



The current banking challenge is the most intractable one: Patel
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1 dead in Portland after Trump supporters, protesters clash
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India, Russia emerge joint champions in Chess Olympiad
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NEARBY



Delhi reports 2,024 fresh COVID-19 cases

NEW DELHI

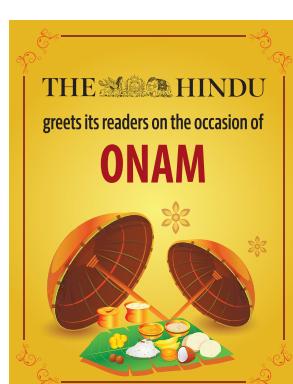
The national capital recorded 2,024 new COVID-19 cases and 22 deaths in the past 24 hours, stated a health bulletin issued by the Delhi government. As many as 1,249 patients also recovered during the same period.

CITY ▶ PAGE 3

Many injured in Srinagar amid Muharram curbs

SRINAGAR
Many people were injured in tear gas shelling and pellet firing on Sunday as authorities disallowed Muhamarr processions in Srinagar and imposed restrictions. At least three policemen were injured. The clashes broke out after the security forces used force to disperse the crowd.

NEWS ▶ PAGE 9



EDUCATIONPLUS ▶ PAGE 11

India can become a global toy hub: Modi

PM urges entrepreneurs to tap into ₹7 lakh crore industry

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday called upon start-ups and entrepreneurs to "team up for toys", pointing out that India's share in the ₹7 lakh crore global toy market is minuscule. He asserted that the country has the potential to be a hub for the industry.

In his monthly 'Mann ki Baat' address, the Prime Minister spoke on a range of issues but kept the focus on the themes of Aatmanirbhar Bharat and the vocal for local campaign.

Asking start-ups to be "vocal for local", Mr. Modi urged them to develop computer games in and based on India, citing the recently conducted App Innovation Challenge by the government.

"Our country has so many ideas, so many concepts; our history has been very rich. Can we make games based on that? I call upon the young talent of the country – make games in India and make games based on India too. It is said let the game begin! So, let us start the game," he said.

"You will be surprised to know that the global toy industry is of more than ₹7 lakh crore. Such a big business, but India's share is ve-

G You will be surprised to know that the global toy industry is of more than ₹7 lakh crore. Such a big business, but India's share is very little in this. Now, just spare a thought for a nation which has so much of heritage, tradition, variety, young population. Will it feel good to have such little share in the toy market?

NARENDRA MODI, PRIME MINISTER

ry little in this. Now, just spare a thought for a nation which has so much of heritage, tradition, variety, young population. Will it feel good to have such little share in the toy market?" he asked. "To my start-up friends, to our new entrepreneurs I say team up for toys. For everybody it is the time to get vocal for local toys."

Mr. Modi lauded citizens for maintaining unprecedented restraint and simplicity in celebrating festivals during the pandemic. He reiterated the slogan of *Do gaz ki doori, Mask hain zaroori* [Maintaining six feet distance and wearing mask are essential].

Hitting out at Mr. Modi for not addressing students taking NEET/JEE, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi tweeted: "JEE-NEET aspirants wanted the PM do 'Pariksha Pe Charcha' [discussion on exams] but the PM did 'Khilone Pe Charcha' [discussion on toys]."

A year later, they are yet to receive rejection slips

RAHUL KARMAKAR

GUWAHATI

Exactly a year after the publication of the complete National Register of Citizens (NRC), the fate of 19,06,657 people excluded from the updated list in Assam continues to hang in the balance.

The ongoing COVID-19 crisis and the repeated floods have been blamed for the delay in issuing rejection slips to each of the excluded persons, citing the reasons why they were left out.

"Rejection slips cannot be issued until COVID-19 is brought under control. Ma-



A desperate search: A file photo of a man checking his name in the final NRC in Morigaon district of Assam.

dunes, a rejected person would have 120 days from the date of receiving the rejection slip to approach a Foreigners' Tribunal (FT) for judging their citizenship status.

"The NRC authority had said work would resume

from September 1 after asking the district heads to ensure laptops and Internet facility for officials handling the process. We hope the pandemic will soon cease to be an excuse for keeping the process in a limbo," said Kamal Chakraborty of the Unconditional Citizenship Demand Committee in southern Assam's Silchar.

Some stakeholders, have suggested that the issue of "illegal migrants" could be kept alive for "yet another election". The Congress, which had started the NRC process, slammed the BJP for delaying the process after the complete list left out many non-Muslims.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

Police officer, 3 militants killed in J&K encounter

Soldier killed in Pak. firing along LoC

PEERZADA ASHIQ

SRINAGAR

Three Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) militants and a police officer were killed near Srinagar during a night-long operation by the security forces.

The three-bike borne militants made a bid to snatch weapons at a joint checkpoint of the CRPF and the police at Panthachowk on Saturday night. Alert forces foiled their plans and chased them. The militants took shelter in a nearby

house and were killed later," Director General of Police Dilbagh Singh said.

One assistant sub inspector of the police's Special Operation Group, Babu Ram, was injured in the firing and later succumbed to injuries.

In a separate incident, a soldier was killed in Pakistani firing along the Line of Control (LoC) in Jammu and Kashmir's Rajouri district.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

Premature retirement not a penalty, says DoPT

'Distinct from compulsory retirement'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT) has issued a notification on review, consolidation and reiteration of the guidelines on premature retirement of government servants, clarifying that it is distinct from "compulsory retirement" and is not a penalty.

"The objective of Fundamental Rule (FR) 560(1) and Rule 48 of CCS (Pension) Rules, 1972, is to

strengthen the administrative machinery by developing responsible and efficient administration at all levels and to achieve efficiency, economy and speed in the disposal of government functions," the order said.

At any time after a government servant has completed 30 years' qualifying service, the official being prematurely retired will be entitled to pension.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

Flood fury



An aerial view of the flood-hit Hoshangabad in Madhya Pradesh. Nearly 8,000 people were rescued after the Narmada went into spate. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT (REPORT ON PAGE 10)

14 lakh affected, 17 killed in Odisha floods

About 2.65 lakh people marooned in 340 villages; 1.68 lakh hectare of crop land hit

SATYASUNDAR BARIK

BHUBANESWAR

Over 14 lakh people were affected due to floods in five river systems of Odisha, the State government said here on Sunday. Seventeen people lost their lives in a wall collapse and by slipping into swollen rivers.

"Heavy rain triggered by back-to-back low pressure area over the Bay of Bengal had caused flooding in 20 districts. The situation is fast improving in areas falling under Subarnrekha, Burhanga, Baitarani and Brahmani river systems," said Pradeep Jena, Managing Director of the State Disaster Management Authority.

According to the office of Special Relief Commissioner, 2.65 lakh people were marooned by vast sheets of water in 340 villages and 57,824 people were being served cooked food after their eva-



People wading through a flooded road on the outskirts of Bhubaneswar on Sunday. ■ BISWARANJAN ROUT

cuation from water-logged houses.

Preliminary assessment of floods suggests 10,382 houses and 1.68 lakh hectare of crop land were affected.

Infrastructure damaged
The floods also caused massive damage to infrastructure. In 11 districts, 107 roads were cut off by the swirling water and 32 breaches on riv-

as little over 10 lakh cusecs of water was flowing through Naraj barrage - the last major flood control structure before the Mahanadi waters hit the low-lying coastal areas. In the past, Naraj barrage had registered a flow of more than 15 lakh cusecs through its gates.

"The water inflow into Hirakud Reservoir from upper catchment is around 8 lakh cusecs while 7.5 lakh cusecs of water is being released through 46 gates of the dam. As per our estimate, peak water flow has passed through Naraj," said Anu Garg, State Water Resource Secretary.

Keeping in mind the vulnerability of the low-lying areas in Jagatsinghpur, Puri and Kendrapara districts, experienced engineers and night patrolling teams have been deployed along major river embankments.

Authorities ruled out massive floods in coastal districts

Haryana malls, shops to remain open on all days

Govt. revokes weekdays shutdown order

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

GURUGRAM

The Haryana government on Sunday revoked its order to shut shopping malls and shops on Mondays and Tuesdays following the Unlock 4 guidelines issued by the Union Ministry of Home Affairs a day earlier.

local lockdown, outside the containment zones, without prior consultation with the Central government".

Shopkeepers in the Millennium City welcomed the decision saying it was a good news for retail trade.

The Haryana government had earlier this month passed directions for shopping malls and shops to remain shut over the weekend following a sudden spurt in cases of COVID-19 infection.

However, the State Disaster Management Authority on August 28 amended the order to impose shutdown on commercial establishments, except those dealing in essential goods and services, on Mondays and Tuesdays.

The decision was taken after stiff opposition to the weekend lockdown by the retailers.

'Haladi' loses its flavour amid pandemic

Despite a GI tag, the lockdown has meant meagre sales of the organic tuber



No takers: Over 80% of raw turmeric has been left unsold in Kandhamal due to fall in prices this season. ■ BISWARANJAN ROUT

village under Tumudibandh block.

Like Mr. Majhi, a majority of the turmeric farmers have failed to sell their produce as its procurement price has nosedived in Kandhamal, a region where farmer suicides are hardly heard.

Unscrupulous traders
Taking advantage of the COVID-19 restrictions, unscrupulous traders have been quoting prices below ₹40 for a

kilo of the tuber whereas the Kandhamal Apex Spices Association for Marketing (KASAM), the government-backed cooperative agency, offers ₹60 per kg.

With more than 60% of the geographical area covered with hills and forest, Kandhamal offers ideal conditions for cultivation of various spices including turmeric, ginger, mustard and tamarind.

'Kandhamal Haladi' for which GI tag has been received is a pure organic product. Tribals grow the tuber without applying fertiliser or pesticide. The aromatic pale and golden yellow colour of 'Kandhamal Haladi' make it stand out from the rest.

The cultivation begins in the summer months of April and May.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

Denial of GST dues will crush federalism, says Bengal FM

Planned strategy to destroy economic health of the States'

SHIV SAHAY SINGH

KOLKATA

West Bengal Finance Minister Amit Mitra on Sunday took a dig at Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman's "Act of God" remark, and said asking States to borrow for the shortfall of the GST revenue was a "planned strategy" to destroy the economic health of the States and crush federalism.

Catch-22 situation

"In the name of 'Act of God', a huge debt is being thrust on the States, which will destroy their financial health, crush federalism and then the brute power of centralism will come to the play," he said at a virtual press conference.

Mr. Mitra said the options made available to the States

borrowing."

Mr. Mitra said about 15 big States had objected to Ms. Sitharaman's suggestion that they should borrow and emphasised that the Centre should borrow instead. He also pointed out that on March 14, the Union Minister had said the Centre is duty-bound to compensate the States.

"Today what the Centre is saying is a complete subterfuge," he said, adding that it amounts to breaking the trust of the States.

Citing a statement by GST Network founder Nandan Nilekani before the GST Council, Mr. Mitra said Mr. Nilekani had said the revenue loss due to fraudulent transactions was ₹70,018 crore. "So is this an Act of God or an act of fraud," he asked.



West Bengal Finance Minister Amit Mitra

Delhi's weekly markets' trial run extended

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

The Delhi Disaster Management Authority (DDMA) on Sunday extended the trial run for reopening weekly markets in the Capital till September 6.

Last week, the DDMA had allowed reopening of one market per day in each zone of the city's three civic bodies and in the New Delhi Municipal Council area.

The civic bodies have been instructed to strictly enforce social distancing, wearing of masks, ban on spitting and other guidelines prescribed under standard operating procedures issued by the government. Last week, a market in NDMC's Narela area was shut down after social distancing norms were flouted there.

CM YK

IN BRIEF

Probe firms with Chinese investments: traders

NEW DELHI
The Confederation for All India Traders wrote to Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal, demanding a probe into Indian companies with Chinese investments. The traders' body has been pushing for a boycott of Chinese goods in the country following the Galwan Valley clash.

Air quality of Delhi-NCR

Delhi	70	Gurugram	54
Ghaziabad	71	Faridabad	82
Noida	62	Greater Noida	80
Good	Satisfactory	Moderate	
0-50	51-100	101-200	
Poor	Very poor	Severe	
201-300	301-400	>400	

AIR QUALITY INDEX AT 4 P.M. YESTERDAY (AVERAGE OF PAST 24 HOURS) SOURCE: CPCB

11-year-old boy dies in road accident

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI
An 11-year-old boy died after the car he was travelling in met with an accident in Dwarka's Sector-22, the police said on Sunday.

The victim – Mayank – received injury on his neck, they said. The car was driven by Mayank's father, Sujit Kumar (35), at that time. His mother, two-year-old sister and grandmother were also present in the car.

The accident took place on Thursday night at 9.30 p.m. when the car hit a divider and flipped a number of times.

The other family members sustained minor injuries, an officer said.

Kumar lives with his family in Pochampur. Mayank died on the spot. The post-mortem was conducted at Deen Dayal Upadhyay Hospital and the body was handed over to the family members.

A case under relevant sections has been registered at Dwarka's Sector 23 police station.

Parents in Gurugram and Delhi are complaining that schools have begun to levy charges other than tuition fee. Government officials, however, say the schools are not authorised to do so during the present health crisis

ASHOK KUMAR
JAIDEEP DEO BHANJ
GURUGRAM

He just wanted to know if schools in Gurgaon are now allowed to collect charges other than tuition fees or not. I have come across many parents stating schools are now asking for annual charges too. What is the latest update? [sic]," read a recent post on an online forum for Gurugram parents. "Can someone guide, Are schools allowed to charge all kind of charges w.e.f. April 2020? [sic]," asked another poster.

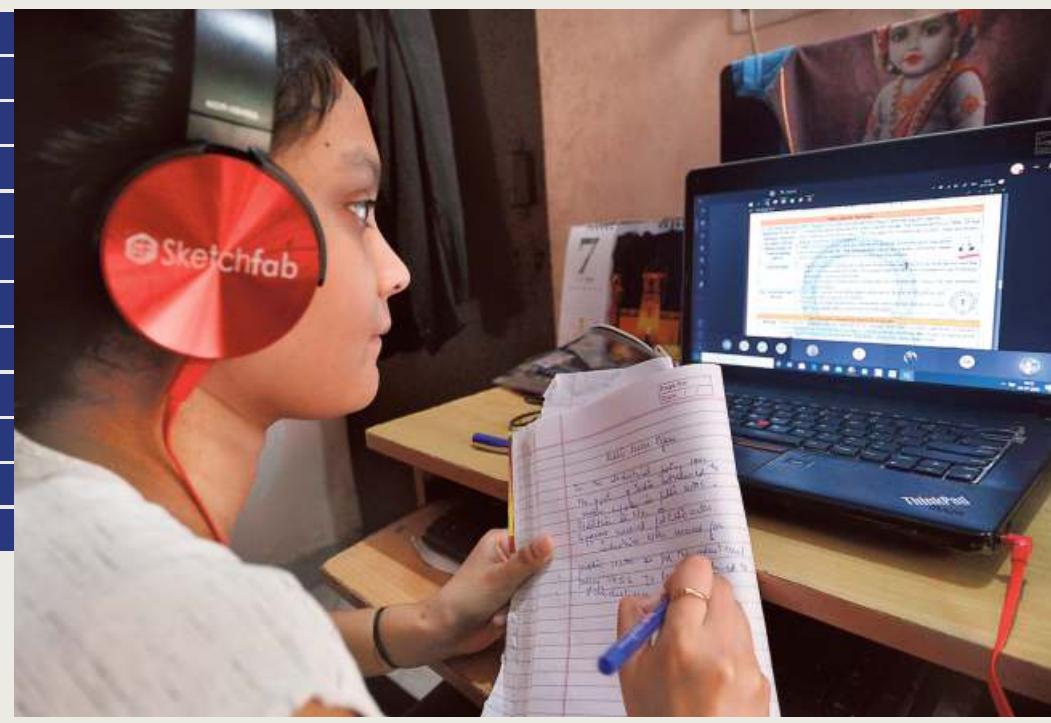
Scores of parents promptly replied with their own experiences and many conceded that they have been paying charges beyond the tuition fee. Some said they have been paying annual charges since the lockdown, while others asserted that schools have been asking for infrastructure and development charges as well.

Only a few seemed to have clarity on government directions regarding the matter.

Adding to the confusion, a few schools have generated fee invoices citing a month-old order by the Punjab and Haryana High Court in *Sarv Vidyalaya Sangh vs. State of Haryana and others*.

As per the court order, disposed of in terms of *Independent Schools' Association (Regd.) & others vs. State of Punjab and others*, schools are entitled to collect the tuition fee, irrespective of whether they offered online classes during the lockdown or not.

The court also allows the schools to collect admission fee and "their actual expenditure incurred under the annual charges



A child taking online classes. Officials say that except for tuition, all other charges have been deferred till the time schools physically reopen. ■ R.V. MOORTHY

president Col. K. Pratap Singh said schools were justified in seeking charges as per the HC order.

He argued that the court order was seen as a "relief to private schools", but it actually was not. "Even a static bus costs ₹52,607 per month to a school owing to salaries of drivers, conductors and maids; and host of taxes. Similarly, schools have to pay minimum electricity charges for the sanctioned load running into thousands of rupees," said Col. Singh.

He added that the court had prohibited an increase in fee this year and this itself had reduced the burden for parents by 10-15%. "The government thinks parents are the losers as they are making noise and do not want to make payment," said Col. Singh.

"The school have no other source of income for revenue except the fee. Budget schools are suffering," he said, while asserting that composite fee was a "legal term" and schools were justified to charge under this component.

Similar issue in Delhi

Parents in Delhi have also been complaining about schools charging fees apart from tuition, including earmarked levies such as transportation, annual and development charges. In an order issued on April 18, the Delhi government said that schools can only charge tuition on a monthly basis during the lockdown.

Aprajita Gautam, president of the Delhi Parents' Association, said: "This month, we started receiving numerous complaints from parents that private schools have started charging fees apart from tuition. Schools are justifying this by saying that unlock orders have been issued."

She added that schools were trying to violate Delhi government orders by finding loopholes and were not being taken to task.

She added that the association has sought a meeting with Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal to discuss the issue and that they have prepared a list of schools that have started hiking school fees/charging fees under different heads in violation of the order issued by the Directorate of Education.

Confusion reigns over school fees

for the period the school remained closed, including actual transport charges and actual building charges". The court order further asks schools not to increase fee for 2020-21 and adopt the same fee structure as of 2019-20.

ceived from parents since the lockdown and all of them were settled to the satisfaction of the complainants.

Any complaints can be forwarded to the Fee and Funds Regulatory Committee headed by the Divisional Commissioner.

"In all cases, the schools agreed to adhere to the government directions after being served notices by the Education Department. However, in case of Pathways World School in Aravali, we had to write to the director seeking action. But the parents later moved the court," said Capt. Boken.

She added that parents from Heritage Xperiential School and Pathways World School had complained about charging of a "composite fee" and refusal to share the break-up giving the tuition fee.

"It is clear that schools can only charge tuition fee. After we approached Heritage Xperiential School, the parents were allowed to make payments as per their convenience," said Capt. Boken.

Capt. Boken claimed that more than 500 complaints have been re-

Haryana Education Minister Karpal Gujjar told *The Hindu* that the government had written to the Advocate General of Haryana, and will soon file an appeal against the High Court order before the Divisional Bench.

Counsel for Haryana School Parents Welfare League, an intervenor on behalf of parents' association in the case, Pardeep Kumar Rapria said as per rule 14.2 of the CBSE affiliation by-laws, unaided school maintain a reserve fund and this should be used to meet the present crisis instead of charging the parents.

Mr. Rapria said that the court allowing schools to collect fee even if they were not offering online classes was not "justified", and added that the court order was against the interests of parents and allowed schools to collect additional charges besides tuition.

Justified to seek fees?
However, Haryana Progressive Schools Conference (Gurugram)

Two held for waving flag of terror outfit

'They had sedition case against them'

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI
Two suspected members of a banned terror outfit – Khalistan Zindabad Force – have been arrested, the police said on Sunday.

They have been identified as Inderjeet Singh Gill (31) and Jaspal Singh (27), both from Punjab. The duo was wanted in a sedition case registered at Moga.

The two had allegedly raised a 'Khalistan' flag on the terrace of the Deputy Commissioner's Office in Punjab's Moga on the eve of Independence Day and also desecrated an Indian flag in the premises, a senior officer said.

Thereafter, a trap was laid near Sani Mandir, GT Karnal road.

"Around 6.30 p.m., two persons were seen standing near Sani mandir bus stand. When police were approaching them, they started moving towards the service road coming from Singhu border, however, they were apprehended after a small chase," said DCP (Special Cell) Sanjeev Kumar Yadav said.

On Saturday, the police received information that the accused would come to Delhi to commit some anti-national activities on the directions of their foreign-based commanders, the of-

ficer said.

Since the plea was filed in July this year, Google, which owns YouTube; and Facebook, which owns Instagram, have removed around 49 URLs – shared by the enforcement agencies – of the offending contents.

However, the court wanted answers on the vexed issue of how content can be blocked permanently from resurfacing once it is identified as "offending".

The court's query came after the status report filed by the Delhi government stated that further URLs containing the offending images/ clips have been uploaded on You-

Solemn affair



Men offer prayers at Jama Masjid on the occasion of Muhamarram on Sunday. ■ SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

FB, Google told to clear stand on removing child pornography

On plea by woman whose photos were circulated online, High Court says efforts should be made to remove them permanently

SOIBAM ROCKY SINGH

NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court has asked the Centre and Internet majors such as Google and Facebook to submit their stand on removing "offending images" of children and preventing them from resurfacing.

The court's order came while hearing a plea by a woman who wanted removal of her objectionable photographs, which were allegedly taken when she was a minor.

Her plea stated that at that time, she was studying in a well-known school.

She said, now that she is a 21-year-old, she is highly distressed by the photographs

and clips being published on the Internet.

49 URLs

Since the plea was filed in July this year, Google, which owns YouTube; and Facebook, which owns Instagram, have removed around 49 URLs – shared by the enforcement agencies – of the offending contents.

However, the court wanted answers on the vexed issue of how content can be blocked permanently from resurfacing once it is identified as "offending".

The court's query came after the status report filed by the Delhi government stated that further URLs containing the offending images/ clips have been uploaded on You-

tube, Telegram and Instagram.

"Union of India has to play a proactive role in this. As far as child pornography is concerned, there has to be some protocol in place... because the images keep popping up," Justice Bakshu remarked.

The court also asked, "What is the position as far as the FIR is concerned. This image has been leaked by a person in a malafide manner. You have to prosecute that person."

Nandita Rao, Additional Standing Counsel (Criminal), Delhi government, said the investigating officer had to be finalised after he got

sick and hence, the case could not progress.

She further said the enforcement agencies are also looking at those people who are re-uploading the content despite knowing that the image is of a child.

Ms. Rao submitted that this is a matter of child pornography and constitutes an offence under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012.

Advocate Tejas Karia, appearing for Facebook, said: "We are very sensitive about it. We don't want any offending material on our platform therefore we are cooperating with the enforcement agencies. But there has to be a process that has to be followed."

Mr. Karia said the protocols adopted in India are not different from those adopted in other countries.

Protocols in place

YouTube's counsel also said, "We have put our resources to curb child pornography. As and when any URL is shared by the enforcement agencies, we will take it down."

Both Facebook and Google submitted that there are protocols for preventing child pornography and they will file a comprehensive affidavit disclosing the same by next hearing.

HC restrains Delhi school from charging annual fee

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court has in an interim order restrained K.R. Mangalam World School here in Greater Kailash II from charging annual and development charges from the fee bill of students.

Justice Jayant Nath also issued notice to the Delhi government on the plea by Parents Association of K.R. Mangalam World School, GK II, challenging the inclusion of annual development fees in the school fees received by the students for the month of July 2020.

Advocate Gaurav Bahl, appearing for the association, said that the lockdown for schools is still on and likely to continue for unforeseen duration. "The same is clearly evident from the recent guidelines dated July 29 passed by the Home Ministry," Mr. Bahl said.

He drew the attention of the court to its order of April 18 where it was ordered that "annual and development charges can be charged from the parents, on pro rata basis, only on monthly basis after completion of lockdown".

He said the fee bill received by the parents for the month of August 2020 clearly shows that the annual development fees has been included.

The Delhi government's counsel also stated that the lockdown period continues to apply as none of the school have physically opened.

The court said, "In my opinion, prima facie, it appears that the annual and development charges cannot be charged from the parents during the pendency of the present lockdown".

"Let the tuition fees be paid by the petitioners," the court ordered and posted the case for September 16.

Reopening of metro a huge relief: Gahlot

'Those violating rules will be fined'

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

Transport Minister Kailash Gahlot on Sunday said the Delhi government welcomes the Centre's guidelines to resume metro services from September 7.

He said the government would ensure that all the guidelines are followed and added that it would reduce the number of commuters, who have been relying on bus services.

"I am glad that after a long wait, the people of Delhi will be able to travel by metro once again. It is a huge relief. We will ensure that social distancing is maintained and thermal screening of passengers is done," Mr. Gahlot said.

He added that tokens will not be issued and commuters can only use a smart card and other digital methods of payment.

The government stated that metro staff and additional Civil Defence volunteers will be deployed to ensure that stations do not get crowded. "Sanitisers will be available at every station and wearing a mask will be

mandatory. If any passenger violates the rules, he or she will be issued a challan," it stated.

Air conditioners in coaches will also be operated as per new guidelines.

"A list of stations – where travel services are being restored – will soon be made public," it said.

Mr. Gahlot added that not all metro stations would remain open.

The DMRC on Saturday said under guidelines issued by the Home Ministry under Unlock 4, the Delhi Metro would resume services from September 7 in a calibrated manner.

"Once metro resumes, the DMRC will strive to facilitate all necessary measures and precautions in its premises to provide a safe travelling experience to its commuters in the wake of ongoing pandemic," said Anuj Daya, executive director of the DMRC.

It added that further details on functioning and usage of the metro by the public will be shared once the detailed SoP is issued by the Centre.

JEE aspirants to get help in reaching exam centres

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

Following an appeal made by IIT-Delhi director V. Ramgopal Rao to IIT alumni, students and the public, to help the candidates of JEE (Main and Advance 2020) and NEET 2020 with transportation facility amid the pandemic, the alumni and students have created a portal to connect with candidates needing a ride.

"The call-for-help germinated independent actions from IIT Delhi Alumni Association, IIT Bombay and IIT

Timings

DELHI

MONDAY, AUG. 31	max min
RISE 05:59	SET 18:44
RISE 17:56	SET 03:56
TUESDAY, SEP. 01	
RISE 06:00	SET 18:43
RISE 18:33	SET 04:53
WEDNESDAY, SEP. 02	
RISE 06:00	SET 18:41
RISE 19:07	SET 05:50

Delhi Weather	max min
Delhi City	31 27
Safdarjung	31 27
Palam	31 27

Delhi Pilm Today
34°C A comfortable morning with light winds. Day would be warm and humid with chances of passing rain.

Delhi Pilm Tomorrow
35°C A spell of light rain with cloudy sky and light wind would affect the area.

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IN BRIEF

Cave-in on Madhav Rao Scindia Marg

NEW DELHI
The traffic movement on Madhav Rao Scindia Marg in central Delhi was closed after a portion of the road caved in. The cause of damage is being identified and then action will be initiated accordingly, a senior NDMC official said.



The Bala Pritam Dawakhana at Gurdwara Bangla Sahib in New Delhi on Sunday. ■ R.V. MOORTHY

DSGMC pharmacy selling medicines at factory price

Cost will be 70-80% less than MRP

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

To provide medicines to the needy at "factory price", the Delhi Sikh Gurdwara Management Committee (DSGMC) has inaugurated 'Bala Pritam Dawakhana' at Gurdwara Bangla Sahib.

The cost of medicines at the pharmacy, the DSGMC said, will be available at 70-80% less than the MRP.

The committee said that it is also planning to expand its network of pharmacies selling medicines at such prices across the Capital.

"All medicines here are sold at the cheapest rates as

they are sold at factory prices and without making any profit. Medicines for the treatment of ailments, ranging from cancer to blood pressure, will be available here," DSGMC president Manjinder Singh Sirsa said while inaugurating the shop.

He added that the medicines were being sold at the shop without any commission and at the cost that companies incur to manufacture those.

Mr. Sirsa also appealed to the people and pharma companies to help the committee in its initiative.

Up to 40% of beds occupied by outsiders in August, says govt.

Capital reports 2,024 fresh COVID-19 infections; active cases now stand at 14,793

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Capital recorded 2,024 new COVID-19 cases and 22 deaths in the past 24 hours, according to a health bulletin issued by the Delhi government on Sunday.

It added that 1,249 patients also recovered during the same period, taking the total number of active cases to 14,793. Delhi has recorded 1,73,390 COVID-19 cases and 4,426 deaths since the pandemic started.

COVID-19

Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal had said that the government would double the number of tests conducted in the city to curb the spread of the virus, but the figures in the health bulletin showed that this is yet to happen. The government said, 6,881 RT-PCR tests and 13,555 rapid antigen tests were conducted in the past 24 hours, which is similar to the number of tests con-



COVID-19 patients playing indoor games at the COVID Care Centre in CWG Village on Sunday. ■ R.V. MOORTHY

ducted last week.

The Delhi government also shared data on Sunday showing that over the past month, between 20-40% beds in city hospitals have been occupied by patients from outside the Capital, especially from Uttar Pradesh and Haryana.

Health Minister Satyendar Jain had recently said that the rise in the number of cases was due to people coming in from other States for treatment in Delhi. The data showed several people who did not hail from the Capital also died here.

Virus spread

Total number of COVID-19 cases
1,73,390

Total deaths
4,426

New cases in the past 24 hours
2,024

New deaths in the past 24 hours
22

SOURCE: DELHI GOVERNMENT HEALTH BULLETIN

Earlier, when the number of cases were rising in June, Mr. Kejriwal had called for reservation of beds in Delhi government hospitals for Delhites. However, this decision was overruled by the Lieutenant-Governor.

The Capital now has 820 containment zones and 7,527 people are under home isolation here. Out of the 14,145 available hospital beds, 4,030 are occupied and out of the 599 beds at dedicated COVID-19 health centres, 336 are occupied.

At dedicated COVID-19 care centre, which have 10,143 beds, 5,113 are vacant at present.

11 foreign nationals held for flouting COVID curbs

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NOIDA
Eleven foreign nationals, including four women, were arrested in Greater Noida on Sunday for allegedly partying in violation of curbs imposed due to the COVID-19 outbreak.

The police said they impounded seven vehicles and seized 237 cans and 51 bottles of beer besides three bottles of liquor from the house in Surajpur.

In view of the pandemic, rules have been issued which prohibit such gatherings.

The arrests came on a day when Gautam Buddha Nagar recorded 107 new COVID-19 cases, pushing the district's infection tally to 7,834, official data showed. Meanwhile, 98 patients were discharged.

The death toll in the district stood at 45 with a mortality rate of 0.57%.

The number of active cases has climbed to 1,009. So far, 6,780 patients have recovered from COVID-19 in the district, the third highest in Uttar Pradesh.

Hindu Rao nurses write to Mayor over no salary

Association alleges misuse of resources, accuses administration of incompetence

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

Nurses at the North Delhi Municipal Corporation's Hindu Rao Hospital, a dedicated COVID-19 facility here, have once again raised concerns over the issue of non-payment of salaries for the last three months, in a letter to the Mayor on Saturday.

Healthcare workers, including nurses, doctors and

paramedics, at the hospitals run by the civic body have been raising complaints over the irregularity of their salaries. Earlier in June, doctors at Kasturba Hospital, which is also run by the North corporation, had threatened to mass resignation due to delays in payment of salaries.

While temporary relief was provided, the issue

cropped up again in July.

In its letter to the Mayor, the Nurses Welfare Association has said that there was "mass unrest and resentment" growing among hospital staffers. It accused the administration of the civic bodies of incompetence, saying that the hospital employees were not being properly remunerated for their work in the last four years.

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THE HINDU

India's National Newspaper

Award-winning cardiologist Dr. Padmavati passes away

She had many firsts to her credit; was active till the end



Padmavati Sivaramakrishna Iyer ■ THE HINDU

medical degree from Rangoon Medical College. Soon after she completed her studies, Japan invaded Burma in 1942. Dr. Padmavati, with her mother and four sisters, fled the country, taking the last flight to India. She was eventually reunited with her father and brothers when World War-II ended.

In 1949, Dr. Padmavati moved to London as a fellow with the Royal College of Physicians in London and the Royal College of Physicians in Edinburgh. She studied in Sweden before receiving a 1949 fellowship with the Johns Hopkins University's Department of Paediatrics. In Baltimore, she trained under Dr. Helen Taussig, who pioneered the first surgeries on 'blue babies', or babies born with congenital heart defects.

She was also the recipient of the Harvard Medical International Award, Dr. B.C. Roy Award and Kamla Menon Research Award and remained active till almost the very end, advising patients and physicians.

Disciplined lifestyle
Though Dr. Padmavati had retired from active practice a few years ago, she would still meet older patients and remain up-to-date about medical research and literature. She often attributed

her longevity to her genes and disciplined lifestyle.

She also had many firsts to her credit, including establishing the first cardiac clinic and cath lab at the Lady Hardinge Medical College in Delhi; initiation of India's first Doctorate of Medicine in Cardiology; and setting up cardiology departments at the prestigious Maulana Azad Medical College, GB Pant Hospital.

Born in 1917 in Burma (now Myanmar), she was the first woman to receive a

them died," a police officer said.

The deceased has been identified as Vimal Prakash, who hailed from Mainpuri district, the officer also said, adding that others injured persons in the incident are in the hospital at present.

August rainfall highest in 7 years: IMD

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NOIDA

A 44-year-old man was killed after a speeding truck hit a divider and overturned along the Yamuna Expressway in Gautam Buddha Nagar, the police said on Sunday. The incident took place

near Jaypee Sports City, under Dankaur police station area, late on August 29, they said.

The mini-truck was carrying vegetables. It hit the divider and overturned. The occupants sustained injuries and were taken to a hospital, where one of

As per ICMR guidelines, after one week from the date of sample collection or detection of COVID-19 symptoms, if a patient does not have fever or other symptoms for another three days, then no further test will be required and the doctor will discharge him/her with a certificate from the hospital or safe home. The patient must stay under home quarantine for an additional 7 days before returning to normal life.

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M.P. village returns to conventional mode as e-learning remains elusive

Parents of just two of the 98 students have smartphones; erratic electricity supply and poor Internet connectivity pose hurdles to learning

SIDHARTH YADAV

INTKHEDI (RAISEN DISTRICT)

Away from school since March, when a nationwide lockdown was imposed, 12-year-old Vijay Bheel is stuck in time and learning: he still believes Congressman Kamal Nath is in power.

The Class 5 student stares wide-eyed, standing sheepishly with hands clasped behind his back amid several primary school students seated cross-legged in files, as assistant teacher Neeraj Saxena attempts to fill them up with events since the COVID-19 pandemic struck: Shivraj Singh Chouhan is the new Chief Minister, Chinese troops intruded into our territory leading to a fight and floods hit more than 50 lakh people in Assam.

Gasps waft across, the students look in amazement at one another. "Yeh sab kab hua? [When did all this happen?] It is coming from mas-

terji, it must be true," Mr. Bheel, struggling to keep a face mask on, tries to reconcile with five-month of lost schooling – a blank slate of zero events for students and no learning virtually.

Back by six months'

The lockdown forced schools shut and learning outcomes of students went back by at least six months, said Mr. Saxena, who teaches 98 students at a primary school in Salegarh hamlet of Intkhedi village in Raisen district. "Allowing the unlearning to continue unabated with schools shut will mean years of effort to bring girl students to school going waste," said Mr. Saxena.

What about the State government's e-learning modules transmitted through smartphones, TV and radio?

"Parents of just two students have smartphones, while those of 10-12 have keypad



Primary school students studying in the verandah of a house in Intkhedi village of Raisen district. ■ A.M. FARQUI

ones. There is no electricity for five-six days at a stretch sometimes, and the Internet connectivity is poor," said Mr. Saxena, supported by guest teacher Amitabh Rathore.

To bridge the digital divide and continue the learning of the 92 students from Bhil and Gond tribes and six from the

other backward classes, conventional teaching in a physical form was the only option left. So, starting July, Mr. Saxena, who travels every day to the hamlet, nearly 48 km from Raisen – trudging 4.5 km along an uneven trail through a dense forest, a sling bag dangling on his shoulder – set up five infor-

mal study groups.

Chirping in unison while reciting the Hindi alphabet, around 20 students sit in the house verandah of Kiran Bhallavi, 20, a former student of Mr. Saxena studying Bachelor of Arts, the first girl from the village to reach higher education.

"Villagers believed if girls study too much, they will marry according to their own accord, even elope. For parents, girls are an asset for the dowry they bring, according to a Bhil custom. And boys are usually sent to take cattle for grazing," said Ms. Bhallavi, teaching students on a board.

When asked, several girl students said they aspired to be like her. "If I left to e-learning, which is exclusionary, their dreams will not be fulfilled," said Mr. Saxena, who pays ₹1,000 from his ₹31,500 salary a month to four such former students-turned-men-

tors, including three girls. buy a smartphone for ₹10,000 from the ₹1.2 lakh a year he makes by cultivating five acres.

'Initiative not a failure'

Refusing to see the initiative as a failure of the online-learning programme, Rajya Siksha Kendra Commissioner Lokesh Jatav said the initiative was part of the "Humara Ghar, Humara Vidyalaya" programme which bolstered device-independent modes. "We are aware there is a limitation to online learning, yet such a success story is possible," he said. Parents of just 25% students from Classes 1 to 8 in the State had smartphones and 50% use them for e-learning.

Further, department's Deputy Director Ashok Pareek believed such community-level initiatives could bring about a change. "We are seeing similar examples especially in rural areas," he said. (With PTI inputs)

Punjab records 1,689 new cases and 56 deaths

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

CHANDIGARH

Punjab recorded 1,689 new COVID-19 cases on Sunday and reported 56 deaths, taking the toll to 1,404, according to an official statement.

The number of positive cases have reached 52,526. The major chunk of new cases, 273 and 188, were reported from Ludhiana and Patiala districts respectively. The health department said the active cases are 15,375 and 35,747 patients have so far recovered.

In Haryana, twelve more people succumbed to the virus on Sunday as the State reported another major spike of 1,295 cases, pushing its infection count to 63,282.

So far, the State has reported 682 deaths due to the infection, according to a health bulletin.

(With PTI inputs)

Odisha virus tally breaches one-lakh mark

Over 3,000 cases on Sunday, daily tally going past the 3,000 mark since Aug. 26

SATYASUNDAR BARIK

BHUBANESWAR

After reporting more than 3,000 daily cases consecutively for the past five days, Odisha's COVID-19 tally on Sunday breached the one-lakh mark while the death toll is inching closer to 500.

As many as 3,014 cases were reported on Sunday. The daily cases have been going past the 3,000 mark since August 26. The highest single-day spike of 3,682 cases was detected on August 28.

After the first detection of the novel coronavirus in a student, who had returned from Italy, on March 15, Odisha has taken 169 days to reach 1,00,934 cases. Close to one fifth of the total cases was reported in the past one week.

The State took 115 days to



A health worker collecting swab sample of a resident in Bhubaneswar. ■ FILE PHOTO

cross the 10,000 mark while the remaining 90,000 cases were detected in just 44 days. Two third of the total confirmed infections were reported in August itself.

As of now, 70,714 patients have been cured while there are still 29,685 active cases.

Odisha accounted for 2.91% of the country's total positive cases while its share in active cases was estimated at 3.95%. The State lost 482 persons to the contagion accounting for 0.77% of India's death toll.

While Odisha's two neighbours – Andhra Pradesh and West Bengal – have long breached the one-lakh mark, two other neighbours – Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand are yet to cross 50,000 cases.

'Peak by mid-Sept.'

"By mid-September, the country may touch a peak in the pandemic. Odisha seems to be lagging behind the national graph by two weeks. So our estimation is that State's peak is likely to come by end

of September," said Jayant Panda, technical spokesperson of the Odisha Health Department.

Due to the increase in number of tests, which was now over 60,000 per day, the State was able to detect more cases and isolate more patients than before, said Dr. Panda.

"Our recovery rate is high. At present, the State's per day cases hover around over 3,000 while the average recovery number is 2,800 per day. Our recovery numbers will improve further and overtake gradually per day detection cases," he said.

Dr. Panda said, "we are much better compared to the national scenario. Our death rate is 0.5% against national average of 1.8%."

Leader of the Opposition and MLA Harpal Singh Cheema on Sunday alleged that the State government was attempting to save all those involved in the Schedule Caste scholarship case, including a Cabinet Minister, and the process of getting a clean chit from the Chief Secretary has been initiated. Mr. Cheema said that his party will go to any extent to protect the interests of the people of Punjab as well as the country.

Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) or any Central agency under the supervision of sitting judge of the High Court. "The probe is a mere eyewash to divert attention of people," he said.

Hitting out at the Chief Minister for calling AAP a 'rouge party', Mr. Cheema demanded that the investigation be handed over to the

Cong. MP Partap Singh Bajwa hits back at Punjab CM

said that his party will go to any extent to protect the interests of the people of Punjab as well as the country. "AAP, which is a result of mass movement against the corrupt system, does not need any certificate from Captain Amarinder Singh," he said.

Shiromani Akali Dal leader and Union Food Processing Industries Minister Hardeep Singh Kaur Badal had also requested Union Social Justice and Empowerment Minister Thawar Chand Gehlot to recommend a CBI inquiry into what she alleged a ₹63 crore scholarship scam.

'Rule of law'

Earlier, Capt. Amarinder had stated that nobody could be put on the mat without a fair probe and proper inquiry, which Cabinet Minister Sadhu Singh Dharamot also deserved. "There is rule of law, which needs to be followed," said the Chief Minister, adding that he would not succumb to Opposition pressure in the case.

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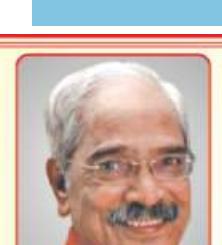
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AAP seeks CBI probe into 'scam'

'Amarinder govt. trying to shield the guilty in scholarship misappropriation case'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

CHANDIGARH

A day after Punjab Chief Minister Amarinder Singh ordered the Chief Secretary to conduct a thorough probe into an alleged scholarship scam, the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) has termed it an eye-wash and demanded a CBI probe into the matter.

Leader of the Opposition and MLA Harpal Singh Cheema on Sunday alleged that the State government was attempting to save all those involved in the Schedule Caste scholarship case, including a Cabinet Minister, and the process of getting a clean chit from the Chief Secretary has been initiated.

Both the BJP and its coalition partner Indigenous Peoples Front of Tripura have been consolidating bases in the tribal areas while the Opposition CPI(M) is desperate to improve its strength. The Congress is largely dependent on its alliance partner Indigenous Nationalist Party of Tripura.

Leader of the Opposition and MLA Harpal Singh Cheema on Sunday alleged that the State government was attempting to save all those involved in the Schedule Caste scholarship case, including a Cabinet Minister, and the process of getting a clean chit from the Chief Secretary has been initiated.

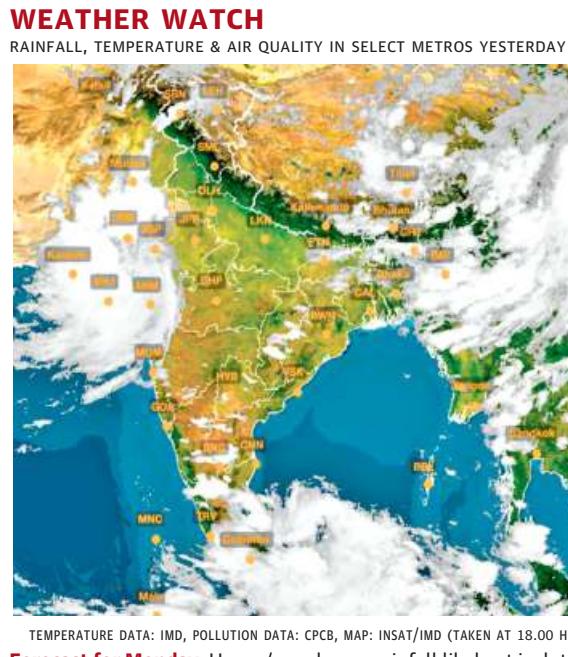
Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) or any Central agency under the supervision of sitting judge of the High Court. "The probe is a mere eyewash to divert attention of people," he said.

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Cong. MP Partap Singh Bajwa hits back at Punjab CM

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Shiromani Akali Dal leader and Union Food Processing Industries Minister Hardeep Singh Kaur Badal had also requested Union Social Justice and Empowerment Minister Thawar Chand Gehlot to recommend a CBI inquiry into what she alleged a ₹63 crore scholarship scam.</



₹177 cr. deal inked when Sandip Ssingh's company posted losses'

Congress questions if MoU was quid pro quo for making PM Modi's biopic

ALOK DESHPANDE
MUMBAI

The Maharashtra Congress on Sunday brought out the financial details of the company owned by producer Sandip Ssingh, who is alleged to be a part of a drug cartel involved in the death of actor Sushant Singh Rajput and accused of having close relations with leaders of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).

The party put out a document which showed that Legend Global Studio suffered losses in 2019 when Mr. Ssingh signed an MoU of ₹177 crore in the Vibrant Gujarat summit organised by the Gujarat government. The party claimed that Mr. Ssingh's firm was the only film company that inked such a big deal at the event.



Sandip Ssingh

Maharashtra Congress spokesperson Sachin Sawant reiterated his demand for a probe into the BJP's connection with Mr. Ssingh and the drug cartel. He also sought an investigation to find out who was his handler within the party. "Sandip Ssingh was the blue-eyed boy of the BJP. Financial records of his

company reflect a different story," Mr. Sawant said.

According to documents released by Mr. Sawant, the company suffered losses of ₹66 lakh in 2017, while it earned a profit of ₹61 lakh in 2018. In 2019, the firm again declared losses of ₹4 lakh.

BJP counters allegation

Countering the Congress, BJP MLA Atul Bhatkhalkar on Sunday wrote to Union Home Minister Amit Shah, claiming that CBI probe had exposed links between drugs cartel, Bollywood and ruling parties in Maharashtra. "The State Home Department and a prominent leader of the Mahatma Gandhi Ji's biopic? Was this a token advance?" Mr. Sawant asked.

Mr. Sawant said looking at

the balance sheet of the com-

pany, no government would want to get involved in financial dealings with it. "On what actual grounds did the Gujarat CM choose Mr. Ssingh's company for the deal?" he asked.

Special invitee

"His was the only company specifically called for the vibrant Gujarat summit of 2019 by Chief Minister Vijay Rupani. An MoU worth ₹177 crore was signed by the Gujarat government. Was this MoU quid pro quo for agreeing to do [Prime Minister Narendra] Modi ji's biopic? Was this a token advance?" Mr. Sawant asked.

Mr. Sawant said looking at

the balance sheet of the com-

Mahad building collapse: one more held

Yunus Abdul Razak Shaikh partnered with developer to sell 40% of flats

RAINA ASSAINAR
NAVI MUMBAI

The Mahad police on Saturday arrested one more person in connection with the building collapse on August 24, which killed 16 people and injured nine others.

Yunus Abdul Razak Shaikh had partnered with the developer, Farook Mahmoodmiya Kazi, and sold 40% of the flats at the five-storey Tarique Garden.

After the flats were sold, Mr. Shaikh made a fake receipt book in the name of a society that was yet to be formed. "The society's name

was decided, but not formed. He made a receipt in that name to receive the maintenance charges from the owners," the Raigad police spokesperson said.

Sections added to FIR

Mr. Shaikh was not named in the FIR. "Initially, there were five accused in the case, of whom one was already arrested. Now the number of accused is six. With the arrest of Mr. Shaikh, two more sections – 420 (cheating) and 471 (using forged documents fraudulently as genuine) – of the Indian Penal

Code were added to the FIR," the official said.

Mr. Shaikh was arrested from his house at Kharkand Mohalla in Mahad. Since he has a hip fracture, he was remanded in judicial custody as the police could not keep him in their custody. However, the police have kept their rights of custody in reserve and will use that when he recovers. Mr. Shaikh has been sent to Alibaug jail.

On August 25, the police had booked five people, including the builder and the RCC consultant of the building in Mahad. The five were

identified as Mr. Kazi, a resident of Talaja; Gaurav Shah, an architect consultant; Bahubali Dhamane, RCC consultant; Deepak Jhunjhunwala, chief officer of the Mahad municipal council; and Shashikant Dighe, a junior civil supervisor with the council. They were booked for causing death by negligence, culpable homicide not amounting to murder, and for causing grievous hurt by act endangering life under the IPC.

Mr. Dhamane was arrested on August 26, while Mr. Kazi is still absconding.

Poor air quality in Smart Cities due to lack of coordination'

Survey of six cities in Maharashtra reveals poor convergence between authorities and underutilisation of data

SHOUMOJIT BANERJEE
PUNE

A survey on the deteriorating air quality in Smart Cities in Maharashtra has pointed out that there is poor convergence between civic bodies and Smart City Corporations on air quality plans prepared under the National Clean Air Programme (NCAP) and the Smart Cities Mission.

Parisar, a Pune-based NGO, prepared the report after surveying six Smart Cities – Pune, Nashik, Aurangabad, Nagpur, Thane and Solapur – last year. Authored by Sharmila Deo, Shweta Vernekar and Ranjit Gadgil of Parisar, the report said though it was mandatory for each city to report on their air quality under the Smart Cities Mission, there was no logic as to why the civic bodies in the cities proposed certain projects, ostensibly to improve air quality.

Mr. Shinde said the Karnataka government should take stringent action in this matter and ensure that there is no more Marathi-Kannada conflict.

last year to address the issue of urban air pollution. The main intent was to reduce particulate matter pollution by 20-30% by 2024. It said, "While a few air sensors (to monitor air pollution) have been installed in some of the cities surveyed, there is no clarity whatsoever on how the data generated by these sensors is to be utilised."

Often disconnected

The report said the project structurally lacked the capacity to fundamentally conceive and execute "smart solutions". Ms. Deo, one of the authors, said, "Our engagement with these Smart City corporations gave us the impression of them being consultant-driven and often disconnected from the urban local body. They did not appear to have the capabilities to address multi-sectoral problems like air pollution."

Ms. Deo said the focus of air quality management in

ties did not necessarily think about how to use this data to formulate a plan to tackle the problem of air pollution.

She said, "Similar is the situation with the action plans made by cities under the NCAP. The action plans are very generic and not city-specific. It is only 'smart' to first find out the sources of pollution in a city and then strategically tackle the largest pollutant source."

Glaring example

The reports singled out Pune as a glaring example of non-convergence between the local civic body and the Smart City Corporation. "When the Pune Smart City Corporation decided to install low-cost monitors, neither the civic body nor the Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology was consulted at the time of purchase or setting up of these monitors. As a result, as many as 50 low-cost monitors lie severely underutilised be-

cause they were supposed to bring data and transparency to urban development projects, there seemed to be no clarity on what data was being collected, where it resided or how citizens could access it to help improve the functionality of the city.

Ms. Vernekar said, "In fact, we found no systems in place. Procuring even basic information boiled down to personal visits and the need to resort to Right to Information applications, which generally drew a blank."

Mr. Gadgil said during the survey, several people attested to the lack of information available to the public and pointed out the opacity in which Smart City Corporations operated. He said, "In our interviews with citizens, they generally complained of the absence of any accountability, revealing a sense that the Smart City Corporations had utterly failed to deliver on their promises."

She said while Smart Ci-

Over 14,000 evacuated as heavy rain pounds parts of Nagpur

Army deployed in submerged areas of Kuhi tehsil

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NAGPUR

More than 14,000 people were evacuated after torrential rains over the past two days triggered flooding in several tehsils of Nagpur district of Maharashtra, officials said on August 30.

Mouda, Kamptee, Parseoni and Kuhi were the worst affected tehsils, and the administration had to call in the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) and the Army to rescue people at some places, they said.

Brihamumbai Municipal Commissioner I.S. Chahal said the number of COVID-19 tests in Mumbai has gone up from 4,000 to 9,000 per day since the last one month. "The number touched 12,000 one day, while on Saturday it was 9,984. We are trying to raise the number of tests per day to 12,000 to 14,000 regularly, and then the cases may touch 1,800 to 2,000 for a few days. We have to be aggressive and on the front foot," he said.

Mr. Chahal said that as per the request made by the district administration, Army was deployed for assistance in the submerged areas of Kuhi. "UMANG Sub Area pressed into service

days resulted in flow of water from dams and rivers," Nagpur District Collector Ravindra Thakre said in a statement.

Nagpur district on August 29 registered 81.43 mm rainfall, he said.

Due to heavy rains, nine villages in Mouda tehsil were flooded, from where 1,568 people were moved to safer places by the State Disaster Response Team (SDRF) and the NDRF on August 29.

Similarly, eight villages in Kamptee tehsil were hit by rains and 620 people were shifted to safer places the rescue teams on Saturday.

Defence spokesperson Basantkumar Pande said that as per the request made by the district administration, Army was deployed for assistance in the submerged areas of Kuhi. "UMANG Sub Area pressed into service

Teams of the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) and State agencies were involved in the rescue operations in Bhandarpur.

The India Meteorological Department has predicted heavy to very heavy rainfall with extremely heavy showers at isolated places in many districts till Tuesday. Since Sunday morning, Panchmaha, Rajkot, Banaskantha, Vadodara, Botad, Ahmedabad and some other districts received heavy rain.

THE HINDU PRESS TRUST OF INDIA AHMEDABAD

Heavy rainfall in parts of Gujarat on Sunday created a flood-like situation in many areas including Bhandarpur, where over 2,000 people from inundated areas along the Narmada river were evacuated following release of water from the Sardar Sarovar dam.

Teams of the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) and State agencies were involved in the rescue operations in Bhandarpur.

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People stand in queue at a fever clinic in Dharavi. ■ FILE PHOTO

Unlock process. Even though we have begun lifting restrictions, we still haven't opened places of worship, theatres, malls and gyms despite demands," he said.

At present, the recovery rate is 80



For the weakest

Revisiting bar on States giving preference to the most marginalised among SCs is welcome

The Supreme Court has given cogent reasons for a reconsideration of the verdict given by a five-judge Bench in 2004 that State legislatures have no power to create sub-classifications among the list of Scheduled Castes notified by the President. A five-judge Bench headed by Justice Arun Mishra has affirmed the competence of the States to give preferential treatment to the weakest among the Scheduled Castes without depriving other castes of any benefit. The Court has noted that the SC list contains many castes and cannot be treated as a homogeneous group. It has recognised the obligation of States to identify for preferential treatment those sections within the SC communities to whom reservation benefits had not trickled down, and were in the same state of backwardness for decades. The Bench has disagreed with the formulation in *E.V. Chinnaiah vs. State of Andhra Pradesh* (2004) that classifying Scheduled Castes into groups amounts to 'tinkering' with the Presidential list. Also, the Constitution has been amended in 2018 to introduce Article 342A under which the President notifies, in consultation with the States, the list of Backward Classes, with a caveat similar to the ones in respect of Scheduled Castes (Article 341) and Scheduled Tribes (Article 342) that Parliament can make inclusions or exclusions in this list, and that once such a change is notified, "it shall not be varied by any subsequent notification". What is the effect of this? The Court says it could mean that just as the BC list can be divided into 'backward' and 'more backward', the same could be done among SCs too.

As *E.V. Chinnaiah* is also a verdict by a Bench with a strength of five, the matter has been referred to a larger Bench. If the judgment is reconsidered, it would provide welcome relief to States that wish to fulfil their obligation to the castes within the SC communities that have made the least progress. In the present case, the affected State was Punjab, which wanted to give preference to Balmikies and Mazhabhi Sikhs among seats reserved for SC candidates, but the measure was struck down by the High Court, citing *E.V. Chinnaiah*. Tamil Nadu has also carved out 3% compartment for Arundhatiyars within the 18% SC quota. Such affirmative action programmes will be protected if a larger Bench overturns the *Chinnaiah* formulation. However, the outcome may not be an unmixed blessing for Dalits at large. Recent jurisprudence is veering towards the view that the 'creamy layer' concept should be applied to SC/ST candidates too. Given the oppression and marginalisation Dalits continue to face, it is a moot question whether this is the appropriate time to begin excluding some of them on the ground that they are better off than the rest of the community. The concern should be less about the 'creamy layer' occupying posts under SC quota and more about ensuring adequate representation to the most marginalised among Dalits.

Alone at the top

The gaps in India's health care exposed by the pandemic must be closed quickly

For most of this month, India has consistently been contributing the most number of daily confirmed COVID-19 infections to the world. This week, it reported 78,508 infections on a single day – a record single day spike – that has pushed the infection tally to over 3.6 million. In March, when the epidemic was yet to take hold in the country, there was the belief that it could be vanquished. In those days, projections based on epidemiological modelling which indicated that millions would be infected were met with denial by the government as well as disbelief by many, especially because of how it had pulverised medical health systems in Europe and the United States. The dominant note in the government's narrative on how it has handled the pandemic is that it has kept India's death rate low. India's confirmed case fatality rate (CFR) is below 2% – totalling to over 64,500 deaths. The U.S. and Brazil, the only two countries with more cases than India, have a CFR of around 3% and a good number of countries that lead the COVID-19 tally have their confirmed deaths in that region. Were India too to have a similar death rate, that would work out to 103,000 deaths. Whether the nearly 40,000 averted deaths are so far evidence of a dodged bullet, or in part due to an undercount that results from States not reporting 'suspected or probable deaths' (as required by ICMR guidelines) and not medically certifying all deaths can only be known by more data being made available in the future for analysis.

That the virus has managed to infect some of India's most secluded tribes in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands is a pointer that it has now set deep roots within the country along with several other bacteria and viruses that thrive in India's tropical climate. Its invincibility has contributed to the widespread adoption of face covers and masks and the vital role of maintaining hygiene and avoiding crowds. These are welcome behavioural changes that will serve well in the future when India will continue to grapple with seasonal outbreaks and epidemics of influenza, dengue as well as its old scourge of TB. The health-care system being pushed to its breaking point has also underlined the country's historical neglect of widespread affordable health care as well as the paucity of qualified personnel to treat the poor. In spite of the availability of sophisticated labs and expert scientists and doctors, India continues to struggle to develop indigenous testing kits as well as conduct well-designed trials to check for the efficacy of drugs that might help with the infection. There must be deep reckoning to fix gaps in the manufacturing and product delivery chain to put in place new habits and erect a stronger line of defence against future blights.

A development that will hardly put India at ease

The World Bank's decision to halt its annual 'Doing Business' report on data authenticity issues has major implications



R. NAGARAJ

On Thursday, the World Bank halted its annual publication, 'Doing Business' report, as it detected irregularities of data for a few countries. A World Bank Press release (<https://bit.ly/2QPSXLn>) of August 27 said: "The integrity and impartiality of our data and analysis is paramount and so we are immediately taking the following actions. We are conducting a systematic review and assessment of data changes that occurred subsequent to the institutional data review process for the last five Doing Business reports. We have asked the World Bank Group's independent Internal Audit function to perform an audit of the processes for data collection and review for Doing Business and the controls to safeguard data integrity..."

Rankings and 'Make in India'
Should we bother about it? Yes, perhaps. India has sought to improve its ease of doing business index ranking, as a means to attract investments to achieve the targets set for 'Make in India', that was announced in 2014. The initiative aims at raising the manufacturing sector's share in GDP to 25% (from 16-17% per cent) and creating 100 million additional jobs in the manufacturing sector by 2022. India's success in boosting its ease of doing business ranking is spectacular, to 63rd rank in 2019, up from the 142nd position in 2014. Policy-makers celebrated it to signal India's commitment to "minimum government and maximum governance", the ruling coalition's winning slogan in the 2014 general

election.

The World Bank decision to audit the 'Doing Business' report for the last five years may soon cause discomfort by shining a spotlight on the sharp rise in India's ranking. In fact, in January 2018, Justin Sandefur and Divyanshi Wadhwa's study at the Center for Global Development found that the improvement in India's ranking was almost entirely due to methodological changes.

The case of Chile and Russia

During the same period, however, Chile's global rank went down sharply, from 34th position in 2014 to 67th in 2017. Chile's former Socialist President (2014-18), Michelle Bachelet, accused the World Bank of manipulating the ease of doing business index methodology to show her presidency in poor light, while showing improvement in the ranking during the regime of the right-wing party. Justin Sandefur and Divyanshi Wadhwa's study of March 2018, with a reworking of the ranks with an unchanging methodology showed very little change in Chile's global rank. In 2017, World Bank's Chief Economist (and later, Nobel Laureate), Paul M. Romer admitted to the World Bank's mistakes. He said, "Based on the things we were measuring before, business conditions did not get worse in Chile under the Bachelet administration." He further added, "I didn't do enough due diligence and later realised that I didn't have confidence in the integrity of the report's data." – "World Bank Unfairly Influenced Its Own Competitiveness Rankings", *The Wall Street Journal*, January 2018. More details are at: <https://bit.ly/2YJkfqU>

The contrasting experience of Chile and India casts doubts on not just the country-level data but also the changes in underlying methodologies. Therefore, the



multilateral agency's decision to suspend the publication and conduct a systematic review of the reports of the last five years is undoubtedly welcome.

Going beyond the data and methodology, does the ease of doing business index have predictive power? Recent evidence about India is telling. While its rank pole vaulted, it has meant nothing on the ground. The share of the manufacturing sector has stagnated at around 16-17% of GDP, and 3.5 million jobs were lost between 2011-12 and 2017-18. Annual GDP growth rate in manufacturing fell from 13.1% in 2015-16 to zero in 2019-20, as per the National Accounts Statistics. To rub salt in the wound, India's import dependence on China has shot up, compelling the Prime Minister to announce yet another initiative – Atmanirbhar Bharat.

It has been the same with Russia. Its ease of doing business rank jumped from 120 in 2012 to 20, six years later, taking Russia ahead of China, Brazil, and India, but without becoming a magnet for investment inflows. China, on the contrary, attracted one of the highest capital inflows but its ease of doing business ranking was low and hovered between 78 and 96 for the years between 2006 and 2017.

Many flaws

There are many shortcomings in the design and implementation of the index. The Indicators used for the index are *de jure* (as per the

statute), not *de facto* (in reality). The data for computing the index are obtained from larger enterprises in two cities, Mumbai and Delhi, by lawyers, accountants and brokers – not from entrepreneurs.

The World Bank's own internal watchdog, the Independent Evaluation Group, in its 2013 report, has widely questioned the reliability and objectivity of the index. The World Bank conducts a global enterprise survey collecting information from companies. Interestingly, there is no correlation between the rankings obtained from ease of doing business and the enterprise surveys. Writing in the well-regarded *Journal of Economic Perspectives* (Volume 29, Number 3 - Summer 2015), Mary Hallward-Driemeier and Lant Pritchett said, "Overall, we find that the single numerical estimate of legally required time for firms to complete certain legal and regulatory processes provided by the Doing Business survey does not summarize even modestly well the experience of firms as reported by the Enterprise Surveys."

More seriously, the theoretical underpinning of the ease of doing business index is suspect. There is little in any major strand of economic thought which suggests that minimally regulated markets for labour and capital produce superior outcomes in terms of output and employment. Economic history shows rich variations in performance across countries and policy regimes, defying simplistic generalisations that inform the construction of the ease of doing business index.

Unfortunately, such simplistic homilies are used under a seemingly scientific garb of the quantitative index to the disadvantage of workers. For instance, to meet the ease of doing business targets, safety standards of factories are compromised. In 2016, the Mahara

shtra government abolished the annual mandatory inspection of steam boilers under the Boilers Act of 1923 and the Indian Boilers Regulation 1950. In its place "third party" inspection and employers' self-certification are mandated. Reportedly, however, no factory has complied with self-certification or submitted the third party certification. Most other States have copied the Maharashtra practice. Hence, industrial safety standards have been practically abolished. Such a change is truly a case of a "race to the bottom", to please the rating agency – NITI Aayog in this case.

Time for a rethink

To sum up, the World Bank's decision to halt its annual 'Doing Business' report on account of data authenticity issues of some countries has implications for India. Since 2015, the government has invested considerable political and administrative capital to improve India's global ranking, with impressive success. But the enhanced ranking has failed to augment investment and output growth. Why? Analytical and empirical foundations of the index are weak, if non-existent. The index is based on *de jure* measures, and not on *de facto* conditions.

There is no credible association between improvement in ranking and a rise in capital formation and output growth, anywhere. Worst of all, it is an ideologically loaded measure against the interest of workers. It is time the World Bank rethinks its institutional investment in producing the 'Doing Business' report. India should do some soul searching as to why the much trumpeted rise in global ranking has failed miserably on the ground.

R. Nagaraj was with the Indira Gandhi Institute of Development Research, Mumbai

Despite the messaging, it is still advantage China

India needs to show foreign investors it has the benefits of China with fewer risks as a relocation destination



KATHERINE B. HADDA

Many U.S. companies as well as the analysts who advise them are cognisant of India's goal of becoming an alternative supply source and investment destination to China. But based on conversations I have had with a number of different organisations and companies here in Washington, it is fair to say that expectations are tempered.

First, despite media reports and strong messaging from Washington, fewer U.S. companies than predicted might quit the People's Republic of China (PRC). Companies focused on the Chinese domestic market rather than as a base for exports will likely remain, at least for now. Those that do leave may not choose India as a relocation destination. Despite New Delhi's noted success in attracting Apple suppliers to India, many U.S. companies with experience working with China are not convinced that India has the PRC's established industrial base and expertise. They also see other Asian countries as more competitive. To change their minds, these sceptics

must be convinced that India offers the benefits of China with fewer risks.

The good and bad points

To be sure, India's identity as a democratic "un-China" is one of its strongest selling points. There are no Indian government hackers stealing foreign companies' industrial secrets. Although Indian officials may have spurned a meeting with Amazon's chief executive officer Jeff Bezos due to negative India-related reporting in his *The Washington Post* newspaper, that is a far cry from the coercive tactics that Beijing employs against criticism by foreign companies both within and outside of its borders. India's open and vibrant press, independent judiciary, and other advantages of democratic governance also provide a favourable contrast to China.

Yet, India might appear more like China to potential foreign investors than New Delhi might think, particularly given policies that seemingly disadvantage foreign investors who pose the greatest competitive threat to India's domestic counterparts.

To be clear, India's goal of creating national champions is not necessarily anti-competitive in itself. But when policies such as taxes on foreign e-commerce companies and education providers seem constructed to disadvantage fo-



reign investors, investors will stay away.

India's large and increasingly well-off domestic market, while alluring, will likely not convince foreign companies to accept limits and conditions they might not accept elsewhere. Although early foreign investors in China endured years of losses caused by disadvantageous PRC policies, today's shareholders demand more accountability and faster profit-making from companies in which they are invested. There are also now many more competitor investment destinations, both within and outside of Asia.

Why China scores

Despite many documented negatives and the overall sour foreign relations picture right now, China continues to offer investors many advantages, such as a manufacturing infrastructure and skill level that allows innovations to move quickly from prototype to pro-

duct. This took decades of strategic planning. India's own planning has been impressively stepped up in recent months, with the government identifying key sectors; surveying major companies about perceived roadblocks to Indian investments; and increasing India's outreach.

But more is needed. For example, China's specialised industrial zones are massive, collocating companies, factories, logistics, and even research and universities. The Indian government Budget that pledged to create equivalent zones is too small and is allocated among too many locations to compete.

Focus on States

The recent World Trade Organization (WTO) dispute panel ruling against India's special economic zones policies, which the Indian government intends to appeal, might actually provide a chance to take a fresh look at the kinds of WTO-consistent industrial bases that are possible. New Delhi can start by focusing development in those Indian States that have already demonstrated the ability to produce and export in key sectors.

Foreign capital could also greatly increase infrastructure funds beyond government spending alone. India might also usefully build up new industrial centres with an eye to geography, for ex-

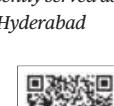
ample linking the southeast of the country to supply chains in Southeast Asia. In fact, by putting resources into States not led by the ruling national party, India will signal clearly that it is committed to economic openness, no matter who is in power, reassuring investors.

Work on the framework

India has taken a great step to reduce the number of investments needing approval by the Centre, and to increase intra-Ministry coordination on foreign direct investment policies. The same coordination could usefully be extended to the appointment of a high-level official or body in the Prime Minister's Office to ensure any and all proposed economic policy changes are consistent with the goal of attracting foreign investment.

A policy framework that is transparent, predictable, and provides increased consultations with existing and potential foreign company stakeholders before introducing new Indian economic policies, will play a crucial role in determining India's foreign investment outlook.

Katherine B. Hadda is an adjunct fellow with the CSIS Wadhwani Chair in U.S.-India Policy Studies and a prior senior U.S. diplomat who most recently served as the U.S. Consul General in Hyderabad



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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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Glitches in national test

I write this as a former Joint Director of Technical Education, Government of Kerala. The Council of Architecture conducted the National Aptitude Test in Architecture (NATA), on August 29, throughout India. This is an obligatory test to prove the aptitude of candidates for admission to the B. Arch (Bachelor of Architecture) programme in any institution in India, except the NITs and IITs (these institutes hold their own aptitude tests). The NATA held on August 29 took candidates for a ride. In this online test, the questions often did not appear in full on the computer screen. And to make things worse, the Council had introduced a strange condition: "Questions will appear one by one and are to be

answered within maximum time. After the candidate answers a question or its maximum time limit exceeds, the system will move forward to the next question. Going back and forth of questions is not allowed." In many instances, the questions appeared in a flash and disappeared, not giving candidates even a moment to read or answer them. Thousands of children have taken pains in preparing for NATA for months. If they experienced such errors, it was indeed a cruel experiment on them. The Council of Architecture should immediately cancel the test of August 29 and permit all candidates to appear in the test that has been scheduled for September 12, without the payment of any extra fees. The Council should ensure

that test administration uses reliable software.
**B.S. WARRIOR,
Kochi**

Japan leads
Japan has yet again demonstrated to the world its high ethics in public life ('Profiles' page, "Japan's eternal Prime Minister", August 30). The decision taken by Shinzo Abe, who was well aware that he would not be able to do justice to the post held by him, is an act that needs to be emulated by leaders in other countries, especially India. In Japan, if it is the workers who demonstrate time and again their commitment towards the progress of the country through their hard work, the political leadership has now raised the bar.

**B.C. UNNIKRISHNAN NAIR,
Kuthiathode, Alappuzha, Kerala**

Toy story

The Prime Minister's push to the Atmanirbhar campaign, where he extended the idea to cover the toys and games sector stands out. Toys are useful in developing psychomotor and cognitive skills apart from having a societal value. Toys are also a reflection of a culture and display the values which a nation follows. Toys and video games can not only inform us about current trends in the society but also serve as a way of promoting the past. Educating the youngest lot of society becomes much easier through these instruments. The famed hero, Steve Rogers, may be fighting against intergalactic forces in the 21st century but his origin lies in the Second World War. Video games provide

its users a first-hand experience of the virtual world in which he/she is playing. Games with historical themes serve both the functions of education as well as entertainment. Therefore, the time is not far when we could see a strategic game based on Chanakaya, a business board game on the Tatas or the presence of a properly articulated action figure of a soldier from the Azad Hind Fauj on the shelves of supermarkets.
**ADITYA VASHISHT,
Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh**

IPL and CSK
It is extremely shocking to know that almost a third of the Chennai Super Kings squad has tested positive for COVID-19. The development raises pertinent questions and

any wilful breach of the BCCI's Standard Operating Procedures should invite punitive measures. All these issues bring to the forefront the wisdom of holding a multi-team, multi-venue tournament in the midst of a raging pandemic. Our 'millionaire' cricketers and 'billionaire' team owners could have skipped this year's IPL and waited next year, by which time a vaccine would most likely be ready. Expecting Mahendra Singh Dhoni to inspire the team is, at this juncture, a tall order. Even the talismanic captain needs a mentally and physically-fit team and support staff to deliver cups/trophies like he has in the past.
V.V. KOUSHIK,<

When crises pay politically

Crises in India are created and utilised to further entrench the image of the leader as the only saviour



SAJJAN KUMAR

Contemporary India mirrors a pendulum oscillating between crises and a saviour. The recent acts of aggression by China and cartographic adventure by Nepal have underlined the question of national security and territorial integrity. The economy, already deteriorating since 2017, has experienced a further setback during the COVID-19 pandemic. Moreover, the forced movement of thousands of migrant workers in the wake of the sudden announcement of a nationwide lockdown by Prime Minister Narendra Modi signified the state of the precariat of the republic, abandoned by both the state and, largely, society. This set of crises is partly systemic and partly the outcome of the Central government's policy responses. From the vantage point of political economy, which assumes the people as rational actors, these should have heralded the beginning of the end of Mr. Modi's populist regime. However, according to ground reports and national surveys, his popularity is on a constant rise. This presents a political puzzle.

An unusual tenacity

Contrary to the dominant argument that personality-driven populist regimes dissipate as quickly as they emerge, Mr. Modi's India reveals a tenacity to surpass material and social crises by recreating and sustaining cultural narratives. Unlike the right-wing populist regime of the U.S., material and social crises in India do not seem to translate into a political predicament for the incumbent. In this sense, right-wing Hindutva populism operates in a specific and complex sociocultural matrix whose mechanisms go beyond the assumed ebbs and flows of populist regimes in general. Here, crises are not simply overcome; rather, they are created and utilised to further entrench and empower the image of the leader as the only saviour. The overarching majority breathes a sigh of relief for the fact that in all these testing times, the country is being led by Mr. Modi.

This holds true even when the



SUDHAKARA JAIN

crises are created or aggravated by the Central government's ineptitude, as was the case with the announcement of demonetisation or the social chaos on account of the lockdown. Some analysts have called this phenomenon as the shift from the politics of *vikas* to *vishwas*. However, the source and sheer intensity of the crises, and the shortcomings of the political-economy and political-sociology approaches to adequately understand Hindutva's populism, warrants the employment of the framework of political psychology. This is desirable all the more in the backdrop of the euphoric societal reception of Mr. Modi as a startling political fact – particularly when it remains independent of one's material condition – being primarily more psychological than logical.

In this backdrop, the Indian case goes beyond the thesis of authoritarian resilience by political scientist Andrew J. Nathan, who explained how the Chinese authoritarian regime led by the Chinese Communist Party (CPC) has successfully been managing the democratic legitimacy crisis since the Tiananmen Square incident in 1989. Contrary to Francis Fukuyama's thesis, *The End Of History*, Mr. Nathan argues that the CPC's strict adherence to elements like norm-bound succession politics, meritocracy over factionalism, employment of the structural-functional approach in the party, establishment of input institutions at the grass-roots levels and whopping economic success are the factors behind the resilience of the non-liberal authoritarian regime even after embracing avant-garde capitalism. Right-wing Hindutva populism does not have such mechanisms, nor does it seem to aspire for them. Rather, the Indian scenario resembles what the dissident Chinese novelist Yan Lianke termed *shenshi zhuiyi* (mythoreal-

ism) that defies any rational attempt to establish a cause-and-effect relationship between events. Instead, it offers a grotesque, hilarious, distorted and precariat world wherein Kafkaesque absurdities constitute the everyday realities of public life.

State of normative flux

This shifts analytical focus back to the societal realm wherein laden with the ubiquity of the social media, something profound and sublime is taking place. The WhatsAppification of our everyday life has led to an unparalleled reach of the right-wing populist narrative. The resulting restructuring of society according to the ever-changing political expediencies of the populist regime ensures that norms and normalcy are fluid. Any thought which does not conform to their domineering cognitive wishes is labelled by the majority as being abnormal and extreme. Consequently, the Hindutva Right is perpetually obsessed with the idea of delineating authentic Indians and declaring challengers as un-Indians. This choir derives a collective sadistic pleasure which will stop at nothing short of declaring a vast section of people as being spurious Indians, wherein the markers of authenticity are ever-expanding with time.

The advent of deriving pleasure in the sufferings of one group by the other weaponises the public sphere with the discourse of political sadism. This, in turn, twists the obvious, and by deliberate mix and match of variables, leads to something grand but absurd. Hence, political sadism acts as a red herring and defines the contours of the rising wave of new politics. It offers a biographical solution for structural and systemic problems. When there are visible cracks in the material realm affecting the people, the political sadists aim at certitudes by tactically

embracing a delusional but grand ideal. Therein the cultural realm emerges as the prime refuge. This state of affairs not only reinforces the primacy of cultural politics over the material one, but helps constitute a biographical villain even for the material crisis. It invests heavily in instrumental rationality where logic has become separate from moral standards. It keeps creating simplistic binaries of friends and enemies as per their cognitive desires. Among the deviants, no one is spared, whether an Army officer or a Shankaracharya. In this state of normative flux, there are neither restraints nor stakeholders of public probity. The participants constituting a significant section of society possess the need-for-chaos personality wherein disruption is constantly caused and cherished, followed by the grand invocation of the saviour to bring an order to the chaos. Therein, sections of the mainstream media and social media do their everyday bidding by devising a number of customised techniques to evoke desired psychic responses from society. In every case, while the leader is the sole saviour, the face of the villain keeps changing. This explains the celebration of absurdities in the wake of the pandemic. A public health crisis that quickly led to an economic crisis found the deafening clamour of "corona jihad" as the prime villain. While the COVID-19 crisis continues, the latest red herring is a news story targeting candidates in civil service exams on the basis of religion.

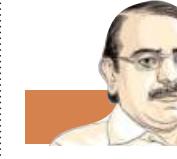
Everyday presents a spectacle which defies any sense but sets the agenda of the day. These spectacles become the instrument of inflating pains of the past, real and imagined. The solution for the same is implicit. Thus, the saviour takes a mystical aura. Everydayness gets laden with the quest to define the moral decay and then tools to remedy it. The anchors of this discourse lack any sense of guilt as larger society resonates with their tune and both become a part of the populist discourse. Unfortunately, this phase seems to be there for the long haul, as we are in a state of democracy wherein we have an Opposition but no political action. They are full of angst but lack formidable convictions.

Sajjan Kumar is a political analyst associated with Peoples Pulse

FROM THE READERS' EDITOR

Popular ideas must replace populist ideas

We must first hold our television channels accountable



A.S. PANNEERSELVAM

The pandemic is one of the many ills affecting journalism. Indian broadcasting has become 'narrow casting' in terms of its social outlook, its adherence to standards, its ethical framework, and its growing inability to identify hate speech. We do not have journalistic language to describe the way some television channels have handled the tragic death of actor Sushant Singh Rajput or the bizarre programme on the "infiltration of Muslims" in the Civil Services on Sudarshan News, which was stayed by the Delhi High Court. Why should I, a news ombudsman for a legacy newspaper, worry about these developments in the world of television?

A downward spiral

The problem is that the downward spiral in the ethical standards of Indian news channels is hurting the reputation of journalism. When we analyse the trust factor in journalism, we need to look at the entire oeuvre of news and current affairs as one entity. I am not the only person who is alarmed by these developments. The Press Council of India has issued a statement advising media to adhere to journalistic norms. It reads: "The media should not narrate the story in a manner so as to induce the general public to believe in the complicity of the person indicted. Publishing information based on gossip about the line of investigation by the official agencies on the crime committed is not desirable. It is not advisable to vigorously report crime related issues on a day-to-day basis and comment on the evidence without ascertaining the factual matrix. Such reporting brings undue pressure in the course of fair investigation and trial." However, the News Broadcasting Standards Authority has been silent about these ethical breaches that are undermining trust in journalism. It looks as if only the print media and some digital news organisations are practicing journalism, while a majority of broadcasters and their social media allies are amplifying the voices of demagogues.

The 21st International Symposium on Online Journalism held in July, hosted by the Knight Center for Journalism, drew a distinct

tion between journalism that lays emphasis on accountability and trust and the drive that gets amplified on some broadcast platforms. A session chaired by Kathleen Kingsbury, Editorial Page Editor of *The New York Times*, looked at some of the threats to independent media. The participants discussed how populist leaders take over independent media, organise troll campaigns to discredit media, legally harass publications, publicly trash specific journalists, and orchestrate threats of violence.

Aggressive media capture

Sérgio Dávila, Editorial Director of *Folha*, Brazil's largest independent newspaper, spoke of the crisis the newspaper is facing. When one of the reporters of his paper, Patrícia Campos Mello, investigated and reported how Jair Bolsonaro and his supporters used WhatsApp, Brazil's most popular social network with 100 million users, to spread misinformation about a political opponent, they began a smear campaign against her, using doctored photos with sexual innuendoes.

Peter Erdelyi, editor of the Hungarian news portal *444.hu*, talked about aggressive media capture that is happening under the watch of Prime Minister Viktor Orbán. He said: "Powerful oligarchs aligned with the party have acquired 18 independent newspapers in recent years. The government now controls a network of 476 print, radio and television news outlets."

Anna Gielewski, vice president of the Reporters Foundation in Poland, said: "Populists are more effective at stirring up fear and anger and manipulating the public. They fill social media with conflicting messages so that the public doesn't know who to trust in the media."

The situation in Mexico is no different. Juan E. Pardinas, General Editorial Director of the newspaper *Reforma*, pointed out that when Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador won the presidency by an overwhelming margin in 2018, he neutralised his political opponents. He needed a new enemy and found one in the press. The Mexican government is the biggest source of advertising revenue in the country and the government uses this revenue flow to stifle independent voices.

It is our democratic duty to replace populist ideas with the popular idea of journalism being a public good. To do that we must first hold our television channels accountable.

readerseditor@thehindu.co.in

An unedifying spectacle

At a time when India is grappling with multiple crises, TV channels are focused on only one case

MOHAMMED AYOOB

The treatment of the Sushant Singh Rajput case by many TV news channels is a good example of how the interrelated concerns about ratings and revenues drive news coverage in substantial parts of the electronic media. Many of the national news channels have been devoting most of their time covering the controversies surrounding the unfortunate death of the up and coming actor. This is done in two formats. First, they attempt to provide "factual" coverage of the case through accounts by their reporters of the latest developments in the case that they have gleaned from their "sources". Second, invited guests billed as experts on this and other similar cases analyse these developments. It is clear that many of these analysts' comments based on incomplete information are akin to shooting in the dark.

What is worrying is that several channels have transformed themselves into investigative agencies thus appropriating the role that belongs to the police, the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) and other government agencies. These channels compete with each other to show largely unverified details of the case sometimes implying that such developments implicate one person or another. A great deal of this information, according to them, is collected from WhatsApp messages, details of telephone records, and video recordings. There is little corroboration of the authenticity of such evidence by reputable and independent testing agencies. Moreover, some of the WhatsApp messages contradict what is being claimed in other messages. This leaves the viewer flummoxed.

A matter of concern

What is more disturbing is the claim by some channels that they have received much of the information on the case from investigative agencies ranging from the Enforcement Directorate to the CBI. The authorities need to verify if such claims are true. And if they are proved to be false, legal action should be taken against the offending channels. However, if their claims are true, this is a matter of

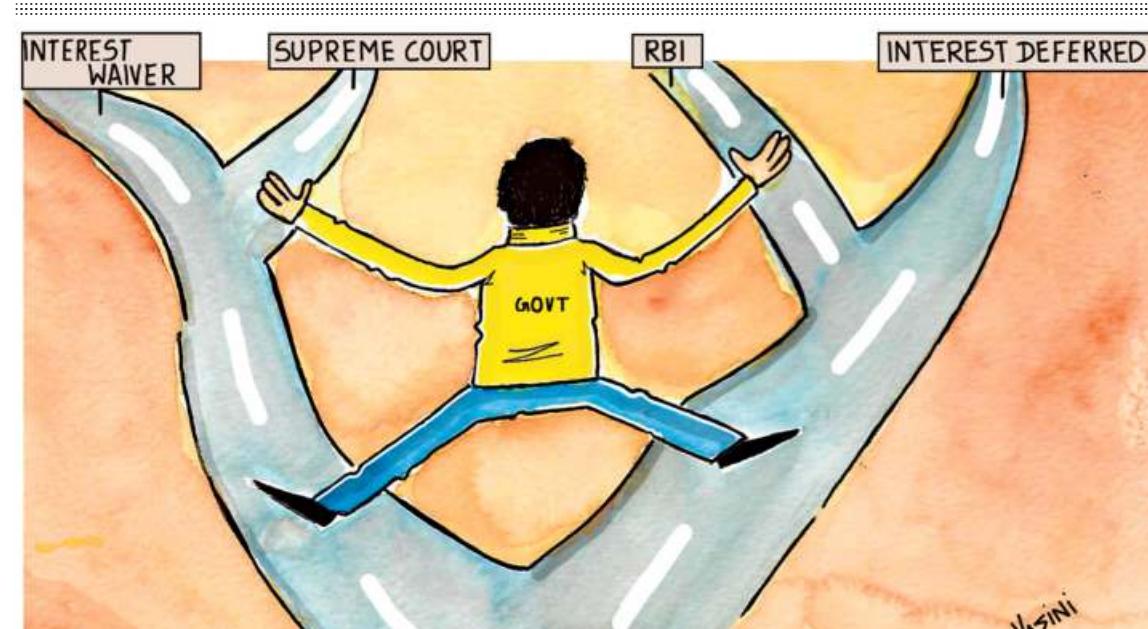
greater concern because it could bring into serious doubt the reputation of India's premier investigative agencies that may stand accused of making public details of an ongoing investigation and violating service rules. Furthermore, such leaks, if they have taken place, will leave pivotal agencies of the government open to legal challenges during the course of the case, especially if it turns out that the information allegedly leaked by them does not correspond to the eventually discovered facts.

Blanket coverage

An equally major offence that these news channels are committing is to turn the case of the unfortunate death of Sushant not only into a spectacle but also a matter of such national importance that it has almost completely dwarfed the coverage of multiple grave problems facing the nation. These include the pandemic that shows no sign of abating with cases rising exponentially and putting the public health system under unbearable strain. They also include the serious economic downturn that predates the pandemic but has been greatly exacerbated by the drastic reduction of economic activity following the outbreak. The sorry plight of millions of migrant labourers caused by the lockdown has been almost totally ignored in the rush to cover this case. The tensions on the India-China border that have the potential to escalate into a serious military conflict have also been all but forgotten.

The mainstream electronic news media, it can be argued, has demonstrated a serious lack of judgment by distorting national priorities in its coverage presumably in search of ratings. If true, this shows a lack of moral sense that has turned an unfortunate death into a melodrama in order to capture viewership and increase revenues. So far, the social media has been the target of attack for irresponsible behaviour. The coverage of this case by the mainstream electronic news media lays it open to the same charge.

Mohammed Ayoob is University Distinguished Professor Emeritus of International Relations, Michigan State University



DATA POINT

China on top of the value chain

Over the last three decades, Chinese exports have consistently moved up the value chain with capital goods becoming the chief component. Capital goods are machinery and equipment which are used to produce other goods. They range from nuclear reactors to milking machines. Many countries, including advanced economies such as Japan and the U.S., have increasingly become dependent on China for capital goods in this period. By The Hindu Data Team

1. Capital rise | The share of capital goods among China's exports has risen exponentially since 1992. From being the least exported good in 1992, it has become the most exported

3. Overdependence | The graph depicts China's share in the total capital goods imports of select countries. Around 1990, China's share was less than 3%, but in 2018 it grew to more than 30%

4. Chief supplier | Dependence on China is even more acute when only imports of "electrical equipment, machinery and mechanical appliances" are considered. The graph shows China's share in the total imports of such items among the top 10 importers in the category in 2018

Last word | The rising border tensions with India, the trade war with the U.S. and the impact of COVID-19 have forced many countries to think about diversifying their capital goods imports and move away from China. However, this is a tough task as China continues to be the chief supplier of capital goods to many leading economies

SOURCE: WITS, WORLD BANK, ORG

2. Rise & fall | In the past three decades, China has replaced the U.S. as the leading exporter of capital goods. The graph depicts the % share of the world's total capital goods exports

CHINA'S SHARE

U.S.'s share

CHINA'S SHARE

Japan

India

U.S.

Australia

Hong Kong

South Korea

Mexico

Germany

Singapore

France

U.K.

The Hindu

FROM THE ARCHIVES

FIFTY YEARS AGO AUGUST 31, 1970

The Cholera menace

(From an Editorial)

The World Health Organisation has uttered the warning that this year the geographical extension of the cholera epidemic might be greater than in previous years. In many parts of Asia it is more or less endemic and generally flares up in the wake of floods, as in Assam and East Pakistan. Governments have learnt by bitter experience to tackle the disease and to undertake inoculation campaigns in time and on a large enough scale.

Recently cholera has been reported from Israel in what has been called "the most westerly examples" of the disease. Usually European countries are free of this scourge and also countries where modern standards of sanitation prevail. It was therefore a matter for great concern to the Soviet authorities when cholera made its unexpected appearance in Astrakhan. They closed down some of the country's southern ports, including the well known one of Odessa. The citizens of the region were asked to observe some essential precautions. Italy has also put into effect necessary precautions in and around its ports at which ships from the east call.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO AUGUST 31, 1920.

Cunnan Chettiar memorial meet.

The citizens of Madras assembled on Sunday evening last at a memorial meeting to express their deep sense of sorrow at the loss sustained by the City and the Presidency by the death of Rao Bahadur Calavala Cunnan Chettiar, a merchant Prince, a philanthropic of non-sectarian views and an ardent patriot and to take steps to perpetuate his memory in suitable manner. The meeting was representative of all classes and creeds. Among those present were the Honorable Mr. Justice T.V. Sheshagiri Aiyar, Mrs Besant, Messrs S. Kasturirangan Aiyangar, K.M. Stathem, C.P. Ramaswami Aiyar, Dewan Bahadur D.A. Govindraghavai Aiyar, Rao Bahadur T. Ranga-chettiar and S. Satyamurthy.

Mr. Kasturirangan Aiyangar moved the following resolution – This public meeting of the citizens of Madras desire to record their profound sorrow and grief at the untimely death of Rao Bahadur Calavala Cunnan Chettiar whose patriotic and philanthropic munificence and activities on behalf of his fellow countrymen will ever be gratefully cherished by them.

CM YK

A ND-NDE

FROM PAGE ONE

19 lakh NRC-excluded stuck in limbo

"The government has hushed up NRC that was once their main issue. The BJP's hidden agenda has been exposed after the exclusion of many Bengali Hindus who were flattered to deceive. The list did not go their way and they want the issue to linger for political mileage," State Congress president Ripun Bora said.

"We don't think the Centre will do anything before the Assembly election [2021]. It did nothing despite several guidelines from the Supreme Court, showing it is not serious about the NRC or the future of Assam's indigenous people and genuine Indians. The NRC could have ensured a permanent solution to the issue of illegal immigration," Rupam Goswami said.

Police officer, 3 militants killed in J&K encounter

"Mr. Ram was well trained and had been part of the anti-militancy operations since long," the DGP said. Ten militants have been killed in three gunfights in Kashmir in the past three days, taking the total number of slain ultras to 153.

Affiliated with LeT
Inspector General of Police Vijay Kumar said the families of the holed up militants were called to the spot and asked to make repeated surrender appeals. "The slain militants, Saqib Bashir Khanday, Umar Tariq Bhat and Zubair Ahmad Shiekh, all residents of Drangbal Pampore, were affiliated with the LeT," Mr. Kumar said. The IG said Bashir was involved in motivating and

said AASU general secretary Lurinjyoti Gogoi.

The AASU has also resented the delay in setting up 200 new FTs sanctioned for handling the cases of the NRC rejects. The government had appointed 221 members (judge-like status) for these FTs in August 2019 and their one-year term is unlikely to be extended.

The BJP, however, put the onus on the Supreme Court. "No organisation in Assam is happy with the NRC list and a petition pending in the apex court for re-verification of at least 10% of the names in districts where demographic changes have been drastic. We are waiting for the Supreme Court's guidance," party spokesperson Rupam Goswami said.

Police officer, 3 militants killed in J&K encounter

radicalising the youth of the area to join terror folds and was behind the weapon snatching bid in Pampore.

The police said that in view of the COVID-19 pandemic, the bodies would be sent to Handwara for burial after completion of all medico-legal formalities. "The nearest family members of the terrorists will be allowed to participate in the last rites at Handwara," Mr. Kumar said.

The Army on Sunday said a Junior Commissioned Officer (JCO) was killed in Pakistani Army's firing along the Line of Control (LoC) in Pir Panjal's Rajouri district.

Officials said Pakistan resorted to sniper fire and the soldier came in the firing range.

+ Premature retirement not a penalty: DoPT

As provided, the appropriate authority can retire an official in the public interest, by giving a notice of not less than three months in writing or three months' pay and allowances in lieu of such notice.

The rule will apply on officials who are in Group 'A' or Group 'B' service or posted in a substantive, quasi-permanent or temporary capacity and had entered government service before attaining the age of 35 years; and who have attained the age of 50 years. In any other case the officials should have attained the age of 55 years.

The authority can retire a government servant in the Group 'C' service or post, who is not governed by any pension rules, after the official has completed 30 years of service, by giving a notice of not less than three months or three months' pay and allowances.

Performance review
There will be quarterly performance review. A register of those who are due to attain the age of 50/55 years, or to complete 30 years of service, has to be main-

tained. The register will be scrutinised at the beginning of every quarter by a senior officer in the ministry, department or cadre.

Non-adherence to the timelines, as mentioned in the notification, due to certain administrative exigencies will not take away the powers of the authority to prematurely retire an official. There is also no bar on the government reviewing any such case again where it was decided earlier to retain the official.

The Secretary concerned of the Cadre Controlling Authority (CCA) will constitute Review Committees of two members at an appropriate level. The Representation Committee will comprise a Secretary level official nominated by the Cabinet Secretary; an Additional Secretary/Joint Secretary in the Cabinet Secretariat, and one member nominated by the CCA.

The broad criteria to be followed by the Review Committee while making the recommendations include the issues of doubtful integrity, ineffectiveness and fitness/competence to continue in the post held.

Kandhamal turmeric loses flavour amid virus

The tuber is harvested during December to February. The raw turmeric is then boiled and sun-dried.

For 60,000 families, turmeric is the only cash crop with the collective production exceeding 26,000 tonnes annually in the district.

However, around March when farmers were getting ready to sell their produce, the nation went into lockdown.

"Of around 26,000 tonnes produced in Kandhamal, we procure only 5,000 tonnes which is

roughly around 20% of production. Traders from other districts and States buy turmeric directly from the farmers, most of whom are tribal," said KASAM secretary Sanjiv Patnaik.

The restriction in vehicular movement and fear of contracting the infection prevented traders from outside the district and State from visiting Kandhamal this year. According to Mr. Patnaik, KASAM which by now procures 600-1,000 tonnes of turmeric has purchased only 300-400 tonnes.

That is the question asked by stakeholders in Channapatna (Ramanagaram district of Karnataka), which has earned the sobriquet of a 'toy city' or 'Gombbegala

'Oru'. The concerns are real as the number of skilled artisans is dwindling and the new generation is loath to enter the business owing to inadequate returns.

COVID-19 pandemic
The COVID-19 pandemic has dealt a crippling blow to the industry. Out of nearly 200-plus units, about 25 to 30% are functioning on a nominal basis owing to a lack of demand for toys, according to Amiruddin of Rabbani Handicrafts in Channapatna.

69% of Telangana cases so far asymptomatic

With 10,603 testing positive, A.P. now in second position; Kerala adds 2,154 cases; Karnataka reports 106 deaths, 8,852 cases

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD

Telangana, which has so far found 1,23,090 people positive for COVID-19, said 69% of them did not have any symptoms, while the remaining 31% were symptomatic.

As a precaution, close contacts (family members and others) of a patient too

COVID-19

underwent tests. In some cases, if a person was positive, his or her close contacts too tested positive though they were asymptomatic. This showed the importance of testing for early detection, isolation, treatment, and containment, officials said.

On Saturday, 61,148 people were tested. Of these, 27,516 were primary contacts, and 8,560 were secondary contacts. Together, the

primary and secondary contacts constituted 59%, the media bulletin said on Sunday. Senior Health Department officials said that the rest of the 41% suffered from fever, Influenza-like Illness (ILI), Severe Acute Respiratory Infection (SARI), which indicated many with COVID-19 symptoms were keen to get tested.

However, whether the 41% had come into contact with other patients, or the source of infection was unknown remained unclear. With 2,924 more samples testing positive, the total came to 1,23,090. The toll stood at 818 as 10 more patients died.

As it reported 10,000 new infections for the fifth day, Andhra Pradesh had the second highest figure in the country after Maharashtra as of Sunday. With 4,24,767 infections, including 10,603 reported the previous day, Andhra Pradesh surpassed

Muted celebrations

Kerala prepares to celebrate Onam keeping in mind preventive measures in view of the pandemic. The graphs show the spread of COVID-19 in the southern States



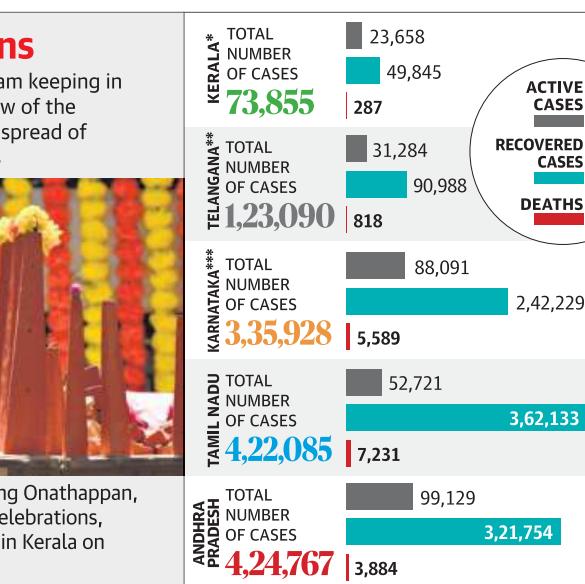
Safety first: A street vendor selling Onathappan, a clay statue used during Onam celebrations, sanitises his hand at Tripunithura in Kerala on Sunday. ■ THULASI KAKKAT

*Kerala has a mismatch of 65 cases due to unaccounted deaths, missing persons. **Telangana numbers are as of 8 p.m. on Saturday

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

Tamil Nadu. The death toll

went up to 3,884 with 88 new fatalities, the Health Department said. While the death rate in A.P. was 0.91%, it was 1.71% in Tamil Nadu.



Active cases in the State stood at 99,129 – also the second highest. The positivity rate of tests so far was 11.59%, and 63,077 more samples were tested. Tests per million ratio stood at 68,659 and confirmed cases per million at 7,954.

Karnataka's total rose further, as 8,852 new cases were reported on Sunday.

The Health and Family Welfare Department put deaths at 106 on Sunday, taking the total to 5,589. Of the total 88,091 active cases, 730 people were in ICU

Kerala reported 2,154 new cases on Sunday, and 23,658 patients were in hospitals.

The toll rose to 287, with the Health Department confirming seven more deaths. These included the death of a migrant worker from West Bengal, two deaths in Kannur, and one each in Thiruvananthapuram, Kasaragod, Kozhikode, and Thrissur.

As many as 6,495 fresh COVID-19 cases were recorded in Tamil Nadu, taking the tally to 4,22,085. As on date, 3,62,133 persons have been discharged. As many as 94 deaths were recorded, taking the tally to 7,231 deaths.

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

IN BRIEF



Kerala targets school reopening by January

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan on Sunday announced a 100-day action plan in a bid to revitalise the economy rendered sluggish by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Mr. Vijayan showcased an expanded social welfare system that offered assistance to individuals and families laid low by the contagion. He said free "food kits" would reach 88 lakh ration card holders monthly at least until December.

The government had expanded the social welfare pension net to include 48 lakh people. Each would get ₹1,300 deposited in their bank account every month.

The Chief Minister reeled off the "achievements" of his government from a prepared speech and refused to entertain questions from presspersons. He prioritised affordable health care and promised to increase the availability of doctors, paramedical staff, and modern medical devices to ordinary people who rely on State-run hospitals.

Mr. Vijayan also spoke at length on his government "achievements" in the education sector. He claimed that the government had given employment through the Public Service Commission to 1,41,615 persons.

Subsidised piped drinking water, power, and phone and internet connectivity for households, and modern dwellings for the homeless were on the top of the government's action plan.

He also announced schemes to support the traditional coir, toddy and fisheries sectors, which make up the bulk of the traditional support base of the LDF.

His announcements came ahead of local body polls in November. Kerala is also gearing up for Assembly elections in 2021.

Will request CM to ban cow slaughter: Sudhakar

BENGALURU Karnataka Medical Education Minister K. Sudhakar on Sunday said he would request Chief Minister B.S.

Yediyurappa to ban cow

slaughter, and sought a discussion in the legislature to ban beef export. "A cow is like a member of the family and it's a crime to kill cows,"

the Minister said at the inauguration of a goshala,

organised by Akhilika Vokkoota in Chickballapur on Sunday.

Karnataka BJP leader tests positive for virus

MANGALURU Karnataka BJP president and Dakshina Kannada MP Nalin Kumar Kateel has tested positive for COVID-19. He tweeted on Sunday that though he is asymptomatic he has been admitted to a hospital on the recommendation of a doctor.

Mr. Kateel asked those who came in contact with him recently to be alert.

Karnataka CM flags off RO-RO train to Solapur

The roll-on, roll-off train will transport goods from Peenya industrial area

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
BENGALURU

Karnataka Chief Minister B.S. Yediyurappa on Sunday flagged off the maiden roll-on, roll-off (RO-RO) train from Bengaluru to Solapur through videoconferencing. Divisional Railway Manager (DRM) of Bengaluru, Ashok Kumar Verma, said the first train would transport 42 loaded trucks on open flat wagons.

"As it is the first train from the city, we need to do some safety tests. Once it is done, the train will leave Nelamangala

gala to Solapur on Monday," he said.

The RO-RO train will transport goods from the Peenya industrial area. Each truck will be loaded with 30 tonnes. It will cover a distance of 682 km, via Dharmavaram, Guntakal, Raichur, and Wadi, to reach Bale near Solapur in Maharashtra. Minister of State for Railways Suresh Angadi said the trial service of the RO-RO train was introduced after studying the traffic of goods trucks between Bengaluru and Solapur since April.



Green light: The RO-RO train from Bengaluru to Solapur being flagged off from Nelamangala railway station on Sunday. ■ K. MURALI KUMAR

In toy city of Channapatna, artisans await govt. assistance

Stakeholders hope Modi's thrust on going vocal about local toys will be matched with policy initiatives to boost the sector

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MYSURU

Will Prime Minister Narendra Modi's thrust on going vocal about local toys in his Mann Ki Baat radio programme be matched with policy initiatives to shore up financial returns for artisans to retain them in the traditional sector?

That is the question asked by stakeholders in Channapatna (Ramanagaram district of Karnataka), which has earned the sobriquet of a 'toy city' or 'Gombbegala



Part of history: The manufacturing of toys in Channapatna goes back at least 200 years. ■ M.A. SRIRAM

"Once we had nearly 9,000 artisans and workers engaged in making toys and

been in the toy manufacturing and marketing business for the last 45 years.

The pandemic has forced many workers to scout for sundry jobs for survival. Some artisans have shifted to being vegetable vendors or have entered the construction sector and their children do not view the manufacture of toys as lucrative enough.

"This will have a bearing on the future of the traditional business if the artisans are not retained in the sector through higher incentives and other policy initiatives by the government," said N. Kumar, president, Karnataka Artisans' Welfare Association.

But Krishna of Kittanna Toys said diversification and innovation had helped many manufacturers fare well despite the challenges.

According to most accounts, the manufacturing of toys in Channapatna goes back at least 200 years.

INTERVIEW | URJIT PATEL

Current banking challenge most intractable one, even before COVID-19

Non-performing assets increase the borrowing cost for everyone in the economy, including good borrowers, warns former RBI Governor

PUJA MEHRA

In his first interaction with a journalist after stepping down from the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), former Bank Governor Urjit Patel spoke about his new book, Overdraft: Saving the Indian Saver, in a conversation on invitation from the Pune International Centre. Edited excerpts.

What made you write this book?

■ My teacher Professor T.N. Srinivasan used to say that in India, our macroeconomic challenges always had macroeconomic sources. In the banking sector in India, which I have observed at various distances over the last 30 years, it's the other way round. Our macroeconomic problems have created financial sector crisis periodically. The current banking challenge is the most intractable one, even before COVID. We have a tendency to make a premature pronouncement of victory over any challenge that we desire to solve. We get tired very quickly.

Look at our fiscal policy – from very high levels of fiscal deficit, we would have a couple of years of very modest declines. So, from a very high level we could go to a slightly lower high level and everyone says, 'Oh, we have now had too much fiscal consolidation so let's go back to our usual norm.' Ditto for bad debts. This does not lead to good outcomes; it just accentuates problems by storing them up.

You write, "High professional integrity

notwithstanding, the RBI's reputation has been that of a soft regulator?" Why "soft"?

■ The regulator is perceived so because of its actions to be pliable for rollback of the regulations that it puts out. Once a regulation has been issued, why is there an expectation that with enough pulls and pressures, things will get diluted? That's the credibility part of the regulator which I have described as being soft. Legally, important parts of the Banking Regulation Act are not applicable to the government banks. That does tie the hands of the banking regulator in important ways.

We are seeing a rising clamour for restructuring of loans. You have called the phrase "restructured standard asset" an oxymoron.

■ The restructuring of assets started in this particular phase before COVID. My reference is, for example, to February 2020 when the real estate commercial sector was allowed restructuring which basically means that you kick the can down the road. You effectively increase the repayment pe-

riod; maybe by making it into a new loan, evergreening etc.

The consequence is that the banks' balance sheets once again don't convey the true nature of their asset book. What a restructured standard asset label does is that it gives an NPA [Non-performing Asset] a veil of false legitimacy to hide the true nature of the asset. This phrase has been used, I think, since 2001 when the Corporate Debt Restructuring mechanism started. You know how that contributed to all the problems of the pre-2014 NPA cycle.

We need to be very cautious on how we proceed down this road. It always gives you a short-term gloss of cleanliness, but everyone knows that it is basically done to hide the bad assets. It makes banks' balance sheets untidy and adds to the sector's risk perception.

Is this what you are talking about when you caution against U-turns?

■ Yes, and there have been other instances which were of regulatory policies which had been put in place after 2014 to help with financial stability. Those have also been reversed since 2019.

There has been a series of these things that have happened including defining what constitutes a default. Over the last year/ year-and-a-half, we have seen a fair bit of reversal in the ecosystem



Over the last year/ year-and-a-half, we have seen a fair bit of reversal in the ecosystem of resolution and liquidation

of resolution and liquidation.

The discomfort the February 2018 circular may have caused among large defaulters can be guessed from what you write. What was the logic of referring cases for Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC) resolution within a day of default and refusing special concessions or exemptions selectively for the power or the real estate sectors? Have the Supreme Court's decision to strike down the February 2018 circular and the RBI's replacement circular of June 2019 hurt the IBC reform?

■ What has happened is that instead of having a rules-based process by which assets are recognised, resolved, and liquidated if necessary, we go back to an ad-hoc approach. Frankly,

every sector, if not every borrower, can come up with a good reason on why he or she did not service the loan. It is possible to do that at any point in the economic cycle. But no one mentions the years of over-borrowing and reckless lending.

It is costly to violate the principle that you have to do your debt servicing at a point in time. Once you go down this path of discretion and non-transparency, it is unfair on those sectors and borrowers who don't get a chance to have their loans recast or NPAs restructured as standard assets. Further, by locking up finance to help inefficient borrowers, we undermine growth. Most countries have a rules-based system. I don't know why we should be an exception that this sector deserves that, then another sector should get something else in terms of forbearance.

What are going to be the long-term implications of the rollbacks and NPAs remaining unresolved consequently?

■ One is that large amount of capital is locked up. Unless bad debts and NPAs are resolved or liquidated they are in state of suspended animation.

Not only I but others have called these 'living dead borrowers', who survive in name but there is hardly any productive activity.

The other is that it increases the borrowing cost of eve-

ryone in the economy, including for the good borrowers. It is in this cycle of NPAs that, for the first time, good borrowers have felt the impact of the large load of NPAs that the banks have been carrying because they have not fully benefited from the cuts in interests rates that have taken place over the last year and a half. My book does not deal with the pandemic's impact. The higher cost of borrowing for the economy is even felt by the government.

That borrowers, especially large borrowers, need not be unduly worried about their assets being taken over by someone else or eventually sold and liquidated by the bankers reinforces a poor incentive structure.

In a way, the wrong kind of borrower is more attracted to borrow from the credit markets. Some productive borrowers in the economy are probably getting crowded out in the bargain. In other words, misallocation of finance. The consequences are fairly deep. And these run for a long time, the longer the clean-up process. It is not good for the credit culture if some borrowers don't have to repay on time.

If you are a small borrower and you don't pay your loans on time, the banks without much fuss make sure one way or the other you lose out. It is the relatively larger borrowers that have this privilege.

The worry is that the roll-

back has become quite serious. Within three years if people are talking about a post-IBC world, then it is amazing that possibly the most important structural reform, to my mind, in the last six years – and it took about two years of hard work by the government to put in place – and that reversal is being, in a way, accepted. The durability of this reform has been – regrettably – short. The loss of credibility on account of the roll-back is high, and so is the cost to the economy. I have laid out the mechanisms by which you get lower growth when you have this kind of overhang of NPAs in the banking system.

You don't seem optimistic about the "likelihood of meaningful privatisation" of government-owned banks.

■ The point is that if the government owns these banks, the temptation to use them as a tool for day-to-day macroeconomic management is just too high. It is very tempting that if I need to boost investment and growth then I have a direct instrument that is even more so than monetary policy because you can use your ownership of intermediaries to increase lending and investment and hope that leads to higher growth.

If it were to privatise all these banks..., the government would lose a very important instrument in its toolkit for, what I call, tactical macroeconomic management.

One of the main points that I make is that given the state of public finances of the country, it will be difficult for the government to have a dominant banking sector and keep to its fiscal targets, which it has not been doing anyway. And, thirdly to have independent regulation – because one of the touchstones by which additional regulation is put into effect is what is the implication of this on government banks and then the government fiscal balances because government may have to put in the money to recapitalise the banks. The risk to the economy is that we should not get into a situation where the standard of banking regulation is determined by the state of government banks and the fiscal balance of the government. The regulations and capital requirement should be primarily determined by financial stability considerations.

The other risk that I point out in this area is that we may risk having the dual regulatory system where some strictures are diluted for the government banks and things are kept as they are for private banks. I hope that doesn't happen. But if the fiscal situation becomes even more difficult and recapitalisation funding becomes even more of a challenge, then that is the kind of regulatory risk that may come about.

(Puja Mehra is an independent journalist, based in Delhi)

IN BRIEF



K.S. Bajpai, former envoy to U.S., dead

Tributes pour in for veteran diplomat

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Asserting that there was no urgency to have an elected Congress president, senior leader Salman Khurshid on Sunday said he "can't see the heavens falling" for the need of a party chief as Sonia Gandhi was still at the helm and should be the one to decide on the leadership issue. PTI

Census, NPR unlikely in 2020, says official

NEW DELHI

The first phase of the Census and the exercise to update the National Population Register (NPR), scheduled for this year but deferred due to the COVID-19 outbreak, may be delayed by a year as there is no sign of slowdown of the pandemic. "Census is not an essential exercise for now. Even if it is delayed by a year, there would be no harm," a senior official said. PTI



K.S. Bajpai

ment was to be India's envoy during Indira Gandhi's tenure when the Cold War had begun to slow down new opportunities for India.

"He was an accomplished diplomat and served in Pakistan, China and the United States of America at a critical period in our history. I succeeded him as India's ambassador to Pakistan in the early 1980s," said Mr. Singh, who was a year junior to Mr. Bajpai in the IFS.

He served in Pakistan as a younger officer during the mid-1960s when the war with Pakistan broke out across the western sector. He subsequently accompanied Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri to Tashkent. His most challenging assign-

Many injured in Srinagar amid Muharram curbs

Several youth hit by pellets in upper body, including eyes

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
SRINAGAR

Many among the faithful were injured in tear-gas shelling and pellet firing on Sunday as authorities disallowed Muharram processions in Srinagar and imposed strict restrictions.

At least three policemen were injured.

Clashes broke out at Zadibal, Saigaripora, Hawal and Alamgari Bazar after the security forces used smoke shells and pellets to disperse people.

"One person was hit by pellets from a very close range in the Zadibal area and was hospitalised," said an official in a local hospital.

Many hit by pellets were treated in dispensaries. "Three youth were hit by pellets and treated locally to avoid police action," said a person from Hawal.

Hemmed in: A boy looking out from his house as a soldier stands guard during restrictions in Srinagar on Saturday. • AP

Seven youth were hit by pellets in the upper body parts, including the eyes, in the Bemina area.

"Two patients may lose sight at least in one eye," a doctor at the Shri Maharaja Hari Singh Hospital said.

All roads in Shia-majority areas in the old city were sealed after the Divisional Commissioner, Kashmir, recently decided to reimpose restrictions on religious gatherings due to the pa-

demic.

However, there was no violence during smaller processions in Baramulla and Budgam districts in the Valley as per traditions.

Peoples Democratic Party leader Suhail Bukhari condemned "the use of brute force on the peaceful Muharram procession in Kashmir."

A Jammu and Kashmir Apni Party spokesman said the curbs in Shia-majority areas "were highly regrettable."

Justice Mishra declines invites for his farewell

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Supreme Court judge, Justice Arun Mishra, who is retiring on September 2, has declined invitations from the Bar for farewell functions.

The judge, who is heading the Bench on several crucial cases, including the *suo motu* contempt against

civil rights lawyer Prashant Bhushan and the AGR dues against telecoms, cited the COVID-19 health crisis as a reason.

In a short letter to the Supreme Court Bar Association president on Sunday, Justice Mishra reiterated that he has "always considered the Bar as the mother of the judiciary".

Cong. flags Chinese build-up on border

It asks PM to spell out security plans

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The Congress on Sunday asked Prime Minister Narendra Modi to tell the upcoming session of Parliament what steps the government has taken to protect the country's border in the wake of the growing hostility with China.

Addressing a virtual press conference, Congress spokesperson Rajeev Shukla and Gaurav Gogoi, referred to a news report that China has gone in for a massive build-up of its troops and installed missile systems near Doka La and Naku La in the Sikkim region.

"The Congress party through this press conference is making a very specific demand that please give us road map of what actions will the government take. So far we have only heard words which have proved to be empty. We want an action plan as to how to boost our defence personnel, how



Ram Madhav calls for flexibility on RCEP

Government officials maintain that there is no change in India's stand

SUHASINI HAIDAR
NEW DELHI

Referring to the Indo-Pacific region as the "centre of geopolitics" in the future, BJP general secretary Ram Madhav suggested that the government could show some flexibility on the issue of joining the 15-nation Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) free trade agreement.

The RCEP grouping's ministerial meetings last week also announced they would leave the path "open for India" to join the agreement, if India were to reconsider its position before the agreement is signed this November.

"Should the decision [to walk out of] RCEP be taken as the final decision, or should we still keep one window open?" Mr. Madhav asked, speaking at a webinar organised by New Delhi-based Indo-American Friendship Association (IAFA) last week, on India's Foreign Policy under Prime Minister Narendra Modi, with the BJP.

C If you want to be a good global player, you cannot be out of all institutions and then say you want to be a global player. So India must play its cards carefully and with much more thinking in the Indo-Pacific region

RAM MADHAV, BJP GENERAL SECRETARY

April this year to reconsider its objections to giving market access for a "limited number of products", if New Delhi would rejoin.

Options open

"The Ministers... reiterated that the RCEP remains open for India given that not only had it participated in the RCEP negotiations since they were launched in 2012 but also in recognition of the potential of India to contribute to the region's prosperity," a joint statement read issued at the meeting on August .

Negotiations have made "significant progress", said RCEP country ministers in a joint statement on Thursday, with plans to finalise the RCEP agreement in November 2020. In the past few months, the RCEP Trade Negotiating Committee (TNC) has held a meeting in Indonesia in February, followed by three rounds of negotiations (29th-31st rounds) through videoconferences as well as two ministerial meetings.

India has declined to attend any of the meetings including the 8th Trade Ministerial meeting on August 27. India had also turned down a proposal from the TNC in

for other details website e-procurement market place www.e-procurement.gov.in

GOVERNMENT OF RAJASTHAN
OFFICE OF THE MEDICAL SUPERINTENDENT CUM MEMBER SECRETARY,
RAJASTHAN MEDICARE RELIEF SOCIETY, SAWAI MAN SINGH HOSPITAL,
JAIPUR
[Sawai Man Singh Road, Tonk Road, Jaipur, Rajasthan 302001]
[Phone 0141-2518308, Email-ms.smshospital@gmail.com]
No. 2278 Store/SMS/MH/2020
Jaipur dated, 25/8/2020
Notice Inviting Bid

Bids for the procurement of Heart Valves are invited from Interested bidders up to 19-9-2020 on 5.00 PM other particulars of bid may be visited on the procurement portal (<http://proc.rajarshan.gov.in>, <http://www.sppr.rajarshan.gov.in>) in the state.

UBN. No. MCJ2021GLRC00058
DPR/C/6752

SUPERINTENDENT CUM
MEMBER SECRETARY

GOVERNMENT OF ANDHRA PRADESH
WATER RESOURCES DEPARTMENT
e-procurement Tender Notice : 01/2020-21 Date: 28-08-2020
(e-auction / Reverse Tendering)

1 Tender Notice No.	1/2020-21, Dated: 28-08-2020
2 Name of work	Lining of Existing SRBC/GNNS canal upto berm level to draw 30000 Cubics in between Gorak

Rise in post-traumatic stress disorder: survey

The Web-based study reveals that COVID-19 lockdown has affected the psychological profile of people

BINDU SHAJAN PERAPPADAN

NEW DELHI

A nationwide lockdown may have prevented the COVID-19 pandemic curve from peaking earlier but it certainly has shown adverse impact on the psychological profile of people in the form of rise in post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), said a dipstick, a pan-India Web-based survey conducted via Google form during the last week of April 2020 when the nation had completed four weeks of lockdown. The survey was conducted by the Department of Community Medicine, Vardhaman Mahavir Medical College, and Safdarjung Hospital.

PTSD is a mental health condition triggered by a terrifying event, causing flashbacks, nightmares and severe anxiety and the "survey indicated that 28.2% of the population [that participated in the survey] suffered from PTSD during lockdown in India," said Anita Khokhar, under whose supervi-

Mental distress | A survey of 234 respondents was conducted to gauge the psychological impact of the COVID-19-induced lockdown

28.2% of respondents were found to have post-traumatic stress disorder

64% felt that the lockdown hadn't happened or wasn't real

55.6% had trouble sleeping

64.1% reported that they were jumpy and easily startled quite a bit; 2.6% said they experienced it in an



sion the research was carried out by Suraj Prakash Singh.

Dr. Khokhar said that ever since COVID-19 had been declared a pandemic, life had not been the same.

Uncertain future

"A nation of one billion plus was forced into a lockdown in an effort to cut the chain of transmission of the virus which has caused devastation in many countries with

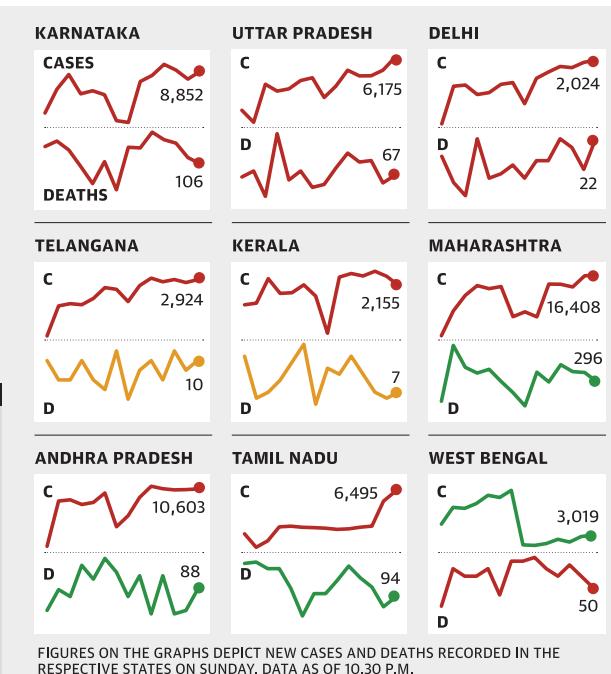
a health care system rated far superior to India. People were restricted to the confines of their homes, unable to meet family and friends or even neighbours face-to-face to interact. Also, there has been uncertainty about the future and fear of pandemic. Under such circumstances, the psychological profile of people is likely to be affected," she said.

The study was done in four weeks with recording

scaling of symptoms of PTSD from "not at all" to "extremely". It asked the participants to indicate the degree of their distress for each of 22 symptoms according to a five-point scale – 0 indicates that the symptom occurs "not at all"; 1, "a little bit"; 2, "moderately"; 3, "quite a bit"; and 4, "extremely".

The survey found the prevalence of PTSD at 28.2%. The PTSD of 13.7% participants was a clinical concern with a score, while for 8.1% PTSD was a probable diagnosis. A majority (55.6%) of participants reported that they had trouble staying asleep, 7.3% reported it "extremely". About 41.5% participants said other things kept them thinking about the lockdown.

On being asked how much they felt irritable and angry after four weeks of home lockdown, 40.2% reported it "quite a bit" and 9.4% reported it "extremely". About 37.6% reported that they



Suresh Raina's uncle's death being probed

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

CHANDIGARH

The Punjab police on Sunday said they had questioned a few suspects in connection with the case of death of a 57-year-old person at Thariyal village in Pathankot.

The deceased is an uncle of cricketer Suresh Raina.

"So far, no arrest has been made but we have questioned a few suspects and investigation is under way. A case under Sections 458, 459, 460 of the Indian Penal Code has been registered," Ravinder Singh, Deputy Superintendent of Police (Dharam Kalan), told *The Hindu*.

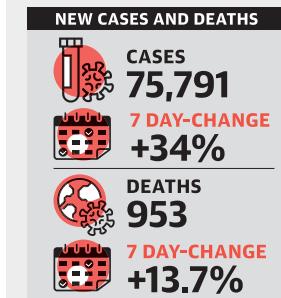
"The incident occurred on the intervening night of August 19 and 20 at Thariyal village, in which the deceased identified as Ashok Kumar, a government contractor, died and four members of the family were injured after they were attacked by a group of unidentified people. The victims were sleeping on the terrace of their house when they were attacked," he said.

Mr. Singh said Mr. Kumar, who suffered head injuries, died on the same night.

"The wife of the deceased, Asha Rani, and a son, Kaushal, are undergoing treatment at a local hospital while Satya Devi, the 80-year-old mother of the deceased, and his other son, Appan, have been discharged," Mr. Singh said.

Viral tracker

With 75,791 cases recorded on Sunday, India's COVID-19 tally stood at 36,15,494. The number of samples tested crossed the 10-lakh mark for the second time on Saturday. Graphs depict new cases and deaths in the last 14 days across select States which are classified based on where cases or deaths are rising (red), falling (green) or flattening (orange).



11,000 rescued from floods in M.P.

454 villages in 12 districts are severely battered, says CM

SIDHARTH YADAV

BHOPAL

More than 11,000 persons stuck in floods in south and west Madhya Pradesh had been rescued in the past two days by the Army, Air Force and disaster response forces, said Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan on Sunday. As many as 454 villages in 12 districts of the State were severely battered by floods, he said. "And the Narmada has broken the record of flooding in 1999," he added.

Besides, 9,300 persons had been taken to 170 relief camps.

While Mr. Chouhan apprised Prime Minister Narendra Modi of the situation on Sunday morning, at night he requested the Army for five



An Air Force helicopter rescuing people stranded in floods in Madhya Pradesh.

* SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

added. "Air-lifting of stranded persons will begin in Raissen and Sehore districts."

With Nasrullaganj and Shahganj in Sehore district as base, the Army would rescue those stranded in nearby areas. "Rain has stopped at several places. And the discharge from dams has reduced," said Mr. Chouhan. In Narela of Sehore district, rescuers took to a safe spot five persons sitting on a tree at 2.30 a.m., he added.

Extremely heavy rain

from 8.30 a.m. on Saturday to 8.30 a.m. on Sunday was recorded in west M.P. in Hoshangabad, Sehore, Ujjain, Dewas and Agar Malwa districts, said the India Meteorological Department, Bhopal.

helicopters to step up rescue efforts. Until Sunday evening, 267 persons had been airlifted by the Air Force using helicopters.

Further, two columns of the Army having 70 soldiers each were sent to Bari and Bareli in Raisen districts, he

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GETTY IMAGES/STOCK PHOTO

■ AMIT SHRIVASTAVA

Peer-to-peer learning can be best described as learning with and from each other in an informal and formal setting. It has been an integral part of a student's learning journey in the traditional educational set up. All of us learnt from other students, and teachers learnt from other teachers, through an exchange of ideas, participating in activities, working collaboratively and sharing feedback.

However, the sweeping wave of COVID-19 has shaken this status quo and presented us with the mainstreaming of e-learning. While ed-tech has played a vital role in ensuring uninterrupted learning for millions of students across the globe, it has also taken the element of inter-personal interactions out of the equation. Peer-to-peer learning has been a clear casualty.

The dynamic learning experience offered by peer-to-peer interactions is an integral element in fostering better academic performances. A study by Stanford University pegs this aspect of the

learning process as pivotal to students' ability to study better, retain information and attain academic excellence. Another report based on a survey of 1,500 students pursuing online courses indicates that greater engagement and contact between peers can elevate

the outcome of an e-learning programme as well. To understand why peer-to-peer learning is critical for the success of online education, one must understand its importance in meeting learning objectives.

Establishes one-on-one connect

Education has always been a social concept in India, so learning from peers is as critical as learning from teachers. Thus, while things are moving online, peer-to-peer learning technologies are critical for students to engage with and learn from

each other. This becomes a source of encouragement and motivates them to push boundaries and take up challenges. By evaluating each other's learning and exchanging feedback on performance, students can operate in a cooperative and active environment. This promotes accountability, kinship, interdependence and deeper understanding of concepts.

Develops critical thinking and reasoning

Collaborating to study new lessons, complete assignments and work on projects

helps students approach their course content differently. They are better equipped to critically analyse what they are studying and use logic and reasoning to process any new information. In the long run, these skills pave the way for self-education and self-directed learning.

Cognitive enhancement

Group study sessions, attempting different exercises together, and solving problems helps students internalise the habit of brainstorming. Asking questions and working together to find

answers improve the understanding of the subject matter, which automatically translates into better grades and academic performance.

Team players

The practice of peer-to-peer learning serves as a foundation to prepare students to exist and thrive in the workforce they will join as professionals. It makes them better team players who can ideate effectively, think of out-of-the-box solutions and approach a single situation from diverse perspectives.

With education moving online and expected to stay that way in the foreseeable future, embedding peer-to-peer technologies in the e-learning framework has become a necessity. P2P tech can help in fostering more holistic student-student as well as teacher-student connect. In addition to this, institutions can also encourage group connect between students through social platforms.

The emphasis has to be on creating a virtual ecosystem that facilitates learning as a community.

The writer is the CTO and Co-founder, KopyKitab.

RTE admissions open in TN



Providing opportunities for learning to all children, in an inclusive environment, is a collective responsibility of all. This has been articulated in the RTE Act 2009, through the landmark provision 12 (I) (c), for admission of children from disadvantaged and economically weaker sections in private unaided schools.

As per the admission schedule released recently by the Tamil Nadu School Education Department, parents can now apply online for the RTE quota seats. **The last date to apply is September 25, 2020.**

Parents with children between the ages of three and four (DOB: May 31, 2016 to July 31, 2017) and whose annual income is less than two lakhs per annum or belonging to SC, ST, MBC, BC and other disadvantaged groups can apply for free education through <https://link.bhumi.ngo/rte-hindu>. Their education from LKG to class 8 will be covered under RTE. The same link has details on the 25% reservation intake capacity (district and school wise details) and RTE Tamil Nadu school list.

This year, Tamil Nadu has more than 1.15 lakh seats in over 8,600 private schools where a parent can apply under RTE reserved quota.

For more information, call 8144224444 or visit www.ilavasakalvi.in. A Bhumi volunteer will call back and help with the procedure.

Learn as a community

With education moving online, embedding peer-to-peer learning technologies in the framework is essential for both students and teachers

SCHOLARSHIPS

■ Department of Electrical Engineering Junior Research Fellowship, IIT Kharagpur 2020

IIT-Kharagpur invites applications from MTech/ME/MS degree holders for the project titled, "Topological Development of a Single-Stage, High-Frequency Isolated, Modular PV Inverter with AC-Coupled Battery Integrated Operation for 1kW Solar Roof-top Application(HFI)".

ELIGIBILITY: Open for candidates who have relevant experience in PCB design of high-frequency power converters, magnetic circuit design, and VHDL coding.

PRIZES AND REWARDS: ₹31,000 per month

DEADLINE: September 2

MODE: Online only

www.b4s.in/edge/ITI3

■ ITR-DRDO Junior Research Fellowship and Research Associateship 2020

Integrated Test Range (ITR), a premier laboratory of Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO), invites applications from graduate/postgraduate/PhD degree holders.

ELIGIBILITY: For Junior Research Fellowship, candidates below 28 years with OR an M.E./M.Tech degree in first division can apply.

For Research Associateship, candidates below 35 years with age with a PhD degree in Computer Science and Engineering/IT OR hold an ME/MTech degree in Computer Science and Engineering/IT with 3 three years of research experience plus publication of at least one research paper in SCI journal can apply.

PRIZES AND REWARDS: Up to ₹54,000 per month

DEADLINE: September 4

APPLICATION: Email only www.b4s.in/edge/DRD5

■ L'Oréal India For Young Women In Science Scholarship

L'Oréal India provides educational scholarships to young women who wish to pursue their graduation in any field of science from a recognised institute in India.

ELIGIBILITY: Girls who have passed Class XII with 85% in PCB/PCM/PCMB in 2019-20 and are not above 19 years. Applicant's annual family income should be less than ₹4 lakhs.

PRIZES AND REWARDS: Up to ₹2,50,000 in instalments towards tuition fees and academic expenses.

DEADLINE: September 20

APPLICATION: Online www.b4s.in/edge/LIF2

Courtesy Buddy4Study

Be the British High Commissioner for a day

The British High Commission (BHC) invites applications from Indian women between 18 and 23 years to be 'High Commissioner for a Day', which will give the winner a chance to view the U.K.'s overseas network and experience a range of UK-India work, meet with senior stakeholders and partners to discuss the collective response to Covid-19, and launch a new BHC Gender Charter reaffirming BHC's commitment to gender equality.

To participate in the pan-India competition, record and upload a one-minute video on "What global challenges and opportunities do you see for gender equality in the age of Covid-19?" and share on Twitter, Facebook or Instagram by tagging '#UKinIndia' and using the hashtag '#DayoftheGirl'. **The last date to apply is September 13, 2020.**

Launching the competition, Jan Thompson, Acting High Commissioner to India, said: "Empowering women and girls globally is one of the U.K.'s top priorities and we continue to work with governments and partners around the world as a force for good, including in India, to make that a reality. This competition is aimed at giving our amazing young women a platform to shape the world we live in."

The British High Commission has run

the 'High Commissioner for a Day' competition annually since 2017 to celebrate the International Day of the Girl Child (October 11), to empower the next generation of women as leaders and trailblazers, and to highlight the challenges women and girls around the world still face.

In light of health and safety precautions required by Covid-19, the winner of this year's competition will be invited to participate in a virtual programme.

A jury at the British High Commission will select the winner, who will be announced on @UKinIndia social media channels by September 23. Only one entry per participant will be accepted. Multiple entries from the same person will be disqualified. The High Commission's decision is final and no correspondence relating to the above will be possible.

By applying to the competition, participants transfer the copyright ownership of their videos to the British High Commission New Delhi (BHC). BHC may use these videos to produce content for future communication on its social media channels.

Participants should not to share personal details in their video, post or tweet. The BHC is not responsible for the data that participants make public on these platforms.

 SOMAIYA VIDYAVIHAR UNIVERSITY

Ph.D. ADMISSIONS 2020-21



Preparing Transformative Leaders Through Research

With over six decades of rich experience in building and managing higher educational institutes of great repute, Somaiya Vidyavihar, located in the Vidyavihar Campus, Mumbai, has become a Private University in 2019, bringing all of its self-financing higher education institutions under it. It was enacted by an Act of the Maharashtra State Legislature, and recognised by the University Grants Commission in 2019.

The Ph.D. Research Centres under the Somaiya Self-Financing Institutes, earlier with the University of Mumbai, SNDT University and Kavikulaguru Kalidas Sanskrit University are now with the Somaiya Vidyavihar University. The University has 27 recognised departments / centres for Ph.D. research and about 100 recognised and experienced research supervisors under the various Faculties.

The University is resolute in defining a new dimension to research using freedom of possibilities. The dynamic research community at Somaiya explores need-based problems to deliver a plethora of possibilities from renewable energy to precision farming, strategies to brand value, microbial diversity to COVID predictions, culture to education among others.

Inviting Applications for admission into Full-Time Ph.D. programmes under the following Faculties:

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Computer Engineering, Mechanical Engineering, Electronics Engineering, Electronics & Telecommunication Engineering, Information Technology, Education Technology

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Physics, Chemistry, Mathematics, Life Sciences, Biotechnology, Computer Science, Environmental Science

Faculty of Management Studies

General Management, Finance, Marketing, Economics, Human Resources Management, Data Science and Technology, Operations, Logistics and Supply Chain Management, Business Analytics, Education Management

Faculty of Dharma Studies

Sanskrit Studies, Buddhist Studies, Indology, Jainism Studies, Comparative Religion, Indian Systems of Philosophy and Thought

Faculty of Education

Education, Education Technology, Education Management

Faculty of Languages & Literature

Indian Languages, English and Foreign Languages, Literatures, Linguistics

Qualifications & Eligibility

- The admission, eligibility, and the conduct of the Ph.D. Program strictly adhere to the UGC Regulations.
- Candidates possessing M.Sc / M.A / M.Com / M.Phil / M.Tech / Masters from Recognised Universities with over 55% overall marks or corresponding grades.
- Students with CSIR Scholarship / UGC NET-JRF are welcome to apply.
- Candidates are expected to have a deep understanding of their proposed area and a high level of commitment to pursue research.

Admission Process

- Candidates are required to fill the applications electronically before the deadline by submitting a completed application form available on phd-admissions.somaiya.edu.
- Admission process includes written test and a one-on-one interview.
- Those candidates selected for Ph.D. admission will be separately considered for Teaching Assistantships and Research Assistantships / Teaching & Research Assistantships of the University.
- Candidates qualified in the CSIR-UGC and other national tests for Junior Research Fellowships are exempted from the entrance test, but have to appear for interview.
- Application Processing fee: ₹ 2000/-
- Date of Ph.D. Entrance Test will be emailed to shortlisted applicants.

Somaiya Institute for Research and Consultancy (SIRAC) is the nodal center for building organic linkages across research disciplines within Higher Educational Institutes (HEIs) of the Somaiya Vidyavihar University. SIRAC coordinates Ph.D. programmes in accordance with the Statutes and Ordinances of the University. For further details contact: research@somaiya.edu

**Shripad Sinnakaar, Poet, 22, Mumbai**

Preferred pronouns: he/they (identifies as gender non-binary)
Follow for: Poems on the queer experience

When Shripad Sinnakaar was in junior college, he was bullied, perceived as effeminate. There were no friends, the authorities were not supportive, and he could not tell his parents about the bullying. So he turned to poetry. "It has been six years now, and it was initially a necessity, though amateurish," he says, of his first poems that he churned out at the rate of four or five a day. "Today, I write maybe one in four months. I'll jot down ideas and then develop them slowly." Shripad, who is doing a post-graduate degree in Philosophy at Mumbai University, says his surroundings affect him the most. "I live in Dharavi, and the space is both limiting and liberating. It's about how I fit my queer identity into this." Through his poetry, he's trying to find answers to life's complexities: if he's taken out of the space, how his poetry will change.

Read his poetry at: Medium.com/@shripadsinnakaar

Sukhdeep Singh, Editor, 31, Kolkata

Preferred pronouns: he/him
Follow for: News updates on issues affecting the LGBTQ community

Gaylaxy, an online portal for LGBTQ news from India and around the world, also features people's personal experiences in blog style, relationship and sexual health advice, and reviews of fiction and non-fiction centred around queer themes. A Hindi section since 2014 has further strengthened its roots in the community. The man at the helm is Kolkata-based Sukhdeep Singh.



A decade since its inception, some central experiences have still not changed. Says Sukhdeep, "People still write in to us with stories of rejection, abuse and bullying." Yet unlike 10 years ago, he adds, "There are so many pride events, marches, and film festivals today that it is becoming impossible for us to cover all." Today, the magazine focusses on legal debates such as the Transgender Person's Act 2019 and civil rights. "Even if the mainstream media covers LGBTQ issues more extensively now, the lens they use to write articles is heteronormative. Here we are not just the writers, we are also the readers." Visit: www.gaylaxymag.com

Navin Noronha, Standup comedian and podcast host, Mumbai

Preferred pronouns: he/him
Follow for: Engaging and humorous takes on all things queer

After three successful seasons of *Keeping It Queer*, standup comedian and podcast host Navin Noronha is planning on going solo with another podcast. Also in the works is a



web series centering around a gay man from the slums of Mumbai.

Having started in 2017, *Keeping It Queer* has seen India's social tapestry change from pre-to-post 377. Navin is joined by Farhad Karkaria, to unpack topics such as 'straight prides', queer group therapy, gay pageants, and adolescent crushes. The new podcast will likely be looking at how queerness has evolved. "The pandemic has turned everything on its head. No one goes to queer parties now; queer dating has changed, and now you have to worry about infections on two levels. The lockdown also forced many people to live with their families who might not be very accepting. It can be quite difficult and the dialogue has to include queer mental health, apart from sexual health," he says. There is however, a certain superiority among gay men, he adds, saying "We have the luxury of blending in society. For true queer independence, he adds, there has to be a movement to include more trans and intersex voices."

YouTube: Navin Noronha

Instagram: @houseofnoronha

As we approach the second anniversary of the decriminalisation of homosexuality on September 6, 2018, we put together a list of emerging voices in the LGBTQIA+ spaces. Follow their work, to understand the community better

PRIDE of the nation

:: TEAM METROPLUS

**Rafail Alom Rahman, Gender and sexuality rights leader, 29, Delhi**

Preferred pronouns: he/him
Follow for: Theology, culture and safe spaces related to homosexuality and Islam

Like many of us, Raful's sleep and work hours have turned chaotic during lockdown. The Delhi lad, founder of The Queer Muslim Project, is organising online fests from Meghalaya, where he came to visit his parents in March. He points out that living with family is

far easier for some than others: "Many from the queer community are holed up with abusive families. It is especially difficult for those who are transgender," he says.

The absence of the Project's offline meeting spaces offering friendship and support is one of the challenges of lockdown, he says, adding, "But a lot of young people are now resorting to the Internet to express themselves creatively and find a community." The Queer Muslim Project, too, has moved online. "We partnered with British Council in June and organised a month-long Digital Pride Festival. We had a bunch of artists from the queer community across South India and the diaspora. There was dance, music, and a play written by Vikram Phukan, shot on Zoom," he says.

In September, they kick off a workshop series called Queer Muslim Futures – "to imagine alternative realities, parallel worlds and the kind of future we want to inhabit."

Instagram: @thequeermuslimproject

Vivek Tejuja, Blogger and author, 37, Mumbai

Preferred pronouns: he/him
Follow for: Book reviews and conversations with authors

Books in different colours and sizes occupy most of the space in Vivek Tejuja's social media pages. He has been an avid reader from his childhood, spending all his free time in the library. "My mother introduced me to books when I was five. I haven't looked back since," he says. Vivek is the author of *So Now You Know* which was published last year and recently put on Audible. It is a memoir about growing up gay in India. "I get messages daily from queer teenagers on how it's helping them." This habit has given him the courage to embrace his gender identity at a young age. "Reading helps you introspect. Knowing that there was a world of queer literature out there and I wasn't the only one who was struggling with my identity, definitely helped and made things easy," he explains.

Vivek, who started blogging in 2009,

has also been reviewing books since then and puts up his opinions on Instagram and Facebook, along with conversations with authors. "It has helped me get to know other readers and be a part of a larger community."

Blog: Thehungryreader.wordpress.com
Instagram: @vivekisms

With inputs by Sweta Akundi, Susan Joe Philip, Sunalini Mathew, and Meghna Majumdar

Two

innovations that look at saving water so we don't waste it away

Water drop



K JESHI

One billion litres. That's the amount of water that can be saved each year if just 1% of the Chennai population makes the switch to a water saving shower filter instead of the regular one. So says Pavithra Rao, Co-founder of Water-Science, a company established in 2014, that designs and makes a range of water saving shower and tap fittings that also clean non-drinking water.

"The objective is to provide better quality water. Our shower filter saves up to 70% of water directly as it mixes water with air and as a result it is not a stream of water but a thick mist of tiny water droplets that come out of the shower," explains Pavithra, who also heads marketing and growth strategy department. Their latest innovation is aromatherapy pads infused with natural essential oils that can be fitted to the shower filter. This is an effort to upgrade the daily showering experience into that of a spa. Here Pavithra fields questions on the devices.

Are non-drinking water filtration products a part of a niche segment?

We are at a place where the drinking water



hi-NCR and Pune. In 2016, we manufactured the standard shower filter; a year later we launched the shower and tap filters. Last year, we launched a multi-flow filter, and water saving shower filter. It is bound to grow. On Amazon and Flipkart, you find companies that import such products from China and sell it here. We directly manufacture at our facility in Bengaluru.

Who develops the products?

Our co-founder Sudeep Nandukandy faced personal struggles with poor quality water. As there were no affordable and easy solutions in the Indian market, it sparked an idea. Sudeep's technical background led him to design Water-Science's flagship product, the CLEO Shower Filter. The other co-founder Mohammad Iqbal is a serial entrepreneur who has experience setting up telecom, real-estate, and retail businesses. They brainstormed and developed an entire range of shower filters and tap filters. All our products contribute indirectly to water saving by easing the stress of available water re-



sources. Globally, water availability and quality has been at a decline for the past few decades. As availability becomes an issue, quality gets compromised. It's a concern and we need to have solutions.

Why do we need a filter? We're not drinking the water.

People can use water from two sources: Municipal water and bore well. The Municipal water has chlorine to disinfect the water of microbes. Chlorine is a skin irritant and it leaves your hair and skin feeling dry. Chlorine needs to be eliminated from water. Bore well water may be hard depending on the location. The

Little drops of water

Can be wisely used and must be clean ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

hard water salts leave white deposits on taps and bathroom tiles and also a similar thing on hair and skin. Hard water salts deposited on the scalp can lead to hair breakage and hair fall. With hard water, soaps and shampoos do not lather easily, and it leaves a soapy residue. If you already have sensitive skin, the hard water can aggravate those sensitivities.

How do your products address these issues?

The shower filters alter the behaviour of calcium and magnesium in hard water so that it doesn't stick to your hair, skin, taps and tiles and instead gets washed away. It is a process called hardness conditioning. The chlorine removal layer eliminates up to 95% chlorine present in the water. A micro sieve layer traps small sediments and dust. A carbon layer removes bad smell. Your bath water thus becomes cleaner and healthier. We use a technology called KDF, patented in the US that removes not just chlorine but also heavy metals like mercury and arsenic.

A DIY KIT TO SAVE WATER FROM RO SYSTEMS

Did you know that a standalone RO system wastes three litres of water for every one litre it purifies? A team of Class X students – Piya Sharma, Aditya Tanwar, Mohammad Umar, Jeiya Khurana and Arjun Singh Bedi – from Shiv Nadar School in Gurugram have addressed this issue with an innovative solution.

The team, called Fluid Force, has rolled out a DIY set up as a part of its science project Colloquium. "The technology curriculum for Class VII to Class X introduces students to modern technology frameworks like programming, artificial intelligence, robotics, sound production, and graphic designing. We created a platform called Colloquium where students apply their skills to solve a real-world problem," says Mark Nelson, mentor of the project and IT Project Head.

This team, he says wanted to address water depletion (particularly groundwater) in local neighbourhoods. "We wanted to start with the RO systems because of the humongous wastage capacity and every drop saved here contributes to the larger goal."

The project involved designing multiple prototypes before arriving at the best possible solutions. Students Jeiya and Umar say that it is a simple mechanical set up that redirects the RO waste water to the tap for reuse. They have installed it at restaurants, residences and also at the Police Commissioner's office at Gurugram.

THE DIY SET UP

One set up is estimated to save 1,800 litres of water per day. As collecting wasted water in buckets and reusing it for household chores, washing cars, gardening and so on were not effective they designed a two-way tap with solenoid valves and sensors. It automatically cuts off the main supply and redirects the waste water to the kitchen tap making the reuse process automatic.

WHAT IS IT?

BIPOC



■ GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCK

SOMA BASU

The acronym for Black Indigenous and People of Other Colour, the term gained traction on the internet when the #BlackLivesMatter movement grew in the wake of George Floyd's death in the US in May. Young people, aware of the intersectionality of politics and culture, and unwilling to be pushed around agenda-driven impositions, brought conversations around BIPOC to the fore, to unite people of all colours and expand its ambit.

Different voices and aspirations amplified to acknowledge (rather than dehumanise) diversity in skin colour, race, and hair, it was in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic that the BIPOC movement went beyond a trend to advocate for inclusivity across all areas of life, from politics to skin care.

There is a positive impact in embracing BIPOC, says Professor Gita Sen, director of social determinants of health at the Public Health Foundation of India, Bengaluru. The force behind such a movement has to do with the narrative and who/what controls society. Everyone has the right to take care of their body, mind, and soul, she says, and agrees that the so-called norms are dictated by the domination of multi-billion dollar industries.

Invisible discrimination has damaging effect on wellness in the long run. A classic case is that of the cosmetics industry that white-

washed identities. A limited number of products that catered mostly to a particular skin colour meant that the 'me' blurs, as the mindset to surrender to outward appearances rules, and making us feel less than our real worth, says Delhi-based dermatologist Dr Navjot Arora with Manipal Hospitals. He reminds us that when communities are under-represented, they also remain outside the gamut of any medical research.

Standardising beauty norms, so that a native of Ladakh, an adivasi from Jharkhand, a tribal from Wayanad all look the same, perpetuates stereotypes, and is one of the factors for poor mental health.

The BIPOC movement can, to some extent, normalise and powerfully empower even the most ordinary, neglected and marginalised.

"People of Colour may not have a resonance in India yet and the impetus is not directly health-related but it surely has health implications," says Prof Sen.

The cross-racial movement is coming of age with BIPOC beauty brands – specifically meant for women of colour to enhance their beauty routine – now entering the market. It at least shows the recognition of the diversity. July was in fact observed as BIPOC mental health month to underline that the spectrum of existence and experience can be respected.

In this column, we decode the buzzwords in health and wellness

AN-NDNE



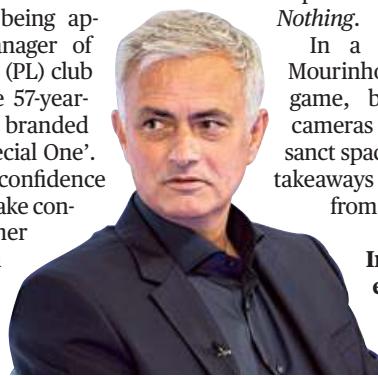
Behind the iron curtain

José Mourinho and Tottenham Hotspur of the Premier League are the focus as Amazon Prime Video returns with another season of the sports documentary series, *All or Nothing*

PRADEEP KUMAR

Highly successful and controversial both on and off the field, there is no secret to why José Mourinho is a darling of the British press.

The Portuguese football coach has never lacked confidence. Arriving in England in the summer of 2004 after being appointed as manager of Premier League (PL) club Chelsea FC, the 57-year-old memorably branded himself the 'Special One'. It is the same confidence that led him to take control of another London club in November 2019: Tottenham Hotspur, who are in a



In the first episode, you imply that the players are 'too nice' on the

difficult period of transition and struggling to assert their status in the company of big-spending, over-achieving rival clubs. Last season, too, yielded less-than-spectacular returns for the club, but the team's arduous journey is documented in the latest season of Amazon Prime Original sports docu-series, *All or Nothing*.

In a group interaction, Mourinho discussed the game, being recorded by cameras in previously sacrosanct spaces and the potential takeaways for fans of the club from the show. Excerpts:

UNDER OBSERVATION

Produced by 72 films, *All or Nothing: Tottenham Hotspur* was filmed using 25 remotely-operated fixed rig cameras and 66 ambient microphones, which were installed at Spurs' stadium and training centre besides a number of key areas like the head coach's office, first team restaurant, and home team dressing room. Director-led camera crews also followed the team around to areas not covered by the fixed rig cameras (on away fixtures, team meetings etc.).

pitch. Was that your primary challenge to tackle at Spurs?

It was. I think to play nice and to use that as a kind of protection for not getting results is not me. There are a few qualities that without them you just can't win. The process in a football team starts with the one thing that takes the most time to develop, which is the psychological profile of the group. Looking at the quality of our players when I arrived and what had happened in the past, I think that was something that we needed to improve.

How did you feel about having the cameras in?

Sometimes I forgot! I think the beauty of the filmmaker's work is that nothing is fake. People didn't

Caught on camera José Mourinho (centre) with first XI players at Tottenham Hotspur Stadium
• SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

change behaviours because the cameras were there or because they were thinking about the cameras all the time. But sometimes, I felt it was quite weird. After a certain meeting, reaction, words or approach, you feel like 'this is part of my intimacy. This is something that I don't want people to understand'. But in the end we learned how to live with it and it was fine.

What will people see that they have not seen before?

People love football. What they have in their homes normally is 90 minutes of the game and a little bit of the pre-match press conferences and after the match. But the day-to-day is something that normally is hidden behind closed doors. Twenty years ago, I couldn't have ever imagined that I would be doing this. Even 15, 10, or even five years ago, the dressing room – and when we say dressing room we mean our life behind closed doors – was quite sacred. It's like a temple. We used to say what happens inside stays inside. So to imagine that people would be able to watch a halftime team talk, along with all of the good, bad and crazy moments, is great.

You have won everything there is to win in the game. What keeps you going?

First of all, I'm very young (laughs). People think I'm very old because I have been at this level since 2002. I'm very young for a football manager. It's the kind of job where you become better with experience and not worse. A coach gets better and better until the motivation is gone. I like the challenge. I want to enjoy, and secondly I want to win more. I want to fight, I want to play and I want to coach every day. That's it.

People have preconceptions about you. Do you think this series might change them?

I don't know, but they will see the real José. Lots of people will have a perception about me, and now they can confirm if the perception is correct. The only thing that I know is what they watch is what I am as a football coach day-to-day.

HOMING IN

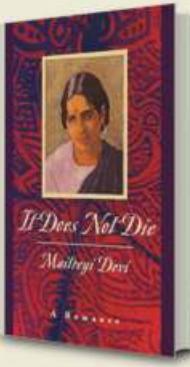
Author of *Faraway Music*, *Sita's Curse* and more, Sreemoyee Piu Kundu has also been named a United Nations Women's Young Achiever for Literature. Here she shares with us her **Reading List** recommendations

SOMA BASU

Na Hanyate by Maitreyi Devi

I have been going back to the joy of reading books in my mother tongue and recently relished this novel penned in 1974 by Maitreyi Devi, which earned her the Sahitya Akademi Award in 1976. It is a sweeping tapestry of ill-fated, young love between the author and Romanian philosopher Mircea Eliade, under the watchful eyes of Maitreyi Devi's father – a towering patriarch – when she was all of 16 and he, 23. *Na Hanyate (It Does Not Die)* was written by the author after Eliade penned *La Nuit Bengali* (titled *Bengal Nights* in English) which presented a fictionalised account of their shortlived affair. I

read it now again with a new pair of eyes, a deeper feminist message and a much bolder social commentary on women.



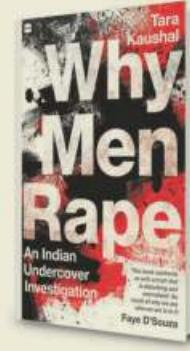
The Collected Poems of Octavio Paz (1957-1987)

I have started on *The Collected Poems* by Nobel laureate and Latin America's foremost poet, Octavio Paz. A sensualist and a humanist, Paz's book marks a landmark bilingual

powerhouse of all the poetry he has published since 1952, the year of his premier long poem, *Sunstone* (*Piedra de Sol*) was first published.

"I am where I was: I walk behind the murmur, footsteps within me, heard with my eyes, the murmur is in the mind, I am my footsteps, I hear the voices that I think, the voices that think me as I think them. I am the shadow my words cast."

Lines like this will haunt me forever.



Why Men Rape: An Undercover Investigation by Tara Kaushal

The only book new book I read during lockdown. Tara conducted an extensive undercover investigation to understand the socio-psychological reasons that make up the mind of a rapist. She chose nine men from different regions, religions and socio-economic backgrounds and visited them in their homes to interview them and their family members. Pacy and fiercely sharp, this work of non-fiction is a brave debut.

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

Bird calls until sundown

Muthu Murugan, a Coimbatore farmer, allocated half an acre of his farm land to grow millets for birds



From the soil Muthu Murugan; Scaly Breasted Munia • S SIVA SARAVANAN AND VARUN ALAGAR SURENDRAJ

says. Muthu has also spotted pigeons, crows, bats, sparrows, peacocks, parakeets, kingfishers, and squirrels amid the millet field.

And, in case they get thirsty, the birds are also welcome to visit the birdbath Muthu has thoughtfully arranged for them. "Many farmers think of birds as a menace. But, I don't see a problem with sharing what I produce with them."

Muthu sees the animals in his farm as his guests. "I don't disturb them and watch from a distance. Most of the birds come in the early morning and the late evening," he says.

The farmer has been

cultivating pulses and vegetables from a young age. "I have always cultivated them along the boundaries of my farm. But this is the first time that I have exclusively reserved a patch of my land for it," he explains adding that he grows beans, tomatoes, bitter gourd, ladies' fingers, and fodder for his cattle on the rest of his property.

"With farmers switching to cash crops and buildings taking up agricultural land, birds are not able to find food. This has reduced the bird count in our city and I want to bring them back." He uses rain water for irrigation and cow dung as manure for the millets. He also stays away from chemical pesticides. "It alters the food chain of the locality as it kills the worms and other insects,

that are food for birds and small animals."

Muthu's farm is surrounded by trees that he has planted for the birds to nest. "Some of those trees grew from seeds dropped by birds. These are all small ways of giving back to Nature."

Wildlife cinematographer Varun Alagar Surendran who visited his farm captured photographs of the birds. He says, "I could not spot the birds on my first visit. I came back the next day and photographed Ashy prinia, Scaly-breasted munia and White-rumped munia."

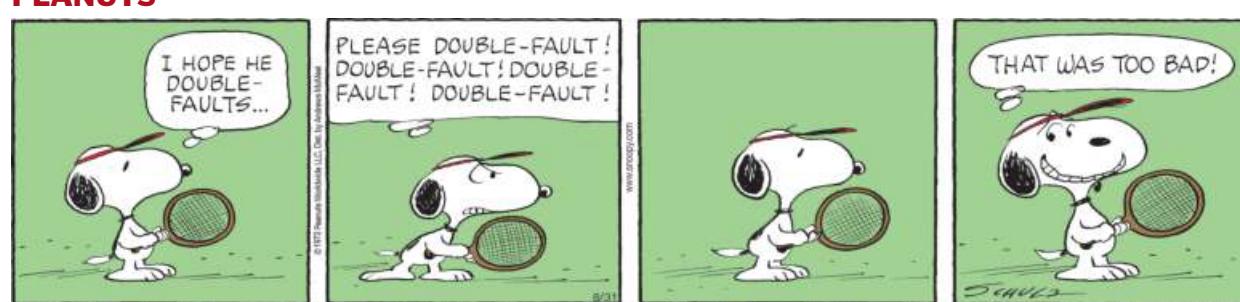
Muthu plans to continue leaving portions of his land for birds in the future. He says, "I hope this will be an inspiration to others. It is heart-warming to hear them chirp."



POOCH CAFE



PEANUTS



HAGAR THE HORRIBLE



CALVIN AND HOBBES



TIGER



PEARLS BEFORE SWINE



COVID-19 cases cross 25 million mark

While New Zealand and S. Korea are battling a second wave, Brazil is still in the throes of its first wave

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

NEW DELHI

Global COVID-19 infections soared past 25 million on Sunday, as countries around the world further tightened restrictions to try to stop the rampaging pandemic.

A million additional cases have been detected globally roughly every four days since mid-July, according to an AFP tally, with India on Sunday setting the record for the highest single-day rise in cases with 78,761.

Even nations such as New Zealand and South Korea, which had previously brought their outbreaks largely under control, are now battling new clusters of infections.

Brazil's grim tally

On the other side of the world, Latin America – the worst-hit region – is still struggling with its first wave, with COVID-19 deaths in Brazil crossing 1,20,000, second only to the United States.

Brazil's curve "has stabilised now, but at the very dangerous level: nearly 1,000 deaths and 40,000 cases per day," said Christovam Barcellos, a researcher



A new normalcy: People having their temperature checked before attending The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, which reopened on Saturday. •REUTERS

at public health institute Fiocruz. "And Brazil still isn't past the peak."

More than 8,43,000 people have died of COVID-19 globally, and with no vaccine or effective treatment available yet, governments have been forced to resort to some form of social distancing and lockdowns to stop the spread of the virus.

Masks will become man-

datory from Monday on public transport and flights in New Zealand, which went more than 100 days without local transmission before the current cluster emerged.

And tightened virus curbs kicked in on Sunday in South Korea, which is also battling fresh clusters – including in the greater Seoul region, home to half the country's population.

Masks will become man-

In Iraq, thousands of Shia pilgrims wearing gloves and masks flooded the holy city of Karbala to mark Ashura, in one of the largest Muslim gatherings since the pandemic began.

Despite the grim numbers, there has been steady opposition to lockdowns and social distancing measures in many parts of the world, often because of their crush-

ing economic cost. But resistance has also come from the extreme right and left of the political spectrum, as well as conspiracy theorists and anti-vaccine campaigners.

In Berlin on Saturday, thousands gathered to march against COVID-19 restrictions – but police later stopped the rally because many participants were not respecting social distancing measures.

Some cheer in New York

There was some cheer on Saturday in New York, once among the world's biggest COVID-19 hotspots.

Visitors raised their arms, clapped and lined up to get tickets as New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art reopened its doors to the public in a festive atmosphere after a six-month closure. Tracy-Ann Samuel, who came with her daughters aged four and nine, said she couldn't wait to again be "surrounded by beautiful art". "It means that there is some semblance of normalcy," Ms. Samuel said. "The Met has been a part of New York history for over 150 years... So this is a big first step."

Singapore to offer free tests to taxi drivers, hawkers

Its Health Ministry says this is due to their 'high frequency of interactions' with the public

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

SINGAPORE

Singapore will offer free COVID-19 tests to community groups such as taxi drivers, food delivery workers and hawkers as part of efforts to expand the COVID-19 testing regime, the Ministry of Health (MOH) has said.

While there has been "no local evidence" that these groups are at a higher risk of

being infected, they will be offered tests "given the nature of their working environment, such as the high frequency of interactions with the members of the public," the MOH said.

The costs of the tests will be fully borne by the government, it said on Saturday, adding that authorities will reach out to the groups progressively. The Ministry on

Sunday reported 54 new COVID-19 cases.

The new cases included eight cases from the community and seven imported. The rest were migrant workers. To date, Singapore has 56,771 confirmed COVID-19 cases. With 110 more patients discharged from hospitals, 55,447 have fully recovered from the infection.

Meanwhile, the MOH has

also reiterated that makeshift face coverings such as bandanas, scarves and neck gaiters should not be used, as per the recommendations of the task force tackling the pandemic.

Noting that there have been recent queries on the efficacy of such makeshift coverings in preventing disease transmission, the MOH said that they may not perform as well as purpose-

built masks as they may not have a good fit around the wearer's nose and mouth and are made from materials that are not specific for disease prevention.

A mask should be worn such that it closely and completely covers the wearer's nose and mouth, without leaving a gap between the mask and the face, the Ministry added.

Ghani names council for peace deal with Taliban

It will be headed by Abdullah Abdullah

ASSOCIATED PRESS

KABUL

Afghanistan's President has appointed a council for national reconciliation, which will have final say on whether the government will sign a peace deal with the Taliban after what are expected to be protracted and uncertain negotiations with the insurgents.

The negotiations were envisaged under a U.S.-Taliban peace agreement signed in February as intra-Afghan talks to decide the war-torn country's future. However, their start has been hampered by a series of delays that have frustrated Washington. Some had expected the negotiations to begin

earlier this month. Afghan President Ashraf Ghani issued a decree late on Saturday establishing the 46-member council, led by his former rival in last year's presidential election, Abdullah Abdullah, who is now in the government.

The High Council for National Reconciliation is made up of an array of Afghan political figures, including current and former officials, and nine women representatives, one of whom was named Mr. Abdullah's deputy. Mr. Ghani also appointed former President Hamid Karzai to the council but his predecessor rejected the appointment in a statement on Sunday.

The move comes two months ahead of the general election, with Mr. Trump playing down the threat of foreign interference and accusing Democrats of leaking sensitive information.

"Probably Shifty Schiff, but others also, LEAK information to the Fake News," the President tweeted on Saturday, referring to House Intelligence Committee chair-

man Adam Schiff. He offered no evidence for the claim, which he has made several times during his presidency.

Congress will still have access to classified written reports, but lawmakers will no longer be able to question of

ficials from the Office of the Director of National Intelligence (ODNI) about what they learn.

Democrats furious
Democrats in Congress reacted with fury, describing

the move as "shameful" and accusing Mr. Trump of covering up Russian interference. "As usual, President Trump is lying and projecting. Trump fired the last DNI for briefing Congress on Russian efforts to help his campaign," Mr. Schiff tweeted. "Now he's ending briefings altogether. Trump doesn't want the American people to know about Russia's efforts to aid his re-election."

Mr. Schiff and House Speaker Nancy Pelosi called in a separate statement for the administration and intelligence community to resume the briefings.

"If they are unwilling to, we will consider the full range of tools available to the House to compel compliance," they said.

'Hezbollah open to new Lebanon pact proposal'

Nasrallah responds to Macron's call

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

BEIRUT

Hezbollah chief Hassan Nasrallah said on Sunday that his powerful Iran-backed Shia movement is "open" to a French proposal for a new political pact for Lebanon.

"On his latest visit to Lebanon, we heard a call from the French President for a new political pact in Lebanon..."

His comments came a day before French President Emmanuel Macron was due in blast-hit Beirut for his second visit in less than four weeks to press for political reform and reconstruction in tandem with the start of political consultations to name a new Lebanese Premier.

Western leaders have joined calls from Lebanese at home and abroad for deep-rooted political change after the explosion

at Beirut port killed more than 180 people and laid to waste entire districts of the capital.

"On his latest visit to Lebanon, we heard a call from the French President for a new political pact in Lebanon..."

His comments came a day before French President Emmanuel Macron was due in blast-hit Beirut for his second visit in less than four weeks to press for political reform and reconstruction in tandem with the start of political consultations to name a new Lebanese Premier.

Mr. Nasrallah said his movement would be "cooperative" in the formation of a government capable of spearheading reform and reconstruction.

TikTok's sale in U.S. may need China's approval

Beijing formulates new export rules

REUTERS

BEIJING/SHANGHAI

China's new rules around tech exports mean that ByteDance's sale of TikTok's U.S. operations could need Beijing's approval, a Chinese trade expert told state media.

ByteDance has been ordered by President Donald Trump to divest short video app TikTok – which is challenging the order – in the United States amid security concerns over the personal data it handles.

Microsoft Corp and Oracle Corp are among the suitors for the assets, which also includes TikTok's Canada, New Zealand and Australia operations.

However, China late on Friday revised a list of technologies that are banned or restricted for export for the first time in 12 years and Cui Fan, a professor of international trade at the University of International Business and Economics in Beijing,

said the changes would apply to TikTok. ByteDance said on Sunday it noted the Friday revisions to China's technology exports list and that it would strictly abide by the rules when dealing with related matters, according to a statement it posted on its official account on Jirui Toutiao, a news aggregator app it owns.

China's Ministry of Commerce added 23 items to the restricted list. It can take up to 30 days to obtain preliminary approval to export the technology.

TikTok's secret weapon is believed to be its recommendation engine that keeps users glued to their screens. Mr. Cui noted that ByteDance's development overseas had relied on its domestic technology that provided the core algorithm and said the company may need to transfer software codes or usage rights to the new owner of TikTok from China to overseas.

CIA un-censors post-9/11 memoir of former FBI agent

Restored sections in Ali Soufan's book add new details to the United States' fight against al-Qaeda

CAROL ROSENBERG

WASHINGTON

After a group of al-Qaeda suspects was captured in September 2002, the CIA flew Ali Soufan, an experienced FBI counterterrorism agent, to Afghanistan to help interrogate them. But when he arrived, CIA officials abruptly sent word to keep him from the two most significant new detainees.

Mr. Soufan had made enemies for opposing the CIA's abusive interrogation of its first prized prisoner, Abu Zubaydah. He eventually won permission to question the two detainees after all, but when he sought to tell the world about those sessions in his 2011 memoir, the CIA censored much of his account as classified.

Nine years later, and after a lawsuit, the CIA has relented. W.W. Norton will republish his book next month under the revised title *The Black Banners (Declassified): How Torture Derailed the War on Terror After 9/11*. Its restored sections add new

details to the history of the United States' early post-Sept. 11 fight against al-Qaeda.

The lesson of the release, Mr. Soufan said in an interview, is "if you fight for the truth hard enough, eventually you will win."

2014 declassification

In the interim, some of what Mr. Soufan sought to discuss has become public, including in the 2014 declassification of a lengthy summary of a landmark Senate study about CIA torture. But his book adds richer details about how FBI interrogators manipulated detainees into divulging information – using rapport-building tactics, he says – and offers a preview of how Mr. Soufan might testify in the delayed military commission case at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, against five men accused of conspiring in the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks.

Defence lawyers may try to suppress what Binalshibh told Mr. Soufan, too, as contaminated by Binalshibh's detention in CIA custody. As Mr. Soufan tells it, he persuaded the prisoner to talk without inflicting abuse by leading him to believe that Mr. Soufan already knew

everything anyway and it was in his interest to cooperate. The CIA allowed Mr. Soufan to republish his book without the black bars that had concealed those kinds of details after a journalist and documentary filmmaker sued the agency. It then conducted a new review and deemed nearly all of the contents unclassified.

One of the most significant restored sections in the book recounts the agent's interactions with Zubaydah, who was captured badly wounded. Mr. Soufan helped keep him alive and then got

him talking in a hospital room, for what the agent described as a conversation that lasted about 10 days.

Crucial revelation

According to the book, the accidental act of showing Zubaydah a wrong photograph while asking about someone else helped Mr. Soufan uncover a crucial fact: Mohammed was the planner of the Sept. 11 attacks. Three years later, in 2005, the CIA misled the Justice Department into believing that big break followed its use of "enhanced interrogation techniques" when seeking renewed legal blessing for its torture programme.

Mr. Soufan also describes how the FBI learned from Zubaydah about a Latino terrorist recruit with an American passport who had vague aspirations – though no real-world ability, in Zubaydah's view – to detonate a radioactive "dirty" bomb in the United States. This led to the identification and arrest of Jose Padilla. NY TIMES

him talking in a hospital room, for what the agent described as a conversation that lasted about 10 days.

One of the most significant restored sections in the book recounts the agent's interactions with Zubaydah, who was captured badly wounded. Mr. Soufan helped keep him alive and then got

CM YK

ASK US

N. SREE KANTH

Q. I am a State government employee. I deposited ₹1.50 lakh in my PPF account. The department is deducting ₹72,000 towards my NPS account. (This is the mandatory 10% basic + DA deduction). Can I claim a deduction of ₹50,000 u/s 80CCD(1B) on behalf of this NPS saving? I have not made any other voluntary deposit in this account.

RAVINDER SINGH

A. Amounts contributed by your employer towards NPS are covered under 80CCD(1) and 80CCD(2) towards employee and employer contributions, respectively. Any voluntary contribution towards NPS shall only be covered under 80CCD(1B), thus the additional ₹50,000 benefit prescribed cannot be claimed by you under 80CCD(1B) as no voluntary contribution has been done.

However, benefits can be availed for NPS contributions under 80CCD(1) and 80CCD(2) done by your employer on behalf of you and your employer in the following manner.

80CCD(1) limits are clubbed with 80CCE limits and as you have exhausted the same through your contribution towards PPF (under 80C), you will not be eligible for any claim over and above ₹1.50 lakh. With respect to 80CCD(2), you may claim a maximum deduction of 10% of basic plus DA (for non-central government employees) and the same is outside the purview of ₹1.50 lakh (80CCE) and ₹50,000 (80CCD(1B)). You may take the break-up of the ₹72,000 from your employer and claim the deduction based on the explanations provided above.

Q. My daughter has received some amount from the sale of unlisted shares owned by her. She already owns a residential flat. She has held the shares for more than two years. Can she buy another residential property or 54EC bond to claim tax exemption?

SHOWKATHALI M.K.

A. As the unlisted shares were held for over 2 years, they are long-term capital assets. She is eligible for exemption under section 54F as she owns only one residential property as on the date of sale of the unlisted shares and exemption under section 54EC will also apply to her provided the investment is made within 6 months of date of sale.

Q. My daughter (married) is studying DNB (post graduation after MBBS) in a private hospital. This course is conducted by the National Board of Diploma of GOI. This is a 3-year course. She is paying ₹1.25 lakh as tuition fee annually.

She is also getting ₹50,000 as monthly stipend. In 2019-20 PY, she received ₹5 lakh in stipend. The hospital authorities are deducting I-T monthly.

1) I want to know whether the stipend income is taxable?

2) If so, can the 'tuition fee' be deducted from gross income?

3) As source deduction of tax has already been made, she is bound to file returns. If the stipend is not taxable, how can this income be shown in the returns?

4) If the tuition fee cannot be shown as deduction in her return, can the same be done in my return?

V.P. SOMASEKHARAN

A. 1. Stipend received by doctors pursuing higher education from private hospitals is a taxable income and considered as emoluments towards performing duties like a full-time doctor while gaining experience and is not perceived as monies received towards scholarship for education. Only amounts received towards scholarship is exempt under tax. Income tax is to be paid in accordance with slab rates applicable for individuals.

2. No, deductions for payment of tuition fee is not allowed from stipend income as this tuition fee paid is not connected with the earning of the stipend.

3. If the hospital is providing Form 16, the same is to be declared under "Income from Salaries", if provided with Form 16A, the same is to be declared under "Income from Other Sources" or "income from business or profession" under applicable ITR.

4. Deduction towards tuition fee paid for two children can be claimed by the parent if the fee is paid to a registered university, school or an education institution based in India for full-time education courses under Section 80C. In your case, as your daughter is paying the fee herself, you cannot claim any deduction in this regard;

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

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

LOOSE CHANGE

RAVIKANTH



"Er, that's out of service..."

A letter to the investing CLASS OF 2020

Surging stocks amid sinking earnings is a paradox encountered by investors amid an economic morass

VIDYA BALA

Dear new investors of 2020, this is one of the strangest of times to start investing. Whether you make a success out of your investment journey or call it quits will depend on what you make of this year!

I said these are the strangest of times to invest. Here's why.

When your stock market valuations hit a new high – with an early 30s price-earnings ratio – and your GDP growth is at a decadal low – that's strange.

When you have lending rates at multi-decadal lows and yet there is little growth in loans, that doesn't seem normal!

When the Nifty bounces back 50% from its March lows but saw its June quarter earnings fall more than half over a year ago, it is odd.

When nobody wants to buy anything, for fear of running down their savings in these tough times, the consumer inflation is at a peak 6.9%. That seems weird.

When there is no certainty of a tomorrow in the COVID-19 times, but brokerages see a meteoric rise in new brokerage accounts 'to build wealth,' it is bizarre!

When bank FD rates are stretching to touch 6% and you have a google newsfeed article crying 'Yield up to 10.53%'. This company offers high returns; it's, well, freaky!

Well, I could list another half a dozen strange things but let's look at why these seem strange.

Greed or fear?

You learnt that markets factor



IMAGING: J.A. PREMKUMAR

why your GDP growth is at decadal low.

in earnings growth. They may factor in several years of growth if there is visibility and afford it a premium too! But, what if the way forward is unclear? What if the present numbers talk a bleak picture? Shouldn't the market stop flaunting high valuations?

This is the point. Returns, when they turn irrational, should teach you to fear, to be sceptical. If you've been doing the reverse, it is time to introspect!

The RBI may have cut its interest rates to levels that may seem attractive for you to buy a house now.

But, will you buy one now, when there is a risk of job loss or pay cut? It's the same with companies. When keeping their house afloat is critical, no company is going to borrow to build new plant(s)! Therefore,

rate cuts aren't really helping the economy. And this is why the growth picture remains unclear!

A single stock – Reliance Industries – pushed up the bellwether index Nifty to lofty levels, buttressed by a string of private equity deals in Jio Platforms. One swallow does not make a summer!

For the rest of the corporate world, there is neither credit nor capital, with smaller companies having to dip into their reserves to keep themselves afloat. It is the rest of the corporate world that the real economy is reflective of. And, that is

COVER NOTE: CORPORATE AGENTS

Have good company for your insurance journey?

Corporate agents provide an array of policy choices, multi-locational services but should clients entirely ignore individual agents?

K. NITYA KALYANI



Two to tango: Corporate agents could offer 3 insurers' offerings as opposed to one that an individual agent offers. • GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCK

In the last decade and a half, the insurance industry has significantly widened its channels of distribution. Earlier there were only agents selling personal insurance. Now, not only has the number of agents boomed, several other channels of insurance sales have also been created giving us choice.

Corporate agents, including bancassurance partners, insurance marketing firms and insurance brokers are the offline, or old-fashioned person-to-person sales channels. You can buy online from web aggregators and insurance companies directly.

Digital insurance

India even has digital insurance companies with little physical infrastructure or network, offering their products and services only in cyberspace.

Corporate agents, as opposed to individual agents, are organisations / institutions that are licensed by insurance companies to sell the latter's pro-

ducts. They can be one of a wide variety, like a limited liability partnership, companies, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), microfinance institutions (MFIs) and non-banking financial companies (NBFCs) can also take up selling panchayats or local authorities. Non-governmental organisations (NGOs), microfinance institutions (MFIs) and non-banking financial companies (NBFCs) can also take up selling

insurance through corporate agency. A corporate agent can sell life, non-life or health insurance policies, or acquire a composite licence and sell a combination of any two of these or all three. They can represent up to three companies in each category. So, you will be able to access more types of policies from a corporate agent as you have three insurers' offerings to choose from as opposed to one company's policies from an individual agent.

Policy claims

Policy claims can occur years after purchase, or in another city. This is where a corporate agent, with business continuity, becomes handy as someone in the organisation would be handling the portfolio. A corporate agent with a wide network can provide service across locations.

The other advantages of dealing with an organisation is that its financial and legal status are specified and vetted by the

Both corporate agents and individual agents are supposed to "render necessary assistance to the policyholders or claimants or beneficiaries in complying with the requirements for settlement of claims by the insurer" as per IRDAI norms

regulator for registration and continuously monitored through reporting systems and inspection afterwards. So are its structure, infrastructure, choice of officials, their qualifications and suitability for the role and qualification, training and other requirements of the actual selling staff.

Corporate agents are bound by a similar code of conduct as individual agents with regard to proper disclosure, transparency and putting your needs and requirements first.

They are both supposed to "render necessary assistance to the policyholders or claimants or beneficiaries in complying

with the requirements for settlement of claims by the insurer," says the IRDAI regulation, while outlining a code of conduct for them. It is seen commonly though that this assistance is not forthcoming.

With the advent of TPAs in health insurance and vehicle service centres having tie-ups for cashless processing of claims, the claims' support role of agents, including individual agents, is getting ignored entirely to our disadvantage.

Given all these, do you choose an individual agent or corporate agent? (Or, one of the other types of intermediaries we will be looking at?). The answer lies in your clarity regarding your insurance and servicing needs; like, if your professional life results in mobility.

The relationship you have with your intermediary will, of course, be the icing on the cake!

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

Bank fixed deposit rates

Bank Name

Highest Slab
1-year tenure
3-year tenure
5-year tenure

SMALL FINANCE BANKS

	8.25	7.25	8.10	8.25
Utkarsh Small Finance Bank	8.00	7.25	7.25	7.25
Jana Small Finance Bank	7.50	6.90	7.50	7.00
Fincare Small Finance Bank	7.50	6.95	7.20	6.50
Equitas Small Finance Bank	7.35	7.10	7.15	6.75
ESAF Small Finance Bank	7.00	7.00	6.50	6.00
AU Small Finance Bank	6.75	5.50	6.75	6.50
Capital Small Finance Bank	6.65	6.50	6.50	6.25
Ujjivan Small Finance Bank	6.50	6.50	6.05	5.80

PRIVATE SECTOR BANKS

	7.25	7.00	7.25	6.75
RBL Bank	7.00	6.75	6.75	6.75
IDFC First Bank	7.00	6.75	6.75	6.75
IndusInd Bank	7.00	7.00	6.75	6.75
DCB Bank	6.95	6.50	6.95	6.95
Nainital Bank	6.50	5.40	5.50	5.50
Lakshmi Vilas Bank	6.25	6.00	6.00	6.00
Bandhan Bank	6.00	5.75	5.75	5.75
Tamilnad Mercantile Bank	6.00	5.90	5.75	5.75
Karur Vysya Bank	6.00	5.50	5.65	5.65
CSB Bank	5.75	5.25	5.75	5.75
City Union Bank	5.75	5.50	5.75	5.50
Karnataka Bank	5.70	5.50	5.65	5.65
South Indian Bank	5.50	5.40	5.50	5.50
Dhanlaxmi Bank	5.60	5.25	5.50	5.50
Federal Bank	5.50	5.35	5.50	5.50

FOREIGN BANKS

	6.25	4.00	4.75	6.25
Deutsche Bank	6.25	4.00	4.75	6.25
DBS Bank	5.20	4.15	4.70	5.20
HSBC Bank	4.00	3.15	4.00	4.00
CitiBank	3.90	3.00	3.80	3.90

FD rates as on August

TV PICKS

US Open: SS Select 1 (SD & HD), 8.30 p.m.; SS Select 2 (SD & HD), 9.30 p.m.

IN BRIEF



LaLiga says contract still valid; Messi skips test

BARCELONA
LaLiga on Sunday released a statement saying Lionel Messi's Barcelona contract was still valid hours after he failed to attend a pre-season medical on Sunday. The ruling body said the only way for the Argentine forward to be released from the contract was to trigger a €700-million release clause. REUTERS



Bucks down Magic, make second round

MIAMI
Milwaukee Bucks powered into the second round of the NBA playoffs on Saturday. Reigning NBA Most Valuable Player Giannis Antetokounmpo scored 28 points and grabbed 17 rebounds as the Bucks beat Orlando Magic 118-104.

The results: Milwaukee Bucks 118 (Antetokounmpo 28, Middleton 21) bt Orlando Magic 104 (Vucevic 22) **Bucks win series 4-1;** Houston Rockets 114 (Harden 31, Covington 22) bt Oklahoma City Thunder 80 **Rockets 3-2;** LA Lakers 131 (Davis 43, James 36) bt Portland Trail Blazers 122 (McCollum 36, Anthony 27) **Lakers win series 4-1.** AFP



Arsenal lifts Community Shield

London
Arsenal beat Liverpool 5-4 on penalties on Saturday to lift the FA Community Shield, the curtain-raiser for the English domestic season, after the two sides played out a 1-1 draw on a chilly afternoon at Wembley.

ASBC webinar underlines safety of boxers

Y.B. SARANGI

KOLKATA
In the first international boxing webinar, organised by the Asian Boxing Confederation (ASBC), the continental body advised various stakeholders to give priority to safety while holding training camps.

Stressing the well-being of athletes, ASBC executive director Ali Salameh said the high number of COVID-19 cases in different countries forced ASBC to postpone all events, including the Asian championship scheduled in India towards the end of the year, to 2021.

ASBC Medical Commission member Dr. Karanjeet Singh spoke about the symptoms of COVID-19, its transmission, treatment, precautionary measures, training restrictions and ways to do contact and non-contact training.

About sparring, an essential part of contact training, Dr. Karanjeet said, "The virus can spread if a person is affected. It will not, if the person is not affected."

He suggested a bio-secure environment, including limited access to gym and team training (for less than 10 persons) with minimum personal space of 10 feet, for contact training.

If a boxer is preparing for a competition, then he/she should be prepared to self-quarantine for 14 days, Dr. Karanjeet said.

Bubble-wrapped US Open unfolds today

Back at the Slams

1 The first of Djokovic's 61 Majors without at least one of Federer and Nadal

3 Grand Slam champions in the men's singles draw (Djokovic, Cilic and Murray). Women, in contrast, have 10

4 Only four of the world's top-10 women will be in the fray, making it the weakest in history. In all, 23 of the top-100 will be missing

6 The sixth edition since a woman defended the US Open crown (Serena, 2014). Andreescu's pull-out continuing the trend

10 Top-20 men's seeds below the age of 25, the most since the 2009 US Open (10)

12 The 12th edition since a man has defended the US Open title (Federer, 2008) after Nadal's withdrawal this edition

17 The previous instance of the US Open not having both its defending champions came 17 years ago in 2003. Pete Sampras retired after winning in 2002, while Serena withdrew with an injury

A look at some interesting numbers ahead of the US Open which begins on Monday (Aug. 31)

21 The last time a Grand Slam didn't feature both Nadal and Federer was the 1999 US Open

■ If Djokovic wins his 18th Slam, he will pull within one title of Nadal and two of Federer in the all-time Major tally

■ Three-time Flushing Meadows champion Kim Clijsters is returning from retirement for her first Grand Slam since the 2012 US Open

■ If Djokovic wins his 18th Slam, he will pull within one title of Nadal and two of Federer in the all-time Major tally

■ Murray, winner in New York in 2012, will be playing only his third Slam in three years, the 2019 Australian Open, where he lost in the first round, was his last

■ Apart from Arthur Ashe Stadium and Louis Armstrong Stadium, no other court will have linespeople. Calls will be made by Hawk-Eye, which will also identify foot faults

COMPILED BY N. SUDARSHAN



MONDAY'S PICKS

- | Men | Women |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1-Djokovic vs. Dzumur | 1-Pliskova vs. Kalinina |
| 4-Tsitsipas vs. Ramos-Vinolas | 4-Osaka vs. Doi |
| 5-Zverev vs Anderson | 6-Kvitova vs Begu |
| 7-Goffin vs Opelka | 8-Martic vs Martincova |

Djokovic, Serena start favourites

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
NEW YORK

The US Open becomes the first Grand Slam of the COVID-19 era when it starts on Monday in a spectator-free bubble at Flushing Meadows following a troubled build-up that saw several top stars withdraw over coronavirus fears.

Novak Djokovic and Serena Williams headline a tournament that will be unrecognisable from previous Slams due to strict safety protocols that were still not enough to convince some of tennis' biggest names to travel to New York.

High-profile absentees

Defending champion Rafael Nadal and women's No. 1 Ashleigh Barty are among high-profile absentees at the US National Tennis Center.

Raucous crowds are a hallmark of the US Open, but this time the cavernous Arthur Ashe Stadium will be eerily empty. The players are being kept in a tightly controlled environment with regular testing throughout the tournament. Any competitor who tests positive once the event has started will be automatically withdrawn.

Most competitors are stay-

ing at one of two hotels about 30 minutes from the venue. A few, including Djokovic and Williams, have chosen to stay in private homes where they must pay for 24-hour security approved by the United States Tennis Association (USTA).

The absence of World No. 2 Nadal and Swiss legend Roger Federer, who is recovering from knee surgery, give Djokovic a golden chance to close the gap on his fierce rivals in the records race. A win would take the 33-year-old to 18 Grand Slam titles, behind Nadal on 19 and Federer on 20.

Djokovic has captured five of the past seven men's singles Slam crowns and is overwhelming favourite to capture a fourth US Open title.

A depleted women's field hands Serena a gilt-edged opportunity for a 24th career Grand Slam title to match Margaret Court's all-time record.

Paire tests positive
France's Benoit Paire, the 17th seed, tested positive for COVID-19 and pulled out of the tournament. He was scheduled to play Poland's Kamil Majchrzak in the first round.

Djokovic wins 35th Masters crown



Novak Djokovic with the trophy. ■ AP

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Novak Djokovic tied Rafael Nadal's record by earning his 35th title at a Masters 1000 tournament, overcoming a sluggish start to beat Milos Raonic 1-6, 6-3, 6-4 in the Western & Southern Open final on Saturday and improve to 23-0 this season.

Djokovic was listless in the first set.

It took all of 30 minutes for Raonic, a Canadian ranked No. 30, to take that set. But Djokovic asserted himself in the second set, breaking to lead 3-2 with a backhand passing shot and raising his right fist.

In the third, Djokovic broke twice more, and eventually the 33-year-old from Serbia was raising his arms to mark his 80th career title and 61st on hard-courts.

Djokovic-led move to form players' body opposed by Federer and Nadal

N. SUDARSHAN

The Novak Djokovic-led move to form Professional Tennis Players Association (PTPA), a breakaway players' body outside the Association of Tennis Professionals (ATP), has set alarm bells ringing. The World No. 1 is the current head of the ATP Player Council, but is understood to have resigned along with Canadian Vasek Pospisil and American John Isner.

The PTPA said that it was not aiming to replace the ATP, with Pospisil announcing that it was "simply to unify the players and have an impact on decisions being made that affect our lives and livelihoods."

Last year, Pospisil and Djokovic were at the forefront of

pressuring the Grand Slams to increase the total prize money. The contention was that at less than 20% of the total revenue earned by a Major, the payout was far too low.

The nuanced position Andy Murray took on Saturday was reflective of this when he called on the Grand Slams to increase compensation, and said that he was not totally against a players' union. The Brit didn't join PTPA because he wanted the current ATP management to be given more time, and for women to be part of the conversation.

While Nadal publicly questioned the timing of Djokovic's move – in the middle of a global pandemic – the health

crisis appears to have accelerated it. When tennis ground to a halt in March, those in the lower rung reeled for months without income.

A player-led initiative came up with a relief fund, but the fact that it was left to a section of players to bail out the rest showed that the pay structure was flawed.

Bopanna's opinion

India's top doubles player Rohan Bopanna, while signing up for the new body, told *The Hindu* that the players' voice went unheard, both in the past and during the lockdown. "The communication has been very poor," he said.

India's top-ranked singles player Sumit Nagal is joining PTPA too.

Tennis has always prided itself on treating players as "independent contractors" who are solely in control of their destinies. But with points and ranking, the two things that define a player, being the preserve of the ATP, are they truly independent? The ATP also co-owns tournaments, making its position as a players' representative questionable.

It is this very structure that the PTPA, a players-only body, is challenging by giving itself collective bargaining power rather than being treated as "independent contractors."



Stick together: Federer and Nadal feel that this is the time to stand united and not go separate ways. ■ FILE PHOTO

Lakshya Institute sets its target high

KAMESH SRINIVASAN

NEW DELHI

Delighted with the Rashtriya Khel Protsahan Puraskar, the Lakshya Institute has set its target high and has vowed to help athletes win Olympic medals.

After being set up in 2010 to nurture budding talent and achieve sporting excellence, Lakshya has supported more than a 100 players across nine disciplines. It has helped them win 238 international and 445 national medals, spending about ₹13 crore on them.

It supported 12 athletes to represent the country in the last two Olympics in London and Rio.

"With the award comes the responsibility. Our aim is to help as many athletes as we can. With the pandemic, the financial situation of the corporate world will be down. Challenge is to sustain



Honour: Lakshya Institute president Vishal Chordia, centre, secretary Sunder Iyer, left, and Abhijit Kunte with the Rashtriya Khel Protsahan Puraskar. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

through this period and not let our players down," said Sunder Iyer, secretary of Lakshya Institute.

At the moment, Lakshya supports 40 players across eight disciplines.

Boxers Pooja Rani and Simranjit Kaur have qualified for the Tokyo Olympics. It has seven more hopefuls eyeing Tokyo berths.

Sharath Kamal, Rutuja Bhosale, Viniti Gujrathi, So-

nia Lather, Sunil Kumar and Swapnil Kusale are some of the leading players supported by Lakshya. Top shooters like Rahi Sarnobat and Anjum Moudgil had also enjoyed the city's support.

"The focus last decade was to ensure many players represented the country in the Olympics. The focus for the next decade will be on how players can start winning more medals for India in the Olympics," said Sunder.

Lakshya has utilised the services of 19 mentors, 28 sports science experts in guiding the players.

Vishal Chordia, the president of Lakshya, received the award in Pune, on the National Sports Day. The team of Lakshya thanked the numerous sponsors from the corporate world who had extended invaluable support.

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"The focus last decade was to ensure many players represented the country in the Olympics. The focus for the next decade will be on how players can start winning more medals for India in the Olympics," said Sunder.

Standings: Drivers: 1. Hamilton 157; 2 Verstappen 110; 3 Bottas 107; 4 Albon 48; 5 Leclerc 45; **Constructors:** 1. Mercedes 264; 2. Red Bull 158; 3. McLaren 68; 4. Racing Point 66; 5. Ferrari 61.

Morgan and Malan do it for England

PAKISTAN IN ENG

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
MANCHESTER

England beat Pakistan by five wickets to win the second T20I on Sunday.

Skipper Eoin Morgan scored 66 and shared a third-wicket stand of 112

with Dawid Malan (54 not out) to take the hosts home.

The series concludes here on Tuesday.

The scores: Pakistan 195 for four in 20 overs (Mohd. Hafeez 69, Babar Azam 56) lost to England 199 for five in 19.1 overs (Jonny Bairstow 44, Dawid Malan 54 n.o., Eoin Morgan 66).

Alaphilippe wins second stage

REUTERS
NICE

Frenchman Julian Alaphilippe won the second stage of the Tour de France, a 186-km mountain ride around Nice, and took the overall leader's yellow jersey on Sunday.

Swiss Marc Hirschi was second and Briton Adam Yates third.

Fast Facts

1 Mercedes' first victory in Belgium since 2017, and its third 1-2 finish at Spa

1 Both Renault cars finished in the top five for the first time since the 2008 Japanese Grand Prix

1 The first time no Spanish driver started a Formula One race since the 2005 US Grand Prix

4 Hamilton's fourth win at the Belgian GP. Only Michael

