di-

Amar Singh, man for all parties, dead

He had a knack for forging ties across parties

NISTLA HEBBAR
NEW DELHI

Rajya Sabha MP Amar Singh passed away in Singapore on Saturday after ailing for some time. He was under treatment at a hospital in Singapore for the last seven months after having suffered kidney failure in 2013. He is survived by his wife, Pankaja Singh, and daughters Disha and Drishti.



The SP's 39 MPs were pledged to support the government after the party had a "change of heart" over the nuclear deal.

The scene in Parliament on the day of voting in July, 2008, however, was unprecedented, with currency amounting to crores being displayed in the Well of the House, and the BJP accusing the Congress and its allies of trying to buy MPs. While the government survived, Mr. Singh was implicated in a legal case on the matter and even served some time in jail (though he was not convicted) in 2010.

The rise of Mr. Yadav's son, Akhilesh, and the resentment of a section of the SP saw Mr. Singh give up all party posts in 2011. The only leader to leave with him was actress and MP Jaya Prada, to whom he had been a mentor in her political career. He later formed his own party with Ms. Prada, and then joined the Rashtriya Lok Dal and lost in the 2014 Lok Sabha elections.

In 2016, he got his second wind and was partially reconciled with Mr. Yadav, who supported his Rajya Sabha election. It was clear, however, with the successive election of two full majority governments headed by Prime Minister Modi, that the era of political deal making was done, and with it, Mr. Singh's unique talents had had their day.

Chidambaram backs Mehbooba's decision

'She is right to reject conditional release offer'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI



P. Chidambaram

Senior Congress leader P. Chidambaram said he backs People's Democratic Party (PDP) president Mehbooba Mufti's decision to reject the Jammu and Kashmir (JK) government's offer to release her on the condition that she will not speak against abrogation of Article 370.

Ms. Mufti is the only top JK mainstream leader who remains behind bars under the stringent Public Safety Act (PSA). On Friday, her detention was extended by three months for the second time.

Mr. Chidambaram said on Twitter the detention extension under the PSA was an abuse of law and an assault on constitutional rights guaranteed to every citizen. "She rightly rejected the offer to release her on conditions which any self-respecting political leader would refuse. One of the reasons given for her detention – the colour of her party's flag – was laughable," he said.

Only 10 more days available to make public comments

JACOB KOSHY
NEW DELHI

With less than 10 days to go before public comments to the controversial Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) notification, 2020 are closed, it emerges that the text of the notification has only been translated into three languages, instead of at least 22, official correspondence accessed by a Right To Information (RTI) request shows.

In a June 30 order, the Delhi High Court had decreed that the draft be translated into "at least the lan-

guages mentioned in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution" within 10 days. There are 22 languages on that list.

However, in spite of five reminders by the Centre to various States, the Centre got translations only in three languages – Marathi, Nepali and Odia – according to documents procured by envi-

ronment activist, Vikrant Tongad.

The draft was originally opened for comments from April 11 to June 11. This was later extended because of the lockdown. After large protests stating that the draft wasn't widely circulated, and a petition in the Delhi High Court, this date was extended to August 11.

EIA draft translated into 3 languages instead of 22



Taking a stand: Farmers protesting against the EIA in Tamil Nadu's Salem district on July 27. ■ E.LAKSHMI NARAYANAN

Tilak made freedom struggle truly Indian, says Amit Shah

He urges youth to study the freedom fighter's speeches

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Saturday said freedom fighter Bal Gangadhar Tilak was the one who made the freedom struggle, started by the Congress, meaningful and truly Indian.

Mr. Shah was addressing the Indian Council of Cultural Relations (ICCR) online conference on Tilak, marking 100 years since his death on August 1, 1920. He urged the youth to study Tilak's speeches and life for inspiration. "Those who know the

Congress's history and their work, will know this. If anyone made India's freedom struggle Indian, it was Tilak," he said.

Citing his slogan, "Swaraj is by birthright and I shall have it", Mr. Shah said the statement changed the freedom struggle, making the

One ration card facility in 24 States now

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Three more States – Manipur, Nagaland and Uttarakhand – and the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir will now offer the 'one nation one ration card' facility, Union Food Minister Ramvilas Paswan said on Saturday. With this, the facility was now available in 24 States, benefitting 65 crore ration card holders, he said.

"The One Nation One Card scheme gives people freedom of mobility, they are no longer tied down to one single fair price shop," Mr. Paswan said. He added that by March 31, all States would be covered under the scheme.

Flood situation worsens in Bihar; two more die

Close to 50 lakh affected due to overflowing rivers

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
PATNA

Floods claimed two more lives in Bihar on Saturday taking the death toll to 13, while the number of people affected by the calamity inched closer to 50 lakh as the waters of overflowing rivers reached fresh areas of the State's northern part.

According to the bulletin issued by the State disaster management department, two fresh casualties were reported from Muzaffarpur district. Earlier, Darbhanga and West Champaran had reported seven and four deaths respectively.

The number of people affected by the floods, across 14 districts, stood at 49,05 lakh, up from 45,39 lakh on Friday. The number of affected panchayats too has risen to 1,043 from 1,012 on the previous day.

According to the department, the State has received average rainfall of 768.5 mm. This has led to a rise in water levels of most rivers flowing through the State. More than a quarter of the affected populace resides in the three adjoining districts of East Champaran, Gopalganj and Saran, all of which fall in the Gandak basin. Other rivers which have been flowing above the danger levels at various places include Kosi, Budhi Gandak, Kama, Bagmati and Adhwara.

According to the bulletin issued by the State disaster management department, two fresh casualties were reported from Muzaffarpur district. Earlier, Darbhanga and West Champaran had reported seven and four deaths respectively.

Out of your two close friends – Jyotiraditya Scindia and Sachin Pilot – one has already left the party, and about the other we are still not clear whether he will remain in the Congress. Why this sudden attrition in the party?

I don't know the reasons and I am sure it varies from case to case basis. You have to ask them the reasons for their actions.

a comment, which I can't be sure was actually spoken or is a piece of fiction.

Out of your two close friends – Jyotiraditya Scindia and Sachin Pilot – one has already left the party, and about the other we are still not clear whether he will remain in the Congress. Why this sudden attrition in the party?

I don't know the reasons and I am sure it varies from case to case basis. You have to ask them the reasons for their actions.

Are you also leaving the party?

Has there been any meeting that I have supposedly attended or any anti-party activity or any statement given by me? I am not going to comment on speculation.

INTERVIEW | JITIN PRASADA

'U.P. govt. has not given its due to the Brahmin community'



There is a growing impression that the Yogi Adityanath government is anti-Brahmin

Brahmin killings are increasing, are you saying that it's a deliberate act, since Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath belongs to the Thakur community?

I will not go that far to say it is by design. The question is, there is an impression that this government is anti-

Brahmin and that perception is only growing. How is it that the victims of recent crime incidents are only Brahmins? The statistics speak for themselves.

Brahmins occupy the top most position in the caste hierarchy giving them an upper hand in every field. Why is there a sudden feeling of isolation?

Historically, what you are saying is true, but I can tell you, in the past 30 years, there has been a steady decline. There is a huge section, who have been left far behind. The pyramid has now inverted. The community is politically marginalised and is economically weak.

As a Minister in the UPA-II government, how do you react to the criticism that it was because of that the Congress was reduced to 44?

I wasn't a part of the meeting of Rajya Sabha MPs with Congress president Sonia Gandhi, so how can I authoritatively give my opinion on

SOUTHERN RAILWAY

E-Tender Notice No. SA/E/2020-21/W1 Dated 31.07.2020

The Divisional Railway Manager/Electrical/Salem Division, Salem - 5 for and on behalf of the President of India invites E-Tender for the under mentioned work. Online bids only will be accepted. For detailed NIT, qualification criteria, bidding document, tender submission etc. can be viewed/downloaded from website portal "www.irps.gov.in". The Cost of Tender and EMD shall be made in online gateway Payment only.

Item No.	Name of the work
1.	SA/E/2020-21/W1: SA Division : Electrification of newly constructed G+2 Floors as annexure to main building of Divisional Office, Salem (Phase II).
2.	SA/E/2020-21/W2: SA DIVN : Provision of ON Grid Solar System of 5 kWp capacity with Net metering Facility in Five wayside stations of Salem Division (LCR, PY, VZ, VNJ, and SUU).
3.	Approximate Cost (₹)
4.	Earliest Money Deposit (₹)
5.	Tender Cost (₹)
6.	Completion Period
7.	Closing Time & Date

All Addendum/Corrigendum, Time extension, Clarifications, etc. will be uploaded in the website only and will not be published separately in News papers. Bidders should regularly visit website to keep themselves updated.

Divisional Railway Manager (Electrical), Salem.

Follow us on : twitter.com/GMSRailway

You have been in the news for your work with the Brahmin Chetna Parishad. Tell us about the reasons to start such an organisation? ■ I began the Brahmin Chetna Parishad in 2017. As part of the organisation we did several meetings across Uttar Pradesh. We have revived our efforts because over the past two years there has

COVID-19 pandemic shatters Ceramics City's traditional business model

Artisans in Khurja look to government support to overcome drop in demand and revenue; want tech upgrade in manufacturing and sales

ANUJ KUMAR
KHURJA

"Nobody can beat me at it," gushes 56-year-old Zahiruddin, as he explains the intricate floral patterns made of cobalt oxide on one of his blue pottery creations.

Sitting in his modest house in Mohalla Punjabian, the hub of artisans in Khurja, Uttar Pradesh, the Shilp Guru awardee for 2017 is worried about the future of the micro-industry that feeds thousands in the sleepy town in Bulandshahr district. "With no melas and mahotsavas because of the lockdown, we have been reduced to living from hand to mouth," he laments.

The work, he says, has reduced to less than half. "It is a labour-intensive industry and many of our skilled la-

bours come from West Bengal and eastern Uttar Pradesh. With Khurja being declared a hotspot during the pandemic, most of them are not going to return anytime soon," says Mr. Zahiruddin, who runs a small unit with his brother Raeesuddin. "It is a lifestyle product. Even when markets are opening up, nobody stops at our shop to even have a look," he says.

Till a week back, even most of the bank branches were not open, complains Ravi Rana, president of the Khurja Pottery Manufacturers' Association.

Azam Khan, assistant manager, District Industries Centre, Bulandshahr, says, as per records, Khurja has 250 registered ceramic factories. From high-end blue

pottery and bone china to utilitarian insulators, they provide employment to at least 50,000 people, directly or indirectly. "The town generates a turnover of around ₹100 crore a year. Because of the pandemic, the manufacturing has been adversely affected and the output has reduced to 50%," says Mr. Khan.

New opportunity

There is an opportunity in adversity. Sami Ahmed Khan of Mark Industries, which specialises in hand-painted stoneware crockery, says, with malls closed, local demand has reduced to less than half but the export business is keeping them hopeful. "Usually, Khurja products are in demand in England, Belgium and Ger-



In with the new: Zahiruddin showing one of his creations at his residence in Khurja. • ANUJ KUMAR

many. But this year, owing to a backlash against Chinese products, we are getting queries from the U.S. as well," he says.

"We can't compete with China in terms of volume and are struggling to match Bangladesh and Sri Lanka in quality. China has a mechanised industry, while we

have largely handmade products. When they are using hydraulic presses, we are still relying on jigger jolly machines. Still, the pandemic has provided us with a window to compete, provided we get government support," says Mr. Sami.

He says the State's one district, one product

scheme should not remain a mere lip service. "The GST on ceramic products could be brought down from 12% to 5% and the interest on loans could be waived for two-three years."

"We have been told that it is the time for online business and exports, something that many of us don't understand or find feasible. The intermediary pays us the Khurja rate and keeps the 'cream' for himself. Why would an artisan spend 10 days on a vessel when he knows he won't get the price for his art," says Mr. Zahiruddin.

Old-timers like Khursheedduzzmeh, the last surviving National Award winner in town, has lost faith in the award itself. "Now you can get it made for a few thou-

sand rupees and get a stall in a mahotsav," he alleges.

The potters also feel they are facing the brunt of the government's proactive policy towards reducing pollution in the National Capital Region. The coal-fed brick chimneys that once dotted the town's skyline have been reduced to derelict monuments.

"Now the diesel-fired furnaces and the ones using rubber oil are also illegal and fetch heavy fines," says Mr. Sami. The gas furnaces, he says, have yet to reach every lane that has a unit.

"The worker should not suffer because of the complex web of pollution and labour laws," he says.

Mr. Khan maintains that they tried to involve the Public Works Department to use the waste product for

the construction of roads. "The use of gas furnace work has multiplied but there are some issues over pricing. We are helping artisans to enrol online players. The artisans compare the gas price in Firozabad, not realising that a public sector company [GAIL] is providing the gas there, while in Khurja a private player [Adani] is the supplier. However, in recent months, there has been a degree of streamlining of rates."

L.P. Sharma, scientist-in-charge of Central Glass and Ceramic Research Institute, Khurja, says the institute is carrying out projects to make potters self-reliant in the country. "In Khurja, a project involving 200 potters for hotelware is under way," he says.



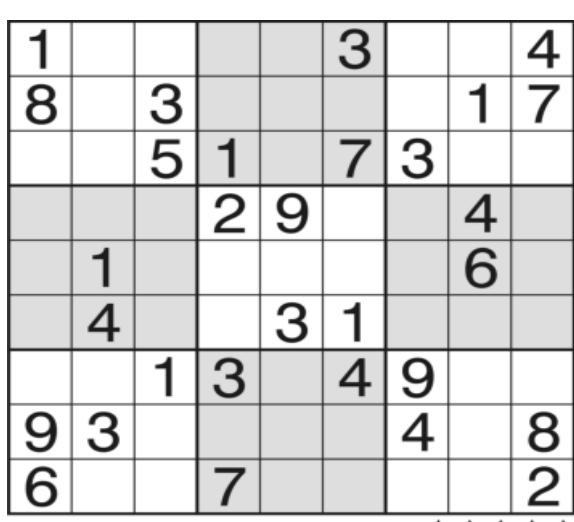
Rao, family interact via videoconferencing

MUMBIAI
Poet Varavara Rao's family had an interaction with him through videoconferencing after two weeks. Mr. Rao is being treated for COVID-19 at Nanavati Hospital. On July 28, the Bombay High Court permitted the family to meet him after the National Investigation Agency (NIA) probing the Bhima Koregaon case told the court it had no problem with the family meeting or talking to him.

MGNREGS funds siphoned off: Mevani
AHMEDABAD
Gujarat MLA and activist Jignesh Mevani and State Congress working president Hardik Patel have alleged that MGNREGS funds were being siphoned off by officials in Banaskantha district, through bank accounts opened in the name of around 500 villagers without their knowledge. Mr. Mevani and Mr. Patel accused officials of large scale misappropriation of funds.

Bengal sees 48 fresh COVID-19 deaths
KOLKATA
West Bengal recorded the highest single-day spike in COVID-19 mortalities on Saturday, with 48 deaths in 24 hours, taking the toll to 1,629. The State also recorded 2,589 new cases, taking the total number of infections to 72,777. Of the 48 deaths recorded in the past 24 hours, 19 were from Kolkata. The State also registered a high discharge rate of 69.41% on Saturday. The number of samples tested in a day also increased to 20,065.

SUDOKU



Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

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

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★☆

Plea in SC against contempt law

Law in question is unconstitutional and rooted in colonialism, says petition

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI



Senior journalists N. Ram and Arun Shourie and advocate Prashant Bhushan have jointly moved the Supreme Court against a law that allows criminal contempt action to be initiated on the "incurably vague" ground that a publication may tend to or even scandalise or lower the authority of a court of law.

They said the contempt law in question was unconstitutional, rooted in colonialism and produced a chilling effect on free speech and expression. Their petition, filed through advocate Kamini Jaiswal, focuses on the legality of Section 2(c)(i) of the Contempt of Court Act. The

section holds that it amounts to criminal contempt if a person publishes, by words spoken or written or by any other act, anything "which scandalises or tends to scandalise or lowers or tends to lower the authority of any court".

"Scandalising the court" is rooted in colonial assumption and objects, which have no place in legal orders com-

mited to democratic constitutionality and maintenance of an open robust public sphere," the petition said.

The legal provision is manifestly arbitrary, as what may or may not cause a scandal is subjective. The application of criminal contempt law on this basis would be incapable of being certain and even-handed, it contended.

The Supreme Court recently began contempt proceedings against Mr. Bhushan for two of his tweets, one concerning a photograph of the Chief Justice of India and another containing the noted civil rights lawyer's view on the functioning of the top court in the past few years.

In back-to-back action, renewed hearings were also

seen in another contempt case against the lawyer for his alleged remarks on the judiciary in an interview to *Tehelka* magazine. This case had been pending for eight years. The last hearing on it was in 2012. Now, both contempt cases have been listed on successive days in early August. The petition said criminal contempt action on the ground of scandalising or tending to scandalise or lower the authority of a court did not amount to reasonable restriction of free speech.

In fact, the provision abridged the right to free speech and expression even in the absence of any tangible or proximate harm, it said.

orders to be recalled, or, in the alternative, be heard as and when physical court hearings resume.

In his petition, Mr. Bhushan contended that the Supreme Court Rules, 2013, required the defective contempt petition to be returned to Maheshwari. Instead, the Secretary General placed the case before a Bench of Justices Mishra, B.R. Gavai and Krishna Murari for hearing. The Secretary General's action was "unconstitutional, illegal, void and non est".

He said the plea filed by Maheshwari was "defective" for it did not have the prior consent of the Attorney General or the Solicitor General.

Bhushan wants both these

petitions to be quashed and set aside by the court. The petitioners also sought that the Supreme Court should rule that the section of the Contempt of Court Act was unconstitutional and directed that the law be struck down. They also asked that the court declare that the section of the Contempt of Court Act was unconstitutional and directed that the law be struck down.

Prashant Bhushan

Noted civil rights lawyer Prashant Bhushan has approached the Supreme Court for a declaration that a "defective contempt petition" against him was "unilaterally" listed by the court's Secretary General for judicial hearing before a Bench led by Justice Arun Mishra.

Mr. Bhushan said the action of the Secretary General was "illegal" and amounted to "usurpation" of the role of the Chief Justice of India as the "Master of the Roster".

"It has been categorically held that the Chief Justice of India is the master of the roster and enjoys the exclusive

orders to be recalled, or, in the alternative, be heard as and when physical court hearings resume.

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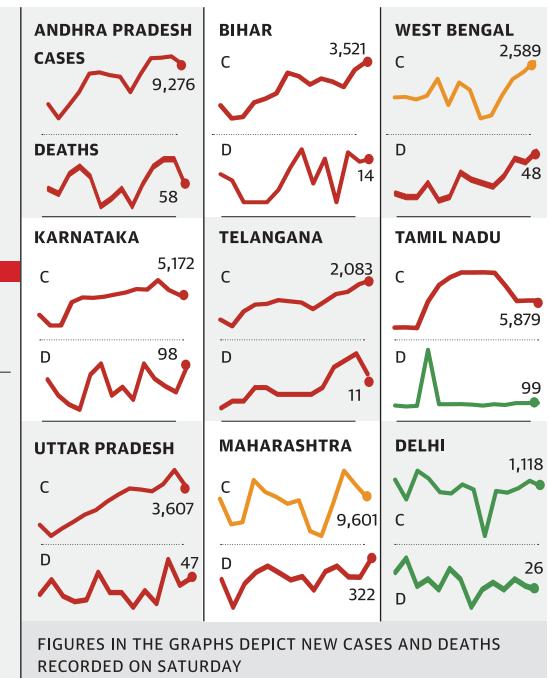
Viral tracker

With 54,351 COVID-19 cases recorded on Saturday, India's tally stood at 17,50,971. As many as 838 new deaths were added taking India's toll to 37,398. A total of 1.93 crore samples have been tested as on July 31, according to the ICMR.

NEW CASES AND DEATHS



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



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

Panel recommends lifting export ban on ventilators

Low fatality, rise in manufacturing capacity cited as reasons

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

A high-level Group of Ministers (GoM) has recommended that India lift the ban on the export of ventilators, a statement from the Union Health Ministry said on Saturday.

India's "low case fatality rate" as well as "substantial growth" in the domestic manufacturing capacity were reasons for the ban to be lifted, the document notes.

Banned in March
The Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT) had banned the export of ventilators on March 24.

"The Group of Ministers on COVID-19 has considered and agreed to the proposal of the Ministry of Health &

Family Welfare allowing the export of Made-in-India ventilators. This decision has been communicated to the DGFT for further needed action to facilitate the export of indigenously manufactured ventilators," the Health Ministry statement added.

According to the Ministry, the number of COVID-19 patients who had succumbed to the disease stood at 2.15% of the total confirmed cases. Only 0.22% of the active cases were on ventilators across the country and there were more than 20 domestic manufacturers for ventilators.

"Now with export of ventilators having been allowed, it is hoped that domestic ventilators would be in a position to find new markets

for Indian ventilators in foreign countries," the statement added.

Case Fatality Rate
From June 18 to August 1, India's Case Fatality Rate (CFR) dropped from 3.33% to 2.15%, according to the government. However, on June 18, there were only 13,856 confirmed cases and that number has increased by more than hundredfold to date. The active cases, as of August 1, were 565,103 and that translated to 124,322 cases on ventilators, as per the Ministry's own data.

No numbers were shared by the government on how many patients were dependent on every ventilator and how these were distributed across the country.

Assam's displaced get a taste of UN camps

For the first time, panchayats will audit management of shelters and distribution of relief material

Dhamor Reserve village nearby.

Music does not motivate 10-year-old Bibek Saha at the Nidnapur Adarsha Prathmik Vidyalaya relief camp 5 km from Baungao a.k.a. Signboard, a name derived from a British-era signpost at a bifurcation indicating the road to Meghalaya's Tura town. What animates him are building blocks in one of the rooms where they are allowed to be expressive.

Children's well-being
"With COVID-19 in the backdrop, the floods in Assam this year have had a severe impact on children's well-being and disrupted routine services for children and women. To address their specific requirements during such emergencies, child-friendly spaces [CFS] were included as an integral part of the relief camp management system this year," said Madhulika Jonathan, UNICEF's Chief of Field Office in Assam.

At the Baungao Lower Primary School near Lakhimpur, a circle headquarters in Goalpara district about 165 km west of Guwahati, seven-year-old Sushmita Hajong looks forward to the lessons anganwadi supervisor Sajeda Begum and her team impart through songs and dances. Sushmita is one of 63 children and 11 infants at the school, a relief camp for residents of the submerged



Battling all odds: Children attending a class at a flood relief camp in eastern Assam's Goalpara. • RITU RAJ KONWAR

UNICEF provided technical support to the Assam State Disaster Management Authority (ASDMA) in the development of the policy guidelines for managing the CFS. The blueprint mandated at least 7 square metres of space for each camp resident compared with 3.5 square metres earlier, along with sufficient toilets and sanitation facilities besides daily monitoring of health – weekly in the past – of the camp inmates. "

Trump says he will bar TikTok from U.S.

Officials, lawmakers have raised concerns that popular app could be a tool for Chinese intelligence

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

WASHINGTON

President Donald Trump said on Friday he will bar fast-growing social media app TikTok from the U.S. as American authorities have raised concerns the service could be a tool for Chinese intelligence.

U.S. officials and lawmakers in recent weeks have voiced fears of the wildly popular video platform being used by Beijing for nefarious purposes, but the company has denied any links to the Chinese government.

Media reports circulated earlier Friday saying that Mr. Trump would require the U.S. operations of the app be divested from its Chinese parent firm ByteDance, but the President announced a ban.

Emergency power

Speaking to reporters on Air Force One, Mr. Trump said: "As far as TikTok is concerned, we're banning them



from the United States."

He added he would take action as soon as Saturday using emergency economic power or an executive order. However, it was unclear how such a move may be enforced.

TikTok, especially popular with young audiences who create and watch its short-form videos, has an estimated billion users worldwide.

TikTok declined to com-

ment on the reports of the forced sales, saying only:

"We are confident in the long-term success of TikTok. Hundreds of millions of people come to TikTok for entertainment and connection, including our community of creators and artists who are building livelihoods from the platform."

Mr. Trump's move comes following a review by the Committee on Foreign Investment (CFIUS) in the U.S.,

which investigates deals affecting U.S. national security.

The firm this week pledged a high level of transparency, including allowing reviews of its algorithms, to assure users and regulators.

"We are not political, we do

not accept political advertising and have no agenda – our only objective is to remain a vibrant, dynamic

platform for everyone to enjoy," TikTok CEO Kevin Mayer said in post this week.

"TikTok has become the latest target, but we are not the enemy."

Earlier this month, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo told Fox News that the administration was "looking at" banning the app in the U.S.

The comments prompted popular TikTokers to consider migrating to platforms such as YouTube, *The New York Times* reported.

Late Friday, TikTok users reacted furiously to the news, telling fans to follow

them on different platforms and criticising the president.

Close to zero'

The popularity of the platform surged after ByteDance acquired U.S.-based app Musical.ly in 2017 and merged it with its own video service.

Earlier reports had suggested that Microsoft was in talks to acquire TikTok, which could be valued in the tens of billions of dollars, but Mr. Trump's move would scupper such a purchase.

James Lewis, head of the technology policy programme at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, said he believes the security risk of using TikTok is "close to zero" but that ByteDance could face pressure from China to engage in censorship.

"It looks like ByteDance may be getting squeezed by Beijing, so making them divest makes sense," Mr. Lewis said.

James Murdoch quits group's board over editorial clashes

He was once seen as a successor to his father Rupert

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

NEW YORK

Former 21st Century Fox chief executive James Murdoch, the son of media tycoon Rupert Murdoch, has resigned from News Corp's board citing clashes over editorial content.

The 47-year-old once seen as his father's successor has been openly critical of some media coverage from publishing empire News Corp's outlets in recent months.

According to a letter written by James Murdoch and released on Friday by the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC), his resignation was due to "disagreements over certain editorial content published by the company's news outlets and certain other strategic decisions".

News Corp owns the *Wall Street Journal*, the *New York*



James Murdoch, the son of Rupert Murdoch. •REUTERS

The group reported net profit of \$23 million for the quarter from January to March, boosted by its HarperCollins book division.

Family media empire

James Murdoch's decision hastens his disengagement from the family media empire, which grew from a newspaper group in Australia. In January, he denounced the climate change scepticism of some Murdoch media, citing coverage of the fires which devastated large parts of Australia.

In a statement, Mr. James and his wife spoke of their "frustration" with some of the News Corp and Fox coverage, adding that they were "particularly disappointed with the ongoing denial among the news outlets in Australia given obvious evidence to the contrary."

Vietnamese city to test entire population

Most recent cases have been traced to Danang, a resort city of 1.1 million people



Accelerating testing: Health workers collecting a sample at a makeshift rapid testing centre in Hanoi on Friday. •AFP

on Saturday that up to 8,000 visitors to Danang have left for other parts of the country since July 1, adding that more than 41,000

people have visited three hospitals in the city since.

Local medical officials in Danang have conducted 8,247 tests in the city since

July 25, when the latest cluster was first detected. Testing capacity will be increased to 8,000-10,000 per day, said authorities.

2 other cities

Vietnam has detected new cases in other cities, including Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City, with links to Danang.

Meanwhile, authorities of the capital city, Hanoi said late on Saturday it had carried out around 49,000 tests since Thursday after the city ordered mass testing for all people who recently returned from the popular coastal city.

Fauci raises concern over Russian, Chinese vaccines

'Claims of having a vaccine ready to distribute before testing is problematic'

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

WASHINGTON

America's top infectious disease official has raised concerns over COVID-19 vaccines being developed by China and Russia as the world scrambles for answers to a pandemic the WHO warned will be felt for decades.

Six months after the World Health Organization declared a global emergency, COVID-19 has killed more than 6,80,000 people and infected more than 17.5 million, according to an AFP tally.

As countries across West-

ern Europe announced new lockdowns and reported historic economic slumps, the UN health body said the pandemic was a "once-in-a-century" crisis.

September target date

Several Chinese companies are at the forefront of the race to develop a vaccine to the disease and Russia has set a target date of September to roll out its own medicine.

But U.S. infectious disease expert Anthony Fauci said it was unlikely his country would use any vaccine developed in either country, where regulatory systems

are far more opaque than they are in the West. "I do hope that the Chinese and the Russians are actually testing the vaccine before they are administering the vaccine to anyone," he told a U.S. Congressional hearing on Friday.

"Claims of having a vaccine ready to distribute before you do testing, I think, is problematic, at best." As part of its own "Operation Warp Speed," the U.S. government will pay pharma giants Sanofi and GSK up to \$2.1 billion for the development of a COVID-19 vaccine, the companies said.

In East Asia, territories

which saw success in tackling the early wave of COVID-19 are now confronting worrying new spikes.

Japan's Okinawa declared a state of emergency Saturday after a record jump in cases on the island – many linked to U.S. military forces stationed there. Hong Kong opened a new makeshift hospital to house COVID-19 patients after cases rose to record highs.

In a sign of the trade-offs being forced on European governments, Britain imposed new lockdowns Friday on millions of households in northern England.

Chief of U.S.-based 'terror group' arrested, says Iran

'He was behind 2008 mosque attack'

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

TEHRAN

Iran said on Saturday that it has arrested the head of a U.S.-based "terrorist group" accused of being behind a deadly 2008 bombing in the southern city of Shiraz and of other, abortive attacks.

The group's "Jamshid Sharmahd, who was leading armed and sabotage operations inside Iran, is now in the powerful hands" of Iran's security forces, state television said in a report citing a statement from the Intelligence Ministry.

A royalist group
The statement did not elaborate on where or when the leader of the opposition

Elsewhere

Arab world's first nuclear plant achieves criticality

UAE announces launch of Barakah

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

DUBAI

The oil-rich United Arab Emirates on Saturday announced the start-up of its Barakah nuclear power plant, scoring another first for the Arab world.

The announcement, coinciding with the Muslim holiday of Id al-Adha, comes hot on the heels of the UAE's launch of the Arab world's first probe to Mars.

"UAE first nuclear reactor at the Barakah Nuclear Energy Plant has achieved first criticality and successfully started up," tweeted Hamad Alkaabi, the country's representative to the International Atomic Energy Agency.

"This is a historic milestone for the nation with a vision set to deliver a new form of clean energy for the nation," he tweeted in English, along with a photograph of technicians raising their arms in celebration.

The UAE Premier and ruler

of Dubai, Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al-Maktoum, tweeted that work at Barakah had "succeeded in loading nuclear fuel packages, carrying out comprehensive tests and successfully completing the operation".

Historic achievement

"Congratulations on realising this historic achievement in the energy sector & marking this milestone in the roadmap for sustainable development," Sheikh Mohammed said.

The UAE started loading fuel rods into the reactor at Barakah in February, after regulators gave the green light for the first of the plant's four reactors, opening the way for commercial operations.

Barakah, which means "blessing" in Arabic, is a regional first. Barakah was built by a consortium led by the Korea Electric Power Corporation at a cost of \$24.4 billion.

Anti-Kremlin protest continues on 4th weekend

Residents of Khabarovsk are unhappy about detention of ex-Governor Furgal

REUTERS

KHABAROVSK/MOSCOW

Thousands of people marched in the Russian far eastern city of Khabarovsk on Saturday for a fourth consecutive weekend in protest at President Vladimir Putin's handling of a local political crisis.

Residents of Khabarovsk, around 6,110 km and seven time zones east of Moscow, are unhappy about the July 9 detention of Sergei Furgal, the wider region's popular Governor, who was arrested on murder charges he denies.

His detention, which his supporters say was politically motivated, has triggered weeks of street protests, creating a headache for the Kremlin which is trying to



Anger boils over: People in Khabarovsk, Russia, taking part in an anti-Kremlin rally on Saturday. •REUTERS

tackle a sharp drop in real incomes as a result of the COVID-19 outbreak and keep a lid on unrest as the economy stutters.

Sheltering from sporadic rain beneath umbrellas, protesters chanted "Freedom!" One banner read

"Russia without Putin" while protesters chanted "Putin resign!" outside a government building.

City authorities estimated around 3,500 people had taken part in the march. Some local media put the number above 10,000, but said the

crowds were smaller than previous weeks.

In far east

The protests have highlighted anger among some in the far east over what they see as policies emanating from detached Moscow-based authorities who have neglected them for years.

Supporters of Mr. Furgal, who is a member of the nationalist LDPR party, say he is being punished for defeating a candidate from the ruling pro-Putin United Russia party in 2018. The Kremlin says Mr. Furgal has serious charges to answer.

Sustained demonstrations are unusual for Russia's regions, as is a lack of response from the authorities to break them up.

Russia, Belarus spar over arrest of 'mercenaries'

This comes ahead of August 9 election

REUTERS

MOSCOW

A dispute between Moscow and Minsk over the detention of more than 30 men who Belarus accused of being Russian mercenaries deepened on Saturday, as the two sides contradicted each other about the group's plans.

The arrests soon before an August 9 presidential election in Belarus could further strain relations between Minsk and its traditional ally Russia, which soured after the neighbours failed to agree on an oil supply contract for this year.

Russia said on Thursday that the men, who it described as employees of a

private security firm, had stayed in Belarus after missing their connecting flight to Istanbul.

But Alexander Agafonov, the head of the Belarusian investigative group which is handling the case, said late on Friday that the men had no plans to fly further to Istanbul.

Authorities in Minsk said a day earlier they believe the husband of Opposition presidential candidate Svetlana Tikhanouskaya may have ties to the group, launching a criminal case against him.

Mr. Agafonov told a local television station the men's had given "contradictory accounts" about the purpose of their stay in Belarus.

China and Nepal have treated each other as equals: Xi

President, Premier exchange greetings with Nepali counterparts on anniversary of bilateral ties



Historic visit: President Xi Jinping with Nepali counterpart Bidya Devi Bhandari in Kathmandu in 2019. •REUTERS

discussed China's plans for a "trans-Himalayan multi-dimensional connectivity network", something New Delhi has reportedly looked askance at.

When asked, Nepal's Ambassador to India Nilamber Acharya denied the meeting should be a matter of concern for India-Nepal ties.

"We are all concerned about the pandemic, as immediate neighbours, and we should not interpret anything beyond that [in the quadrilateral meeting]. India is also cooperating with China despite the difficulties between them," Mr. Acharya told *The Hindu*.

However, former diplomat Vivek Katju said the attempt to rope in three members of the SAARC grouping, without including India, was a "provocative" move by China. The MEA did not respond to a question on whether India had been invited to join the meeting, or if it had protested the quadrilateral discussions with the governments in Kathmandu or Kabul. "That the Chinese are making a concrete strategic foray in South Asia which will necessarily impact on our interests. This is a provocative move, and should be seen as a message," Mr. Katju said.

The quadrilateral meeting came on the heels of deepening concerns over the India-Nepal relationship, including Nepal's decision to include disputed areas like Kalapani into a new map, followed by Mr. Oli's accusation that India was trying to destabilise his government, coupled with reports that the Chinese Ambassador to Nepal was brokering a political settlement between Mr. Oli and rival factions in the ruling party.

In 2019, after his trip to India, Mr. Oli had travelled to Nepal, the first such visit by a Chinese President. The two sides had signed 18 agreements and two MoUs on

July GST revenue slides 14%

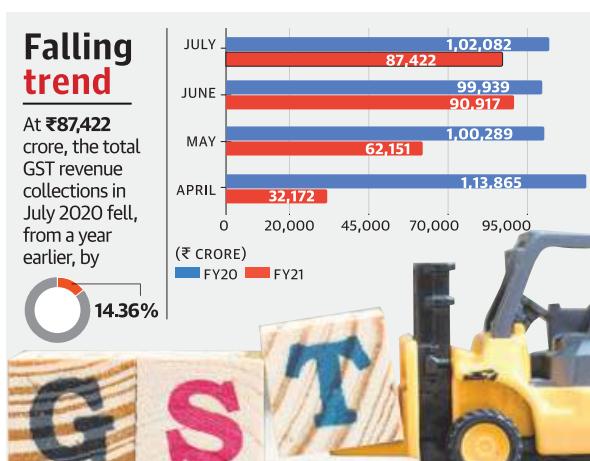
AG's view on borrowing to meet cess shortfall to be discussed by GST Council

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Gross Goods and Services Tax revenue slid 14% last month to ₹87,422 crore, from the ₹1,02,082 crore collected in July 2019, data released by the Finance Ministry on Saturday show. Receipts were also almost ₹3,500 crore less than June's collections.

The data was released on a day when a senior Finance Ministry official said an opinion had been received from the Attorney General on the legality of market borrowings to bridge any shortfall in the GST compensation fund.

"Preliminary discussions were held during the GST Council meeting in June, and it was decided to seek legal opinion on market borrowings," the official told journalists, admitting that the Council which was originally slated to discuss this issue in July was yet to set a date for its next meeting. "The opinion has come, and we will soon hold an exclusive GST Council meeting on the compensation issue," the official,



who spoke on the condition of anonymity, added.

No obligation

Press Trust of India reported, citing sources, that the Attorney General had opined that there was no obligation on the Union government to make good the shortfall in GST compensation payable to the States.

Cess collections, needed to pay compensation to States' for the first five years of the GST regime, fell short

by 42% in 2019-20, with the Centre forced to use cess collected in previous years as well as a previous transfer from the Consolidated Fund of India.

In July, cess collections amounted to ₹7,265 crore, 15% less than the ₹8,551 crore collected in the same period in 2019.

Central GST (CGST) revenue for July was ₹16,147 crore, State GST (SGST) was ₹21,418 crore, and integrated GST (IGST) — which is to be

split between States and Centre — was ₹42,592 crore.

COVID-19 relaxation

"The revenues for the last month [June] were higher than the current month [July]. However, it is important to note that during the previous month, a large number of taxpayers also paid taxes pertaining to February, March and April 2020 on account of the relief provided due to COVID-19," the Finance Ministry said in a statement.

"It may also be noted that taxpayers with turnover less than ₹5 crore continue to enjoy relaxation in filing of returns till September 2020," it added.

Data also showed that a decline in imports had hit tax collections in July. GST revenue from import of goods only reached 84% of the amount collected in the same month last year, while revenue from domestic transactions, including import of services, reached 96% of last July's collections.

Tractor makers report higher sales in July

Farm income, monsoons boost demand

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI

The automobile sector may be struggling with COVID-19-related issues but July saw a rise in tractor sales.

Mahindra & Mahindra Ltd.'s Farm Equipment Sector (FES) reported a 27% growth in the sales of tractors to 25,402 units.

Sonalika Tractors reported a 71.7% growth in domestic sales to 8,219 units.

"These are our highest-ever July sales, said Hemant Sikka, president, Farm Equipment Sector, Mahindra & Mahindra Ltd.

"The strong demand momentum continued, aided by positive sentiments due to good cash flows to farmers, higher Kharif sowing, a timely and normal monsoon and continued higher rural spending by the government," he said.

"The sentiments are likely to remain buoyant, translating into a robust demand

Samsung, Foxconn, 20 others apply under incentive scheme

Global phonemakers propose output worth ₹9 lakh crore

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

sales of goods manufactured in India.

Of the global mobile phone manufacturing firms that have applied, three — Foxconn, Wistron and Pegatron — are contract manufacturers for Apple iPhones.

"Apple (37%) and Samsung (22%) together account for nearly 60% of global sales revenue of mobile phones and this scheme is expected to increase their manufacturing base manifold in the country," an official release said.

Domestic firms pitch in

Domestic firms that have applied under the scheme include Lava, Dixon Technologies, Bhagwati (Micromax), Padget Electronics, Sojo Manufacturing Services and Optiemus Electronics. Ten companies have filed applications under the Specified Electronic Components Segment which include AT&S, Ascent Circuits, Visicon,

Walsin, Sahasra, Vitesco and Neolync," it added.

While international mobile phonemakers have proposed production of goods worth over ₹9 lakh crore, domestic companies have proposed a production of about ₹2 lakh crore. The firms under Specified Electronic Components segment have proposed a production of over ₹45,000 crore.

The Minister added that under the scheme, domestic value addition was expected to grow from the current 15-20% to 35-40% in the case of mobile phones and 45-50% for electronic components.

Replies to a query on lack of participation from Chinese firms, Mr. Prasad said, "This scheme is not against any country. It is only India positive. "We have proper rules and regulations with regard to our security, the bordering countries... all compliance [is] very important."

Chinese bonds draw record global inflows

REUTERS
SHANGHAI

Foreign investors made record net purchases of Chinese bonds traded through the country's Bond Connect programme in July, boosted by record yield premiums over U.S. debt.

Net inflows into Chinese bonds through Bond Connect, which gives global investors access to the country's onshore bond market through Hong Kong, totalled 75.5 billion yuan (\$10.8 billion) in July, Bond Connect Co. said in a statement dated Friday.

Analysts say widening spreads reflect the differing approaches of the U.S. and Chinese central banks.

The Federal Reserve is facing dimming hopes for a quick economic rebound, while China is steadily recovering from the coronavirus crisis, allowing the People's Bank of China (PBOC) to switch from emergency mode to focus more on financial risks and curtailing speculation.

'Don't extend loan moratorium'

Credit rating agencies flag risks of a likely surge in NPAs

LALATENDU MISHRA
MUMBAI

Lenders and credit rating analysts have urged the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) to avoid any further extension of the moratorium on loan repayment as such a move risks triggering a surge in non-performing assets (NPAs) in the financial sector.

The RBI's monetary policy committee is set to meet August 4-6.

In March, the RBI had announced a three-month moratorium on repayment of loans and interest to cushion borrowers from the adverse impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and help mitigate a potential crisis in the financial sector in case of defaults. This was subsequently extended till August 31.

"Prolonged moratorium can result in ALM (asset liability management) issues, especially for NBFCs who have been impacted more than banks," said Krishnan Sitaraman, senior director,

A one-time restructuring is a more prudent option than a blanket moratorium

SANKAR CHAKRABORTI
Group CEO Acute Ratings and Research

Crisil. "This is because NBFCs had extended moratorium to many of their borrowers but there was no moratorium on their capital borrowings and a limited moratorium on their bank borrowings," he added.

"Another key monitorable with extended moratoriums will be how borrower behaviour towards repayment discipline gets impacted post lifting of the moratorium," said Mr. Sitaraman, adding that subsequent delays in loan repayments were bound to push up NPAs.

He said while initially many retail and corporate borrowers had opted for the moratorium to manage cash flows, the numbers had come down subsequently as

economic activity picked up.

Stating that there were no official figures available on the moratorium burden faced by banks and NBFCs, Sankar Chakraborti, Group CEO, Acute Ratings and Research said: "Estimates worked out by us suggest that it was about 42% for public, 30% for private and 15% for foreign banks in the first phase on an aggregate portfolio exposure basis. It was over 65% for NBFCs."

"Providing a continuous moratorium with relatively better liquidity position may lead to diversion of surplus funds," Mr. Chakraborti said, adding that a one-time restructuring was a "more prudent option" than a blanket moratorium.

State Bank of India Chairman Rajnish Kumar on Friday asserted that lenders were against extending the moratorium beyond August 31. "It is the view of all banks. Six months is enough. I do not know what will happen," he said.

"The sentiments are likely to remain buoyant, translating into a robust demand

Companies need incentive to share data on cyberattacks

Now, reputation risk is the main concern, says Infosys's Salvi

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Amid a significant rise in cyberattacks during the COVID-19 pandemic, one roadblock in international collaboration on the issue is lack of incentives for corporates to share information about such incidents, and instead risk reputational damage, Vishal Salvi, chief information security officer and head of the Cyber Security Practice at Infosys, said.

He was speaking at a webinar on 'Regional collaboration to achieve a safe and trusted Cyberspace' organised by the Bengaluru Chapter Committee of the Indo-Australian Chamber of Commerce.

"These are our highest-ever July sales, said Hemant Sikka, president, Farm Equipment Sector, Mahindra & Mahindra Ltd.

"The strong demand momentum continued, aided by positive sentiments due to good cash flows to farmers, higher Kharif sowing, a timely and normal monsoon and continued higher rural spending by the government," he said.

"The sentiments are likely to remain buoyant, translating into a robust demand

tacks and incidents in real time because there is a fear and risk of reputational damage. "We need to work towards finding out how to incentivise organisations to be open in terms of sharing and collaborating," he said.

Following the outbreak of COVID-19, attackers had become more motivated and the number of phishing and ransomware attacks had seen an "extraordinary rise," he said. Mr. Salvi pitched for an international cooperation ecosystem to apprehend in-

dividuals behind different cybercrimes.

"... we've not really worked as industries, as governments, as law enforcement [agencies] to come together to create a single international cooperation ecosystem so that we are able to apprehend and catch individuals behind these different cybercrimes," he said.

Tobias Feakin, Ambassador for Cyber Affairs, Government of Australia, also part of the discussion, said his government had seen a rise in the number of threat actors it was dealing with.

He added that it was seeing a lowering of the bar for entry into cybercrime.

To a query on challenges in international collaboration between large firms and governments, Mr. Salvi said the first challenge is there is no incentive for an organisation to truly collaborate and share details of at-

India to see good coffee output this year: planters

Rainfall to be the deciding factor

MINI TEJASWI
BENGALURU

If rains do not play spoilsport, India's coffee production this year will be in the range of 3,20,000 tonnes to 340,000 tonnes, according to planters.

This is far better than the last two flood-hit years, when production was way below 30,000 tonnes.

As of now, coffee plantations have received only 30% of the rain, including the blossom showers in March and the showers in the following months. Rainfall during August and September will be the deciding factor as excessive rains can

lead to floods, landslides, wet-foots (coffee plants standing in water and decaying) and berry-shedding.

"This year's crop is expected to be much better than last two years," said Bose Mandanna, a major planter in Kodagu and a former Coffee Board member.

"We have received some rain at the time of spike formation and flowering. Another 50-60% of well-distributed rains are needed for best berry development, spring cultivation and recharging of water tables. If all goes well we will have a bigger crop this year."

Venkataramani leaves 'a void'

India Pistons' CMD had a humane head for business

K.T. JAGANNATHAN

N. Venkataramani, Chairman and Managing Director of India Pistons Ltd., is no more. A self-effacing personality, he had been with the company since 1967.

A Fellow of The Institute of Mechanical Engineers, who had completed his Masters from Imperial College London, he held board positions in many Amalgamations group companies.

His simplicity and humility set him apart. "He belonged to a gentleman generation," said T.T. Srinivasaraghavan, MD, Sun-daram Finance. Preferring a low profile, Mr. Venkataramani was ever dignified. He was contemporary in knowledge

and up-to-date in details on business and trends. A widely respected voice in board meetings, his passion for doing things and perspective on issues — both technical and otherwise — were rarities in the modern business world.

OBITUARY

His peers were often stumped by his unhesitating readiness to share knowledge. A sports lover, he avidly followed cricket and tennis.

His passion for cricket remained unadvertised. An incident from the 1990s gives us a clue to his humane side. Cricketer J.R. Madanago-

pal, now a top BCCI umpire, was a frustrated man. Despite consistent scores in the 1st division league, he was nowhere near a call for the State and on the verge of quitting the game. Mr. Venkataramani asked him not to give up. In return, he promised all the support.

Mr. Madanagopal heeded the advice and went on to play for both Tamil Nadu and the South Zone.

In 1991, he served the Madras Chamber of Commerce as President. An advocate of co-partnership, he believed that industry had to co-travel with labour to progress consistently. His passing has left a huge void in Tamil Nadu's industrial scene.

Apollo Tyres adapting to new normal

N. ANAND
CHENNAI

Apollo Tyres Ltd. (ATL) is working to achieve its long-term vision of being a premier tyre company with a diversified and multinational presence undeterred by the impact of COVID-19, said a top official.

"We continue to do what we do best — launch new products for a better product mix, seed new markets, expand distribution network and focus on cost and process efficiencies," said Neeraj Kanwar, vice-chairman and MD.

Dues collection improved amid COVID-19'

Hexaware's cash pile doubles in a quarter, firm declares interim dividend twice

K. BHARAT KUMAR
CHENNAI

Hexaware Technologies Ltd. has seen improved collection of dues from clients amid the pandemic — a time when businesses typically tend to conserve cash and not pay outstanding dues.

"Our days outstanding of sales (DSO) has actually come down by five days," CEO and ED R. Srikrishna told *The Hindu*.

The total DSO stood at 77 days for the quarter ended June compared with 82 for the three months prior. The figure is a measure of the average number of days that a

firm takes to collect payment after a sale has been made. In comparison, industry bellwether Infosys saw a slight worsening of DSO metrics, from 69 days for the March quarter to 71 in the subsequent quarter. Tech services major Wipro said, "Our DSO improved by about two days both quarter-on-quarter and year-on-year."

"We thought this [DSO] was actually going to go up quite a bit. So, we put a lot of focus and effort on it," said Mr. Srikrishna, adding he had not anticipated the number coming down.

This could be a reflection of many businesses in the U.S. getting reimbursed for some payroll costs, he said.

Significantly, the firm's cash and cash equivalents more than doubled to ₹886 crore at the end of June from ₹441 crore in March. With the accumulation of cash, Hexaware was able to announce two interim dividends in two months.

"At the beginning of the June quarter, we said we were not announcing a dividend because we wanted to conserve cash

SNAPSHOTS



Volcanic Venus

It was believed that the surface of Venus had cooled and hardened so much that hot material deep within its surface could not puncture through to the surface. But according to a new study, published in *Nature*, Geoscience, Venus may still be geologically active. The study identified 37 active volcanoes on the surface of this celestial neighbour of the Earth by numerically modelling the activity on Venus. It may help identify target areas for future missions.



Detecting Alzheimer's

A new blood test may help detect Alzheimer's disease even 20 years before onset of cognitive impairment, according to a study published in *Journal of the American Medical Association*. Usually, Alzheimer's disease is diagnosed by characterisation of the amyloid plaques and tau tangles in the brain, typically, this is done after the person dies. In the new study, the phospho-tau21 protein found in the tangles could be an accurate indicator in living people.

Novel coronavirus circulated unnoticed in bats for decades, study says

SARS-CoV-2 virus diverged from closely related bat viruses 40-70 years ago

R. PRASAD

The novel coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2), which has so far infected over 17.6 million people and killed nearly 6.8 million across the world, has been circulating unnoticed in bats for decades. Bats have been the "primary reservoirs" for novel coronavirus. The SARS-CoV-2 virus is likely to have diverged from closely related bat viruses called the sarbecovirus, 40-70 years ago, a study published in *Nature Microbiology* says.

In early February, Chinese researchers had found that SARS-CoV-2 is most closely related to RaTG13 sarbecovirus, which was isolated from a horseshoe bat in Yunnan province in 2013. Based on the nearly 96% genome sequence identity between SARS-CoV-2 and RaTG13, a team led by Zheng-Li Shi from the Wuhan Institute of Virology, Chinese Academy of Sciences, Wuhan, China said in a paper published in February in *Nature* that an origin in bats is probable for the COVID-19 outbreak. The current study by Prof. Maciej Boni from the Pennsylvania State University in the U.S. and others not only confirms the findings of Dr. Shi but also suggests the probable time when SARS-CoV-2 diverged from RaTG13.

The authors analysed the evolutionary history of SARS-CoV-2 using genomic data on sarbecoviruses. They employed three approaches to identify regions in the virus that had not undergone recombination and that could be used to reconstruct its evolution. All approaches suggest that RaTG13 and SARS-CoV-2 share a single ancestral lineage and esti-



Virus relative: In early February, Chinese researchers had found that SARS-CoV-2 is most closely related to RaTG13 sarbecovirus, which was isolated from a horseshoe bat in Yunnan province in 2013. ■ISTOCKPHOTO

mate that SARS-CoV-2 genetically diverged from related bat sarbecoviruses in 1948, 1969 and 1982, respectively. "The findings demonstrate how critical it is to undertake genomic analysis of bat viruses," says Prof. Satyajit Mayor, Director of the Bengaluru-based National Centre for Biological Sciences. "Many species of bat harbour several viruses which can cross over to new hosts. When we disrupt habitats, we will face more such threats."

No recombination

Importantly, Prof. Boni and co-authors say that novel coronavirus itself has not arisen from recombination of any sarbecoviruses. The ability of the spike protein in the virus to bind to ACE2 human receptors had emerged within bats and is an an-

cestral trait shared with bat viruses and "not one acquired recently via recombination". According to them, the results suggest the presence of a "single lineage" circulating in bats with properties that allowed it to infect human cells. This was also the case with the bat sarbecoviruses related to the 2002 SARS lineage.

The *Nature Microbiology* paper also challenges the notion that pangolins would have served as an intermediate host where the virus would have acquired its ability to infect human cells thus facilitating the jump into humans. They conclude that it is plausible that pangolins could have been a conduit for transmission to humans, but there is "no evidence that pangolins facilitated adaptation to humans" by being an intermediate host.

While pangolins or other species might have served as an intermediate host before the virus jumped into humans, "current evidence is consistent with the virus having evolved in bats" and rendering the virus the ability to replicate in the upper respiratory tract of both humans and pangolins, they say.

Before pangolins, snakes were thought to have served as intermediate hosts of SARS-CoV-2. But the present study found no evidence to support this hypothesis. Days after this was hypothesised, the scientific community had nearly ruled it out.

Lurking danger

The researchers also caution that the long divergence period raises the possibility of other undocumented virus lineages circulating in horseshoe bats that have the potential to jump from bats to humans. Different and yet unstudied bat sarbecoviruses that have descended from the SARS-CoV-2/RaTG13 common ancestor forms a clade with properties to infect many different mammals, including humans.

"Without better sampling, however, it is impossible to estimate whether or how many of these additional lineages exist," they write.

The diversity and dynamic process of recombination amongst lineages in the bat reservoir makes identifying viruses that can cause major outbreaks difficult. "This underscores the need for a global network of real-time human disease surveillance systems... for pathogen identification and characterisation," they say.



Eating right: Besides vitamin D and calcium, food rich in micro-nutrients can be offered to address hidden hunger in poorly nourished people. ■ISTOCKPHOTO

Arming India's poor against the pandemic - 2



SPEAKING OF SCIENCE

D. BALASUBRAMANIAN

Gratified by the suggestions and critiques of our earlier article of July 19: 'Arming India's poor against the pandemic', we offer an updated Part 2 here. The very first update is the comprehensive and authoritative paper by C. V. Harinarayan and H. Akhila, titled: "Modern India and the tale of twin nutrient deficiency- calcium and vitamin D- nutritional trend data of 50 years-retrospect, introspect and prospect", that has appeared in the journal *Frontiers in Endocrinology*, August 9, 2019 <https://doi.org/10.3389/fen.2019.00493>. Dr. Harinarayan has been involved in this area for decades, conducting trials and comparing levels of calcium and Vitamin D in rural, urban, poor, not-so-poor and well-to-do persons in Tirupati, Karnataka and elsewhere, with rigour. In the section on *Prospect* in this paper, the authors have recommended several steps that should be taken to propagate them through schools and colleges, and social media using cell phones, TV and radio, how nutritional deficiencies can be overcome through the help of expert groups and through supplementation on a mass scale. (I recommend that this important paper be read by all). While many of these suggestions are already being practised, there is need for even more.

Genetics and vitamin D deficiency

On an aside, and interestingly, while they (and Selvarajan *et al.* in 2017, too) ask why a sun-blessed nation still exhibits vitamin D deficiency, we notice from other reports that a similar deficiency occurs among people of the Indian sub-continent origin settled in Great Britain (for example, Patel *et al.*, *International Journal of Cardiology*, 2013, 2172-76 <doi:10.1016/j.ijcard.2012.05.081>. This has made some wonder whether any genetic factors are involved. (Light falling on the skin produces a precursor molecule, which is processed in the cells of the organs to make vitamin D, and if this becomes faulty due to any genetic/metabolic error, deficiency might arise). One Roger Bouillon writes in *Nature Reviews Endocrinology*, 13, 464-79, 2017, that there might be at least four genetic variants. It would be worthwhile for Indian geneticists to take up this possibility in our deficient populations.

Harinarayan and Akhila point out that calcium levels are deficient not just in India's poor, but even among the well-to-do. The data provided by the National Nutrition Monitoring Board (NNMB) reveal that over the last 50 years, the calcium (Ca⁺⁺) levels in average Indian populations has plummeted from 700 units per day to 300-400, (far below the normal, needed level of 800-1,000), again a puzzle for the top country in the world which produces the maximum amount of milk per day! Milk products are rich sources of calcium. Ca⁺⁺ is also needed by vitamin D for its action. Thus, both sub-normal calcium and vitamin D is a double whammy! The paper thus suggests, in the *Prospects* section, that while supplementation of these two is essential for a healthy India, we should also have all schools have their students stand in sunlight for 20-30 minutes daily, and encourage physical exercise and games for an hour per day. These will be in addition to the daily mid-day meals that they offer to all students (and teachers).

Fighting hidden hunger

The Central and State governments, many NGOs and public spirited individuals have been helping the poor by offering free wheat/rice plus pulses. In addition, they have been offering highly subsidized food items like sugar, milk and some vegetables, but no cooked food. Nutrition experts across India have emphasised that besides vitamin D and calcium, supplementation, food rich in micro-nutrients (such as B complex vitamins, plus Ca, Fe, Zn, Iodine, Se, Zn) be offered, so that immunity against any infection is also ensured. Such an addition takes care of what is called 'hidden hunger' in poorly nourished people. As cooked food is given in schools in several states, anganwadis and such, the meals offered should have the kind of menu that offers the best combination of vegetable components in the meal. Many nutritionists have suggested that besides dal (or sambar) using pulses, such meals include vegetables like spinach and other green leafy vegetables, beans, peas, carrots, tomato, potato, milk/curd and fruits like bananas, and omega 3 and 6 fatty acids (and an egg) are contained in the meal. Likewise, they have suggested what a balanced non-vegetarian meal could be, which is wholesome, yet affordable.

What is affordable? Madhura Swaminathan of MSSRF writes in *The Hindu* of July 28, 2020 that as per FAO's State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2020 (SOFI 2020), a nutrient-adequate meal costs PPP \$2.12 (or ₹25 per meal or ₹50 for 2 meals per day), and a 'healthy diet' about ₹100 per day. For over 370 million poor people in India, this is a big figure! It is clear that besides the valiant efforts of Central and State governments, substantial contributions must come from private foundations (Indian and international), CSR from large industries, and individual donors, so that we may reach this ₹100 per day's meals. It can be done.

Nutrition from seaweed

Seaweeds are nutritious additions to everyday meals. Mainland India has a coastline of over 7,500 km, and island mass coastline of 5,500 km, and seaweeds, namely algae, are grown and processed for use, including for food. Japan, Korea, China and most Southeastern countries eat them. These are vegetarian, and rich in vitamins, minerals, iodine and omega 3 fatty acids. The Central Salt and Marine Chemicals Research Institute (CSMCRI) at Bhavnagar has published the paper: (Dixit D.C. *et al.*, Assessment of the nutritive, biochemical, antioxidant and antibacterial potential of eight tropical macro algae along Kachchh coast, India as human food supplements, *Journal of Aquatic Food Product Technology*, 27(1), 61-79, DOI: 10.1080/10498850.2017.1396274 <https://doi.org/10.1080/10498850.2017.1396274>. It is time that we Indians also begin adding seaweeds in our meals.

(Grateful thanks to Dr. Mahtab Bamji for her continuing advice).

Gene variants and susceptibility to schizophrenia

A pilot study of 97 people with schizophrenia finds an association between immune response genes and the disorder

SHUBASHREE DESIKAN

Schizophrenia is a constellation of symptoms such as hearing voices, false beliefs and trouble with thinking and concentration, and its cause is not exactly known. In that sense, schizophrenia is still an enigma.

Studies of schizophrenia among groups of varied ethnicities across the world have shown associations of the disease with alleles (variant genes) related to the human leukocyte antigen - an important part of the immune system and related to a group of genes on chromosome six. However, the specific allele that was found to be associated with schizophrenia varied from group to group.

Recently, a pilot study on a south Indian, Tamil-speaking group consisting of 97



Variants: Studies indicate that different alleles may be involved in different populations. ■ISTOCKPHOTO

people with schizophrenia and 103 controls was carried out by Schizophrenia Research Foundation (SCARF) and Jeevan Stem Cell Foundation, in Chennai. The study, published in *International Journal of Immunogenetics* finds an association of specific alleles with the disease.

"Studies done in Saudi Arabia and Tunisia have shown a particular HLA al-

lele (DRB1*03) to be a risk factor for schizophrenia but in [a study involving] Japanese population it was a different allele (DRB1*01) which predisposed to the disease condition," says Dr S. Vani Laboratory Director, Jeevan Stem Cell Foundation, Chennai, in an email to *The Hindu*. She is a principal investigator of the present study along with Dr. Vijaya Raghavan.

The occurrence of different variants itself is not a problem, as HLA genes are extremely variable and are very different across human populations, according to Prof. Sanjeev Jain, Department of Psychiatry, National Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences, Bengaluru, who was not involved in the study. "The reasons are not entirely clear, but

perhaps selection and 'memory' of past selection pressures (infections) play a role," he adds.

In the present study, the researchers found that there was a higher frequency of HLA class I alleles (HLA-A*01:01, -B*37:01:01 and -C*01:02:01) in individuals with schizophrenia as compared to the controls. Individuals carrying these alleles could be susceptible to schizophrenia.

They also found a negative correlation with some alleles (HLA-B*35:03:01 and HLA-DRB1*04:03:01) which were found in lower frequency in individuals with schizophrenia. These could be protective alleles in schizophrenia.

Small sample

"The paper adds a valuable

piece of information, on the relation between immune response genes and schizophrenia," says Prof. Jain. "It is a small sample, and the associations are observed only in a subset (often females only); correcting for multiple comparisons may reduce the significance of the findings..." he adds.

Amino acids

The researchers also studied the type of amino acid present in the peptide binding groove of HLA molecule and compared it among patients and controls, finding a significant difference. "The amino acid level association study has not been reported earlier in schizophrenia," says Dr. Vani, adding that the results need to be strengthened further using a larger sample size.

Question Corner



How fire ants float

How do fire ants present together in large numbers float on water?

A single fire ant (*Solenopsis invicta*) dropped in water struggles, but when there are many of them together, the ants can float effortlessly even for days at a stretch. Fire ants are originally from the rainforests of Brazil and have evolved a strategy to keep their colonies together due to the regular flooding of their habitat. Using time-lapse photography, a three-member team led by David L. Hu from Georgia Institute of Technology, Atlanta, U.S. found that fire ants, when present in a group, tend to link their bodies together to build "waterproof rafts." Lotus leaves, rose petals and a host of other plant parts exhibit water repellency.

Water repellency is achieved through the hydrophobic nature of the surface. Much like lotus leaves, the researchers found that the fire ants that gathered together in water exhibited a hydrophobic surface. By linking their bodies together, a process analogous to the weaving of a waterproof fabric, the fire ants enhanced their water repellency, they write in a study published in the journal *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*. The waterproof raft they build, by linking their bodies, is achieved by trapping of ants at the raft edge by their neighbours. The researchers used liquid nitrogen to freeze the ants to study how the ant linked together within the raft. They found that ants, "gripped each other by using a combination of mandibles, tarsal claws, and adhesive pads located on the ends of their tarsi," (the bones of the proximal segment of the foot).

Readers may send their questions/answers to questioncorner@thehindu.co.in

Study finds physical distancing linked to drop in coronavirus spread

Over two weeks, 46 countries prevented an estimated 1.57 million cases

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Implementation of physical distancing policies nationally is associated with significant reductions in transmission of the SARS-CoV-2 virus, that causes COVID-19, and reduced community mobility, according to researchers. The study, published in the journal *PLOS ONE*, found that physical distancing policies enacted nationally in 46 countries prevented an estimated 1.57 million cases of COVID-19 over a two-week period, representing a 65% reduction in new cases.

The researchers emphasise the significant benefits that can be achieved by individuals practising social distancing measures. "From our data-driven analysis, it became clear that practising social distancing can have a huge impact on transmission rates," said Raghu Kalluri, a professor at The University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center in the US.

Analysing the effects of social distancing policies



Strategy wise: Countries implementing national social distancing policy showed greater reductions in transmission compared to those with regional policies. ■ T. VIJAYA KUMAR

globally, the researchers were able to obtain sufficient data for 46 countries with national social distancing policies, 74 nations without such policies and 14 with regional policies.

Countries with any social distancing policies had significantly reduced community mobility relative to nations without policies, and those with national policies saw greater decreases than countries with regional policies, according to the researchers.

served between countries with regional policies and those without social distancing policies, they said.

Countries with any social distancing policies had significantly reduced community mobility relative to nations without policies, and those with national policies saw greater decreases than countries with regional policies, according to the researchers.

There was a strong correlation between decreased mobility and decreased transmission of the virus, highlighting the importance of individuals practising so-

cial distancing to effectively prevent transmission of the virus, they said.

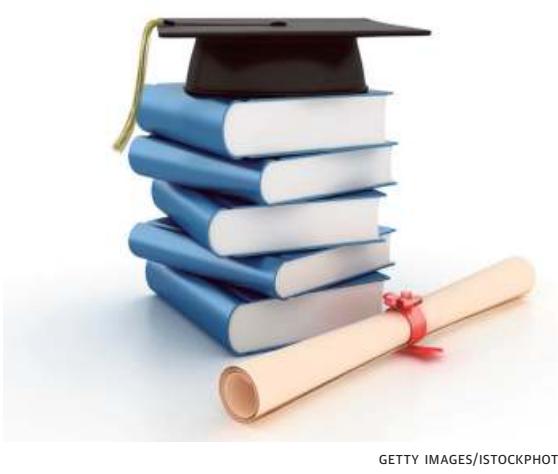
"This is clear evidence that social distancing measures can collectively have tremendous impacts on reducing transmission of SARS-CoV-2, and we encourage individuals to practice social distancing to help control spread of infections," said Dr. Kalluri.

Useful evidence

"We believe these data will provide useful evidence for public health officials and policy makers when considering future measures to reduce the spread of COVID-19 in their communities," he said.

The researchers acknowledge the study is limited by a reliance on direct COVID-19 testing, which may underestimate prevalence.

They also focused on spread rates following implementation of social distancing policies as an internal control for the numerous additional factors likely contributing to spread rates.



Education and NEP

What has the draft National Education Policy, 2020 proposed? What are the major challenges?

PRISCILLA JEBARAJ

The story so far: The Union Cabinet approved a new National Education Policy on July 29, after a 34-year gap. The National Education Policy, 2020 is meant to provide an overarching vision and comprehensive framework for both school and higher education across the country. The new NEP, approved by the Cabinet, has not been presented in Parliament. It is the first to be formulated by a Bharatiya Janata Party government and the first in the 21st century. It is only a policy, not a law; implementation of its proposals depends on further regulations by both States and the Centre as education is a concurrent subject.

What are some of the key proposals? The NEP proposes to change the school curricular structure from the current 10+2 (Class 1-10 of general education followed by two years of higher secondary school with specialised subjects) with a 5+3+3+4 structure, bringing children from ages 3 to 5 years within the formal education system for the first time, and ensuring curricular continuity in the last four years. A mission for foundational literacy and numeracy, free breakfasts being added to free lunches in government schools, vocational education along with internships from Class 6, and proposed redesign of the board examinations are some other major initiatives for school education.

For higher education, a new umbrella regulator has been proposed with separate verticals for regulation, standard setting, accreditation and funding. It will absorb arts and science, technical and teacher education into its fold, replacing several existing regulatory bodies, and also ensure a level playing field for public and private players.

Implementation will be done in phases, based on time, region and types of institutions with Institutes of Eminence and central universities taking the lead, according to Higher Education Secretary Amit Khare

What is the timeline for implementation? The policy is meant to transform the education system by 2040. Some proposals will be implemented immediately, starting with the change in the name of the Ministry of Human Resource Development into the Ministry of Education. "There are over 100 action points from the Policy. Implementation will be done in phases, based on time, region and types of institutions with Institutes of Eminence (IoEs) and Central Universities taking the lead," said Higher Education Secretary Amit Khare. For instance, four-year undergraduate degrees with multiple entry-exit options will be introduced in the 20 IoEs from the 2020-21 academic year, while others continue with the existing three-year degree courses. Existing M.Phil students can continue until they complete their degree, although new admissions for the programme will not be accepted.

The National Testing Agency will introduce a pilot version of the common entrance test by December 2020, which will be used for admission to all IoEs and central universities in 2021. Some Indian Institutes of Technology are working on developing the technical structure of the Academic Credit Bank, which will also be established by December, and become applicable to all new students joining central universities next year.

The National Foundational Literacy and Numeracy Mission which is to be implemented by 2025 will be launched by the end of this year, said Mr. Khare. The National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) will introduce the curricular framework for the new school structure, including early childhood care, by the next academic year.

Where do the difficulties lie? Some of the proposals require legal changes. The draft Higher Education Commission of India Bill has been languishing in the Ministry for over a year, but is likely to be published for feedback by September. The proposal for a Board of Governors for universities may also require amendments of the Central and State Universities Acts. A Cabinet note has already been moved to set up the National Research Foundation as a trust under the government, but in order to make it a fully autonomous body, an Act may be required.

Others require funding. Free breakfasts can only be considered in the next academic year if a budget allocation is made to cover it. The process of converting affiliated colleges into degree granting autonomous institutions and then further into fully fledged universities is estimated to take at least 15 years, as the Centre will have to provide financial assistance for this purpose.

The Ministry feels that an increase in government funding of education to 6% of GDP will be sufficient to cover the financial implications of the NEP. However, such an increase in funding has been proposed but not achieved for the last half-century, point out experts. The proposal to make the mother tongue the medium of instruction till Class 5, which has stirred up the fiercest debates, is dependent on State governments, according to the Education Minister, who would not even confirm that the policy will be implemented by centrally-run schools.

Courting controversy in Rajasthan

Why are questions being raised about the actions of State Governor Kalraj Mishra?

VARGHESE K. GEORGE

The story so far: In Rajasthan, Governor Kalraj Mishra repeatedly turned down the advice of the Council of Ministers to convene a session of the Rajasthan Assembly. He insisted that a 21-day notice is essential for a session, demanded to know the purpose of calling it, and put other conditions such as maintenance of social distancing norms and recording of proceedings. He agreed to summon the House on August 14, only after the Council of Ministers agreed to the 21-day notice. The Governor's action has raised the question whether he has the power to turn down the recommendation of the Council of Ministers.

What are the powers of a Governor?

The controversy in Rajasthan now is around the Governor's refusal to summon a session as desired by the Council of Ministers; in Arunachal Pradesh in 2015, the Governor changed the schedule of a session and set its agenda without a recommendation from the Chief Minister. In 2016, a five-judge constitution Bench of the Supreme Court dealt with questions arising out of the situation, which was comparable to Rajasthan today – rebellion in the ruling Congress and the Governor appearing

eager to help the rebels. In the resulting Nabam Rebia, Bamang Felix v. Deputy Speaker and others case, the Supreme Court of India examined the powers of the Governor, particularly with reference to summoning an



Assembly session. The top court reiterated that "the functions, duties and powers of the Governor by or under the Constitution are 'cabinied, cribbed, confined'." The Bench explored the Governor's powers vis-à-vis the executive and the legislature.

Who summons an Assembly session?

The Supreme Court held that the Governor's power "under Article 174 to summon, prorogue and dissolve the house(s) must be exercised in consonance with the aid and advice of the chief minister and his council of ministers. In the above situation, he is precluded [from taking] an individual call on the issue at his own will, or in his own discretion". The "discretion given to the Governor in respect of his relations with the Legislative Assembly is not only limited and circumscribed by the Constitution but also by the Rules framed by the Legislative Assembly under Article 208 of the Constitution".

Can the Governor direct the agenda or procedure of the legislature?

The proceedings of the legislature are guided by rules made by it, and the Governor cannot have any say in it,

points out P.D.T. Achary, former Secretary General of the Lok Sabha. Courts have directed video recording of procedure on occasions, but Mr. Achary says that is an overreach. For instance, the rule of 21-day notice for the session was first set by the Lok Sabha and adapted by State legislatures. The Lok Sabha has since reduced it to 15 days. But the Speaker has the powers to call a session with a shorter notice.

When can the Governor act without the advice of the Council of Ministers?

In some States, the Governor has special powers to advance tribal welfare. A Governor can reserve a bill passed by the legislature for the consideration of the President of India, and he or she can recommend President's rule in a State. If the Chief Minister and his Council of Ministers lose their majority, or they refuse to recommend a session in six months, or there is a reasonable doubt about their majority, the Governor could demand a session. The Governor invites a person who he thinks has the legislative majority to form a government, but the use of this power cannot be arbitrary. If there is a Council of Ministers with a majority, the Governor has to go by its recommendation to dissolve the legislature. In the event of a Chief Minister and his Council of Ministers losing the majority, the Governor can use his or her discretion to either explore the formation of a new government or dissolve the House.

Is the Governor bound by people's representatives?

The Constituent Assembly very consciously limited the Governor's discretionary powers. The misuse of the Governor's office by parties in power at the Centre to disturb State governments in control of the Opposition has remained a scourge. But the constitutional scheme is very clear, as stated in the 2016 Supreme Court judgment that a Governor "cannot have an overriding authority, over the representatives of the people, who constitute... the state legislature... and/or even the executive government functioning under the council of ministers with the Chief Minister as the head".

Will environment regulation be weakened?

What are the key changes in the Environment Impact Assessment Notification compared to the past?

G. ANANTHAKRISHNAN

The story so far: The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF&CC) has published the draft Environment Impact Assessment (EIA) Notification 2020, with the intention of replacing the existing EIA Notification, 2006 under the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986. The government wants to incorporate modifications made to the regulations through amendments in the interim period. An EIA makes a scientific estimate of the likely impacts of a project, such as a mine, irrigation dam, industrial unit or waste treatment plant. There is also a provision for public consultation in the rules, including a public hearing at which the local community and interested persons can give opinions and raise objections, based on the draft EIA report prepared by experts for the project.

How does the draft EIA Notification differ from the one now in force?

Among the major departures from existing regulations is the removal of several activities from the purview of public consultation. A list of projects has been included under Category B2, expressly exempted from the requirement of an EIA (Clause 13, sub cl. II).

The projects under this category include offshore and onshore oil, gas and shale exploration, hydroelectric projects up to 25 MW, irrigation projects between 2,000 and 10,000 hectares of command area, small and medium mineral beneficiation units, small foundries involving furnace units, some categories of re-rolling mills, small and medium cement plants, small clinker grinding units, acids other than phosphoric or ammonia, sulphuric acid, micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) in dye and dye intermediates, bulk drugs, synthetic rubbers, medium-sized paint units, all inland waterway projects, expansion or widening of highways between 25 km and 100 km with defined parameters, aerial ropeways in ecologically sensitive areas, and specified building construction and area development projects.

The projects in this list are, under existing norms, identified on the basis of screening by Expert Appraisal Committees, rather than being exempted through listing in the Schedule. Also, coal and non-coal mineral prospecting and solar photovoltaic projects do not need prior environmental



mental clearance or permission in the new scheme.

What are the apprehensions?

There is apprehension that the exemption from EIA and public consultation for listed B2 category activity and expansion and modernisation projects will seriously affect the environment, since these will be carried out without oversight. Combined with a new provision for post-facto environmental clearance (of projects executed without prior clearance), this would further weaken protections.

Moreover, the notice period for public hearing has been cut from 30 days to 20 days. This will make it difficult to study the draft EIA report, more so when it is not widely available or provided in the regional language.

Similarly, for project modernisation and expansion, the norms in Notification 2020 are liberal, with only those involving more than 25% increase requiring EIA, and over 50% attracting public consultation.

Under the proposed changes, project proponents need to submit only one annual report on compliance with conditions, compared to the existing two. The move is seen as retrograde, because the CAG found in 2016 that the deficiency in semi-annual compliance reporting was between

43% and 78%, while failure to comply with conditions ranged from 5% to 57%. Non-compliance was encountered particularly in river valley and hydroelectric power projects and thermal power projects. After the gas leak at LG Polymers in Visakhapatnam on May 7, the Environment Ministry told the National Green Tribunal that the unit lacked environment clearance, exposing the low effectiveness of rules.

How would the new rules enable post-facto approval of violations?

The MoEF&CC cites its own order of March 14, 2017 enabling appraisal of projects involving violations – where construction had begun or expansion or modernisation was carried out without clearance – and an order of the Jharkhand High Court asking for consideration of a case on merits, independent of penal action for violation, to introduce a beneficial scheme for violators.

The EIA Notification 2020 excludes reporting by the public of violations and non-compliance. Instead, the government will take cognisance of reports only from the violator-promoter, government authority, Appraisal Committee or Regulatory Authority. Such projects can then be approved with conditions, including remediation of ecological damage, which, again, will be assessed and reported by the violator (and not an unconnected agency), although Central Pollution Control Board guidelines must be used.

How does the draft notification compare with global norms?

EIA rules must meet the requirements of the precautionary principle of avoiding harm, and intergenerational equity. The European Union, as an evolving example, has modified its processes in accordance with the Aarhus Convention, 1998, which stipulates that environmental rights and human rights are linked, the present generation owes an obligation to future generations, sustainable development can be achieved only through the involvement of all stakeholders, government accountability and environmental protection are connected, and interactions between the public and public authorities must take place in a democratic context. The EU Directive on EIA includes climate change and biodiversity concerns.

The rules in India, including EIA 2006, it can be argued, privileged the interests of the project proponent by whitewashing public consultations, accepting flawed and faulty EIA reports resulting from external influences, and ignoring the non-renewable nature of resources. Notification 2020 deepens the impact of that paradigm.

The subject of contempt of court

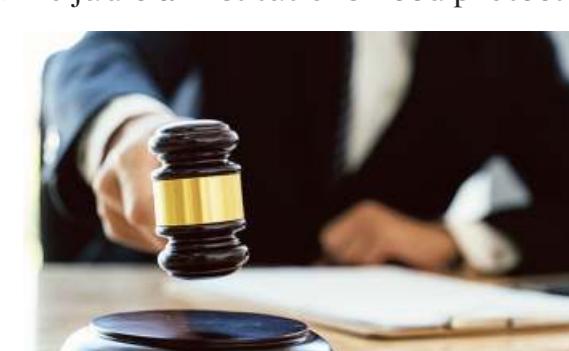
What is the rationale for this provision? Do judicial institutions need protection?

K. VENKATARAMAN

The story so far: Contempt of court, as a concept that seeks to protect judicial institutions from motivated attacks and unwarranted criticism, and as a legal mechanism to punish those who lower its authority, is back in the news in India. This follows the initiation of contempt proceedings by the Supreme Court of India, on its own motion, against advocate-activist Prashant Bhushan.

How did the concept of contempt come into being? The concept of contempt of court is several centuries old. In England, it is a common law principle that seeks to protect the judicial power of the king, initially exercised by himself, and later by a panel of judges who acted in his name. Violation of the judges' orders was considered an affront to the king himself. Over time, any kind of disobedience to judges, or obstruction of the implementation of their directives, or comments and actions that showed disrespect towards them came to be punishable.

What is the statutory basis for contempt of court? There were pre-Independence laws of contempt in India. Besides the early High Courts, the courts of some princely states also had such laws. When the Constitution was adopted, contempt of court was made one of the restrictions on freedom of speech and expression. Separately, Article 129 of the Constitution conferred on the Supreme Court the power to punish contempt of



itself. Article 215 conferred a corresponding power on the High Courts. The Contempt of Courts Act, 1971, gives statutory backing to the idea.

What are the kinds of contempt of court?

The law codifying contempt classifies it as civil and criminal. Civil contempt is fairly simple. It is committed when someone wilfully disobeys a court order, or wilfully breaches an undertaking given to court. Criminal contempt is more complex. It consists of three forms: (a) words, written or spoken, signs and actions that "scandalise" or "tend to scandalise" or "lower" or "tends to lower" the authority of any court (b) prejudices or interferes with any judicial proceeding and (c) interferes with or obstructs the administration of justice.

Making allegations against the judiciary or individual judges, attributing motives to judgments and judicial functioning and any scurrilous attack on the conduct of judges are normally considered matters that scandalise the judiciary. The rationale for this provision is that courts must be protected from tendentious attacks that lower its authority, defame its public image and make the public lose faith in its impartiality.

The punishment for contempt of court is simple imprisonment for a term up to six months and/or a fine of up to ₹ 2,000.

What is not contempt of court?

Fair and accurate reporting of judicial proceedings will not amount to contempt of court. Nor is any fair criticism on the merits of a judicial order after a case is heard and disposed of.

Is truth a defence against a contempt charge?

For many years, truth was seldom considered a defence against a charge of contempt. There was an impression that the judiciary tended to hide any misconduct among its individual members in the name of protecting the image of the institution. The Act was amended in 2006 to introduce truth as a valid defence, if it was in public interest and was invoked in a *bona fide* manner.

Fair and accurate reporting of judicial proceedings will not amount to contempt of court



AYODHYA

Faith and dispute: the tale of a sacred town

The demolition of Babri Masjid and the movement for Ram Mandir turned this sleepy temple town into the fulcrum of Indian politics

NISTULA HEBBAR
OMAR RASHID

The ground-breaking ceremony of the Ram Mandir in Ayodhya on August 5, after a decades-long legal dispute that concluded last year, would not only set off its construction but also mark a new chapter in the history of the town. Located 130 km east of Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh's capital, Ayodhya, a town of great religious significance, gained national prominence in the past few decades, coinciding with the Ramjanmabhoomi movement and its intertwined fortunes with the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).

Religious tourism economy in the town founded on the beliefs associated with the Ramayana has lagged behind that in other spiritually important cities in the State like Mathura, Prayagraj and Varanasi. The proposed Ram temple promises to alter all that as locals hope it would augur a new wave of development and livelihood opportunities, to cement the closure of an issue that has defined Ayodhya.

"Ayodhya's importance, more than just a site of the dispute over the birth place of Lord Ram, was as a constant cipher in shaping post-independence politics," said Prof. Pralay Kanungo, aca-

demic and author of RSS's *Tryst with Politics: From Hedgewar to Sudarshan*. "There was an interesting interlude in 1980-81, when there was a talk of late Prime Minister Indira Gandhi moving towards Hindutva politics at least in the Hindi heartland," he said. Plans to develop Ayodhya as a pilgrimage city, termed the Ram Ki Purhi project, was given the go-ahead by her in the early 1980s.

Mandal and Mandir
This trajectory was cut short due to Mrs. Gandhi's untimely and violent death in 1984. Ayodhya itself was destined to be the epicentre of the two

great ideas of the 1990s politics in India – Mandal and Mandir. And it was another political party altogether that would take the sleepy temple town and make it the fulcrum of Indian politics – the BJP.

"In the early 1980s, the newly formed BJP and its leadership came to the conclusion that to connect with people, it needed an emotional issue. Even when the erstwhile Jan Sangh participated in the anti-cow slaughter movement of 1967, the movement itself was led by the Congress, and there were no political dividends for the Jan Sangh," said R. Balashankar, the former editor of *Organiser*, the RSS mouthpiece, and former national convenor of the BJP's intellectual cell.

"The Ram Janmabhoomi movement was one such issue that had the potential and did in fact transform the BJP from a cadre-based party into one with mass support," he said. The fate of Ayodhya was sealed in a little known town of Palampur in Himachal Pradesh, where, at a national executive meet in 1989, the BJP decided to politically back a demand by the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) to recognise the dis-

puted site at Babri Masjid as Ram Janmabhoomi and support litigation by Hindu suits to build a Ram Temple there.

"The movement was then piloted by (L.K.) Advani through his rath yatra, and the expansion of the BJP's connect through the figure of Lord Rama with Indians

The BJP decided to politically back the Ramjanmabhoomi movement in 1989 that demanded construction of a Ram temple at the site where Babri Masjid stood

across the country, of all sampradayas (traditions) and castes," said Mr. Balashankar. "The movement also helped the BJP negotiate the Mandal agitation and the far-reaching changes it made to Indian polity. Lord Rama is universally worshipped among a majority in the country, and helped transcend caste barriers in mobilising support," he added. In fact, many leaders of the movement were from the

Other Backward Communities (OBC) like Kalyan Singh and Uma Bharti, and laid the groundwork for the election of many BJP Chief Ministers with an OBC background.

Prof. Kanungo added that backing the VHP and the sants and heads of Hindu Mutts that are members of the VHP was also a turning point for the BJP.

"The Congress had traditionally been dealing with the Mutts and religious institutions in a piece meal fashion, and many of them had supported the Congress through the first four decades of independence. The BJP's support was important in pushing these institutions with their deep penetration of civil society across the hinterland in mass basing of the BJP."

A metaphor for Hindutva

Ayodhya became the physical site and a metaphor for Hindutva politics, with "kar sevaks" converging from across the country for what turned out to be the death knell of the Babri Masjid.

The proposed Ram temple would be built at the site where the Babri Masjid stood till December 6, 1992. While the litigation process could be traced back to the 19th

century, its major flashpoints came after independence, such as the surreptitious planting of idols inside the mosque in 1949, the court-ordered opening of the locks in 1986 for Hindu worshippers and the police firing on kar sevaks in 1990.

The twin towns of Ayodhya and Faizabad, covered in 15 minutes by road, offer glimpses of a shared culture, with the latter carrying remnants of the Nawabi rule through its architecture and as the erstwhile capital of Awadh. The Ayodhya town itself is dotted with several significant temples, including the Hanumangarhi, dedicated to Lord Hanuman. The town also houses 20-odd Muslim shrines, including one dedicated to Nuh (Noah), regarded as an apostle by many faiths. A local activist Vineet Maurya, who petitioned the Supreme Court claiming that excavations at the site were linked to Buddhist faith, has been at the forefront of promoting the town's Buddhist heritage.

Ayodhya regularly rewarded the BJP. Since 1991, when the Ram Janmabhoomi movement was at its peak, barring an upset in 2012, when the Samajwadi Party won, Ayodhya has voted for a BJP MLA. In eight Lok Sabha polls during the same period, the BJP won five times.

After coming to power in U.P. in 2017, the BJP government has attempted to revamp the infrastructure in Ayodhya, building roads, setting up lights and repairing drainage. In 2017, Ayodhya picked its first Mayor Rishikesh Upadhyay after the Yogi Adityanath government elevated it to the status of a municipal corporation. The names of Faizabad district and divisions were changed to Ayodhya, thus increasing its territorial and political boundaries. The Deepotsav Mela, to be held in Ayodhya on Diwali, was also granted the status of a state fair.

Prof. Kanungo sees the town rivalling Varanasi, Haridwar and Rishikesh, looking at its politico-cultural space in India. "It won't surprise me if the developments around this pilgrimage site become a space for debating the singular questions on Hinduism," he says. For now, Ayodhya holds its breath.

In Focus

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■ While the

RAFALE JETS

The 'game-changer' fighters

They are a major capability booster for IAF, whose fighter fleet is shrinking

DINAKAR PERI

The Indian Air Force (IAF) has much to cheer with the arrival of five Rafale omni-role fighter jets in terms of the technology and capability accretion that it brings. In the words of the Air Chief Marshal (ACM) R.K.S. Bhadauria and former ACM B.S. Dhanoa, Rafale is a "game changer".

Encapsulating what the Rafales bring in, ACM Bhadauria said in February that at the time of the Kargil conflict in 1999, India had an edge over Pakistan in terms of Beyond Visual Range (BVR) missile capability. "We allowed that to slip and thereafter it took a decade-and-a-half of struggle in the acquisition process to be able to get better capability," he said. The Rafale, armed with the Meteor BVR air-to-air missile, will restore that edge in the neighbourhood as there is no equivalent to it currently.

According to its manufacturer Dassault Aviation, Rafale is an omni-role fighter capable of the entire spectrum of roles – air superiority and air defence, close air support, in-depth strikes, reconnaissance, anti-ship strikes and nuclear deterrence. With its advanced AESA (Active Electronically Scanned Array) radar, electronic warfare suite and network-centric capabilities in addition to its armaments, Rafale is now the most advanced fighter in the IAF arsenal, overtaking the



SU-30MKI, which is due for major upgrades.

Rafale is also the first imported fighter to join service in over two decades since the SU-30s in the late 1990s. Rafale has 14 hard points for weapons and can carry a total external load of over 9 tonnes. In addition to the Meteor, it is armed with SCALP long-range stand-off attack air-to-ground missiles and MICA multi-mission air-to-air missiles. The latest addition, HAMMER (Highly Agile Modular Munition Extended Range) medium range air-to-ground missiles, is being procured through the emergency route.

Another significant factor with the Rafales is that as per contract, at least 75% of the Rafale fleet has to be operationally available, which would make it the most available fighter in the IAF fleet. The first Rafale squadron, No. 17 Golden Arrows, will be based at Ambala and the second squadron will be

at Hasimara. All 36 aircraft will be delivered on schedule by end 2021, the Indian Embassy in France said last week.

The €7.87 billion (₹59,262 crore) inter-governmental agreement, signed in September 2016 between India and France for 36 Rafale jets in fly away condition, also includes 13 India-Specific Enhancements (ISE), the non-recurring design and development cost of which is ₹9,855 crore. Some of them pertain to radar enhancements, helmet mounted display, ability to start and operate from high altitude airfields, advanced infrared search and track sensor and a very potent electronic jammer pod.

The deal also epitomises the cumbersome defence procurement process in which government-to-government deals have of late become the way out. Rafale was originally selected under the Medium Multi-Role Combat Aircraft tender is-

sued in 2007, which itself was conceived as a MiG-21 replacement project in early 2000s. Rafale was selected in 2012 but negotiations got stuck due to differences and the tender was eventually withdrawn after the emergency purchase announced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in April 2015, citing "critical operational necessity" of the IAF.

Falling numbers

However, the 36 Rafales will do little to arrest the falling numbers of fighter squadrons of the IAF, which has a sanctioned strength of 42 squadrons but is down to 31 at present. To offset that, the IAF is banking on the indigenous Tejas Light Combat Aircraft (LCA). A contract for 83 LCA-MkII is in final stages and they are in addition to the 40 jets already contracted for. A more advanced LCA-MkII is also in the works. The government has recently approved the procurement of 21 MIG-29 jets from Russia, which will add two additional squadrons. In addition, 12 SU-30MKI aircraft have also been approved, which will replenish the numbers of Sukhois lost in crashes. The IAF will also phase out five squadrons of MiG-21s in the next few years.

While the IAF works to keep the numbers from falling further, the Rafale, which joins the IAF at a time of unprecedented tensions on the border with China, will give a qualitative edge to the force in the region.

NAJIB RAZAK

The fall of a titan

Malaysia's former all powerful PM has been sentenced to 12 years in jail

GARIMELLA SUBRAMANIAM

Najib Abdul Razak, Malaysia's former Premier who was sentenced on July 28 to 12 years in jail and a \$49-million fine for money laundering, criminal breach of trust and abuse of power, has pleaded his innocence and vowed to appeal the ruling. The conviction of the 67-year-old in Kuala Lumpur's most high-profile criminal investigation pertains to the misappropriation of billions of dollars at 1Malaysia Development Bhd (IMDB). Mr. Najib founded the state investment fund when he was Prime Minister in 2009, serving on its board as chairman, with the aim of raising the country's economic profile to a high-income bracket.

The former head of the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO) party, who became the country's sixth Prime Minister in 2009, Mr. Najib has been one of the most influential voices in Malaysian politics for decades.

He is the son of the country's second Prime Minister Abdul Razak Hussein and the nephew of the third Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad in the April 2018 general election. The UMNO-led coalition lost power for the first time in Malaysia's history. Mr. Mahathir, who returned to active politics from retirement to occupy the high office (though replaced in March this year), swiftly unleashed a probe

into Mr. Najib's role in the multi-billion dollar scandal. In May 2018, the embattled leader and his wife were stopped from leaving the country in a private jet. In the following month, the police confiscated jewellery and luxury goods worth about \$275 million and a sum of about \$30 million in various currencies from his premises.

The recent conviction – an unprecedented low for an ex-Premier of Malaysia – relates to the illicit payments into Mr. Najib's personal accounts via SRC International, formerly a IMDB subsidiary. While admitting the transaction, he has insisted that it was not linked to IMDB and that the bulk of the amount has been returned to the source. Mr. Najib is also on record that it was a donation from a friendly Muslim government anxious to bolster a moderate Islamic nation and that the funds were meant for electoral purposes.

During the trial hearing last December, Mr. Najib reportedly told the court he was misled by a Malaysian financier to believe that the sums were gifts from the Saudi royal family.

Changing political winds

While the appeal process could drag on, current political winds could turn less hostile for Mr. Najib in the months ahead. His UMNO party is the dominant force in the current coalition led by Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yaseen, following the collapse of Mr. Mahathir's Alliance of Hope. In May, Mr. Najib's stepson Riza Aziz reached a settlement with the new government to hand over part of the \$248 million IMDB funds he was accused of having laundered to his film production firm. The decision was sharply attacked and raised fears for the prosecution's independence in the challenge to last week's ruling and the other three trials involving Mr. Najib's family and others. There is also speculation of a snap general election in early 2021 and the likelihood of Mr. Muhyiddin's Malaysian United Indigenous Party merging with the UMNO.

Malaysians have made a historic beginning with the sustained crackdown of recent years against corruption that culminated in Mr. Najib's conviction. They might also recognise that enforcing democratic accountability is a continuous process.

ministerial roles until he became the PM in 2009.

The IMDB scandal

A U.K. educated economist, the politician's graph took a nosedive in the midst of his second term in office in 2015. Mr. Najib was confronted with revelations that some \$681 millions had been paid into his personal bank accounts just before the 2013 general election via IMDB subsidiaries. About the same time, the U.S. Department of Justice alleged that \$4.5 billion had gone missing from IMDB.

Mr. Najib's troubles only intensified with the decisive blow dealt by his one-time mentor Mahathir Mohamad in the April 2018 general election. The UMNO-led coalition lost power for the first time in Malaysia's history. Mr. Mahathir, who returned to active politics from retirement to occupy the high office (though replaced in March this year), swiftly unleashed a probe

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THE HINDU DELHI
SUNDAY, AUGUST 2, 2020

IN BRIEF



Todd shoots into the lead at Memphis

Brendon Todd shot a 5-under 65 and grabbed a two-stroke lead with a bogey-free, five-birdie round for a 129 total at the FedEx St. Jude Invitational on Friday. Rickie Fowler closed with birdies on his final two holes for a 67 and 131. Defending champion Brooks Koepka fell apart on the back nine with a double bogey and two bogeys for a 71. AP

Back-to-back birdies help Atwal make the cut

TRUCKEE (US) Arjun Atwal came up with back-to-back birdies on the back nine to make the cut at the Barracuda Championship. The 47-year-old Indian had three birdies and three bogeys as he picked up three points from the round to take his total to +9 and make the cut at tied 46th. Kyle Stanley landed his second eagle in two days and shot a 14-point second round to take the lead into the weekend. PTI

Shubhankar misses cut at Hero Open

BIRMINGHAM Shubhankar Sharma failed to make the cut at the Hero Open here, missing out on weekend action in his first start since the return of competitive golf on the European Tour. Sam Horsfield, with a superb nine-under 63 including a hole-out eagle, was at the top alongside Spaniard Sebastian Garcia Rodriguez. PTI



Kang leads as LPGA returns after five months

CHICAGO Danielle Kang produced a flawless round to take the lead at the Drive On Championship on Friday as the LPGA Tour resumed after its five-month coronavirus shutdown. Kang carded a six-under 66 to lead by one shot from England's Jodi Ewart Shadoff, who also had a bogey-free round with a five-under 67. AP

Daruvala finishes 12th

SILVERSTONE Jehan Daruvala had a disappointing outing in the FIA Formula 2 race here on Saturday, finishing 12th. Starting seventh on the grid, the Indian dropped positions at the start, made his way up again before losing ground towards the end. Daruvala's teammate Yuki Tsunoda grabbed the third spot. Nikita Mazepin won the race.



Bhutia. ■ FILE PHOTO

IPL 2020: safety protocol, schedule top GC agenda

Concerns of franchise owners to be addressed

AMOL KARHADKAR
MUMBAI

The much-anticipated governing council (GC) meeting of the Indian Premier League (IPL) will go ahead as planned on Sunday evening, but is unlikely to be followed by a formal announcement of the fixtures and standard operating procedures (SOPs) for the league's rescheduled 13th edition.

Ever since IPL GC chairman Brijesh Patel confirmed the shift to the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and the start date (September 19), pending government clearance, fans and franchises have been eagerly awaiting information on the conduct of the tournament, deferred because of the pandemic.

Govt. nod awaited

The BCCI was hoping to secure that IPL executives, in consultation with the BCCI medical team, have been paying minute attention to detail while finalising the SOPs. It will be interesting to see whether the GC can satisfy the demands of the teams, cricketers, officials and broadcasters.

The franchises, during



• FILE PHOTO: K.V.S. GIRI

Despite the Dubai Council having earlier announced a self-quarantine period only until the return of the COVID-19 test result, less than 48 hours after landing in Dubai, the UAE government has revised the guidelines to a week-long quarantine upon arrival.

This means that players who are set to arrive in the UAE after participating in the England-Australia T20 series (concludes on September 15), the Caribbean Premier League (September 10) and the Lanka Premier League (September 20) will likely miss the start of the tournament.

The franchises are also hoping for clarity on the player-replacement policy during this edition. "If a replacement has to be sought due to COVID-19 or an injury during the tournament, the replacement has to serve a week-long quarantine during the tournament, it will be unfair on the team. Hopefully the BCCI-IPL finds a way out," said a franchise official on condition of anonymity.

The players again took a knee to support Black Lives Matter before the game.

The three-match series, which is being played behind closed doors, marks the start of the ICC Cricket World Cup Super League.

Hamilton scorches the track to take pole

Bottas joins him on the front row

BRITISH GP

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
SILVERSTONE

Lewis Hamilton smashed the track record twice on Saturday to grab a record seventh British Grand Prix pole position with a stunning performance in a tense qualifying session.

Hamilton, who seeks a record-increasing seventh Silverstone victory, finished ahead of Mercedes teammate Valtteri Bottas by more than three-tenths of a second.

The defending six-time champion and current series leader bounced back from a ragged performance, including a spin, in the first parts of qualifying to claim his 65th pole with Mercedes and the record-increasing 91st of his career.

It was also a record eighth successive Mercedes pole success in Britain on a day when it was clear of the nearest rival Red Bull by a full second. Max Verstappen took third place on the grid ahead of Ferrari's Charles Leclerc and Lando Norris in his McLaren. Lewis Hamilton...unstoppable. ■ AFP



The results (qualifying):

1. Hamilton (Mercedes), 2. Bottas (Mercedes), 3. Verstappen (Red Bull), 4. Leclerc (Ferrari), 5. Norris (McLaren), 6. Stroll (Racing Point), 7. Sainz (Renault), 8. Ricciardo (Renault), 9. Ocon (Renault), 10. Vettel (Ferrari).
11. Gasly (Alpha Tauri), 12. Albon (Red Bull), 13. Hulkenberg (Racing Point), 14. Kvyat (Alpha Tauri), 15. Russell (Williams), 16. Magnussen (Haas), 17. Giovinazzi (Alfa Romeo), 18. Raikkonen (Alfa Romeo), 19. Grosjean (Haas) and 20. Latifi (Williams).

NBA: Antetokounmpo powers Bucks to victory

Harden helps Rockets beat Mavericks

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
LOS ANGELES

Giannis Antetokounmpo shook off the rust of a long lay-off by scoring 36 points to power Milwaukee Bucks to a 119-112 victory over Boston Celtics in their first game of the NBA's restarted season.

In another game, James Harden scored 49 points and Houston Rockets out-gunned Portland Trail Blazers 140-135 in a high-scoring Western Conference contest.



On the ball! Antetokounmpo stayed on track to become the NBA's first back-to-back MVP since Curry in 2015-16. ■ AP

East Bengal can still play in next ISL: Das

AASHIN PRASAD
CHENNAI

Kolkata giant East Bengal participating in the upcoming season of the Indian Super League (ISL) still remains a possibility, according to the AIFI general secretary Kushal Das.

During the Sportstar Star Talk webinar series, powered by ITM University and moderated by *The Hindu*'s Amitabha Das Sharma, Special Correspondent (Sports), on the anniversary of the

club's centenary celebrations, former East Bengal players Bhaichung Bhutia and Renedy Singh expressed their desire to see the club in the country's top division.

Bhutia, former East Bengal captain, felt the club should improve in every department to sustain itself in the ISL, as and when it makes the step up.

"Nothing is impossible," replied Das, when asked if the club can feature in ISL 2020-21.

"We came up with the roadmap last year in Kuala Lumpur. One of the things decided was that by 2021, two clubs from I-League, through the bidding process,

can go into the ISL by adhering to the regulations, including the financial criteria. Fortunately, Mohun Bagan [through its merger with ATK] has been able to come in [to ISL]," said Das.

Can East Bengal fulfil the terms and conditions of playing in the ISL right now? The most important thing is for the club to be organised and be ready. The club should be sustainable to produce players and invest in them to make the club grow," he said.

including those by the Olympic champion, didn't make the cut.

Sanjoy Chakravarthy, who had played a significant role in building up world-class shooters like Anjali Bhagwat, Deepali Deshpande and Suma Shirur, was given the award in 2017.

Multiple Asian Games gold medallist Jaspal Rana, who has guided young shooters to be world-beaters, is the only coach whose name figures in the nominations list from shooting this time.

Tennis coaches and the elusive Dronacharya award

Shooting has had only two awardees so far; Jaspal Rana figures in the nominations list this time

KAMESH SRINIVASAN
NEW DELHI

For Indian tennis coaches, the Dronacharya award is a distant dream. In the 35 years since the inception of the award for coaching excellence, not a single tennis coach has won it.

More than a hundred coaches have secured the award in 23 disciplines including kabaddi, kho kho and powerlifting. Athletics (26), boxing (17), wrestling (14) and hockey (11) have cornered a lion's share.

When the guru of gurus, Akhtar Ali – the coach of the team when Ramanathan Krishnan took India to the Davis Cup final (1966), and a travelling coach for another ace, Vijay Amritraj – applied for Dronacharya, he got the Arjuna award!

Disappointed

Thereafter, many eminent coaches like Nandan Bal, Enrico Piperno, T. Chandrasekaran and C.V. Nagaraj have applied and repeatedly been disappointed.

Chandra Bhushan, whose name figures in the list of nominations from tennis, was the coach of the team when Prithvi Sekar and Jafreen Shaikh won the Deaflympics bronze (2017). Jaidip Mukerjee was the

captain of the tennis team when Leander Paes won the singles bronze medal in the Atlanta Olympics.

One of the most successful sports in the country, shooting, has managed only two Dronacharya awards so far. Prof. Sunny Thomas, who played a big role in setting up a strong foundation, received the award long before Rajyavardhan Rathore, Abhinav Bindra, Vijay Kumar and Gagan Narang won Olympic medals.

Many names proposed,

Campher comes good again

His second straight half-century props up Ireland

IRELAND IN ENG

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
SOUTHAMPTON

Ireland overcame another poor start to finish at 212 for nine in the second ODI against England here on Saturday.

The visitors, who decided to bat first, slipped to 91 for six before Curtis Campher, playing in just his second one-dayer, led the recovery. Campher scored an 87-ball 68 with eight fours before being dismissed by seamer Saqib Mahmood (two for 45).

Campher shared two key partnerships late in the innings – a seventh-wicket 60-run stand with Simi Singh (25) and 56 for the eighth wicket with Andy McBride (24).

England leg-spinner Adil Rashid took three for 34 off 10 overs, including the key wicket of Kevin O'Brien. He went on to become the first England spinner to take 150 wickets in ODIs.

The players again took a knee to support Black Lives Matter before the game.

The three-match series, which is being played behind closed doors, marks the start of the ICC Cricket World Cup Super League.



Clueless: Kevin O'Brien looks back to see his stumps disturbed by an Adil Rashid delivery. ■ REUTERS

SCOREBOARD

Ireland: Paul Stirling c Banton b Willey 12, Gareth Delany lbw b Willey 0, Andy Balbirnie c Bairstow b Vince 15, Harry Tector c Saqib b Rashid 28, Kevin O'Brien c Rashid 21, Curtis Campher c Rashid b Saqib 68, Simi Singh c Bairstow b Saqib 25, Andy McBride c Bairstow b Topley 24, Craig Young (not out)

2; Extras (b-4, lb-5, w-4, nb-1): 14; Total (for nine wkts. in 50 overs): 212.

Fall of wickets: 1-12, 2-15, 3-39, 4-44, 5-78, 6-91, 7-151, 8-207, 9-212.

England bowling: Willey 10-1-48-2, Topley 9-1-31-1, Moeen 8-0-27-0, Vince 4-0-18-1, Rashid 10-0-34-3, Saqib 9-0-45-2.

Toss: Ireland.

England made one change with left-arm pacer Moeen Ali recalled to the side for the first time since the 2016 T20 World Cup af-

ter a career-threatening injury. He replaced Tom Curran. Ireland included Josh Little in place of the injured McCarthy.

TV PICKS

British Grand Prix: Main race, SS Select 2 (SD & HD), 6.35 p.m.
Serie A: Sony Ten 2 (SD & HD), 9.20 p.m. & 1.10 a.m. (Monday); Sony Ten 1 (SD & HD), 12.10 a.m. (Monday)
NBA: Sony Six (SD & HD), 6 a.m. & 11.20 p.m.
PGA Tour: Eurosport (SD & HD), 12.30 a.m. (Monday)
Ultimate Tennis Showdown: SS Select 1 (SD & HD), 8.20 p.m. & 12.30 a.m. (Monday)

SHORT TAKES

Fans pick Chhetri as 2019 Asian Cup's favourite

NEW DELHI Sunil Chhetri was on Saturday voted as the favourite player of the 2019 AFC Asian Cup by fans as he finished ahead of Eldor Shomurodov of Uzbekistan. Chhetri beat Shomurodov 51-49 in the poll after trailing in the initial stages of voting. PTI

Decision on Perez depends on UK govt.

SILVERSTONE Team chief Ottmar Szafnauer said on Saturday that Racing Point will await guidance from the British government before deciding if Sergio Perez can return to drive in next week's 70th Anniversary Grand Prix. The Mexican, who returned a positive coronavirus test and was ruled out of the British GP, is in quarantine near Silverstone. AFP

Botham made member of House of Lords

Legendary England all-rounder Sir Ian Botham has been made a member of the House of Lords. The 64-year-old, among the 36 new peers announced by the government to join the unelected House, will sit as a crossbench – independent – peer. PTI

Carlsen in cruise mode

Makes short work of Svidler yet again

RAKESH RAO
NEW DELHI

For the second successive day, Magnus Carlsen shut out Peter Svidler in quick time in the day's opening game and stayed ahead in the semifinals of the chess24 Legends of Chess on Saturday.

After Carlsen and Ian Nepomniachtchi had posted identical 2.5-0.5 victories in the first set on Friday, the latter drew the first game of the second set with Anish Giri in 40 moves.

Carlsen, playing white, did not allow Svidler the

freedom to free his pieces once the contest moved into the middle-game. Svidler's decision to castle on the queenside made it tougher for him as Carlsen promptly launched a fierce attack and won in just 26 moves. On Friday, Carlsen won two games, lasting 27 moves, with black pieces.

The results:

Semifinals: Set Two, Game

One: Magnus Carlsen (Nor) bt Peter Svidler (Rus); Ian Nepomniachtchi (Rus) drew with Anish Giri (Ned); **Set One:** Carlsen bt Svidler 2.5-0.5; Nepomniachtchi bt Giri 2.5-0.5.

Would have retired if we had won the 2017 WC: Mithali

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
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