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MVA rubbishes rumours on govt. stability

ALOK DESHPANDE

MUMBAI

All three allies of the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) on Tuesday dismissed speculation about the State government's stability, triggered by NCP chief Sharad Pawar meeting Governor Bhagat Singh Koshyari and Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray on Monday.

Shiv Sena MP Sanjay Raut said there was nothing to worry if two leaders running a government met. State Congress president Balasaheb Thorat and NCP Minister Nawab Malik accused the Opposition BJP of spreading lies.

BJP leader Devendra Fadnavis said the government would fall due to internal conflict. He also alleged that Congress leader Rahul Gandhi was trying to push blame onto the Sena.

REGION ▶ PAGE 5

OPPORTUNITIES ▶ PAGE 11

PM reviews LAC standoff with NSA, CDS and 3 Service Chiefs

Talks on the ground fail to break impasse with China in eastern Ladakh

DINAKAR PERI
SUHASINI HAIDAR
NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday reviewed the current situation on the Line of Actual Control (LAC) and the ongoing standoff with China with National Security Adviser Ajit Doval, Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) Gen. Bipin Rawat and the three Service Chiefs, multiple sources said. The meeting comes a day before the biannual Army Commanders conference.

Army chief Gen. Manoj Naravane made a detailed presentation on the standoff at various points of the LAC in eastern Ladakh, it has been learnt.

Several rounds of talks on the ground up to the level of Division Commanders have failed to break the impasse.

Earlier in the day, Defence



A file photo of the Pangong Tso area which has witnessed tension between Indian and Chinese troops.

Minister Rajnath Singh, at a meeting to review ongoing military reforms with the CDS, the three Service Chiefs and other officials of the Ministry, also discussed the situation along the LAC, sources said.

The meeting was to review the implementation of

the recommendations of the Shekatkar Committee but the Ladakh standoff was discussed, sources said, without stating the specifics of the discussion.

The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) denied reports that Foreign Secretary Harsh Shringla had been asked to

Be prepared, says Xi Jinping

Chinese President Xi Jinping called on the military "to think about worst-case scenarios" and "scale up battle preparedness". He made the remarks during his annual meeting with the People's Liberation Army's representatives attending the National People's Congress in Beijing. ▶ PAGE 12

brief the meeting as well. Thus far, the MEA has issued only one statement on the tensions at LAC, in which it said Chinese troops were "hindering India's normal patrolling patterns," and denied Chinese accusations.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

'No WHO bar on India testing HCQ as preventive'

Need for stricter trials, says Soumya Swaminathan

JACOB KOSHY
BINDU SHAJAN PERAPPADAN
NEW DELHI

The World Health Organisation's (WHO) moratorium on testing hydroxychloroquine (HCQ), the controversial anti-malarial drug, for treating COVID-19, which was announced on Monday, doesn't imply that India should pause testing the drug as a preventive, Dr. Soumya Swaminathan, Chief Scientist, WHO, told *The Hindu* in an email. However, she stressed that India ought to be doing stricter trials to test the drug's efficacy in staving off infection in asymptomatic people at high-risk of contracting the virus.

HCQ was one of four drug-combinations being tested in a global clinical trial, called Solidarity Trial, coordinated by the WHO.

Four hundred hospitals in 35 countries would be comparing the benefits to COVID patients from taking either Remdesivir; Lopinavir/Ritonavir; Lopinavir/Ritonavir with Interferon beta-1a; and hydroxychloroquine. They are all drugs for other diseases but have shown varying

degrees of promise in blunting COVID-19 infection.
WHO has consistently said that the best way of proving the efficacy of a drug for prevention or treatment is through well-conducted randomised clinical trials

SOUMYA SWAMINATHAN, Chief Scientist, WHO

India adds 6,017 cases

India registered 6,017 fresh COVID-19 cases and 175 fatalities on Tuesday, according to data from the State Health Departments. The overall tally now stands at 1,50,775 cases, including 82,171 active ones, and 4,345 deaths. ▶ PAGE 10

nefit – even additional harm of cardiac arrhythmia – in those being treated with HCQ.

However, this study wasn't a clinical trial and was an observational study in which all participants get the treatment.

However, officials in the Health Ministry said India's stance – recommending the drug as a preventive for groups that were at high risk of contracting the infection – whereby some groups of patients, unknown to the administering doctors and recipient patients – would get the drug and some wouldn't.

While these studies are in progress and still actively recruiting patients, a spate of studies have shown that HCQ shows no benefit – in fact, it puts patients at greater harm.

The latest such study published in the medical journal *Lancet* found that in 96,000 hospitalised SARS-CoV-2 patients across six continents, there was no benefit.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

Ensure transport, food for migrants, SC tells Centre, States

KRISHNADAS RAJAGOPAL

NEW DELHI

A three-judge Bench of the Supreme Court on Tuesday said there have been "inadequacies and certain lapses" on the part of the Central and State governments in dealing with the migrant workers' crisis during the

COVID-19 lockdown.

The court ordered the Centre and the States to immediately provide transport, food and shelter free of cost to the stranded migrant workers.

The *suo motu* cognisance of media reports and representations from senior la-

wyers to step in to protect the fundamental rights of the migrant workers were taken by the judges in their chambers.

The court admitted that the "crisis is even continuing today with large sections of migrant labourers still stranded on roads, high-

ways, railway stations and State borders". Effective concentrated efforts were required to redeem the situation, it noted.

The Bench, led by Justice Ashok Bhushan, said in a written order, "Adequate transport arrangement, food and shelters are immediately

to be provided by the Centre and the State governments free of cost. Although the Government of India and the State governments have taken measures yet there have been inadequacies and certain lapses."

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

+ 97 more die in State as cases cross 54,000

Leaping for joy



At long last: A man lifts his child in the air as they wait with other passengers outside Lokmanya Tilak Terminus to catch a Special Shramik train, in Kurla on Tuesday. ■ EMMANUEL YOGINI

Truecaller details of over 4 crore Indian users for sale on dark net

GAUTAM S. MENGLE

MUMBAI

Users of Truecaller, an app to identify unknown callers that also red-flags spammers, may have their personal data compromised as details of over four crore Indian users are now available for sale at just \$1,000 on the dark web, as per a U.S.-based cyber intelligence firm.

A quick study of the leaked data reveals that the details belong to citizens from all over the country, including from cities like Maharashtra, Bihar, Andhra Pradesh, Delhi, Haryana, Madhya Pradesh, North East India, Orissa and Punjab, along with another folder titled 'Unknown'. The details include phone numbers, names, genders, locations, emails, IDs and Facebook

profile information.

Indian central and State cybercrime agencies have initiated investigations into the matter, taking into account the scope for the number of crimes that can be committed, including phishing attacks and identity thefts.

The data leak has been detected by Cyble Inc, a firm founded by global cybersecurity expert Beenu Arora that had unravelled two other leaks earlier this month on the dark web, both affecting Indians.

Surprisingly low price' According to Mr. Arora, Cyble researchers have identified a known player on the dark web offering details of a whopping 4.75 crore Indians for sale. Even more surprisingly, the entire

packet, which would be regarded as a goldmine in terms of the sheer number of ways it can be misused, is being offered for a surprisingly low \$1,000.

Cyble has indexed this information on Amibreached.com - Cyble's data breach monitoring and notification platform. People who are concerned about their exposure can register on the website to ascertain their exposure," the firm said in a note.

The threat actor behind the data leak has been identified as someone who goes by the name TooGod on the dark web. "The low price suggests that the threat actor has some interest in gaining attention or expanding his customer base," Mr. Arora said.

Mumbaikars' hunt for hospital beds to ease Integrated dashboard to now allocate beds; 1916 helpline to get more lines

JYOTI SHELAR

MUMBAI

An integrated dashboard of vacant beds in public and private hospitals and improved services on the 1916 helpline will help in prompt allocation of beds to patients in need in Mumbai, Municipal Commissioner I.S. Chahal said on Tuesday.

"Bed allocation was a big problem as there was no real-time data. We now have a dashboard that will be updated every half an hour. Bed details from private hospitals have also been integrated on a single portal," Mr. Chahal said on Tuesday.

He said problems in reaching the 1916 helpline will be sorted out from Wednesday. "We are adding more lines. The line should not be busy for any person."



I.S. Chahal ■ FILE PHOTO

beds to one lakh by June 15.

A media release sent by the BMC, however, showed only 18,000 beds in DCH, DCHC and CCC2. "This is the number of active beds. As needed, the capacity can be scaled up to 44,000," deputy executive health officer Dr. Daksha Shah clarified.

The release said 82% of the beds in these three types of set-ups were occupied as of Tuesday. Nearly 65% of the 4,116 beds with oxygen support were occupied, 95% of the 644 intensive care unit beds were occupied, and 66% of the 359 ventilator beds were occupied.

With a recent order bringing 80% of beds in private hospitals under State regulation, health officials said more beds will be available. The State has capped the

charges for these beds, which are meant for COVID-19 as well as non COVID-19 patients.

State health secretary Pradeep Vyas said they had received 22 complaints against hospitals for overcharging. "The hospitals had to return the money," he said, adding they have also given written apologies.

456 ambulances

Mr. Chahal said the BMC has deployed 456 ambulances to ferry patients, and all rivers have been given PPE kits. "We have also tied up with Uber, through which the citizens can know the availability of an ambulance near them. In the next four to five days, this will be worked out with super efficiency," the civic chief said.

Mumbai's civic commissioner IS Chahal said these numbers should not trigger fear among citizens. "Numbers should not become a cause of worry," he said adding that the city's case fatality rate has improved from 7.6% in the beginning to 3.2%. "We are trying to bring it down to 3% which is the national average," he said.

State health officials clarified that 35 of the 97 deaths had occurred over the last two days while the rest were reported from April 17 to May 23. Nearly 67% of the victims had comorbid conditions like diabetes, hypertension, asthma and heart disease.

The State has carried out nearly 3.90 lakh tests so far. Mumbai's average testing rate is 13,000 tests per million population. On Tuesday, 1168 people recovered and went home from the State.

Flight restrictions lead to dip in passengers flying out of city

Airport reports 22 departures, 19 arrivals and three cancellations; highest passenger load on Mumbai-Delhi route

ADITYA ANAND
MUMBAI

Tuesday witnessed a drop with 638 passengers flying out of the city owing to cancellation of flights on various routes. There was also an increase in 10 passengers arriving in the city.

The Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport (CSMIA) saw 44 flights operating on Tuesday, handling a total of 4,224 passengers. On Monday, when domestic flights resumed in the country, the airport handled 4,852 passengers: 3,752 were departing passengers and 1,100 were those arriving in the city.

Airport officials attributed the dip in number to restrictions on the number of flights allowed to operate from and to Mumbai and higher load on certain routes. A CSMIA spokesperson said the airport reported 22 departures, 19 arrivals and three cancellations.

"These routes were operated by six airlines catering to 13 sectors. The total of 4,224 passengers included 3,114 passengers at departures and 1,110 at arrivals," the spokesperson said.

Like Monday, the highest passenger load on Tuesday was seen on the Mumbai-Delhi route. The first flight from CSMIA departed for Ranchi at 6.30 a.m. while the first flight arrived at 8.20 a.m. from Lucknow.

Both flights were operated by IndiGo.

Barrage of questions

The day also saw several questions being posed by passengers. These ranged from whether one could wear personal protective equipment kits and board the aircraft to demanding airline schedules be made available. The CSMIA helpline number 022-66851010 kept ringing throughout the day, officials said.



Hurrying home: Passengers arrive at the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport in Mumbai following the resumption of domestic flights. ■ ARUNANGSU ROY CHOWDHURY

'After jumping through several hoops, I am so near, yet so far...'

A day that began with eager anticipation turned into a nightmare for a Mumbai-Dehradun flier due to mismanagement at multiple levels

SAMBHAVI VAIDEESWARAN
DEHRADUN

After two months of anticipation, and a weekend of political drama, I heaved a huge sigh of relief on getting to know that my Mumbai-Dehradun flight was among the 'select 25' that were allowed to fly from the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport (CSMIA).

The excitement and travel anxiety ensured I barely had any sleep, and I wearily got out of bed on Tuesday morning. The only thing keeping me moving was my ultimate goal: seeing my family. By 7.15 a.m., I was standing outside CSMIA packed and ready, armed with an N-95 mask, gloves that were a little too big for my hands, and two kinds of sanitisers.

A verification of my identity and thermal screening later, I stood at one of the self-check-in kiosks, befuddled, like most other fliers, but we pulled through with some guidance from airline officials. As I walked past the security check towards my gate, I couldn't believe this



Contrast: While physical distancing norms were followed in Mumbai, (right) they were violated in Dehradun. ■ SAMBHAVI VAIDEESWARAN



was the same airport that once bustled with life. Most shops were closed, barely any humans were in sight and there was absolutely no sound apart from the occasional wail of a baby.

In all, the boarding experience in Mumbai was quiet and organised, and the flight took off before the scheduled departure of 10.05 a.m.

The real nightmare awaited us at Dehradun.

Everyone followed rules up until they reached the terminal, but physical distancing norms were quickly forgotten as people went to

collect their baggage and waited to be allowed out.

Fliers sweated it out for over two hours in the airport, as none of the air conditioners or fans were working.

"I don't know about COVID-19,"

but I'll definitely die of dehydration," said a girl wearing personal protective equipment.

With barely four to five people being allowed out every 10 minutes, the crowd grew impatient and thronged the gates, questioning the medical staff on duty.

"We have no jurisdiction over what happens after you leave, ma'am," said a doctor,

trying to calm down a passenger. "That is the State administration at work."

He promptly redirected the questions to a CISF staffer.

Quarantine blues

Most passengers were riled at the 'compulsory paid quarantine' requirement, which was an example of more mismanagement and apathy.

Passengers demanded to know why only air passengers were being discriminated against while road and rail passengers were being allowed home quarantine. In response, an official had this

to offer, "Kal toh aapko pata chal gaya tha na ki rule badal gaya hai, toh ticket cancel kar late" (when you got to know yesterday that the rule has been changed, you could have cancelled your ticket.)

Nearly three hours later, passengers were let out as fliers on board the next flight entered the terminal.

But this was simply the beginning of a new ordeal. After we were finally let out, we were to choose a paid facility, but the options were limited and many of the reasonably-priced ones were full. Then there was the hour-long wait

in a makeshift tent under the scorching sun, with the token fans in the area being directed towards officials.

A group of unyielding fliers had decided they would refuse to fill the forms and wait till the end of day to talk to the authorities and ensure they do not have to go to the paid quarantine facilities. "When we signed the undertaking, it clearly mentioned 14 days of home quarantine. We did not sign up for this," said one. "This is all just a ploy for the hotels and government to make money," said a flier who owns a hotel in the city.

Finally, my name was called out to board a bus to the hotel I had opted for, but the bus stopped at several other similar facilities along the way. "I have to reach the hotel and report to work," said Katyayni Jain, who is with a consultancy firm in Mumbai. She and her sister had decided to return to Dehradun and work from home due to the fear of the growing number of COVID-19-positive cases in Maxi-

mum City. This was true for several other youths who were on the flight.

If the tired passengers thought they could get some rest at the hotel, they were in for more nasty surprises. While some passengers were shocked to hear the prices claiming they were not briefed properly at the airport, others felt the demand that the entire amount be paid in advance was ridiculous.

Hotels, too, are underprepared, with no idea on whether those quarantined will be tested, or clarity on the actual time period of quarantine. The hotel I was sent to had a power outage, and electricity was restored at 9.30 p.m. For over two hours, the staff just kept repeating, helplessly, "Ma'am, please give us 10-15 minutes."

As I sit in pitch dark and type this, I can't help but wonder, why this discrimination against those travelling by air? What is the State administration up to? And of course, when will I get to see my family?

Timings MUMBAI

WEDNESDAY, MAY 27
RISE 06:01 SET 19:11
RISE 09:51 SET 23:25
THURSDAY, MAY 28
RISE 06:01 SET 19:11
RISE 10:50 SET 00:00
FRIDAY, MAY 29
RISE 06:01 SET 19:12
RISE 11:50 SET 00:14

Mumbai Weather max min

Mumbai Airport	34	29
Pune	38	25
Mumbai City	34	29

Mumbai Today 34°C Slowly clouds is likely to increase during warm day. Short spell of light rain may occur. Humid to increase.

Mumbai Tomorrow 34°C Spell of rain and thunder shower is likely. A cloudy and warm weather to continue. Night will be humid.

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HINDU
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Relief-on-wheels initiative provides migrants safe, dignified passage home

As thousands trudge across the State, seeking the small comfort of home, a UNICEF-led group is taking survival toolkits to them on Jeevan Raths across Mumbai and Pune

SHUBHA SHARMA
MUMBAI

A few days ago, at Ghodshwar Road crossing in Thane, where nearly 3,000 migrant workers gather every day from all over Mumbai hoping to get a bus to their villages hundreds of miles away, volunteers who were distributing food and water to them noticed a little boy come back repeatedly, but only to take water bottles. Curious, the volunteers followed him. They saw the child pouring the water on his mother's feet, peeling from continuous walking in the scorching sun.

"We have seen people make footwear out of plastic water bottles," says Nirajan Aher, who runs the Alert Citizens Forum and has organised 18 to 20 volunteers who work in shifts in the area, providing essentials to migrant workers. "We have seen people plead helplessly, cry. Most of us are at home for fear of the novel coronavirus infecting us. This is a wholly different battle."

Mr. Aher is part of a network of volunteers and NGOs who collect and distribute non-perishable food, hygiene materials, water, sanitary napkins and basic medical support to migrant workers on *chhota hathis* or mini trucks. Led by UNICEF, this relief-on-wheels initiative has brought together over 50 NGOs in Maharashtra under the



Rushing to help: Volunteers distribute relief material to migrants travelling out of the city. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

began conversations with his NGO network to exchange ideas and avoid duplication in relief efforts. The WhatsApp group quickly grew from 20 to over 100 members. "We started asking, 'Can we give them a dignified, safe passage in terms of food, counselling, essentials like slippers, oral rehydration fluid, water and masks?' From these conversations, the movement took shape in mid-May, with a pledge to raise funds and support the needs of migrants for 50 days. "The organisations shifted all their resources and support for a common cause: working for the underprivileged and vulnerable."

Karan Shaiva, managing trustee, RISE Infinity Foundation, says, "Concept-to-implementation was 48 hours. Partners came together at lightning speed." People say NGOs don't work together, Ms. Shaiva says.

"but it's amazing how everyone did that here. Everyone is cheering each other on in the spirit of collaboration, and that's not easy to find, especially in such a stressful situation."

Mr. Kabir says, "The beautiful part of this collaboration is that no one is pushing anyone. It's a synergistic thing." Omkar Khare, State consultant, disaster risk reduction at UNICEF, Maharashtra, says in this coming together, there has been a crucial realisation: Mumbai, where "everyone is a migrant", is thinking of what its labour community requires. "For the first time, we are saying we should make them more comfortable."

The rath is not stationed in one location for more than one or two hours. It primarily goes to Vasai-Virar, Fountain Hotel junction in Thane, and Dahanu and from there, wherever funds for non-perishable food and other items are being raised on Ketto and Donatokart – over ₹3.5 lakh has been raised – and FICCI FLO Mumbai and ELSA Mumbai are running a campaign to support migrant women's hygiene and sanitary needs.

migrants collect. There are also raths in Pune. The local police station informs the team on the ground of the migrants' presence, and at times, the rath takes resources to migrants who are walking. On the ground, about 50 volunteers distribute essentials for a couple of hours in the morning and evening.

Gio Roti Ghar, LIFE Foundation, and Rotarians take care of the food, which includes bananas, sheera, theplas, biscuits. The children are given sweet buns. The owners of four godowns opened them up for storing the material.

Three kitchens, checked for hygiene, prepare the food. Suppliers are given feedback on taste, and the volunteers are told to open the packets and check for quality before distribution: "what is not good for you is not good for the migrants". Theplas, vacuum-packed to last a week, are superhits," says Mr. Khare, and Mr. Kabir says the raths have now acquired the moniker 'thepla rath'. "People often ask, 'Woh thepla wala kahan gaya' (Where has the thepla man gone?)."

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Parallelly, a campaign on UNICEF's platform is raising funds for long-term goals: following the migration, village preparedness, school readiness in State's villages (see box: A single platform).

and supplies reach late, and volunteers have been stopped by police. They also have to often think on their feet, says Bhupendra Mishra, founder, The Resilient Foundation, who connected with his network to bring youngsters together for the cause. For instance, one of them parks his motorcycle in Thane in such a way that the migrants are forced to walk in a single file, practising physical distancing. "It becomes difficult to manage them, sometimes. When they see

our truck, they just rush forward for food, often not even wearing masks," says volunteer Swapnil Shirsat.

More to do

The group is aiming to reach out to 100,000 migrants by May 31. It has connected with dhabas on the Nashik-Ahmednagar and Mumbai-Ahmedabad sectors, to provide migrants with food kits and toilet facilities. A call centre to track whether migrants have reached their destinations, whether they have grievances or need police assistance on the way, has been started, and the contact numbers are given to the migrants at the time of boarding.

Mr. Khare says the team is also arranging for paramedics with nearly 7,000 medical kits to attend to migrants. The team also plans to get a year's insurance for volunteers.

"We have no money beyond a couple of days, but we jump in nevertheless," says Mr. Kabir. "We believe something will come our way, and it does."

The idea is to build on what is being done because the problem won't go away easily, says Ms. Shaiva. NGO partners will start taking over, once the migrants reach their villages, she says. Mr. Kabir says, "We are calling it an organic movement. The outcome is not always linear. We are shifting our strategies but not our target population."

A single platform

SHUBHA SHARMA
MUMBAI

UNICEF has established a digital coordination platform wherein almost 50 of its partners communicate on a daily basis.

The platform shares and discusses strategies on infection prevention and control, containment, WASH, food, migrants, shelter, social sector recovery, assessment, and monitoring the humanitarian crisis. The group comprises NGOs, corporates, Rotarians, technical agencies and medical institutions.

It helps mobilise resources and coordinate with government departments. The flagship programmes are Jeevan Rath,

and supplies reach late, and volunteers have been stopped by police. They also have to often think on their feet, says Bhupendra Mishra, founder, The Resilient Foundation, who connected with his network to bring youngsters together for the cause. For instance, one of them parks his motorcycle in Thane in such a way that the migrants are forced to walk in a single file, practising physical distancing. "It becomes difficult to manage them, sometimes. When they see

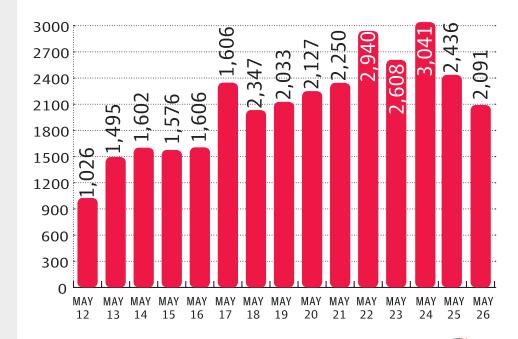
Maharashtra COVID-19 tracker

TOTAL CASES	NEW CASES	ACTIVE CASES	RECOVERED	DEATHS
54,758	2,091	36,004	16,954	1,792

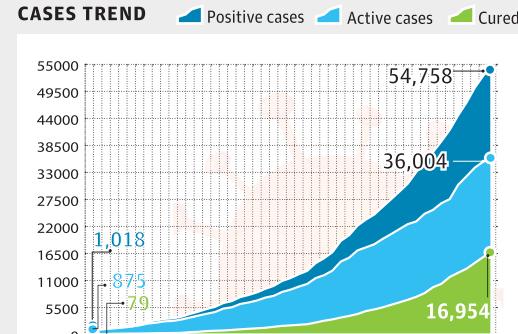
DISTRICTS AFFECTED: 35

DISTRICT	CASES	DEATHS	DISTRICT	CASES	DEATHS
Mumbai	32,974	1,065	Nanded	105	5
Thane	7,315	126	Sangli	87	1
Pune	6,335	282	Ahmednagar	84	5
Aurangabad	1,310	53	Latur	82	3
Nashik	992	49	Jalna	73	0
Raigad	845	17	Buldhana	49	3
Palghar	752	18	Gondia	47	0
Solapur	646	49	Osmanabad	37	0
Nagpur	481	8	Nandurbar	32	2
Jalgaon	447	41	Beed	32	0
Akola	437	17	Gadchiroli	26	0
Kolhapur	340	1	Parbhani	25	1
Satara	339	5	Chandrapur	25	0
Amravati	193	13	Sindhudurg	19	0
Ratnagiri	171	5	Bhandara	14	0
Hingoli	133	0	Washim	8	0
Dhule	129	9	Wardha	7	1
Vyatmal	115	0			

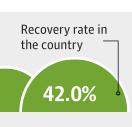
POSITIVE CASES OVER LAST 15 DAYS



1,002 (48%) of Tuesday's cases are from Mumbai



30.96% is the State recovery rate

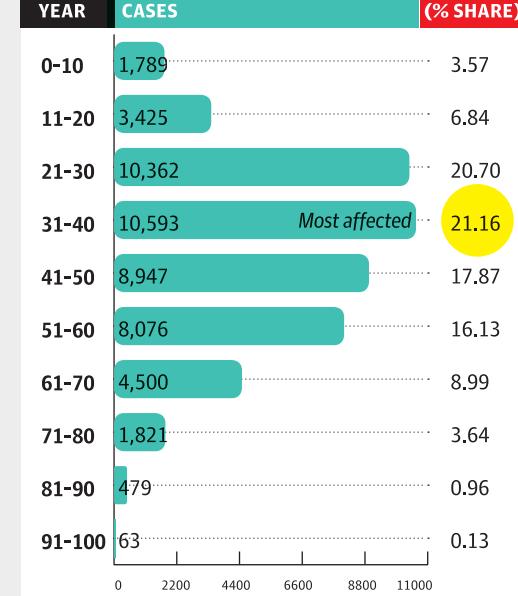


MORTALITY RATE

Maharashtra 3.27%

India 2.84%

AFFECTED (AGE-WISE)

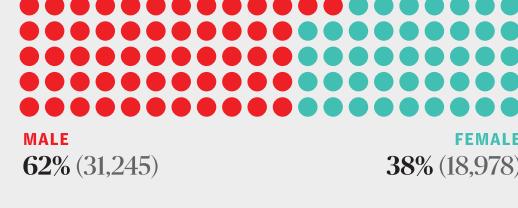


QUARANTINE NUMBERS

5,67,622 Home quarantine



35,200 Institutional quarantine

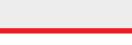


As on May 24

DEATH (GENDER-WISE)

As on May 24

MALE 63% (1,077)



FEMALE 37% (618)

As on May 24

71% of deaths due to co-morbidities

HELPLINE NUMBERS

Toll free number: 104/1075

Maharashtra: 020-26127394

National: 1075/1800-112-545/011-23978046

State helpline email id: ssumaharashtra@gmail.com

CITY-WISE HELPLINE NUMBERS

Mumbai city: 022 22664232

Palghar: 02525 297474

Mumbai suburbs: 022 26556799 / 26556806

Raigad: 02141 222118

Thane: 022 25301740

Sindhudurg: 02362 228847

Source: Public Health Department, Maharashtra, BMC

Over 1,000 more cases in Mumbai, yet again

BMC focuses on institutional quarantine of contacts in slums

JYOTI SHELAR

MUMBAI

Mumbai recorded 1,002 cases on Tuesday, pushing its COVID-19 tally to 32,974 cases. The city's death toll reached 1,065 with 39 more deaths.

Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) Commissioner IS Chahal, who addressed the media on Tuesday, said their new mantra is to 'chase the virus' by focussing on institutional quarantining of contacts in slums and containment zones.

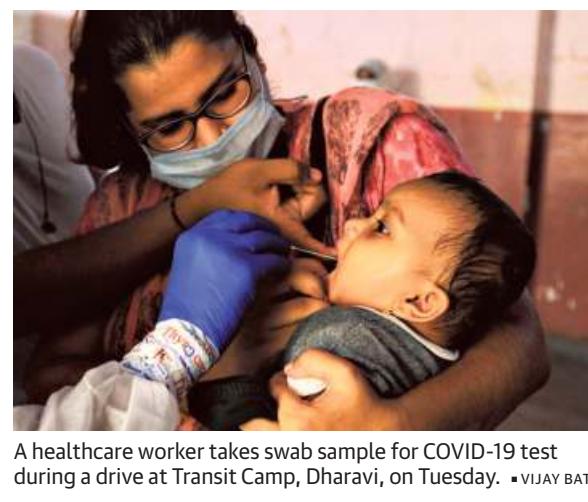
"Contact tracing has to be strong. We are now aiming at institutional quarantine of 15 contacts of one positive patient from slums. Earlier, this ratio was 1:4 or 1:5," said Mr. Chahal, adding this will break the chain of infection.

The increasing number of deaths has been a cause of concern with Mumbai losing an average of 29 lives every day to the infection. Of the 39 deaths reported on Tuesday, 28 were men and 11 were women.

As many as 25 patients had co-morbid conditions, which made their recovery difficult. The city's case fatality rate currently stands at 3.2%. Mr. Chahal said efforts are on to further reduce the rate to 3%, which is the national average.

1.74 lakh tests done
Till date, Mumbai has carried out 1,74,841 tests in seven government laboratories and 13 private laboratories. The rate of positivity stood at 18%. He said private laboratories, who were keeping a very high backlog and delaying reports, have been instructed to fall in line.

The laboratories have now been asked to strictly follow the 24-hour cycle in giving out reports.



A healthcare worker takes swab sample for COVID-19 test during a drive at Transit Camp, Dharavi, on Tuesday. ■ VIJAY BATE

Now, an online portal for dialysis patients

TANVI DESHPANDE

MUMBAI

Following complaints of dialysis patients suffering in view of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) has now started a real-time online portal, covidialysis.in, particularly for these patients.

After the coronavirus outbreak, dialysis patients faced a tough time as the BMC had initially said that symptomatic dialysis patients, who were close contacts of COVID-19 patients, were to be tested. This order was later simplified so that the centre could ask for a test only if there was

Dharavi crosses 1,600-mark
Dharavi went past the 1,600-mark on Tuesday, as it reported 38 new cases.

The total number of cases has reached 1,621 cases, with 60 deaths.

(With inputs from Raina Assainar)

a strong suspicion about a dialysis patient being COVID-19 positive.

The BMC has started this online portal so that doctors can find slots for patients who have tested positive. There are 84 dialysis machines in Mumbai for COVID-19 positive patients and six machines for suspected patients. The portal will help doctors find where can a positive or suspected person be directed for dialysis. The BMC claimed that the system has helped doctors find slots for 30 patients in the last three days. The system will ensure 600 patients and 100 suspected patients are allotted slots.

63 in Navi Mumbai
The Navi Mumbai Municipal Corporation on Tuesday reported 63 new cases and two deaths.

The total number of cases has reached 1,621 cases, with 60 deaths.

(With inputs from Raina Assainar)

the Mumbai Fire Brigade has set up a COVID-19 care centre at its Byculla headquarters for asymptomatic positive employees.

The facility has a capacity of 30 beds and is managed by healthcare professionals specially appointed for it. "We created the facility within four days," chief fire officer P.S. Rahangade said.

Meanwhile, a fireman died at JJ Hospital on Sunday after initially being denied treatment, but it could not yet be confirmed if he has tested positive for novel coronavirus.

On May 16, the fireman developed diarrhoea and fever, and proceeded on leave. His test report said he was suffering from typhoid. On May 23, when he went to JJ Hospital, he was again moved to JJ Hospital. Since he had low blood oxygen concentra-

tors prescribed him typhoid medicines instead. However, his condition worsened on May 24 and he was again moved to JJ Hospital. Since he had low blood oxygen concentra-

tion, he was put on oxygen support, but passed away later in the day.

Even as he was engaged in sanitation duty, it could not be ascertained if he had COVID-19.



The new normal: Aspiring candidates maintain physical distancing while queuing up outside the Thane Municipal Corporation for recruitment on contract basis in its health department, on Tuesday. ■ VIBHAV BIRWATKAR

BMC appoints workers to wrap victims' bodies

NMMC begins mass screenings at Koparkhairane, Turbhe

Corporation releases list of clinics that will treat patients according to severity of symptoms

RAINA ASSAINAR

NAVI MUMBAI

With the highest number of COVID-19-positive cases reported at Koparkhairane and Turbhe, Navi Mumbai Municipal Corporation (NMMC) has started mass screening of people residing in these areas.

The initiative was undertaken with the help of D.Y. Patil Hospital and Terna Hospital. While Turbhe has around 423 positive cases, of whom 17 have died and 129 have recovered, Koparkhairane has 342 positive cases, of whom 10 have died and 157 have recovered.

The screening is done by maintaining physical distancing with the help of 10 teams of health workers, doctors and volunteers. If a person is found

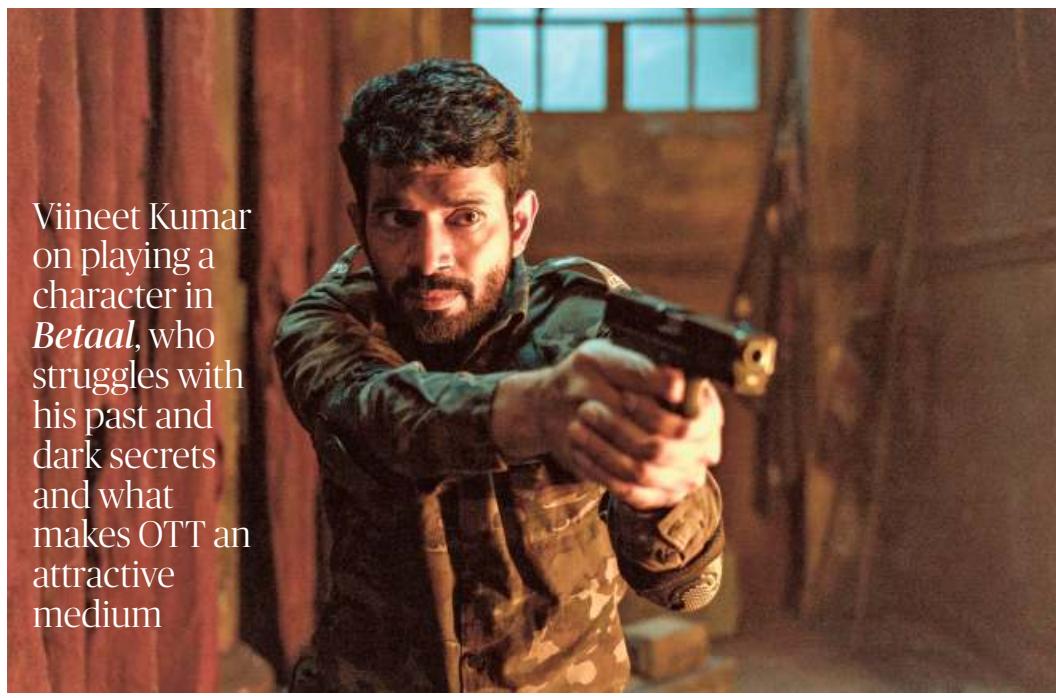
to have fever-like symptoms in thermal scanning, their oxygen level is checked. If these are found low, a swab test is also conducted.

The mass screening of around 400 people was conducted from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. in Sectors 15 and 16 of Koparkhairane. There are more such screenings planned from May 27 to June 2, and in Turbhe from June 3 to 9.

Meanwhile, NMMC has released a list of flu clinics, COVID Care Centres (CCC), Dedicated COVID Health Centres (DCHCs) and a dedicated COVID hospital (DCH), and when one should visit them. "If one has flu-like symptoms, they should visit flu clinics at NMMC hospitals in Nerul, Airoli, Belapur and

Malabar Cancer Centre (an autonomous centre under Government of Kerala) Thalassery, Kannur - 670 103, PH: +91 490 2355881 e-mail: mcdly@gmail.com, www.mcc.kerala.gov.in

Antiviral drug sought for Cabinet minister who has tested positive



Vineet Kumar on playing a character in *Betaal*, who struggles with his past and dark secrets and what makes OTT an attractive medium

NAMRATA JOSHI

It's a few days before *Betaal*'s premiere on Netflix and Vineet Kumar is grumbling—all in good humour—about how he hasn't yet managed to catch his own show. "Naamuraad virus ne bahut kuchh cheen liya (The ominous virus has taken away a lot)," he says, referring to the customary cast and crew screenings that have become rightly extinct during the ongoing lockdown.

The new web series is the *Mukkabaaz* and *Saand Ki Aankh* actor's first crack at the horror genre. Though, Kumar does remember being part of a television show early on in his career, in which he had a small role as a ghost. "You couldn't make out it was me. Even I could recognise myself only from the kurta that I was wearing," he laughs.

Fear is fun

But it wasn't the zombie-horror element that drew him towards Patrick Graham and Nikhil Mahajan's *Betaal*. He regards *Betaal* as more than a horror show, "Darr se maza aayega (It's a fear that you will enjoy)." As Vikram Sirohi, the second in command of the fictional CIPD force, that takes on the un-

'Surrendering to the director enriches you as an actor'

dead East India Company officer and his battalion of zombie red-coats, Kumar found himself wearing the uniform for the first time on screen. More than that, it was the character's backstory. According to him, for every role he plays on screen, Kumar makes it a point to discuss the character's past with the writer and director, to put the present motivations in context. His method as an actor has always been to understand the mind, the rhythm and upbringing. "But in *Betaal*, it is all present on screen itself. The past, the dark secret, the guilt that he can't undo, the pain

he carries within," he says, adding, "There is the external battle and then there is another constant fight within him." It's an internal battleground that haunts Sirohi at all times.

This is something new and more complex for Kumar. He last remembers playing a complicated person in Anurag Kashyap's *Ugly*. "He [Chaitanya, his character] used to think one thing and say another," says the actor. For Kumar, more than the ghosts of the past, *Betaal* is all about a larger theme of action and reaction. How our actions in the present will

behave in the future. "We must all give it a thought. So much poverty is not something that has happened overnight. People are stressed about basic things in life. With a daughter in arms, a suitcase on the head they are walking. Can't we see all that is happening around us?" he asks rhetorically. The actor rewinds, to his days of studying and practising his MD in Ayurveda and pulls out a medical analogy: "The chronic problem of the past has become an acute illness. We all need to seriously introspect."

Philosophic outlook

Betaal also marks Kumar's first outing with Mahajan and Graham. "As an actor you always get to learn a lot from a new team. Surrendering to the director enriches you as an actor," he says. It also marks his second attempt at web series, the first being Ribhu Dasgupta's *Bard of Blood* last year. "Paisa samay se pehle account mein aa jaata hai (Payment is transferred to the account before due date) so you can focus on your work," he states candidly spelling out one of the reasons he finds the OTT world an attractive platform as an actor.

What is coming next? Kumar has four new projects that are ready, one of which needs patchwork shoot and dubbing. What he is disappointed about is not being present at the Tribeca Film Festival for his new film, Prashant Nair's *Tryst With Destiny*. It was slated to have had its world première there. While the physical festival was cancelled, the film was screened virtually for the festival jury and clinched the best screenplay award in the international narrative section. "I was looking forward to meeting my favourite actor Robert De Niro who is the founder of [the] Tribeca [festival]," he says. Kumar then reverts to his characteristic philosophical mode, "Nature takes its own course. Nothing is in your hands. The only lesson is to not take yourself too seriously."

Betaal is streaming on Netflix

'The benefit of OTT is its wide audience'

Debutant director Pushpendra Nath Misra on his film *Ghoomketu*'s digital release and writing for different formats

KARISHMA UPADHYAY

Anurag Kashyap has directed Nawazuddin Siddiqui in four films (*Gangs of Wasseypur I and II*, *Raman Raghav 2.0*, *Dev D and Black Friday*) and the Netflix series *Sacred Games*. What are common to all of these are the adjectives 'dark and gritty'. *Ghoomketu*, their fifth film together is a complete departure not just because they are co-actors for the first time but also because it's a slice of life comedy. "It was very enjoyable to see them do comedy," says director Pushpendra Nath Misra who has made his debut feature with this film.

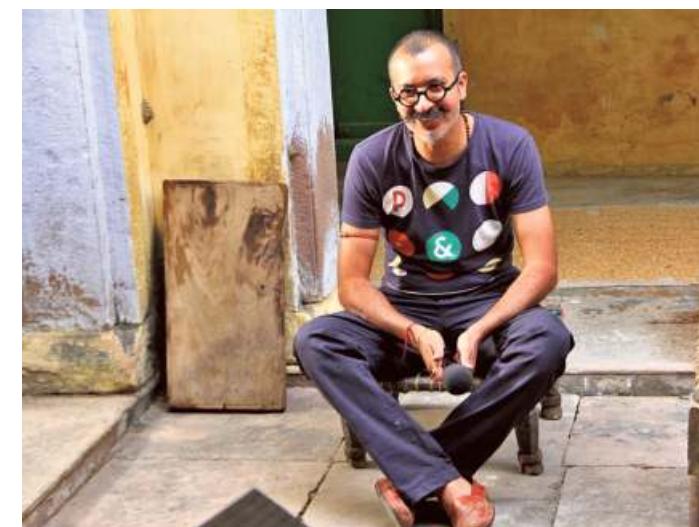
Ghoomketu revolves around an aspiring film writer (Siddiqui) who runs away to Mumbai to fulfil his dreams. When his family files a missing person's complaint, it's up to Badlani (Kashyap), a lazy

and corrupt cop to find Ghoomketu and bring him back.

Interestingly, Misra first noticed Siddiqui in Kashyap's *Black Friday*. "He has a very small part in that film and he's very dark in it. But I knew from his performance that he has great talent. Also, it's great when you cast people non-stereotypically. When I look at him, I see a fantastic mix of talent, innocence and star power. He can play a common person but he brings a certain amount of star value to the character. He's very interesting to shoot," the ad-film-maker says about the film's leading man.

Lure of digital

An alumnus of the National Institute of Design (NID), the director grew up in Lucknow. Though the film is set in western Uttar Pradesh, he insists it's not autobiographical in any way. "I studied in a convent school and then went to NID. I had all the privileges and support, while this film is about someone who wants to escape his life and go to Mumbai and write for Bollywood." He adds, "It's a



Digital foray: Pushpendra Nath Misra on the sets of *Ghoomketu* • SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

purely imagined story but the imagination is fuelled by a lot of characters observed around me. Uttar Pradesh is very rich in people and characters, with their mannerisms, how they speak and that sharp humour. This is a story

graphical in any way. "I studied in a convent school and then went to NID. I had all the privileges and support, while this film is about someone who wants to escape his life and go to Mumbai and write for Bollywood." He adds, "It's a

Today's audience likes to see anecdotal stuff, they like to pause it on their phones, take a phone call and then get back to it.

PUSHPENDRA NATH MISRA

of a person who looks at all these characters as sources of stories. *Ghoomketu* wants to bring his world into Bollywood."

Ghoomketu is among the handful of feature films like *Gulabo Sitabo* and *Shakuntala Devi* that are going straight-to-digital. While most directors talk about the high of seeing their films in a theatre, Misra says he's 'never had any fascination for the big screen'. "Today's audience likes to see anecdotal stuff, they like to pause it on their phones, take a phone call and then get back to it. The benefit of OTT, it's very wide audience - it's not just one country, it's many. So, it's a much bigger release than Bollywood, any one region or a certain num-

ber of theatres. For a creator, you get so much more love or criticism," he explains.

Since the announcement of films releasing on OTT platforms, exhibitors have been up in arms. There's been talk about how the popularity of streaming services like Amazon Prime, Zee5, Disney Hotstar and Netflix could herald the decline of theatres but Misra dismisses them as hyperbole.

"Big films will always go to theatres first. Going to a theatre with one's family and watching a film with big visuals and big sound will never lose its charm. In current times, when people are asked for social distancing it's a different matter and hopefully temporary. Once things open up, big films will again go there. I think the balance will be found on its own and there's nothing to worry about. OTT will keep growing but producers won't make the same kind of profits like they would with a theatrical release, so theatres

will always be the first choice."

Storytelling comes first

It's not about the size of the screen that matters but the story that you want to tell, Misra believes. Earlier this year, Netflix launched *Taj Mahal 1989*, Misra's first show as a director. Misra, who also writes his own stories, says the distinction between ad films, episodic series and feature films starts at the writing stage. "With the writing of a web series, you leave it at a cliffhanger, you understand the introduction of the characters in a five-act structure. With a feature film, it's a three-act structure. In an advertising film, you need to come to the climax and leave people with one point and a call to action." But once he starts shooting, Misra doesn't see any distinction between the formats. "As a director you are only concentrating on shooting the next scene. That doesn't change regardless of what you are shooting."

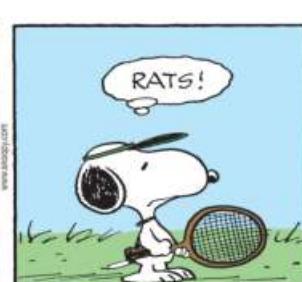
Ghoomketu is streaming on Zee5

POOCH CAFE



DIGITAL FORAY: Pushpendra Nath Misra on the sets of *Ghoomketu* • SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

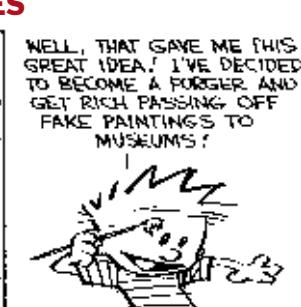
PEANUTS



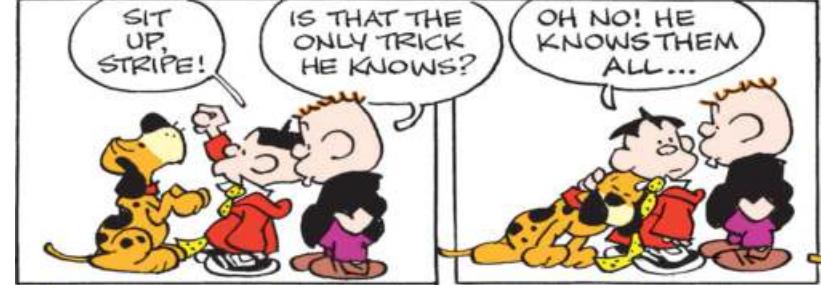
HAGAR THE HORRIBLE



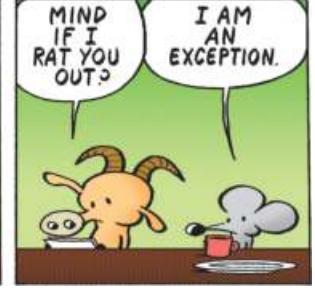
CALVIN AND HOBBES



TIGER



PEARLS BEFORE SWINE



A sensitive approach The team behind *Limbo* • SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Her story

A film documenting the abuse and ostracism suffered by rape victims in Myanmar has won top honours at WHO's film festival

SOMA BASU

Seven years ago, a 19-year-old girl was raped and impregnated at home by her uncle in the State of Kayin in Myanmar. Her family silenced and pressured her into aborting the child; their attempts failed and the girl gave birth to a baby boy.

This was just one of the many stories that moved Anglo-Burmese filmmaker Lindsey Merrison, who founded the Yangon Film School (YFS) in Myanmar 15 years ago. She encouraged her students to address the issue of rape as an outlet of anger, a war weapon and an instrument of repression.

Twelve of her students made a series of four films on gender violence and submitted them to the World Health Organisation's inaugural Health for All film festival in Geneva, which was held online this month. One of the four films, *Limbo*, an innovative sand animation documentary, which documented the story of the 19-year-old girl, walked away with the Grand Prix award and a grant of \$10,000.

"*Limbo*'s theme was sensitive and the presentation too had to be so. We did not want to sensationalise the condition of a woman who is raped," says Debjani Mukherjee, co-founder of BOL—The Language of Children, an NGO that trains novices in ani-

mentation filmmaking to enable them to share their stories.

Mukherjee was brought on board by Lindsey as the animation tutor and has spent months at YFS conducting workshops for students there. "The students had collected a lot of material after speaking to survivors of gender abuse. It was challenging to weave them into a powerful commentary with a riveting presentation," she adds. Mumbai-based writer, Paromita Vohra, was also roped in as the audio trainer.

Social cinema

Art can be a powerful medium to engage the youth and community with serious issues, believes Debjani. "It becomes a powerful tool of social engagement," she says, adding that when making *Limbo*, the anonymity of the contributors had to be maintained while keeping their narration on injustice and violence hard-hitting. "We relied a lot on symbolism and decided to use the technique of sand animation. It is still an experimental medium in India. It involves an organic way of shifting sand with your hands to create a series of images and pat-

terns," says Mukherjee.

In her award-acceptance speech that she made online, Lindsey said recognising the film meant a fillip not only to her students but also to the women's rights movement in the country. Violence against women in conflict-ridden Myanmar, with a population of 54 million, is said to be so pervasive that it is regarded as normal. Women, Lindsey said, are ostracised and blamed even if the perpetrators were found guilty, which in itself was a rare occurrence.

Ed Doh Poe, one of the students involved in making the video, said the subject of rape is brushed under the carpet in his country. He reiterated how *Limbo* was a way forward to protect the survivors of gender violence and give them a safe space and the confidence to speak up. Having endured silently all these years, the protagonist in *Limbo* wants to see her uncle behind bars and bring up her son in an equal society. "The film will hopefully give many more victims a voice," says Mukherjee. *Limbo* can be watched on WHO's website

MVA rubbishes rumours on govt. stability

Fadnavis says BJP in no hurry to return to power, internal conflicts will bring down current government

ALOK DESHPANDE

MUMBAI

A day after Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) chief Sharad Pawar held consecutive meetings with Governor Bhagat Singh Koshyari and Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray, all three allies of the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) on Tuesday dismissed speculation about the State government's stability.

The Opposition Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) said it is in no hurry to come to power, and the government will fall due to conflicts between the NCP, Shiv Sena and Congress. Leader of Opposition Devendra Fadnavis claimed it was the ruling alliance that was spreading rumours to divert people's attention from its failure to tackle the COVID-19 pandemic.

'Strong, united'
Sena MP Sanjay Raut said a meeting between two leaders running the government should not cause any fear. "A



Together: MVA allies said they were united in fighting the COVID-19 pandemic. ■ FILE PHOTO

cure for COVID-19 and a method to bring down the Maharashtra government, are both yet to be found by anyone. Sharad Pawar and Uddhav Thackeray held a meeting for over one-and-a-

half hours on Tuesday. The government is strong and will continue to function. Nobody needs to worry."

State Congress president and Revenue Minister Balasaheb Thorat said all three

parties are united in fighting the pandemic. "We are in contact with each other. Some forces are deliberately spreading lies about the stability of the government. We are together and will continue

'Rahul's remarks show Congress pushing blame on Sena'

Fadnavis alleges discord within MVA; Rahul's comments not wrong, says NCP

ALOK DESHPANDE

MUMBAI

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) on Tuesday targeted Congress leader Rahul Gandhi over his remarks that the party is not running the Maharashtra government and cannot take crucial decisions here.

Leader of Opposition Devendra Fadnavis, in a digital press conference, said Mr. Gandhi's remarks are an attempt to distance his party from the failures of the tripartite Maha Vikas Aghadi government in dealing with

COVID-19 pandemic.

"Rahul Gandhi's statement comes at a time when he and his party realise the coronavirus crisis is getting out of hand. Now the Congress and its leaders want to blame everything on the Shiv Sena and Uddhav Thackeray," he said.

He said the Gandhis and the Congress cannot distance themselves from the government's performance. "Rahul Gandhi's statement shows that at a time when the government is failing, its allies too are slamming it.



Devendra Fadnavis

Here we have a government where all parties are blaming each other," he said.

Mr. Gandhi, in a digital press conference in Delhi earlier in the day, had said Maharashtra is an asset of

the country. "It is the centre of business. It needs full support from the Government of India as it is fighting a very difficult battle. We are supporting Maharashtra government, but we are not a key decision-maker here. There is a difference between running a government and supporting a government," the former Congress chief said.

Referring to reports of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) attempting to invoke President's Rule in the State, Mr. Gandhi said he understands the BJP has a duty as an Opposition to register protest or ask constructive questions of the government. "But uprooting the demo-

cratic structure for no reason and invoking President's Rule is not a constructive Opposition's work," he said.

Congress allies like the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP), meanwhile, said there was nothing wrong in Mr. Gandhi's statement.

"He is right when he said Maharashtra does not have a Congress government. He said so because Maharashtra

has a Maha Vikas Aghadi government. Those trying to distort the statement must stop. The three parties are happy together and serving the people of Maharashtra," said NCP chief spokesperson and Minority Affairs Minister Nawab Malik.

HC tells magistrates to speed up interim bail hearings

State told to submit report of COVID-19 testing in prisons

SONAM SAIGAL

MUMBAI

The Bombay High Court on Tuesday directed the State government to inform it about the number of testing labs and mobile checking centres in all districts.

A Division Bench of Chief Justice Dipankar Datta and Justice K.K. Tated was hearing a public interest litigation (PIL) filed by Khalil Wasta, a fisherman from Ratnagiri district, through advocate Rakesh Bhatkar.

The PIL said till the first week of April, swab samples were being sent to labs in Pune. Later, the Health Department directed samples to be sent to Miraj Hospital in Sangli district, 178 km from Ratnagiri. The PIL said suspected patients in Dapoli are facing delays in receiving samples and receiving results.

Mr. Bhatkar told the court about 26 medical colleges and hospitals that meet Indian Council of Medical Research's guidelines and can conduct COVID-19 tests. However, the government pleader said they do not meet the requirements.

The court expanded the PIL's scope and sought to know the testing status in all districts. The matter will be heard on May 29.



Several inmates at Arthur Road jail have contracted COVID-19. ■ FILE PHOTO

This would mean that 16,000 prisoners would have to be released and that a prison could accommodate only 8,000. On May 25, Maharashtra's prisons still had 29,737 inmates.

The court has directed the State to file a reply stating whether tests were carried out on prisoners in Arthur Road jail, who may have come into contact with 158 of those who have tested positive for the virus.

PUCL, represented by senior counsel Mihir Desai, sought permission for inmates to make video calls, and prosecutor Deepak Thakare said arrangements for videoconferencing were being made, and till then, inmates would be allowed to speak to their family or advocate over the phone once a week.

Mr. Desai also informed the court that the system of transmitting money to the inmates through money orders has been discontinued and separate bank accounts have to be opened.

Mr. Thakare told the court that an April 8 circular had said the jailer can open an account and provide the details to inmates. The court told prisons to implement the instruction immediately.

Can pets be taken for a walk, State seeks to know

AWBI must clarify norms, HC told

SONAM SAIGAL

MUMBAI

The State government recently told the Bombay High Court that the Animal Welfare Board of India (AWBI) must clarify whether or not pets can be taken for a walk during lockdown.

A Division Bench of Chief Justice Dipankar Datta and Justice S.S. Shinde was hearing a public interest litigation

(PIL) filed by animal welfare activist Vineeta Tandon through advocate Harshvardhan Bhende. The PIL states that as a result of the lockdown, police stations have been arbitrarily stopping citizens taking their pets for walks.

The PIL said police stations have issued arbitrary directions to housing societies to stop residents from taking their dogs for walks. It also mentioned that ambulances or pet taxis operated by NGOs and others to ferry

animals from their shelters, or pet owners to veterinary clinics are being arbitrarily stopped and digitally obstructed by the police.

The police were also refusing to issue passes for these ambulances and pet taxis, the PIL said.

'Not practical'
In its reply, the State, through an affidavit filed by joint secretary (Animal Husbandry), said with increasing number of coronavirus cases, granting permission for

pet owners to walk their dogs would not be practical as several localities have been declared containment zones and local bodies or Collectors are in a better position to take decisions after assessing the situation.

The affidavit mentioned that the demand for implementation of the guidelines proposed by AWBI cannot be fulfilled. The court had earlier asked the State to direct the police to not stop or obstruct ambulances or pet taxis ferrying sick animals.

Gujarat worse in handling COVID-19 crisis: Raut

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

MUMBAI

Shiv Sena leader Sanjay Raut on Tuesday hit back at BJP MP Narayan Rane's demand to impose President's Rule in Maharashtra. "Our government is stable and strong. We are busy fighting the coronavirus," he said.

due to work like this for many more years," he said.

Minority Affairs Minister and NCP chief spokesperson Nawab Malik, accused the BJP of spreading lies about imposing President's Rule in Maharashtra. "Our government is stable and strong. We are busy fighting the coronavirus," he said.

'Not playing politics'

Mr. Fadnavis, addressing a digital press conference on Tuesday, said, "We are not interested in playing politics. We are in no hurry to come back to power. This government will fall because of internal conflicts. The Centre is busy fighting COVID-19 as are we." He alleged that the three ruling parties are exhibiting no coordination.

When asked about BJP leader Narayan Rane's demand to impose President's Rule in Maharashtra, Mr. Fadnavis said that was the Rajya Sabha member's personal opinion.

Without specifying any party or leader, Mr. Raut

said the Opposition should get "quarantined", and that their efforts to destabilise the State government could boomerang.

Senior BJP leader and former minister Sudhir Mungantiwar, meanwhile, said though the COVID-19 situation in Maharashtra is grim, it does not qualify for President's Rule.

Mr. Rane, a Rajya Sabha member, on Monday met Governor B.S. Koshyari and demanded imposition of President's Rule due to the Shiv Sena-led State government's "failure" in tackling the pandemic.

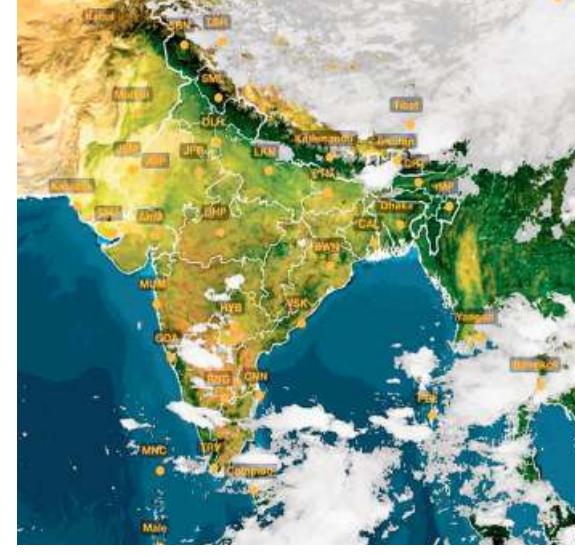
Mr. Raut told reporters, "If you go by the Gujarat High Court's strictures on tackling the COVID-19 crisis,

tackling the COVID-19 crisis, the State's performance is worse compared to Maharashtra. If President's Rule has to be imposed, the Centre should start with Gujarat."

Mr. Mungantiwar said the BJP does not think President's Rule should be imposed in the State. "The situation in Maharashtra is grim, but it does not qualify for Presidents Rule. We feel the current State government is not serious enough to tackle the situation," the BJP leader told a news channel.

WEATHER WATCH

RAINFALL, TEMPERATURE & AIR QUALITY IN SELECT METROS YESTERDAY



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

Forecast for Wednesday: Thunderstorm accompanied with lightning/gusty winds likely at isolated places over Gangetic West Bengal, Sikkim, Bihar, Jharkhand, Ladakh, Gilgit-Baltistan and Muzaffarabad. Heavy/very heavy rainfall likely at isolated places over Assam, Manipur, south interior Karnataka and Kerala

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	—	34.2	27.7	Kozhikode	—	35.8...	28.0
Ahmedabad	—	43.7	27.5	Kurnool	—	42.1...	30.7
Aizawl	—	27.2	19.1	Lucknow	—	43.8...	27.3
Allahabad	—	47.6	29.0	Madurai	—	40.4...	28.0
Bengaluru	—	32.9	21.9	Mangaluru	—	36.0...	27.2
Bhopal	—	44.0	26.9	Mumbai	—	34.1...	29.0
Bhubaneswar	—	34.3	28.5	Mysuru	—	33.4...	22.2
Chandigarh	—	44.0	25.2	New Delhi	—	46.0...	28.2
Chennai	—	37.5	29.4	Patna	—	40.3...	27.2
Coimbatore	—	37.3	26.0	Port Blair	—	32.0...	26.5
Dehradun	—	39.8	21.2	Puducherry	—	36.1...	29.1
Gangtok	23.3	20.6	15.3	Pune	—	39.1...	25.3
Goa	—	35.4	29.0	Raipur	—	46.0...	31.0
Guwahati	33.2	23.7	21.2	Ranchi	—	40.2...	27.8
Hubballi	—	36.0	24.0	Shillong	36.9...	25.1...	—
Hyderabad	—	42.3	29.6	Shimla	—	32.2...	22.3
Imphal	—	30.1	21.2	Srinagar	—	31.7...	13.2
Jaipur	—	45.0	33.2	Thiruvananthapuram	2.8...	33.6...	25.8
Kochi	18.2	32.8	24.6	Tiruchi	—	41.4...	28.2
Kohima	—	25.0	15.8	Vijayawada	—	40.0...	28.6
Kolkata	—	34.1	28.6	Visakhapatnam	—	34.2...	29.8

Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius

Pollutants in the air you are breathing

CITIES	SO ₂	NO _x	CO	PM _{2.5}	PM ₁₀	CODE
Ahmedabad	—	23	20	...43	...91	■■■
Bengaluru	—	14	32	...38	...67	■■■
Chennai	—	20	72	105	—	■■■
Delhi	25	28	11	159	219	■■■■■
Hyderabad	.7	37	22	57	90	■■■■■
Kolkata	—	8	13	29	51	■■■■■
Lucknow	.5	21	55	211	—	■■■■■
Mumbai	—	10	11	20	84	■■■■■



Oil price pickle

The increased duty on fuel can fund welfare, but arbitrary methods will have implications

Union Petroleum Minister Dharmendra Pradhan's recent remark that the Centre is taking a 'cautious and conscious approach' of ensuring a balance in fuel prices and aims to use the resultant savings for welfare is on the face of it unexceptionable. With global oil prices still about 45% lower than 2019 closing levels despite coordinated supply cuts by major producers, India had an opportunity to pass on the benefit to consumers and provide a fillip to becalmed consumption. That the 'deregulated' oil marketing companies chose not to reduce pump prices, even when crude tumbled last month, could be attributed to their caution amid a sharp slump in demand in the wake of the nationwide lockdown. It is the government's decision, earlier in May, to raise Excise Duty on petrol and diesel for a second time in less than two months that raises several concerns. For one, subsequent to the latest increase the Centre's tax revenue on a litre of petrol sold by IOC in Delhi as on May 16 was 1.8 times the fuel's freight inclusive base price of ₹18.28 and represented 46% of the final retail price of ₹71.26. With economic activity brought to a near standstill by the lockdown the Centre's overall revenue prospects have come under severe strain, and from that perspective the government's move to maximise its takings from transport fuels is understandable. Still, the fact that the government has consistently tinkered with the duty structure through recent years of largely benign oil prices, undermines the benefits from pricing deregulation that ought to have accrued to oil companies and consumers.

Back in 2018, ahead of key Assembly elections, the Centre had cut the excise duty at a time when global crude prices were on the ascent in order to minimise any electoral fallout from unchecked fuel costs. The government's goal of maximising revenue from fuel products to fund welfare measures can only bear fruit if demand for petrol and diesel remains unaffected by the continuing high costs. With curbs on inter-State road transport still in place, contracting automobile sales unlikely to recover any time soon, job losses and pay cuts sure to shrink household budgets, it is hard to see transport fuel demand rebounding to pre-lockdown levels for at least one or two quarters. Add to that the fact that the Centre's ambitious disinvestment target of ₹2.1-lakh crore for this fiscal had included a stake sale in BPCL, and the petroleum products' pricing approach gets even more complicated. With potential investors unlikely to be impressed by the lack of autonomy in the sector, it is in the government's interest not to risk the health of the goose that lays the golden eggs.

The common factor

China is now a dominant subject in U.S. politics as the election draws closer

President Donald Trump is entering deeper into a political quagmire on three related fronts: America's death toll from COVID-19 is perilously close to the psychologically important mark of 100,000; the economy looks to be on the verge of slipping into a deep recession, if not outright depression, in the wake of the pandemic impact across sectors; and his management of both the crises is facing acerbic criticism from Democrats even as the 2020 U.S. presidential election draws closer. There is one factor that links all three political hazards he is facing – China. On the pandemic front, Mr. Trump has regularly tweeted to the effect that the novel coronavirus ought to be called the "China virus" and his top officials including Secretary of State Mike Pompeo have made unsubstantiated suggestions that the virus may have leaked out of a Wuhan laboratory. While Mr. Trump appeared relatively more mollified after a call with Chinese President Xi Jinping in late March, he reverted to name-calling a few weeks thereafter. Beijing meanwhile has concertedly pushed a campaign around the message that the virus – contrary to any publicly verified evidence – originated outside China. On the economic front, the savage trade war that roiled global markets through most of 2019 appeared to be near a resolution when Washington and Beijing inked the 'phase one' pact for lower tariffs and trade concessions this January. The pandemic appears to have set that process back considerably: neither side will be in the mood to make concessions given that tens of millions of jobs have been lost in the U.S. and China is far from an economic recovery.

It is however the third factor, the presidential poll in November, that could most significantly alter the landscape of conflict-ridden bilateral ties. Presumptive Democratic nominee and former Vice President Joe Biden has for several months launched scathing attacks on Mr. Trump's bungling in the early phases of viral transmission, including repeated messaging that the President was slow to respond to warning signs from Wuhan and reluctant to lock down the U.S. to enforce physical distancing. Pro-Trump campaign organisations have in turn taken to labelling Mr. Biden, "Beijing Biden," which gives Democrats the tough choice of either attacking or defending China. If Mr. Biden does either, he will open himself up to political attacks. There is, however, a third way. If he steps back from the brink of what some analysts are describing as the potential "New Cold War," based on the understanding that neither side would stand to gain from the cumulative tally of economic and geopolitical conflict, he may not only avert a torrid clash between the two nations, but in the process he might win over economically insecure, independent and undecided voters across the U.S., who are decisively important to secure an election victory. Not only the U.S. and China, but the world at large, might stand to gain if he did that.

The heavy burden of social suffering

The misery the pandemic has caused to the poor points to the horrendous ways in which societies are organised



RAJEEV BHARGAVA

It is a truism that suffering is part of life. No one, literally no one, is exempt from it.

A deep philosophical interpretation of this claim is provided by the great Buddha: the mere fact of human existence entails suffering because everything in the world is ephemeral, transient. Its imminent disappearance is experienced as a loss, causing grief. This elemental imperfection in the world keeps us all in a near-permanent state of 'dukkha' or radical discontentment.

Inescapable truth

There is a second, extremely important sense in which all human beings are subject to suffering. We all undergo a deeply negative, unwanted experience when daily routine is disrupted by disease, sickness, ageing, death, natural catastrophe or when a misfortune unexpectedly crashes into our life. Part of their life cycle, all humans are equally vulnerable to it. Buddha talked with great wisdom about it as do the Indian epics. Indeed, most religions in the world attempt to address and make sense of this ubiquitous, inescapable human suffering that is both physical and mental (feelings of profound meaninglessness, anguish and despair). Paradoxically, our very capacity to reflect, to remember our past and imagine a future intensifies this suffering.

Buddha spoke not only about the deeply felt suffering caused by major, disruptive episodes in life but also minor, persistent, daily suffering – dissatisfaction caused within an individual by an effort going waste, an unfulfilled aspiration.

tion or a missed opportunity, by the persistent irritations within social interactions. Indirectly, he differentiated suffering by its duration – short term, episodic or long term, continuous. The great Asoka introduced another dimension, implicitly distinguishing suffering by its source, by what causes it, as arising within human agency or outside it. Owning up responsibility, he expressed remorse at the immense and continuing agony he caused to the people of Kalinga. He acknowledged how the anguish caused by a war he waged began a chain reaction, creating an ever-widening circle of co-sufferers.

The dark and tragic Mahabharata also speaks of war, a relatively short 18-day episode in which immense human suffering was inflicted by one group on another. Thus, we may distinguish forms of human suffering by their (a) source, (b) intensity and gravity and (c) duration. With these, we can home in on a third form of 'dukkha' – in which grave disruptions caused by humans become an enduring feature of daily life, as when humanity was continuously ravaged by the two world wars.

Traumatic images

Such colossal misery inflicted by one group of persons on another or by the rulers on the ruled might be called socio-political suffering. This reprehensible experience, a consequence of various acts of commission or omission by powerful people in society who go to war, impose harsh economic measures, deliberately sow social divisions or work for the benefit of a few with no regard for the welfare of the larger, powerless population, is entirely avoidable. Until recently in human history, this systematic violence and institutionalised oppression was barely recognised for what it really is: something not given to but made by humans.

It is this man-made suffering



that has recently invaded our lives. It is induced neither solely by COVID-19 nor by the decision to lockdown but largely by how the lockdown has been handled, reminding us of Arthur Schopenhauer's comment that "the world is Hell, and men are on the one hand the tormented souls and on the other the devil in it". Lakhs of penniless, barefoot workers trudging hundreds of kilometres under the scorching sun. A pregnant woman carrying a load on her head, or lying in a cart pushed by her husband; a mother delivering a baby on the pavement and moments later standing up to renew her journey or pulling a broken suitcase on wheels with a four-year-old clinging to it; a 10-year-old collapsing on the roadside, exhausted by the heat; rickshaw puller from Delhi cycling all the way to Bihar with all his family and worldly goods; scores hiding in the entrails of a dumper to avoid the punitive gaze of the police, thousands spending endless nights on the platform waiting for the promised train to arrive and take them home, hundreds killed on the railway track or the road by speeding vehicles or trains, their food, blood and chappals strewn everywhere.

These images that have flashed past us are shattering, first because they display the sheer corporeality of suffering – pain and injury, unimaginable fatigue and exhaustion, exposure to excessive heat, stomachs aching with hunger, parched throats, nausea and

dizziness; and second, because they exhibit unbearable mental distress – suppressed rage, anguish at the plight of old parents or little children, homesickness, fear, loss of dignity, humiliation, social rejection, betrayal, the incessant realisation that you live with others who treat you as disposable waste, as garbage. They all combine to generate a comprehensive attack on one's personhood accompanied by a feeling of overwhelming despair that one exists at all. We have been witnessing here a concentrated form of what millions of people undergo daily in some or another part of the world, starkly bringing into relief that large-scale disruptions such as the current pandemic compound structural suffering of millions and point to the horrendous ways in which many societies are currently organised.

Moral indifference

There is something wrong with this world, and gravely, astonishingly wrong with our moral indifference to this daily denial of humanity to others. How is it that we, corporeal beings, equally vulnerable to pain and anguish, allow others to experience states that we will not accept for a minute? How

can we accept a process of self-formation that simply fails to make us moral? How can a nation be built without *saharidhyata* (shared feelings, empathy)? How can a social structure exist that renders superfluous those very people who put their life and blood in maintaining it? Are we engaged in an archaic ritual of violence which we know to be incomplete without the sacrifice of the most precious, the most indispensable amongst us?

Alas, this moral coarseness – the ability to shut off from discomfiting conditions, to not see or feel for them, hear or think about them – is not just a defensive psychological strategy to keep sane but an ingrained habit, con-

stituting what we are, part of our training since childhood, a trait in our character. Perhaps, it is integral to our chosen, self-indulgent lifestyle – one sustained by social and economic processes that originate in the carefully hidden oppression of others. Surely, some of these practices have an old lineage – for instance, the hierarchical caste system founded on mistreatment of indispensable others; others are very much a product of modern technology and organisation. Doesn't a common amoral thread run through the remote control bombing of civilian populations, the organised machinery of genocidal violence, the calamitous destruction of the environment and the structural poverty of millions?

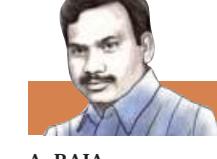
We are all culpable in this grave wrongdoing. Yet, this shared responsibility is graded. Those with more power and wealth, those who run the state and the big corporations must bear greater responsibility for collective suffering.

There may have been a time when most people oriented themselves to a world that was little more than what Schopenhauer called 'a penal colony', where life itself was viewed as punishment, in which nothing untoward or irregular was found in the torments of life. Natural calamities and man-made oppression were viewed as part of the order of things. This seems to have changed everywhere and in India too, particularly by the experience of the anti-colonial struggle and the vibrancy of contemporary political democracy. Today more and more people hold some others responsible for part of their suffering and expect governments that are run in their name to do something about it. Indeed, when appropriate, they directly, publicly blame governments, beware!

Rajeev Bhargava is Professor, CSDS, Delhi

Continue India's tryst with Nehruvian ideology

It remains essential even today to fight against the dark forces of communalism and to kindle the light of harmony



A. RAJA

Fifty-six years after Jawaharlal Nehru left the world stage – his anniversary is today, May 27 – demagogic attempts are still being made to dub Nehruvian ideology as myopic. In the discussion on the dilution of Article 370 of the Indian Constitution in both Houses of Parliament, Nehru was not only criticised by the ruling party, but even lampooned.

The debate began with the opinion that Nehru had mishandled the Kashmir issue, and that had it been entrusted to Sardar Patel, as in the case of the other princely States, the end result would have been impeccable. Pertinently, one needs to understand the historical context and the point in time of Kashmir's integration with India.

A dedication to integration

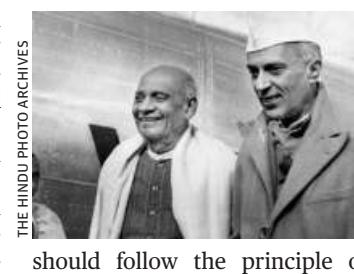
Mehr Chand Mahajan who served as the Prime Minister of Jammu and Kashmir in 1947-48, and later as Chief Justice of India, has recorded in his autobiography the entente between Nehru and Patel in the matter of Kashmir's integration with India. On October 24, 1947, Mahajan received a late-night call from Deputy Prime Minister Sardar Patel asking him to come over to Delhi from Amritsar, in the same plane in which Lady Mountbatten was to go to Srinagar to meet the recently-freed Sheikh Abdullah with a message from Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru. It is also important to note that Nehru was in the U.S. at this time and Patel was at the helm in India. Yet, the correspondence between Nehru and Patel during this period clearly captures a sense of camaraderie and sincere dedication to the

goal of Kashmir's integration with India. Even the letter drafted by Nehru addressed to Sheikh Abdullah was sent to Patel for his perusal through N. Gopalaswami Ayyangar. This then led to the initiation of administrative proceedings in the Constitutional Assembly. Even minor changes in the draft Article 370 were being apprised (with relevant clarifications) to Nehru by Patel, as seen in his letter dated November 3, 1949.

Article 370 was deemed temporary by both Nehru and Patel, but given Kashmir's geography and its implications for India's national security, that Constitutional provision was an urgent necessity. In its absence, Kashmir would have virtually atrophied.

Approaches of Nehru, Patel

Nehru's sincere commitment to secularism, evinced in his espousal of the principles of religious equality, is being criticised either as "pseudo-secularism" that is biased in favour of the minorities or as an impractical exercise in futility given how the majority's religion is compared to the minorities. The criticism is touted as if Patel and Nehru had divergent opinions on the meaning of secularism even though there is no such evidence. Granville Austin's observation is relevant here: "Nehru and Patel were the focus of power in the Constituent Assembly, when they were divided on an issue, as in the case of property clause, factions could line up behind them and the debate would be lengthy. But when they settled their differences, the factions among the rank and file would do little else but shake hands and make the decision unanimous." Patel's view on secularism is moderate and as chairman of the advisory committee on fundamental rights, he had to review the report of the sub-committee on minorities in the Constituent Assembly. His tenor there was very much that India



THE HINDU PHOTO ARCHIVES

should follow the principle of secularism.

Nevertheless, Patel is often identified as a Hindu traditionalist. It is a historical fact that Hindu traditionalist leaders like Madan Mohan Malviya and Lala Lajpat Rai favoured the idea of an Indian nation built around the majority (Hindu) community to which Nehru was strongly opposed. When K.M. Munshi (then a Union Minister) tabled in Parliament the matter of reconstruction of Gujarat's Somnath Temple which had been damaged by the army of Mahmud of Ghazni in the 11th century, Deputy Prime Minister Sardar Patel announced in November 1947, that the government would provide funds for rebuilding the temple. However, at the insistence of Nehru, Gandhiji suggested that the project should be financed by public subscription. Nehru was strongly committed to keeping the government distanced from religion – an attitude that defined the character of new-born India.

Nehru used every available opportunity to not only propound the benefits of a 'socialistic democracy' as opposed to the 'Hindu Nation' prescribed by the Hindu Mahasabha, but also to reassure India's Muslim minority of their future in India. On the other hand, on June 6, 1948, Sardar Patel urged the Hindu Mahasabha to amalgamate with the Congress. He made similar pleas to the RSS.

In Sankar's *Sardar Patel: Select Correspondence (1945-50)*, we find that in May 1948, after Gandhi's assassination, Nehru was anxious about the 'recrudescence of the RSS'. Consequently, the RSS was

banned. Golwalkar pleaded first with Nehru and then with Sardar Patel to lift the ban on RSS. At which point, Patel demanded that Golwalkar should put together a written constitution for the RSS. In the end of January 1949, the RSS's official constitution came into being. However, Sardar Patel's expectations were not met in this constitution and it became an exercise in futility. Golwalkar intended to launch an agitation from his place of detention. Finally, in June 1949, Patel agreed to accept an amended constitution and the ban on the RSS was lifted on July 11. Patel's favourable inclination towards the RSS reached its peak when a resolution was passed in the Congress Working Committee (CWC) on October 10, 1949, authorising Swayamsevaks to become members of the party – all during the absence of Nehru who was then travelling abroad.

The internal democracy within the Congress was also put to the test in 1950, when Purushottam Das Tandon was elected as party president by defeating Kripalani, with the support of Patel in recognition of his Hindu nationalist loyalties. Tandon emphasised two points at the Nashik Congress session: one was Hindu nationalism and the other was adoption of Hindi as an official language. Nehru as Prime Minister threw his weight against this emergent tense and prickly situation. He said, "... If you want me as Prime Minister, you have to follow my lead unequivocally. If you don't want to me to remain, you tell me so and I shall go. I will not hesitate. I will go out and fight independently for the ideas of the Congress as I have done all these years."

Need for science and logic

The approaches of Nehru and Patel in dealing with Hindu nationalist ideology may be divergent but they are clearly two sides of the same coin – that coin being secularism. History recounts that Patel's approach was based on his faith and trust, not on logical inferences. Nehru felt that India instead of favouring science and logic instead of orthodox religiosity. He believed that 'education is meant to free the shackles of the human mind and not to imprison it in pre-set ideas and beliefs'. His motto, namely cultivating scientific temper and nurturing the spirit of tolerance are the foundations of his concept of secularism.

Consider Nehru's commitment to the adoption of the Hindu Code Bill introduced by the then Law Minister B.R. Ambedkar. According to Ambedkar, "The Hindu Code Bill was the greatest social reform measure ever undertaken by the legislature in the country...." The Bill was vehemently resisted by every Hindu nationalist in the Congress. President Rajendra Prasad even expressed apprehension that it may cause disruption in every Hindu family. Nehru's inability to pass the Bill initially, forced Ambedkar to resign from the cabinet. However, Nehru's continuous struggle to get the Bill passed (even if with some amendments) is credible testimony to his commitment to uphold secularism.

Nehru had dreamt for a modern India to have an exalted position on the world stage, rising above sectarian politics and divisive forces. In January 1948 he said, "As far as India is concerned, I can speak with some certainty. We shall proceed on secular lines... in keeping with the powerful trends towards internationalism."

An effective democracy and the nurturing of unity and solidarity are the need of the day for our nation. Nehruvian ideology continues to remain essential even today to fight against the dark forces of communalism and to kindle the light of social harmony.

A. Raja, a Member of Parliament, is a former Union Minister

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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

A virus and the mask

Before March, one would have never visualised images of Indians wearing masks at all times (OpEd, "Battling a virus with masks", May 26). In these difficult times, not only is the usage of masks essential but their maintenance too. The subject of mask hygiene has also started

trending. The other day, I was amused to see a girl explaining how to remove and re-use a face mask using a plastic container without touching the front of the mask. With the government suggesting that citizens learn to live with the virus for sometime, we should also learn and observe mask hygiene and

etiquette at all times.

M. LAKSHMI NARAYANAN,
Chennai

Now and then

The Editorials, "Batting for free speech" (May 26, 2020) and 'From the Archives - A Hundred Years Ago, May 26, 1920, "Silently gagging the media. (From an editorial), suggest that

nothing much has changed

over the last century. The urge to control the media,

then and now, remains,

only the *modus operandi* has changed.

R. HARIPANTH,
Chennai

How India can become self-reliant

There needs to be significant government reinvestment in public sector undertakings and R&D



D. RAGHUNANDAN

Addressing the nation on the COVID-19 pandemic, Prime Minister Narendra Modi emphasised the necessity of a self-reliant India. He said the need was brought home by the absence of domestic production of personal protective equipment (PPE) when COVID-19 struck, but India initiated and quickly ramped up PPE production. Mr. Modi said there needs to be improvement in quality and domestic supply chains going forward. If this is to happen though, India will have to make major course changes in development strategies.

Much has changed since the self-reliance model of the Nehruvian era, so a perspective for Indian self-reliance in science and technology (S&T) and industry in a globalised world is long overdue.

Not globally competitive

Self-reliance in state-run heavy industries and strategic sectors in the decades following independence had placed India ahead of most developing countries. In the 1970s and 80s, however, India did not modernise these industries to climb higher up the technological ladder. The private sector, which had backed the state-run core sector approach in its Bombay Plan, stayed content with near-monopoly conditions in non-core sectors in a protected market. Little effort was made to modernise light industries or develop contemporary consumer products. India's industrial ecosystem was thus characterised by low productivity, poor quality and low technology, and was globally uncompetitive.

India completely missed out on the 'third industrial revolution' comprising electronic goods, micro-processors, personal computers, mobile phones and decentralised manufacturing and global value chains during the so-called lost decade(s). Today, India is the world's second largest smartphone market. However, it does not make any of these phones itself, and manufactures only a small fraction of solar photovoltaic cells and modules currently used, with



N. RAMAKRISHNAN

ambitious future targets.

At the turn of the millennium, when India embarked on liberalisation, privatisation and globalisation, the very concept of self-reliance was rubbed, in the belief that it was tantamount to reinventing the wheel when advanced technologies could simply be bought from anywhere at lower costs. Two related ideas have prevailed since then, and neither delivered the desired results. The first was that public sector undertakings (PSUs) are, by definition, inefficient and sluggish for the competitive globalised scenario. No effort was made to engender either real autonomy or a transition to new technological directions. Instead, PSUs with capability and scale for the task were undermined or abandoned, along with many nascent research and development (R&D) efforts (for instance, in photovoltaics, semiconductors and advanced materials). On the other hand, the private sector displayed little interest in these heavy industries and showed no appetite for technology upgrading. With entry of foreign corporations, most Indian private companies retreated into technology imports or collaborations. Even today, most R&D in India is conducted by PSUs, and also in indigenously developed technologies. Taiwan developed technologies and manufacturing capacities in robotics and micro-processors, while Singapore and Hong Kong adapted advanced technologies in niche areas. These self-reliant capabilities were enabled, among other factors, by planned state investments in R&D including basic research (3-5% of GDP), technology and policy support to private corporations, infrastructure and, importantly, education and skill development (4-6% of GDP).

The second idea was that inviting foreign direct investment and manufacturing by foreign majors would bring new technologies into India's industrial ecosystem, obviating the need for indigenous efforts towards

self-reliance. However, mere setting up of manufacturing facilities in India is no guarantee of absorption of technologies (the ability to independently take them to higher levels). There is no evidence from any sector that this has taken place or has even been attempted. The fact is, foreign majors jealously guard commercially significant or strategic technologies in off-shore manufacturing bases. The key problem of self-reliance is therefore neither external finance nor domestic off-shore manufacturing, but resolute indigenous endeavour including R&D.

Experience and achievements in other countries in Asia attest to this, and also contradict the notion that self-reliance is a hangover from Nehruvian 'socialism'. Learning from Japan's post-war success, countries like South Korea, Taiwan, Singapore and Hong Kong took huge technological and industrial strides in the 1970s and 80s. South Korea, in particular, climbed determinedly up the technology ladder and value chains in electronic goods, consumer durables, automobiles, micro-processors, personal computers and heavy machinery. It emerged as a global powerhouse in manufacturing, but also in indigenously developed technologies. Taiwan developed technologies and manufacturing capacities in robotics and micro-processors, while Singapore and Hong Kong adapted advanced technologies in niche areas. These self-reliant capabilities were enabled, among other factors, by planned state investments in R&D including basic research (3-5% of GDP), technology and policy support to private corporations, infrastructure and, importantly, education and skill development (4-6% of GDP).

Countries like Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia and Vietnam have focused

on off-shore manufacturing lower down the value chain and without the thrust on self-reliance. This is useful for job creation but is an unsuitable model for a country of India's size and aspirations.

China is, of course, unique in scale and in its determination to become a superpower not just geopolitically but also in self-reliant S&T and industrial capability. China advanced purposefully from low-end mass manufacturing to a dominant role in global supply chains. It has now decided on shifting to advanced manufacturing and has set itself a target of becoming a world leader by 2035 in 5G, supercomputing, Internet of Things, artificial intelligence (AI), autonomous vehicles, biotech/pharma and other technologies of the 'fourth industrial revolution'.

The way forward for India

Unfortunately, India may well have missed the bus in many of these technologies in which the U.S., Europe and China have established perhaps insurmountable leads. Yet self-reliant capabilities in electric and fuel cell vehicles, electricity storage systems, solar cells and modules, aircraft including UAVs, AI, robotics and automation, biotech/pharma and others are well within reach.

Large-scale concerted endeavours would, however, be required, since self-reliance will not happen by itself. State-funded R&D, including in basic research, by PSUs and research institutions and universities needs to be scaled-up significantly, well above the dismal 1% of GDP currently. Upgraded and reoriented PSUs would also be crucial given their distinctive place in the ecosystem. Private sector delivery-oriented R&D could also be supported, linked to meaningful participation in manufacturing at appropriate levels of the supply chain.

Finally, India's meagre public expenditure on education needs to be substantially ramped up (as against current trends of privatisation which would only shrink access), including in skill development. No country has achieved self-reliance without mass quality public education. And no country has developed without a much stronger public health system than what we have in India.

D. Raghunandan is with the Delhi Science Forum, affiliated to the All India People's Science Network

A time for reform in courts

The Supreme Court can move away from an oral hearing-based system to one based on written submission



V.V. SIVAKUMAR & CHITRANSUL SINHA

The pandemic has turned the world on its head. No aspect of life has escaped unscathed. This includes the functioning of courts and tribunals. The judiciary has limited its work to hearing urgent matters via video conferencing. A lot has been written about how this is an opportunity to improve IT infrastructure of courts so that they can move to video conference hearings as the norm. However, any such move without first revamping procedural law would be futile.

Changing the system

In subordinate civil courts and High Courts, a significant time of daily proceedings is taken up by cases where only adjournments are sought for procedural matters like filing of replies. Both as a response to this crisis, as well as in the medium term, this system can be done away with. A system needs to be devised where cases are not listed before the court unless all the documents are filed within strict timelines and every procedural requirement complied with. The existing infrastructure is enough to enable this. Listing can be done before the court only in cases requiring urgent interim intervention from the court, while the matter is pending procedural completion, after verification of urgency by a judicial officer or a judge upon oral or written application.

When courts reopen, apart from fresh cases, only a limited number of cases (say, 20-30 a day) which are ripe for arguments can be posted. This can be done with sufficient notice to the Bar Associations that requests for adjournments will be looked at askance. This will ensure that court rooms are not crowded. Circulation of the cases to be listed in advance (say, two weeks before listing) will give advocates enough time to take instructions from clients and prepare for arguments.

The Supreme Court Rules, 2013 should amend provisions pertaining to Special Leave Petitions (SLPs). Article 136 of the Constitution enables people to file a petition seeking leave to appeal a decision of any judicial or quasi-judicial authority. The Supreme Court grants leave to appeal if the petition raises a question of law of general public importance, or if the judgment appealed against is especially perverse, which would require interference from the Court. The provision has been abused over the years to only clog the docket of the Supreme

Court. The Supreme Court was never intended to be a court of appeal, barring such appeals which specific statutes provide for. The High Courts are usually meant to be the final courts of appeal. Instead, SLPs are now being treated as the last round of appeal.

Reports show that SLPs comprise about 60-70% of the Supreme Court's docket. Out of this, 80-90% of SLPs are dismissed, which means only 10-20% of such cases raise important questions of law. This takes up a lot of time of the Court. A simple solution would be to do away with immediate oral hearing of SLPs. The Supreme Court Rules could be amended to provide for a structure of pre-hearing of SLPs. Every SLP must be accompanied by an application for oral hearing which must be decided first by the Court, and that too in chambers. To assist the Court for that, a cadre of judicial research assistants made up of qualified lawyers should be created. The research assistants can go through each SLP and cut out the important questions of law as envisioned in Article 136. Thereafter, the Court may or may not allow applications for oral hearings based on whether such questions of law merit its attention. Only such SLPs in which oral hearing is permitted should be listed for hearing. SLPs in which no questions of law are raised, or frivolous ones are raised, should be dismissed without oral hearing and upon imposition of costs. This will ensure that only meritorious SLPs get judicial attention and will deter people from filing frivolous SLPs. It will also reduce pendency exponentially as the system will free up the Court's time to hear statutory appeals and matters pertaining to interpretation of the Constitution or constitutional validity of laws or executive actions.

No filing reply to appeals

Even in cases of statutory appeals, and appeals where leave is granted in SLPs, the Court should do away with the system of filing reply to the appeals and rejoinders to such replies. Every case can be decided based on records of the subordinate courts. As no new arguments on facts can be raised before the Court in appeals, the system of filing additional pleadings should be rendered redundant as the pleadings are simple regurgitation of the records of the subordinate courts. Most such appeals can be dwelled upon by judges and their research assistants in chamber, and only such appeals should be granted detailed hearings where the judges require clarifications. The above mechanisms will ensure that the Supreme Court moves away from an oral hearing-based system to a written submission-based one.

V.V. Sivakumar and Chitranshu Sinha are partners at Dua Associates, Advocates and Solicitors

RESPONSE

An effective lockdown

India's containment strategy has been successful

G. KISHAN REDDY

A former Finance Minister who had served under Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee recently wrote an op-ed in this newspaper titled "Flawed stimulus is justice denied" (May 20). His lack of objectivity is clearly visible when he conflates the selfless contributions of NGOs with some Opposition parties that were propagating a class divide during the pandemic. In such circumstances, it becomes necessary to counter such egregious falsehoods.

Lives versus livelihoods

India's lockdown and its enforcement has been one of the most structured exercises globally. The lockdown saved lives and its gradual easing aims to protect livelihoods. India's lockdown, with minimum prior notice, can be contrasted with the chaos that ensued in northern Italy when the news of an imminent lockdown was leaked by the media. Thousands tried to flee northern Italy and carried the infection to other regions. In contrast, the aim of the Prime Minister's announcement was to ensure that the virus doesn't spread to the villages. This strategy has been successful.

During the lockdown, the government's goal was to alleviate the hardships of the poor and vulnerable by providing free foodgrain through the PDS and by providing cash assistance through Direct Benefit Transfers (DBT). As of May 17, about 41 crore people have received financial assistance of ₹52,608 crore under the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Package. The invocation of the Disaster Management Act permits State governments to use the funds available in State Disaster Response Funds for all expenses including those incurred in repatriating migrant labour. Thus any attempts to blame the Ministry of Railways in accounting for operational expenses while plying Shramik trains is grossly ill-informed.

The lockdown saw the Union government and State governments come together in charting a unified course. The Prime Minister held five meetings with the Chief Ministers of various States since the announce-

ment of the lockdown. This calibrated approach saw the timely easing of the lockdown and a coordinated attempt at restarting economic activity.

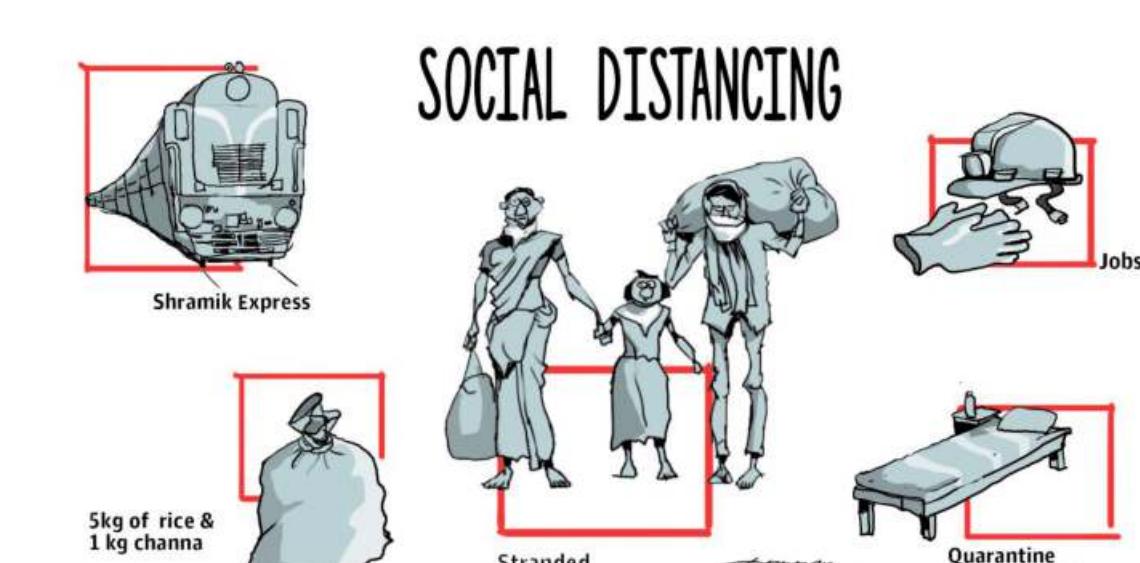
The twin goals of self-reliance
The Prime Minister's vision for a self-reliant India is based on two complementary goals: self-reliance of our citizens to control their outcomes and self-reliance of the nation to control its destiny. For our aspirational classes, the economic package provides adequate support to achieve the outcomes they set for themselves. Opportunities are being provided in terms of loans to start and sustain livelihoods. The package also aims to reskill our workers.

As a country, self-reliance is a concerted effort at building institutional capacities. The past term has seen us make significant strides in addressing open defecation, sanitation and empowerment of girls and women. More than 1 crore poor beneficiaries have had access to quality healthcare. Technology-enabled governance initiatives such as DBT have been instrumental for the welfare of the poor. Leadership at the top is the single-most enabling factor for building such self-reliance and resilience.

In a 2014 interview, the former Finance Minister stated that there are two kinds of expenditure – investment and consumption. He said that while the former is regarded as productive expenditure, the latter is not regarded as productive expenditure. True to his "rollback" years, the former Finance Minister has come full circle to portray large-scale government infrastructure and investment spending as "wasteful expenditure". Contrary to his beliefs, the Central Vista project and the bullet train project are investment expenditures that would create jobs, boost the economy and build capital assets.

The government, led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, embraces criticism. However, it is also duty-bound to set the record straight when falsehoods and intellectual dishonesty are mainstreamed as opinions.

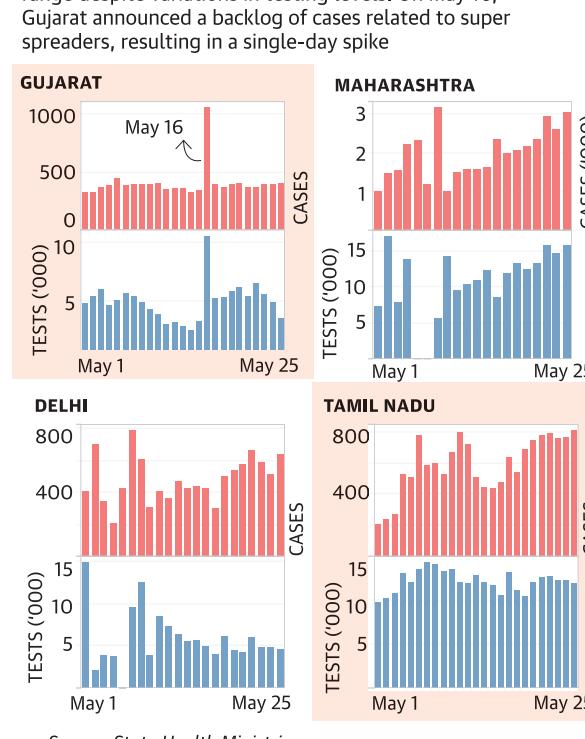
G. Kishan Reddy is the Minister of State for Home Affairs and is a Member of Parliament from Secunderabad constituency



DATA POINT

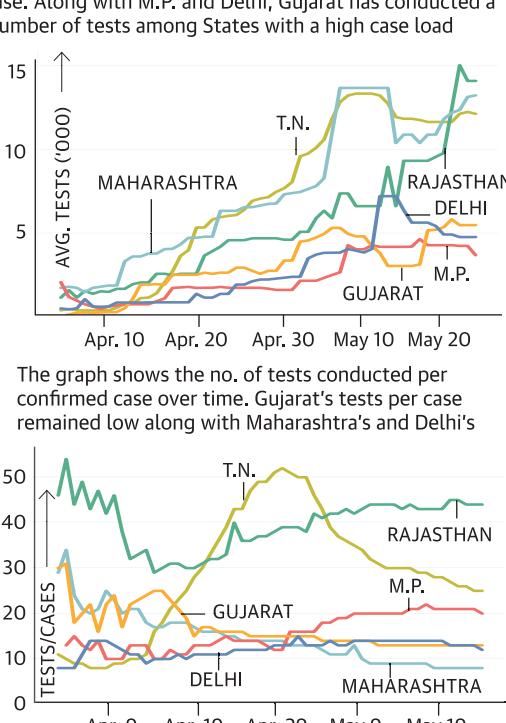
A curious test case

A UNIQUE CURVE The graphs show daily cases (red bars) and daily tests (blue bars) conducted in four States/UTs with the highest infections since May 1. The daily increase in cases has remained nearly constant in Gujarat in the 320-440 range despite variations in testing levels. On May 16, Gujarat announced a backlog of cases related to super spreaders, resulting in a single-day spike



Among the four States/UTs with the highest number of COVID-19 infections, Gujarat has a unique pattern of steady daily case increases through May. Despite its relatively high overall case load, the State's tests per confirmed case remain low. Gujarat needs to increase testing relative to the size of the outbreak. By The Hindu Data Team

LOW ON TESTS The first graph shows the seven-day rolling average of tests conducted in States with a high number of infections. Gujarat was steadily showing higher levels of testing till May 7, but a reduction resulted in lower averages between May 8 and 18. Since then, there was again a steady increase. Along with M.P. and Delhi, Gujarat has conducted a low number of tests among States with a high case load



The graph shows the no. of tests conducted per confirmed case over time. Gujarat's tests per case remained low along with Maharashtra's and Delhi's

The Hindu
FROM THE ARCHIVES

FIFTY YEARS AGO MAY 27, 1970

Strange bedfellows

Having routed the Hertzogites in the recent general election, Dr. Vorster, South Africa's Prime Minister, has been visiting Malawi, his client State, and Mr. Ian Smith's Rhodesia. While these two countries are anxious to receive material aid from South Africa, the richest and most powerful country in the south of the continent, Mr. Smith also looks up to it for military aid against the nationalist guerrillas who are preparing themselves to fight his illegal regime. While other African States condemn the racist regimes in Rhodesia and South Africa Dr. Hastings Banda, Malawi's leader, has been maintaining friendly relations with both for economic reasons. There are reports that South Africa is setting up a military base at Lilongwe in Malawi which would not only be valuable as part of its forward air defences but could also be utilised for air operations against the African guerrilla camps in Tanzania and Zambia. About 6,000 guerrillas are said to be training in Zanzibar; many more have already completed training elsewhere in Tanzania and Zambia. Though they have occasionally staged some raids in Rhodesia, the guerrillas do not yet pose a threat to the Smith regime.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO MAY 27, 1920.

Whitewash.

(From an editorial)

At least the Hunter Committee Report has seen the light of day and an apprehensive public has had its worst anticipations realised. It is whitewash, pure and simple, an apology for crimes that in other circumstances would have provoked floods of indignation from the very persons who now attempt to gloss over the most serious breaches of the laws of humanity and civilisation. One understands better now Mr. Montagu's coyness in refusing to publish the Hunter Report earlier, for its flimsy attempts at condonation, its strange evaluation of evidence and the facility with which it jumps to conclusions unwarranted even by the facts that were presented to its contemplation, would not have borne the test of public scrutiny. His anxiety therefore to take action on the report before its publication arose, it is now clear, from a desire to shield the whitewashers from the glare of public criticism and to face the public, British and Indian, with the accomplished fact in the question of punishment.

FROM PAGE ONE

Modi reviews LAC standoff with NSA, CDS

In contrast, in three separate sets of remarks last week, the Chinese MFA had accused Indian troops of "crossing the line" across Ladakh and Sikkim, of "infringement activities" and of "attempting to unilaterally change the status of border control."

MEA officials have also said "established mechanisms" are in place to resolve the issue, indicating their relative silence on the issue is to enable talks between military commanders and diplomatic channels to proceed.

However, sources on the ground have indicated that the situation on the ground is far more serious, with a faceoff between troops at at least three points in Ladakh and Nakula Pass in Sikkim, increased numbers of Chinese troops at the LAC in areas where India patrols, including the Galwan river valley, and Chinese troops blocking Indian patrols in the finger areas on the Pangong Tso (lake).

Meanwhile, defence sources denied reports of a major buildup by Chinese troops across the LAC in Ut-

tarakhand (also called the middle sector of the LAC), particularly in the Joshi-math-Harsil area, where Indian troops have been moved to more forward positions. The sources said these were routine "local movements".

In Delhi, the Chinese Embassy also denied reports that flights arranged to repatriate citizens were connected to the ongoing tensions at the LAC in any way.

"In consideration of the development of the epidemic situation in India, the Chinese side is planning to dispatch temporary flights to India to bring back students, tourists and business inspectors who are facing difficulties in India," Embassy Spokesperson Ji Rong said.

On Tuesday, the Chinese Communist Party-owned newspaper *Global Times* published an editorial cautioning against misreading the move. "China clearly has no intention of escalating the border disputes with India, so its assistance to its citizens should not be over-interpreted," the editorial said.

'No WHO bar on India testing HCQ as preventive'

"WHO is not advising stopping all HCQ trials... the suspension of enrolment applies only to the Solidarity trial. Many prophylaxis trials using HCQ are ongoing or about to start," Dr Swaminathan said.

On May 4, the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) formally published plans for a clinical trial – again an observational trial – that will check if 2,000 doctors, healthcare and sanitation workers who work in five dedicated COVID-19 hospitals across the country were afforded any protection while taking a prescribed course of HCQ.

WHO for RCT testing
Dr. Swaminathan said HCQ, even for testing its potency as a prophylactic, ought to be tested via the RCT method.

"WHO has consistently said that the best way of proving the efficacy of a drug for prevention or treatment is through well-conducted randomised clinical trials. Observational studies are always subject to the risk of bias and can sometimes produce misleading results. In the case of HCQ, there is no clear evidence from RCTs on either safety or efficacy, so that would be the best way to proceed," she said.

"It was 'very rare,' for a drug to fail at treating moderate or severe disease but to be effective in working as a preventive," added Dr Swaminathan, who was formerly Director-General of the ICMR.

Director-General of ICMR Balram Bhargava said at a press conference on Tuesday that while several studies were ongoing in India, there "was evidence" that the drug worked as prophylactic. "It is difficult to do a

randomised trial for a drug that may be working. We've got some observational data. A more detailed study will be available soon. We've weighed the risks and benefits and concluded that we can't as of now deny this to our frontline workers battling COVID-19."

The government late last week extended the use of HCQ for paramilitary and police personnel involved in COVID-19 management, besides direct health care providers for positive patients. It cited three separate studies that claimed benefits but hasn't publicised details of these studies.

Two trials in patients – again, not RCTs and in small groups – in France and South Korea found that the drug reduced viral loads as well as protected hospitalised patients and healthcare workers exposed to the virus and appears to be prime source of optimism about its prophylactic potency. On the other hand, it has also been linked to retinopathy and cardiac malfunction which is why it evokes deep scepticism among doctors and medical experts on India's faith in the drug.

"We know that HCQ has been used for over four decades for immuno-modulation... Some patients have been on lifelong therapy of one tablet every day. The reason some people are now talking against HCQ is the 'potential serious side effects' of this drug. Of special concern is its effect on the heart. But the fact of the matter is that this drug is extremely safe and side effects are mild and extremely rare and are being blown out of proportion in today's scenario," said Dr. Yash Gulati, orthopedic surgeon, Indraprastha Apollo Hospitals, New Delhi.

The court also ordered the convicts to pay ₹25,000 each (total ₹1 lakh) to the

Ensure transport, food for migrants, says SC

It asked Solicitor General Tushar Mehta to assist the court and produce on record by day after tomorrow (May 28) measures taken by the Centre so far to alleviate the migrants' sufferings. It referred to newspaper and media reports on helpless migrants forced to travel thousands of miles on foot or bicycles during the lockdown.

Newspaper reports and other media reports have been continuously showing the unfortunate and miserable conditions of migrant la-

bours walking on foot and cycling for long distances. They have also been complaining of not being provided food and water by the administration at places where they were stranded or in the way i.e. highways from which they proceeded on foot, cycles or other modes of transport," the court stated.

It issued formal notice to the Centre, the States and the Union Territories and asked them to file their responses by May 28. It said the case was urgent.

They reportedly shifted the child to a relative's house, forcing the police to

intervene. The child was later brought to Uthra's house at Anchal accompanied by her father-in-law and police officers.

Meanwhile, a post-mortem examination on the snake that bit Uthra was conducted in the presence of officials. "It was mainly for cross-checking certain facts, including whether it was the same snake that bit Uthra and if it was venomous.

At present, everything matches with the investigation report, but we have collected enough samples and preserved the carcass for any further investigation," said Jacob Alexander, senior zoo veterinary surgeon.

Returnees push up cases across southern States

81 new cases in Karnataka, 60 in Kerala, 49 in Andhra Pradesh were of persons coming back from overseas or other States

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Kerala recorded a major spike in COVID-19 cases on Tuesday with 67 persons testing positive. While 60 cases were detected in expatriates and non-resident Keralites from other parts of the country, seven cases are indigenous infections from unknown sources.

COVID-19

Of the 60 imported cases, 27 were people returning from overseas while the rest were from Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Gujarat, Karnataka, Delhi and Puducherry.

Of the seven cases of "contacts", four are in Kannur, two in Palakkad and one case is in Kottayam.

Of the new cases, 29 are in Palakkad, eight in Kannur, six in Kottayam, five each in Ernakulam and Malappuram, four each in Kollam and Thirissur and three each in Alappuzha and Kasaragod.

The State also recorded

the recovery of 10 persons on Tuesday. The total number of persons currently undergoing COVID-19 treatment in the State is 415.

Of the total of 963 cases reported so far in Kerala, 542 have recovered. There have been six deaths.

Koyambedu link in A.P

Andhra Pradesh reported one more death and 97 fresh cases since Monday. More than half of the fresh cases are returnees from the Gulf countries. While 44 new cases are of persons who returned as part of the Vande Bharat Mission have tested positive for COVID-19. The remaining 48 new infections, four have links to the Koyambedu market in Chennai. The total tally has gone up to 2,983 with 917 active patients. One more death was reported in East Godavari district taking the toll to 57. 125 persons including 55 local cases and 70 mi-

grant cases, have recovered in the past day. As of Tuesday, a total of 2,009 patients were discharged after treatment.

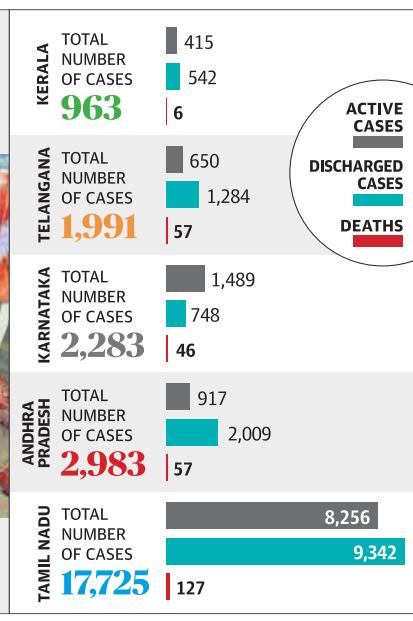
The Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) has approved the A.P. government's proposal to conduct Convalescent Plasma thera-

Back to business

With the easing of lockdown restrictions, business establishments have slowly started opening their doors to customers across the country



Displaying caution: Mannequins covered with face masks displayed at a shop in Bengaluru's Rajarajeshwari Nagar on Tuesday. ■ SAMPATH KUMAR G.P.



py at the Sri Venkateswara Institute of Medical Sciences in Tirupati, Special Chief Secretary K.S. Jawahar Reddy said.

Spike in Telangana
Telangana recorded another 71 positive cases – the third highest number of cases re-

ported in a day since March 2. The highest of 79 was recorded on May 11. One more fatality was recorded, taking the State's toll to 57.

Significantly, 120 people were discharged after treatment again the highest number so far. One more COVID-19 patient died taking

the toll to 57.

Of the 71 new cases, 38 are from GHMC area, seven from Rangareddy, six from Medchal, one each from Suryapet, Nalgonda, Vikarabad and Narayanpet. While 12 are migrants, remaining four are foreign returnees.

20 cases in Chitradurga

A total of 101 new cases were reported in Karnataka over 24 hours, taking the tally to 2,283. Of these, 81 were persons from other States – a majority from Maharashtra – while four patients have international travel history.

The highest number of cases was reported from Chitradurga district at 20. This was followed by Yadgir with 14 cases. Of the 1,489 active cases in the State currently, 18 are in ICUs. The total number of discharges on Tuesday was 43, taking the total number to 748. The State government has tested 2.28 lakh samples.

(With inputs from Bengaluru, Hyderabad and Vijayawada)

Testing times



No exam fever: A girl undergoing thermal screening before appearing for the SSLC examination at a higher secondary school in Palakkad, Kerala on Tuesday. ■ K.K. MUSTAFAH

10-year RI for ex-Kerala DSP, three others for murder bid

They are convicted of attempting to murder an officer

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

A special CBI court convicted a former Deputy SP and three others in Kerala of a murder bid on a police officer on suspicion of him leaking the news of a party organised by liquor barons attended by the police officers.

Apart from then Deputy SP Santhosh Nair, the Special Judge, Thiruvananthapuram, has also sentenced Jinda Ani, Container Santhosh and Penty Edwin (all private persons) to 10 years RI, CBI spokesperson R.K. Gaur said here.

The court also ordered the convicts to pay ₹25,000 each (total ₹1 lakh) to the

complainant, head constable Babu Kumar, who was stabbed multiple times in 2010 in Kollam with an intent to kill him.

The accused had suspected him of leaking information about the party which became a massive scandal because of the attendance of the four police officers and film stars in it.

The journalist who published the story in a Malayalam daily was also allegedly attacked. This case is under a separate trial.

The agency took over the case of the head constable on September 12, 2013, on the orders of the Kerala High Court on a writ petition filed

by him. It was alleged that the accused entered into a criminal conspiracy in and around 2010 and in continuation of the same, attempted to murder Babu Kumar, head constable, Kerala police, by causing multiple stab injuries with a knife as revenge, as the victim reported about the alleged activities by police officials and cine stars, in the media," Mr. Gaur said.

He said it was further alleged that one of the accused also manipulated the records and concealed/destroyed the knife, which was recovered through him.

The agency filed a chargesheet on November 21, 2014. The court has acquitted two accused.

IN BRIEF



ED questions Christian Michel in Tihar jail

NEW DELHI
The Enforcement Directorate has questioned British national Christian Michel at the Tihar jail in the ₹3,700-crore AgustaWestland VVIP helicopter deal case. The agency had earlier approached a Delhi special court for permission to quiz the accused in the light of fresh evidence. The court said that considering the requirement of investigation and the sensitive nature of the case, it was appropriate to allow probe officials to question the accused on Monday and Tuesday in the jail, where he is lodged in judicial custody.

Navlakha taken to Mumbai jail

NEW DELHI
Civil rights campaigner Gautam Navlakha was taken to a Mumbai jail by the National Investigation Agency (NIA) on Tuesday, a day before his interim bail petition is to come up in the Delhi High Court. Mr. Navlakha, 67, surrendered before the NIA on April 14 in New Delhi for his alleged involvement in the Bhima-Koregaon riots of 2018. He was sent to judicial custody in Tihar jail by a court on May 23. His partner Sahba Hussain said she received a call from Mr. Navlakha at 1.15 p.m. on Tuesday from a court in Mumbai where he was produced.

Milestone in building Chardham tunnel

NEW DELHI
The Border Roads Organisation (BRO) has achieved a milestone in the construction of a 440-m tunnel below the densely populated Chamba town on the Rishikesh-Dharasurad National Highway in Uttarakhand. In a statement, it said, "Breakthrough and perfect linkup of construction teams from north and south portals was accomplished amid challenges of COVID-19 and restrictions due to the lockdown." The tunnel is part of the efforts to boost the annual Chardham yatra.

Loan moratorium: SC fiat to Centre, RBI

NEW DELHI
The Supreme Court on Tuesday directed the Central government and the Reserve Bank of India to file their formal response to a petition challenging the charging of interest rate on loans even during the three-month moratorium declared amid the COVID-19 pandemic and the nationwide lockdown. A Bench led by Justice Ashok Bhushan issued formal notice to the RBI and the Centre. It asked them to file their counter-affidavits in a week.

Panel should probe hospital conditions: HC

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
AHMEDABAD
Days after criticising the health authorities for the deplorable conditions at Ahmedabad Civil Hospital where almost 400 COVID-19 patients have died, the Gujarat High Court on Tuesday directed the State to form a committee of independent doctors to probe the conditions at the hospital.

A Division Bench also said the judges would like to pay a surprise visit to the hospital.

The Superintendent of the Civil Hospital and other authorities of the Health Department shall keep themselves ready to find our presence one fine morning on a given day in the civil hospital. This would put an end to all the controversies with regard to the functioning of the civil hospital," Justice J.B. Pardiwala said.

The number of COVID-19 cases in the State jumped to 14,829, with 361 cases reported on Tuesday. The death toll increased to 915 with 27 deaths.

Goyal blames Maharashtra for cancellation of 55 trains

Trinamool says Railway Minister should not play politics

YUTHIKA BHARGAVA

NEW DELHI

The political slugfest over running of Shramik Special trains continued with Railway Minister Piyush Goyal taking to Twitter to allege that the Maharashtra government failed to provide passenger details due to which at least 55 such trains could not be run on Tuesday.

Mr. Goyal tweeted that on a request from the Maharashtra government, the Railways had scheduled 145 Shramik Special trains for Tuesday, of which 85 were scheduled to operate till 6 p.m. However, only 27 trains could be run due to lack of passengers.

Meanwhile, with 41 of these 145 trains scheduled to terminate in West Bengal, the Mamata Banerjee-led Trinamool Congress accused the Railway Ministry of bulldozing the State government's rights, even as the State has expressed inability to receive the trains following Cyclone Amphan.

"We gave them as many trains as the Maharashtra government asked for, but the trains returned from there without passengers because they could not bring passengers. Last evening, the Maharashtra government asked for 145 trains from the Railways, after reviewing the entire night, we planned 145



Tug-of-war: The Centre and non-BJP State governments are locked in a war of words over special trains.

trains to Maharashtra," Mr. Goyal tweeted.

Amid migrant workers struggling to go back to their homes, the Centre and non-BJP State governments have been engaged in constant to and fro over the running of Shramik Special trains.

According to the Railways, of the 145 trains, 68 were planned to depart for Uttar Pradesh, 27 to Bihar, 41 to West Bengal, one each to Chhattisgarh, Rajasthan, Jharkhand, Uttarakhand and Kerala and two each to Odisha and Tamil Nadu. The 41 trains were scheduled for West Bengal despite the State government conveying its inability to receive any trains since the State is still coming to terms with the destruction.

Maharashtra and West Bengal spoke to each other and the trains have been halted for now.

Taking a dig at Mr. Goyal, Trinamool national spokesperson and Rajya Sabha member Derek O'Brien said, "PM Narendra Modi and his Ministers are more busy tweeting rather than speaking to the State governments and co-ordinating during this crisis."

He said the State followed a certain protocol with the Shramik Special trains – screening them at the platform, government-monitored home quarantine for asymptomatic patients and institutional quarantine for others, all of which was not possible at present for the State government.

Mr. O'Brien said the West Bengal and Maharashtra governments were in touch with each other and the Railway Minister should not play politics.

Chaos at stations, State calls out Railways for cover-up job

43 trains scheduled to West Bengal in one day, when asked for two, says minister

AJEET MAHALE

MUMBAI

While there was no let up in the political slugfest between the Centre and Maharashtra governments over the running of Shramik Specials, there was chaos outside Lokmanya Tilak Terminus and Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Terminus (CSMT) late on Tuesday night.

With several trains scheduled in the evening, over 5,000 people gathered outside both stations.

Senior Railways officials said since there was little movement on Tuesday morning, many trains were rescheduled for evening. Officials said that the crowd eased by around 11 p.m. after three trains departed from both stations.

"An additional eight to ten trains are scheduled and we tehy keep them running till around 3 a.m.," a senior official said.

The political storm over Shramik Special trains continued on Tuesday with the Railways claiming that only a fraction of the 145 trains they were ready with 145 trains.

"We get the schedule at 2.30 a.m. and a lot of the trains are expected to depart before noon the same day. After doing bandobast duty for namaaz, the police personnel return home and see at 8 a.m. that they need to prepare for trains at noon, which is not possible," he



Rushing home: Migrant workers crowd outside Lokmanya Tilak Terminus in Mumbai on Tuesday to catch Shramik Special trains at their home towns. ■ EMMANUEL YOGINI

not cause further delays.

'Don't play victim'

State Transport Minister Anil Parab on Tuesday slammed the Railways for playing the victim card and said it was trying to discredit the Maharashtra government by announcing now that they were ready with 145 trains.

The war of words on Tuesday was kicked off by Union Minister for Railway Piyush Goyal who took to Twitter asking the Maharashtra Government to fully cooperate in ensuring to bring passengers to stations on time, and

said. Mr. Parab added that the Railways was trying to cover up its own follies and cited the example of the Gorakhpur-bound train being diverted through Orissa.

Mr. Parab said that till May 24, as many as 555 trains had been run and they had asked for 172 trains from May 26 of which 48 trains were for West Bengal. "In one day, they scheduled 43 trains for West Bengal, though the State government asked us to send only two trains everyday because of the cyclone. Despite knowing about the request, the Railways deliberately scheduled 43 trains in one day only to

portray itself as the victim," he said.

Leader of Opposition Devendra Fadnavis, in a press interaction on Tuesday, said 600 trains for migrant workers had been run in all for which Railways had spent ₹300 crore.

On Sunday, Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray had said that only 50% of the trains demanded by the State government for migrant workers were being run.

Mr. Goyal later responded to this with a series of tweets asking the State to send a list of workers. He added that they were ready to run as many as 125 trains.

Pradhan's fuel pricing explanation conflicting

Be more sensitive to the plight of people: Moily

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

Former Union Minister M. Veerappa Moily, reacting to *The Hindu*'s interview with Petroleum Minister Dharmendra Pradhan on Tuesday, termed the latter's explanation over fuel pricing as "conflicting".

He said the government should have been more sensitive to the plight of the people in the time of a pandemic and passed on the benefits of a global price cut to the consumer.

"The interview of Union Minister of Petroleum and Natural Gas Dharmendra Pradhan, stating that the Union government has taken a 'cautious and conscious' decision to use the saving for the welfare of the people, is very conflicting. He himself admits 'the reduction in demand has led to a peculiar situation where the product prices are less than the price of crude,'" Mr. Moily said in a written statement.

He said the UPA-II government had taken a "conscious decision to do away with the administered



M. Veerappa Moily

price regime and to fix the prices of diesel and petroleum in accordance to the market price of crude. The idea was to pass the benefit/liability in accordance with the market trend.

"This is a sound principle of economics and also done in the interest of the consumers and the economy. In the days of crisis in the economy, such as the onset of COVID-19, the government should have been more sensitive to the plight of the people and consumers as they are in great distress," he said.

GOVERNMENT OF ANDHRA PRADESH, APEWIDC, VIJAYAWADA
Door No.9-76, Sai Fortune Heights, Block-A, Vaddeswaram, Guntur (Dt)-522502.
NATIONAL COMPETITIVE BIDDING
"e-Procurement Notice Inviting Tender"
NIT No: 20 /MD/APEWIDC/VJA/2020-21 dated 26-05-2020

Tenders (5th Call) are invited on e Procurement from Original Equipment / Product manufacturers for Procurement of Water supply & Sanitary items (Toilets & Bath Rooms) to the Government Schools (Educational Institutions) in Andhra Pradesh.

Submission of Tender / Bids through online : From 27-05-2020 to 04-06-2020 up to 15.00 Hrs and Opening on : 04-06-2020 at 16.00 Hrs. For all details, visit e-procurement platform @ www.apewidc.gov.in

Sdi/- Managing Director, APEWIDC, Vijayawada.

BHARAT COKING COAL LIMITED
'A Mini Ratna Company'
(A Subsidiary of Coal India Limited)

NOTICE

All the tenders* issued by Bharat Coking Coal Limited (BCCL) for procurement of Goods, Works and Services are available on website of BCCL www.bcclweb.in, Coal India Limited (CIL) e-procurement portal <https://coalindiatenders.nic.in> and Central Public Procurement portal <https://reprocure.gov.in>. In addition, procurement is also done through GeM portal <https://gem.gov.in>.

*This is applicable to all Open (Domestic/Global) Tenders issued through e-procurement portal of CIL.

GOVERNMENT OF TAMIL NADU PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT BUILDINGS (C&M) CIRCLE, COIMBATORE -1.
TWO COVER SYSTEM LUMP SUM CONTRACT (ITEM RATE TENDER SYSTEM)
SHORT TERM TENDER NOTICE No.NIT:01/BC/C&M/CBE/2020-21, Dt:26.05.2020

For and on behalf of the Governor of Tamilnadu, Two cover system sealed Tenders viz., Pre-qualification Tender and Price Tender in separate covers both inserted in single cover will be received upto 3.00 pm on 19.06.2020 from the PWD Registered Contractors by the Superintending Engineer, PWD, Buildings (Construction & Maintenance) Circle, Coimbatore - 641 001 for Construction of Various Buildings in 1) Package I-Slice 1: GHSS at Kuthalai, Slice 2: GHSS at Keelavelyur, 2)Package II - Slice 1: GHSS at Thogaimalai Slice 2: GHSS at Sengulam in Karur District, 3) Package III -Slice 1: GHSS at Chithode, Slice 2: GHSS at Unjalur in Erode District, at his office and Prequalification Tender will be opened on the same day at 3.30 PM.

All other details are available in the website www.tenders.tn.gov.in, www.tntender.gov.in. If any changes/corrections etc., to the tender, it will be published on the above website only.

Superintendent Engineer, P.W.D., Buildings (C&M) Circle, Coimbatore.

GOVERNMENT OF TAMIL NADU HIGHWAYS DEPARTMENT MADURAI HIGHWAYS (Construction & Maintenance) CIRCLE TENDER NOTICE
T.N.No. 03 / 2020-21 / HDO / Dated : 26.05.2020

For and on behalf of the Governor of Tamil Nadu Percentage tender through online only will be received upto 02.07.2020, 14.00 hours by the Superintending Engineer (H) C&M, Madurai Circle under CRIDP 2020-21, (Package No.20 to Package No.46) pertaining Dindigul and Palani (H) C&M Division.

Details of works, approximate value of works, EMD, availability of tender documents and all other details are available from 29.05.2020 onwards in the Government website <https://tnitenders.gov.in>. If any changes / corrections / in the tender, it will be published in the above Government website only.

Superintending Engineer (H), C&M, Madurai Circle.

GOVERNMENT OF TAMIL NADU HIGHWAYS DEPARTMENT NABARD & Rural Roads Circle, Chengalpattu TENDER NOTICE
Tender Notice No. 03 / 2020-2021 / SDO / Dt. 26.05.2020

For and on behalf of Governor of Tamil Nadu Percentage tender through online only will be received upto 29.06.2020, 15.00 hours by the Superintending Engineer (H) NABARD & Rural Roads, Chengalpattu Circle for One Individual work in respect of Chengalpattu (H) NABARD & Rural Roads Division under Upgradation of Panchayat Union Roads and Panchayat Roads to ODR Standards.

Details of Name of works, approximate value of works, EMD, availability of tender documents and all other details are available from 03.06.2020 onwards in the Government website <https://tnitenders.gov.in>. If any changes / corrections / amendments etc to the tender, it will be published on the above Government website only.

Superintending Engineer (H)
NABARD & Rural Roads Circle, Chengalpattu-1

GOVERNMENT OF TAMIL NADU PALLAVAPURAM MUNICIPALITY E-Tendering Notice
Roc.No:7872/2018/E-1
Govt. of Tamil Nadu Sanctioned for Construction of 1.00 MLD 2 Nos & 2.00 MLD 1 Nos of Muvvampattu and Tirukulam Abandoned Quarries for Pallavapuram Municipality under CGF Fund 2019-20.Under this scheme the Municipal Commissioner, Pallavapuram invites sealed bids from the eligible and qualified contractors for the following work as detailed in the table given below.

Sl. No	Estimate Amount(Rs, in Lakhs)	Tender Document available from	Tender Opening	Period of completion
1	1250.00	26.05.2020 to 25.06.2020 (3.00 PM)	26.06.2020 (3.30 PM)	180 Days

Pre-Bid Conference will be held on 17.06.2020, 03.00 PM in the office of Pallavapuram Municipality. The Bidding document will be received by the Commissioner, Pallavapuram by 03.00 PM of the date of submission also within two days of the bid closing date. If E-Tender submission, the EMD should be dropped in the tender box before closing time. It is by 3.00 PM on 26.06.2020. E-evaluation of bid will be done as per Tender Transparency Act 1998 of Government of Tamilnadu and rules thereof. Eligibility criteria and other details can be had from the Bidding document. For the details contact E-Mail Address: commr.pallavapuram@tn.gov.in

Commissioner, Pallavapuram Municipality

GOVERNMENT OF TAMILNADU HIGHWAYS DEPARTMENT TIRUNELVELI (H) NABARD AND RURAL ROADS CIRCLE TENDER NOTICE
TENDER NOTICE NO. 02/2020-2021/D-1/DATED:26.05.2020

For and on behalf of Governor of Tamilnadu sealed percentage tender two cover system through online only will be received by the Superintending Engineer (H) NABARD and Rural Roads, Tirunelveli circle for the works approved in G.O.No.(Ms)No.57 Highways and Minor Ports (HWI) Department dated:20.03.2020 for Construction / Reconstruction of Four Bridge works under NABARD Loan assistance in RIDF XXV-40 Bridges for the year 2019-2020 in Tirunelveli (H) NABARD and Rural Roads Division.

Details such as Name of works, approximate value of works, EMD, documents to be uploaded, critical dates and all other details related to the works are available from 29.05.2020 onwards in the Government website <https://tnitenders.gov.in>. If any Changes / Corrections / Amendments etc related to this tender arises, it will be published on the above Government website only.

SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER (H)
NABARD AND RURAL ROADS, TIRUNELVELI

PROJECT MANAGEMENT UNIT
Uttarakhand Public Financial Management Strengthening Project (UKPFMS)
4th Floor, DPM Tower, Ajaprakurk, KargiChowk, Dehradun, Uttarakhand

CORRIDUM

The Government of Uttarakhand is expected to receive financing from The World Bank towards the cost of Uttarakhand Public Financial Management Strengthening project. The Applications were invited for the following assignment latest published in Hindu National Edition and Amar Ujala State Edition Uttarakhand for engagement of services under PMU on 14th May 2020. The following Amendment is made in Qualification. The Details are given at www.uttarakhandandit.ukpfms.gov.in. The engagement of services will be purely on temporary basis for a period of one year. The total experience has to be post qualification. The date of last application remains 3rd June 2020. Applications should be sent in the desired format only. Applications may be sent by post or delivered in person to the above address.

SL. No	Name of Post	No of Post	Qualification/Experience
1	2	3	4
01	Finance Expert		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *CA/ MBA/ Finance

Recovery rate up, says Health Ministry

It, however, says the 'war against COVID-19 is a long-drawn one and we are far from safe'

BINDU SHAJAN PERAPPADAN
NEW DELHI

India's COVID recovery rate has improved from 26.59% on May 2 to 41.61% on May 26, according to figures released by the Union Health Ministry on Tuesday.

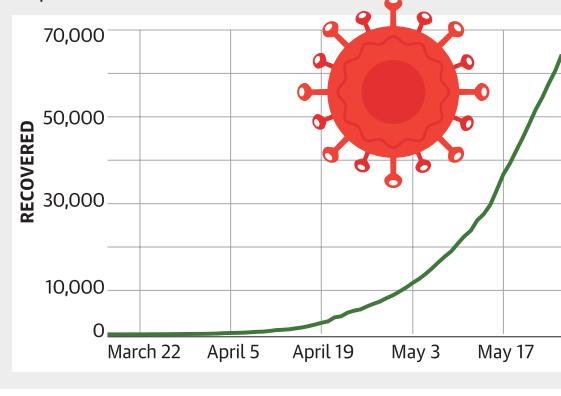
The Ministry, however, maintained that this improved recovery rate should not allow complacency to set in. "The war against COVID-19 is a long-drawn one and we are far from safe," it said.

The case fatality rate was showing a downward trend from 3.30% (as on April 15) to around 2.87% at present, which is among the lowest in the world. The global average is presently around 6.45%.

"An analysis of case mortality per lakh population indicates that India has about 0.3 deaths per lakh population, which is also amongst

Shot in the arm

In the period since May 16, close to 3,000 COVID-19 recoveries have been recorded daily on an average. The chart depicts cumulative recoveries



DATA AS OF 9.45 P.M. ON MAY 26, 2020

the lowest in the world against the statistics of 4.4 deaths per lakh population for the world. The relatively low death figures, both in terms of mortality per lakh population and case fatality rate, represent timely case

identification and clinical management of the cases," Lav Agarwal, Joint Secretary, Health Ministry, said at a press conference.

On Tuesday, the country reported 6,535 new cases and 146 deaths in a span of

24 hours, taking the total number of cases in the country to 1,45,380, including 80,722 active ones; 60,490 recovered/discharged and 4,167 deaths, according to Health Ministry data.

According to data from State health departments, the total number of cases is 1,50,775, including 82,171 active ones; 64,259 recovered and 4,345 deaths. There were 6,017 new cases on Tuesday and 175 deaths.

Mr. Agarwal warned that the improved recovery rate and the low fatality rate should not "make us relaxed". "We can easily slide back on our gains if community support isn't continued. More so now than ever before we need to maintain hand hygiene, respiratory hygiene and effective sanitization along with social distancing and use of masks," he said.

Health Secretary Preeti Sudan held a high-level review meeting with senior officials of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh, the States which are witnessing a surge in COVID-19 cases in the past three weeks as lockdown rules have been eased and inter-State migration allowed.

"The States were briefed on mapping individual case trajectory with respect to case fatality rate, doubling time, testing per million and confirmation percentage. Also, factors that need to be focused for effective containment strategy were pointed out such as perimeter control, diligent house-to-house survey through special surveillance teams, testing, active contact tracing and effective clinical management," said a release issued by the Ministry.

"The States were briefed on mapping individual case trajectory with respect to case fatality rate, doubling time, testing per million and confirmation percentage. Also, factors that need to be focused for effective containment strategy were pointed out such as perimeter control, diligent house-to-house survey through special surveillance teams, testing, active contact tracing and effective clinical management," said a release issued by the Ministry.

Centre's lockdown strategy has failed: Rahul Gandhi

'India only nation to relax curbs when infections are rising'

SANDEEP PHUKAN
NEW DELHI

Former Congress president Rahul Gandhi on Tuesday said that all the four stages of lockdown had "failed", and claimed that India was the only country that was opening up when the coronavirus infection was rising "exponentially".



A dangerous situation will arise if financial support to people and industry is not provided

At an online press conference, he cautioned the government of "devastation and a second wave of infection if it opens up haphazardly", and asked Prime Minister Narendra Modi to spell out his government's Plan B.

Mr. Gandhi also distanced his party from Maharashtra's high COVID-19 case load by stating his party is not a decision maker in the State.

He reiterated the party's demand to go in for direct cash injection to help poor families, migrant labourers and small and medium businesses. Not doing so would be "fatal" for the economy, he said.

PM low key

"We are the only country in the world where the virus is rising exponentially and we are removing a lockdown. So, it is pretty clear that the aim and the purpose of the lockdown has failed," he said. The four-stage lockdown failed to produce the result that the Prime Minister had expected. He urged Mr. Modi to once again to come on the front foot instead of being low key."

"We want to ask the government what is their strategy as far as India's opening up is concerned, and what are the precautions they are going to take to curb the disease now? How are they going to support the migrants, State governments and the small and medium businesses," he asked.

Mr. Gandhi said the Congress-ruled States were offering direct cash to farmers and labourers but they were not getting any support from the Centre and the ₹20 lakh crore package was actually merely 1% of India's GDP".

"The Central government must infuse cash into the hands of people and it will be fatal if they do not do it. A dangerous situation will arise if financial support to people and industry is not provided," he said.

Asked if India made a mistake by prioritising health over livelihood issues, he said, "I don't think it is either health or economics. We are smart enough to work a path through that will create

a successful compromise between health and economics."

Asked about the rising number of COVID-19 cases in Maharashtra, where the Congress is a partner in the government, he said a State that had multiple connectivity was likely to see a high growth rate in COVID-19 cases.

"We are supporting the Maharashtra government but we are not a key decision-maker here... Maharashtra is one of the most important assets that India has; it is the centre of business. It needs full support from the Government of India," he said.

On a reported comment by Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath that other States would now have to seek his government's permission if they wanted to employ labour from U.P., he said, "These people are not his personal property or the property of U.P. They are Indian citizens and have a right to decide what they want to do."

Responding to Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman's comment that his interaction with migrant workers was *dramebazi* (theatrics), Mr. Gandhi said, "That's her view... if they allow me, I can walk down to U.P. and help migrants on the way."

On border tensions with China and Nepal, he urged the Centre to be transparent on what was happening in Ladakh and Nepal but refrained from commenting.

Aarogya Setu app is now open source, says govt.

YUTHIKA BHARGAVA
NEW DELHI

Amid concerns over privacy of data being collected by its COVID-19 contact tracing app, the government on Tuesday said it was open-sourcing Aarogya Setu.

The government has also launched a "Bug Bounty" programme wherein financial rewards will be given to security researchers for finding any vulnerability in the application or suggesting improvements to the source code.

"With the release of the source code in the public do-

main, we are looking to expand collaboration and to leverage the expertise of top technical brains amongst the talented youth and citizens of our nation and to collectively build a robust and secure technology solution to help support the work of frontline health workers in fighting this pandemic together," the government said.

While the source code for the Android version of the application will be available for review on GitHub, the iOS version of the application will be released as open



Researchers can suggest improvements to the source code of the app. ■ AP

source within the next two weeks, the Ministry of Electronics and IT said in a statement.

Almost 98% of over 11.4 crore users of Aarogya Setu

users are on Android platform.

"...the step will have a positive impact on the privacy of Indian users. This will improve transparency on how the data is used, improve security by minimising bugs and empower experts to improve the app via public contributions," said Udbhav Tiwari, Policy Adviser, Mozilla Corporation.

The "Bug Bounty" programme will be open to Indian and foreign nationals, but only Indians will be eligible for rewards offered under the scheme. Anyone who

points out a security vulnerability in the app source code will be eligible for a reward of up to ₹3 lakh, and up to ₹1 lakh for pointing out a suggestion or improvement in the source code.

Mishi Choudhary, technology lawyer, said, "The government of India has an amazing policy on adoption of open source software that encourages formal adoption and use of open source software in government organisations. We will be verifying that all code is open source and global best practices are followed."

"We want to ask the government what is their stra-

Hospital staff developed neutralising antibodies: study

RAMYA KANNAN
CHENNAI

Virtually all hospital staff sampled from 13 days after the onset of mild COVID-19 symptoms in eastern France showed antibodies capable of neutralising the SARS-CoV-2 virus, a non-peer-reviewed article published in *medrxiv* has claimed. This may be associated with immunity against further infection with the same virus, the authors have argued.

The paper "Serologic responses to SARS-CoV-2 infection among hospital staff with mild disease in eastern France" by Samira FAFIKREMER et al, showed that neutralising antibodies were found in 91% of the individuals of the Strasbourg University Hospitals who participated in the study. Hospital staff who had recovered from mild forms of PCR-confirmed SARS-CoV-2 infection were tested for an-



A rapid test and the S-Flow assay were used during the study. ■ FILE PHOTO

neutralising antibodies may be associated with protective immunity for SARS-CoV-2 infection."

High neutralising activity was associated with time since onset of symptoms, in subjects having a dry cough, male participants, those with a high BMI, and high blood pressure. All these characteristics remained independently associated with high neutralising activity in multivariable analysis except for high blood pressure, the paper said. "Antibody titres are generally higher in patients with severe or critical diseases. Interestingly, in our study, individuals with factors associated with more severe disease (e.g., male sex, high body mass index and high blood pressure), were more likely to have high titres [required volume] of neutralising antibodies compared to others," the authors observed.

The authors state: "We further report that the neutralisation activity of the serum increases with time, reaching 97% four weeks after the onset of symptoms. Therefore, it is a fair assumption that the majority of individuals with mild COVID-19 generate neutralising antibodies within a month after onset of symptoms." They go on to add: "Although not yet demonstrated, several lines of evidence suggest that the presence of

Migrants sell goats, ring to pay airfare

They booked tickets for a flight to Kolkata from Mumbai, which was cancelled

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI

Three migrant labourers from West Bengal living in Diva near Thane sold their goats and a gold ring and borrowed money to buy air tickets. But they were left high and dry because the flight was cancelled.

Sona Mullah, Raheema Khatum and Farid Mullah, who hail from three nearby villages in Murshidabad, have been working in Mumbai for varied durations over the past decade. They reached the airport here, paying ₹2,000 for a taxi. Then, they came to know that the aircraft was not taking off any time soon.

As a video of the May 25 incident went viral on social media, thanks to a journalist of an English daily and several others, IndiGo offered to carry them on a different flight.

IndiGo said in a tweet,

"We've re-accommodated the 3 passengers who were unable to travel to Kolkata. Their original booking had to be cancelled as the government of West Bengal has prohibited flights until May 28. We had offered to rebook them on the first service on May 28, but they have now decided to travel on June 1, and we have accommodated their travel plans at no additional charge."

Mr. Sona Mullah broke down while speaking to this reporter. "We have no income since the lockdown. We tried repeatedly for train tickets and then heard about the resumption of flight services. My wife sold three goats back home in Murshidabad. It fetched us ₹9,600. She then borrowed ₹1,000 and we purchased this ticket," he said. He plans to look for a job in Murshidabad.

Mr. Sona Mullah works as



Gruelling experience: Farid Mullah with his ticket at the Mumbai airport. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Hotels told to refund foreign returnees

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Union Home Ministry has asked the States to issue directions to hotels to refund passengers returning from foreign countries the quarantine charges of seven days, as the period of institutional quarantine had been reduced from 14 days to seven.

In a letter to the States, Union Home Secretary Ajay Bhalla said, "It has been brought to the notice of this Ministry that Indian nationals quarantined in hotels on return from abroad were made to pay advance for 14 days. Since they can now leave for home quarantine after seven days, the amount paid by them for the remaining days needs to be refunded to them, which some hotels are refusing to do."

The quarantine charges are borne by passengers.

CROSSWORD 12946

(set by Hypatia)

SCANTO PLAY

De-stress at home with some fun brain teasers. Try out at never-before prices at <https://crossword.thehindu.com>

12 Had initial debates about holy text caused a stir? (8)
13 On returning, despised journalist handed over? (9)
15 Bothersome annoyance nagging existence, primarily (4)
16 Sort text (4)
17 See Grant's acting prowess (9)
21 Wealth is, to rich, flaunting something of great value (8)
22 Heading West, VIP entering road to return to safe custody (6)
24 Uncut nude scene or blue movie, eventually released (10)
25 Counter next to musical instrument (4)
26 Betraying, losing team's captain for scoring (6)
27 Acquire flexibility to conceal gut reaction (6)

■ DOWN
1 Frank, leaving Church again after misdeed (7)
2 "It's needed for baking", perhaps Rose said (5)
3 Support friend or securely hug (7)
5 Allow what a stylist may do to hair (6)
6 Can I age with no wrinkles another time? (4,5)
7 Is coming up with say, boring spelling test to harass (7)
8 Can we order to do something never done before? (3,1,3,6)
14 Restless Hypatia is on top of case (9)
16 How a desperate dieter hopes to remain solvent (7)
18 Read big novel to summarize (7)
19 Spooner disallowed footwear in play area (7)
20 Prayer from soldiers is working (6)
23 Picked up courage to lead, perhaps (5)

■ ACROSS
1 Tone down regularly after seconds (6)
4 Switching sides in a dance before boy gains balance (6)
9 Free diamonds in card game (4)
10 Cops secured criminal caught skipping established rules (3,7)
11 Waiter carrying a royal drink (6)

SUDOKU

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

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★★

Solution to puzzle 12945

M	I	G	R	N	T	W	O	K	E	R	S

<tbl

Cyclone evacuees and migrants under one roof

Storm shelters had been serving as quarantine facilities till villagers had to be evacuated before Amphan struck

SHIV SAHAY SINGH

SOUTH 24 PARGANAS/KOLKATA

Before Cyclone Amphan struck on May 20, officials of the Achintyanagar gram panchayat in Pathapratin block of South 24 Parganas in West Bengal tried to move as many people as possible to cyclone shelters.

The panchayat, with a population of 30,000, is close to the sea and over 100 km from Kolkata. The impact of the cyclone was expected to be severe in this part of the Sunderbans. A newly built multi-purpose cyclone shelter near the panchayat office, which was serving as a quarantine centre for migrant workers returning from Haryana and Delhi, was also assigned to shelter hundreds of villagers from the cyclone.

"On the day of the cyclone, the situation was really bad. We had to put villagers



No distancing: Migrants are in quarantine at a cyclone shelter in South 24 Parganas district in West Bengal. • RAJEEV BHATT

ers in the cyclone shelter along with the quarantined people," Gauri Halder, deputy pradhan of the gram panchayat, said.

'No option'
In remote areas, particularly in South 24 Parganas and the

islands of Sunderbans, cyclone shelters were turned into quarantine shelters for migrant workers returning from different parts of the country. But when the administration had to evacuate people from low-lying areas because of cyclone Am-

phan's trajectory, they had little option but to put locals into the same shelters.

'To prevent deaths'
Dulal Sith, the pradhan of the gram panchayat, also admitted that locals were housed with quarantined

persons, and added that many people under quarantine are now pressuring authorities that they should be allowed to go home. "We had evacuated about 7,000-8,000 people and kept them in cyclone shelters. In the panchayat office alone, there were 200 people. This was the only way to prevent deaths and injuries [when the cyclone made landfall]," he said.

State's Home Secretary Alapan Bandyopadhyay, while speaking to journalists at the State Secretariat on Tuesday, admitted that the infrastructure, particularly the road transportation sector and the health apparatus in the State, was "stressed" because of the cyclone. Mr. Bandyopadhyay said that in such circumstances, the return of migrants should be organised in "a planned and staggered" manner.

In the three-storey cyclone shelter of Achintyanagar about 100 migrant workers, mostly returned from Haryana and Delhi, remained in quarantine on

Monday afternoon, while the villagers returned to their homes. In gram panchayats like Achintyanagar, the number of people returning from outside is as high as 10% of the population. About 3,000 migrant workers have returned here so far.

State's Home Secretary Alapan Bandyopadhyay, while speaking to journalists at the State Secretariat on Tuesday, admitted that the infrastructure, particularly the road transportation sector and the health apparatus in the State, was "stressed" because of the cyclone. Mr. Bandyopadhyay said that in such circumstances, the return of migrants should be organised in "a planned and staggered" manner.

Panchayat officials have been successful to the extent that nobody died in Achintyanagar gram panchayat, located at a distance of only 10 km from the Bay of Bengal. However, the social distancing and quarantine measures could not be followed.

In the three-storey cyclone shelter of Achintyanagar about 100 migrant workers, mostly returned from Haryana and Delhi, remained in quarantine on

Fisheries scheme has no relief component

PMMSY plans to double incomes

PRISCILLA JEBARAJ

NEW DELHI

Though the Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana (PMMSY) was announced as part of the Centre's economic stimulus package in response to COVID-19, it does not seem to contain any components aimed at relief or financial assistance to provide immediate help for the hard-hit fisheries sector.

at 2.50 PM on 26/ National Fish Ce

Giriraj Singh releasing a booklet on the scheme to boost the fisheries sector.

Fisheries Ministry responded to the NFF's demand by sending letters to the State governments asking for estimates on losses to fishworkers, leading to hopes that the stimulus package would provide such support.

"We have heard nothing further from the Ministry after those initial discussions and the package announced by the Finance Minister has nothing much for small and traditional fishers," said Mr. Peter.

Anil T. Varghese from the secretariat of NFF in Delhi said, "The Ministry itself put out a statistics handbook in 2019 with clear estimates of number of fish workers in each State and their average earnings."

Fishing ban

On Monday, the Ministry reduced the duration of the annual fishing ban in the monsoon season from 61 days to 47 on the demand of mechanised fishing boat owners, saying it was to provide COVID-19 relief.

"The ban is there for important environmental reasons to ensure that fish spawning can take place during the monsoon and regeneration of fish stock," Mr. Peter said.

SOP for reopening of museums

Online ticket booking, masks and social distancing to be strictly followed



No entry: The Gandhi Museum in Madurai, Tamil Nadu, closed for visitors as a preventive measure.

While a decision on re-opening and the rules to be followed for that would be notified by the National Dis-

aster Management Authority under the Ministry of Home Affairs, a senior Culture Mi-

nistry official said an SOP was being drafted for safe opening of museums and monuments. The official said online-only ticketing system, mandatory wearing of masks by all, and placement of hand sanitisers to maintain hygiene were being considered as a part of the SOP.

Tourism sector
Limiting the number of visitors at a given time was also being considered, the official said.

Another official said guidelines for the tourism sector, including hotels, would also be drawn up as a large number of visitors to the cultural sites are tourists.

Centre: order on full wages withdrawn

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The Centre on Tuesday informed the Supreme Court that it had withdrawn a contentious March 29 order requiring private employers to pay full wages to workers during lockdown.

Appearing before a Bench led by Justice Ashok Bhushan in a virtual court hearing, Attorney General K.K. Venugopal said the May 17 order of the government extending the lockdown also saw the withdrawal of the condition requiring private establishments to pay full wages to workers.

GENERAL

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30-06-2020

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<https://www.uohyd.ac.in/careers-uoh/>

Place : Hyderabad

Date : 18-05-2020

SD/-

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shortlisted for further selection

process based on the performance

in GATE-2019 (Score) and Interview.

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online for the post of ET-2020 by

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OPPORTUNITIES

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Will work ever be the same again?

Three CEOs present scenarios that overturn widely accepted notions about working and the corporate workplace

PRINCE FREDERICK

Titled "Strategies For Returning To Work", the webinar led one to expect slot-machine answers to the question of "how" to get back to the cubicle when partial normality returns.

As it turned out, the one-hour long exercise over Zoom, organised by Freshworks, was pleasantly wide-angled in its focus, covering answers to the "whys" and "why-nots" around the immediate and distant future of work.

Significantly, the panellists drawn from three SaaS companies – Girish Mathrubootham, Founder & CEO, Freshworks; Suresh Sambandam, CEO, KissFlow; Krish Subramanian, Co-founder & CEO, Chargebee – explored newer work scenarios for a post-COVID-19 world.

Early on, moderator Suman Gopalan, CHRO at Freshworks, quizzed the panellists about their schedules for opening their offices, and the three were on the same page about continuing with remote-working as long as it would be safe for employees to head back to their desks, and the free-wheeling answers threw up some thought-provoking ideas – vulnerability score; cultural onboarding; transfer of intangibles; and two inter-related concepts "work from anywhere" and "hybrid approach to remote working".

Vulnerability score
Girish said there were two components to being ready – the workplace and the work-force.



is seen as a straightforward necessity, and precautions are automatically put in place; workforce readiness is only rarely acknowledged.

Girish pointed out their strategy for opening offices, whenever that would happen, included calculating the "vulnerability score" of each employee, and this would factor in whether they had at-risk people at home. Girish called

transport another major component and employees either travelled by their own cars or took the: office cabs, and in the case of the latter, social distancing norms would be spelt out. "Nobody should be allowed to take public transport," explained Girish, adding that all safety protocols were laid out in a playbook.

Work from anywhere
"We are seriously evaluating moving our company to a full-fledged remote-working format," declared Suresh.

Thinking aloud, he pictured for the audience a future scenario of his employees working from their hometowns. "Because I am a big believer in the equality of urban versus rural populations," disclosed Suresh, adding that many of

his senior managers were from small towns.

Suresh believes the "Work From Anywhere" model could be an answer to lopsided development that unfairly favoured urban geographies.

If the corporate workforce were distributed, it could bring greater "purchasing power" to small towns, leading to improvement in social infrastructure, he reasoned out.

Adding to Suresh's observation, it could also check urban congestion and agglomeration. Hybrid approach
Krish guided the discussion along what he termed a "hybrid approach" to remote working, one that would take employees' preference into consideration, before it did anything else.

In this approach, Krish expounded, "Everyone works remotely, and working out of offices becomes optional, with multiple offices being provided (to the workforce)." Girish was also favourable to the notion of moving out of huge centralised offices to smaller distributed offices, in a post-COVID scenario.

Integrating those recruited in the middle of a full-fledged remote-working scenario into the company's cultural process is a challenge

GENERAL

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Xi meets PLA, urges battle preparedness

In annual meeting with PLA representatives, Xi orders military to think about worst-case scenarios

ANANTH KRISHNAN

China's President Xi Jinping on Tuesday called on the military "to think about worst-case scenarios" and "scale up battle preparedness".

He made the remarks during his annual meeting with the People's Liberation Army's (PLA) representatives attending the National People's Congress or Parliament in Beijing.

Mr. Xi had also referred to "battle preparedness" during his meeting with the PLA in 2019. This year, his speech focused on the post-pandemic situation, as he heard the PLA members of Parliament reporting on "strengthening training amid the epidemic, and accelerating capacity building on biosafety defense".

Mr. Xi said the epidemic "brought a profound impact on the global landscape and



Battle-ready: A file photo of President Xi Jinping speaking to PLA's Navy fleet in the South China Sea. ■ AP

on China's security and development as well".

He "ordered the military to think about worst-case scenarios, scale up training and battle preparedness, promptly and effectively deal with all sorts of complex situations and resolutely safeguard national sovereignty, security and develop-

ment interests," the official Xinhua news agency reported.

While the comments are not new, Mr. Xi's remarks will be closely parsed in India, amid the ongoing border stand-off, and also in Taiwan, with heightened tensions. The NPC's annual report this year for the first

time mentioned "reunification" with Taiwan, a long-standing goal, without the usual prefix "peaceful". China's Defence Ministry spokesperson, PLA Senior Colonel Wu Qian, told reporters on Tuesday that "Taiwan independence is a dead end".

Neither Senior Colonel Wu nor China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi, who addressed his annual press conference on May 24, were reported as referring to the current tensions with India.

China's media has largely been silent on the tensions, barring the English-language *Global Times*, a Communist Party-run newspaper intended for an international audience.

'Necessary moves'
A commentary in the paper on Tuesday blamed India for the stand-off. "India in recent days has illegally con-

structed defense facilities across the border into Chinese territory in the Galwan Valley region, leaving Chinese border defense troops no other options but making necessary moves in response, and mounting the risk of escalating stand-offs and conflicts between the two sides," wrote Long Xing-chun, a senior research fellow at Beijing Foreign Studies University.

"Unlike previous stand-offs, the latest border friction was not caused by accident, but was a planned move of New Delhi. India has been clearly and definitely aware that the Galwan Valley region is Chinese territory."

"If India failed to stop such provocations as soon as possible," he added, "it will impact Beijing-New Delhi ties – and may even exceed the sort of intensity of the Doklam standoff."

Trump threatens to pull GOP event out of North Carolina

He wants Governor to ensure there are no curbs on crowds

SIRIRAM LAKSHMAN

U.S. President Donald Trump threatened to pull the Republican Convention out of North Carolina if its Governor did not guarantee that there would be no restrictions on crowd numbers. The convention is an event to nominate the GOP's presidential candidate (expected to be Mr. Trump).

As the U.S.'s 50 States are in various stages of reopening, the number of coronavirus deaths approached 100,000.

Tweeting to the Governor of North Carolina, Roy Cooper, a Democrat, Mr. Trump said the GOP was spending millions constructing the arena for the convention and that Mr. Cooper was still in "shutdown mood", unable to guarantee if a full crowd would be allowed to attend the August 24-27 convention.

"They [the Republicans] must be immediately given an answer by the Governor as to whether or not the space will be allowed to be fully occupied. If not, we will be reluctantly forced to find, with all the jobs and economic development it brings, another Republican



Donald Trump

National Convention site. This is not something I want to do," Mr. Trump wrote on Monday, which was the Memorial Day holiday in the U.S.

Science and data

Mr. Cooper tweeted out a statement in response, which said the State would review its plans for the convention and would rely on data while making decisions.

"State health officials are working with the RNC [Republican National Convention] and will review its plans as they make decisions about how to hold the convention in Charlotte. North Carolina is relying on data and science to protect our State's public health and safety."

North Carolina is in 'Phase 2' of opening – this allows an easing of some restrictions, such as restaurants opening with limitations on capacity and permission for gatherings of 10 people indoors and 25 outdoors. Mecklenburg County, where Charlotte is located, recorded more than 3,200 cases and 73 deaths as per the Johns Hopkins University coronavirus database.

Nominating conventions are typically attended by about 50,000 people, including thousands of media representatives. The Democrats, who will nominate former Vice-President Joseph R. Biden Jr., moved their convention, to be held in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, from mid-July to mid-August due to the pandemic. Earlier this month, the party gave its convention organising committee the power to hold a virtual convention if needed.

Mr. Trump is reluctant to take the GOP down that route. "We'll have a convention. I'm a traditionalist, but we'll have to see, like everything else, but I think we'll be in good shape by that time," he told the *Washington Examiner* earlier in May.

'Security law not a threat to Hong Kong'

Carrie Lam says 'no need to worry' even as protesters take to the city's streets

ASSOCIATED PRESS

HONG KONG

The city's chief executive, Carrie Lam, told reporters that there was "no need for us to worry" over the move being considered by China's ceremonial National People's Congress.

"Hong Kong has proven that we uphold and preserve those values," Ms. Lam said. "Hong Kong needs this piece of legislation for the bigger benefit of the great majority of Hong Kong people."

Ms. Lam also said that transit service would resume at Hong Kong's international airport on June 1, but that foreigners would still be banned from entering the city as part of measures to prevent a new wave of coronavirus infections.

The move by China to pass the legislation signals the central government's de-

termination to take greater control of Hong Kong after months of pro-democracy protests last year. Beijing has appointed new representatives in Hong Kong who follow the hard line laid down by Chinese President Xi Jinping, who is also the head of the ruling Communist Party.

Sharp criticism
Such a move has long been under consideration and was hastened by last year's street protests in the former British colony, which was returned to Chinese rule in 1997.

Beijing promised that the territory could retain its own relatively liberal civil, legal and economic systems that contrast starkly with the much more centrally controlled and authoritarian system in mainland China.

The U.S. has sharply criti-

cised the proposed legislation and threatened to withdraw preferential trade status for Hong Kong.

Some "foreign politicians" have "expressed untrue opinions" about the plan to impose the law on Hong Kong, Lam said, without giving details.

She repeated claims that the law would only target "a minority," citing concerns about terrorism and subversion.

Protesters have returned to Hong Kong's streets to oppose the legislation, with thousands turning out on Sunday as police fired tear gas and deployed a water cannon to disperse the crowds. On Tuesday, over 100 protesters gathered at a luxury shopping mall in Hong Kong's Central business district, condemning Lam and her administration.

The protests are a continuation of a months-long pro-democracy movement that began last year and has at times descended into violence between police and demonstrators.

Beijing has increasingly pushed for measures such as punishment for disrespecting the Chinese national flag or anthem along with a boost to pro-China patriotic-themed education in schools.

Initial reports have said the Pakistan International Airlines jet crashed after an apparent engine failure.

Pakistani aviation auth-

orities said on Tuesday they have shared their initial findings with the visiting 11-member team from the European plane maker.

The Airbus experts and engineers are also to visit the crash site.

Only two people on board Flight PK-8303 survived the crash.

Airbus experts probe plane crash in Pak.

ASSOCIATED PRESS

KARACHI

Pakistan announced on Tuesday that Airbus experts have opened a probe into last week's plane crash that killed 97 people when an Airbus A320 went down in a crowded neighborhood near the airport in the port city of Karachi.

Initial reports have said the Pakistan International Airlines jet crashed after an apparent engine failure.

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AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

LONDON

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson's government was hit by its first resignation on Tuesday over the controversy surrounding top aide Dominic Cummings' cross-country trip during the lockdown.

Douglas Ross, a Minister for Scotland, quit in protest.

"I have constituents who

didn't get to say goodbye to loved ones; families who could not mourn together; people who didn't visit sick relatives because they followed the guidance of the government," he said in a Twitter statement announcing his departure.

"I cannot in good faith tell them they were all wrong and one senior adviser to the government was right."

He added that Mr. Cummings' interpretation of government rules was "not shared by the vast majority of people".

The resignation will pile more pressure on Mr. Cummings, who held a press conference Monday to justify driving his wife and young son on a 425-km trip from London to Durham during the height of crisis.

Sri Lanka Minister Thondaman passes away

MEERA SRINIVASAN

COLOMBO

Ceylon Workers' Congress [CWC] leader and Sri Lanka Cabinet Minister Arumugan Thondaman passed away on Tuesday night, after a sudden illness. He was 55.

Earlier on Tuesday, Minister Thondaman met Indian High Commissioner Gopal Baglay and held discussions on development partnership in Sri Lanka's hill country, where Malayala Tamils, or Tamils of recent Indian origin, reside. Nearly 1,50,000 people from the million-strong community work in the tea estates. "It was very sudden. He was very active through the day, holding several work meetings," a family member told *The Hindu*.

Arumugan Thondaman,



Arumugan Thondaman

who served in President Gotabaya Rajapaksa's government as Minister of Community Empowerment and Estate Infrastructure Development, is the grandson of iconic plantation Tamil leader and trade unionist Savumiamoorthy Thondaman, and has been the face of the party since his grandfather's demise.

Curfew lifted in Colombo after 2 months

Health authorities have issued guidelines for eateries, restaurants, salons, and other social gatherings

MEERA SRINIVASAN

COLOMBO

After over two months, authorities in Sri Lanka lifted the curfew – except during nights – in capital Colombo on Tuesday, signalling Sri Lanka's "gradual return to normalcy" since the coronavirus pandemic hit.

From March 10, the island nation has reported 1,278 COVID-19 positive cases, 712 recoveries and 10 deaths, as of Tuesday evening.

Colombo district accounted for the highest number of cases so far – 150, according to the Epidemiology Unit of the Health Ministry – and has been on police curfew, though the curfew was eased in most other districts sooner.

Health authorities have is-



Risky ride: Commuters boarding a bus in Colombo following the lifting of curfew after two months. ■ AFP

sued operational guidelines for eateries, restaurants, salons, conduct of weddings and funerals that include limiting the number of people – a maximum of 100 for weddings – regular disinfection of surfaces, providing hand washing facilities, checking temperature and mandatory face masks.

Further, senior police official Ajith Rohana on Monday warned that those who fail to maintain physical distancing in public places will be arrested. In the last two months, police arrested

some 60,000 "curfew violators".

Meanwhile, a task force entrusted with COVID-19 control, on Tuesday proposed to President Gotabaya Rajapaksa that Sri Lanka reopen its airports to foreign tourists from August 1.

President Rajapaksa underscored the need to follow health guidelines "issued by international and local health experts", according to a statement issued by his media division. Sri Lanka could be at the forefront of tourism revival, based on a "well-planned strategy", he said.

While the lifting of curfews would help a "gradual return to normalcy", the risk of COVID-19 has not been "eliminated 100%", accord-

ing to Dr. Anil Jasinghe, Director General of Health Services. "This is the time when people and institutions have to be very vigilant and follow the guidelines. We have to ensure there is no second wave," he told *The Hindu*.

Frontline health workers are treating patients from a large cluster of Navy personnel – over 600 infected – while dozens Sri Lankans who recently returned from Kuwait and were under quarantine, have tested positive in the last two days. Calling for utmost vigilance at this time, a public health expert, who requested not to be named, said: "We are nowhere near the beginning of the end of this pandemic. If at all, we might just be at the end of its beginning."

China's virus apps could survive the outbreak

The govt's virus-tracking software has been collecting information, including location data, of people



A man holding up his smartphone that displays his health status through an app at a security check in Beijing. ■ REUTERS

where people are increasingly protective of their digital privacy. Companies and government agencies in China have a mixed record on keeping personal information safe from hacks and leaks. Authorities have also taken an expansive view of using high-tech surveillance tools

in the name of public well-being.

The government's virus-tracking software has been collecting information, including location data, on people in hundreds of cities across China. But authorities have set few limits on how that data can be used. And

now, officials in some places are loading their apps with new features, hoping the software will live on as more than just an emergency measure.

Health guardian
Zhou Jiangyong, Communist Party secretary of the eastern tech hub of Hangzhou, said this month that the city's app should be an "intimate health guardian" for residents, one that is used often and "loved so much that you cannot bear to part with it," according to an official announcement.

Governments worldwide are trying to balance public health and personal privacy as they pull out the stops to protect their people from the virus. In China, however, the worry is not just about potential snooping.

The country's leaders have long sought to harness vast troves of digital information to govern their sprawling, sometimes unruly nation more efficiently.

But when computer sys-

Arrest of media persons in Bangladesh raises concern

Attacks on scribes in India on the rise

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The South Asia Media Defenders Network (SAMDEN) on Tuesday raised concerns over the "detention of media professionals in Bangladesh, attacks on journalists in Punjab, and the dismissal of a pregnant reporter in Assam as part of a pattern of official and corporate arbitrariness against media in the case," it said.

It also raised concerns over actions against media in India, including police beating up a journalist in Chandigarh and cases filed against reporters in U.P., Punjab and Gujarat for reports filed by them.

SAMDEN also supports journalist Ranjita Rabha from Assam, who says she was forced to resign by Prag News as the organisation had "no policy of maternity leave for employees."

'Myanmar military behind destruction of village'
At least 200 houses and other buildings were destroyed by fire at Let Kar village in the northwestern Rakhine, a conflict-ridden state in Myanmar, in an incident that has "all the hallmarks" of previous military arson attacks on villages, Human Rights Watch said on Tuesday. AFP

MARKET WATCH

	26-05-2020	% CHANGE
Sensex	30,609	-0.21
US Dollar	75.66	0.38
Brent oil	35.78	3.6

NIFTY 50

	PRICE	CHANGE
Adani Ports	315.60	5.00
Asian Paints	1629.85	11.95
Axis Bank	341.30	4.35
Bajaj Auto	2564.85	11.10
Bajaj Finance	4097.25	-218.30
Bharti Airtel	1829.00	-66.30
Bharti Airtel	559.25	-33.95
BPCL	313.15	-2.05
Britannia Ind	3163.85	-3.25
Cipla	627.70	-11.65
Coal India	127.25	2.05
Dr Reddys Lab	3864.30	-28.55
Eicher Motors	14805.10	882.70
GAIL (India)	88.15	0.95
Grasim Ind	532.65	0.30
HCL Tech	524.00	-6.40
HDPC	1502.15	-14.00
HFDC Bank	852.40	13.55
Hero MotoCorp	2113.65	-36.95
Hindalco	129.10	4.25
Hind Unilever	1977.80	-10.10
ICICI Bank	292.70	1.65
IndusInd Bank	348.20	9.85
Bharti Infralet	208.15	0.65
Infosys	680.55	-11.80
Indian Oil Corp	77.15	1.65
ITC	191.70	5.35
JSW Steel	176.25	10.10
Kotak Bank	1153.20	-7.00
L&T	825.55	9.85
M&B	429.15	2.80
Maruti Suzuki	5246.15	111.85
Nestle India Ltd.	16655.15	440.00
NTPC	93.00	2.05
ONGC	77.00	0.85
PowerGrid Corp	157.35	1.50
Reliance Ind	1424.05	-7.50
State Bank	151.40	0.55
Shree Cement	20667.30	757.05
Sun Pharma	459.15	-10.25
Tata Motors	83.10	0.30
Tata Steel	280.45	6.00
TCS	1943.00	-7.35
Tech Mahindra	520.45	-9.20
Titan	892.75	43.10
UltraTech Cement	3786.00	147.05
UPL	367.05	-4.10
Vedanta	87.90	-1.20
Wipro	188.80	-0.20
Zee Entertainment	165.20	1.95

EXCHANGE RATES		
Indicative direct rates in rupees a unit except yen at 4 p.m. on May 26		
CURRENCY	TT BUY	TT SELL
US Dollar	75.46	75.78
Euro	82.66	83.02
British Pound	92.89	93.29
Japanese Yen (100)	70.07	70.39
Chinese Yuan	10.58	10.62
Swiss Franc	77.92	78.27
Singapore Dollar	53.16	53.40
Canadian Dollar	54.38	54.62
Malaysian Ringgit	17.29	17.38
Australian Dollar	49.97	50.19

Source: Indian Bank

TVS Motor announces pay cuts

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT		
CHENNAI		
TVS Motor Company Ltd.	has announced a temporary reduction in the salary of junior executives and senior management for six months, starting May 2020, due to COVID-19.	

In the wake of the unprecedented crisis, TVS Motor Company has rolled out a temporary salary reduction for a period of six months from May to October 2020. There will be no salary reduction at the workmen level," said an official spokesman.

"There will be a 5% salary reduction at the junior executive level and about 15% to 20% at the senior management level."

INTERVIEW | SATYAKAM ARYA

Time for incentive-based scrappage policy

Capacity utilisations across OEMs to suffer between 25-30%, says DICV CEO

N. ANAND

The automobile industry recorded zero sales in April 2020. To boost consumer sentiment, the Centre should reduce GST and come out with an incentive-based scrappage policy, says Satyakam Arya, MD & CEO, Daimler India Commercial Vehicles Pvt. Ltd. Excerpts from an interview:

What has been the impact of COVID-19 on the commercial vehicle (CV) segment?

The CV industry has been going through a tough phase since April 2019 owing to declining sales. This is because of the economic slowdown in India, the impact of revised axle load norms and GST which increased trucking efficiency, and the NBFC crisis that led to a funding crunch.

The expected spike in BS-IV vehicles pre-buying in Q1 2020 did not manifest. Increasing taxes on diesel will further add to the woes of the fleet owners because about 50% of the total cost of operation is fuel. Due to high availability and low demand, most operators will not be able to pass this increase on to their customers. Although demand from some segments such as agriculture and e-commerce is likely to

rebound quickly, demand from India's core industries will take longer.

In this already difficult time, the COVID-19 outbreak and the resultant lockdown has brought the CV industry to a grinding halt. Post-lockdown, we expect business and consumer sentiment to remain poor in India, leading to a sluggish demand in the coming months.

However, the easing of lockdown for economic activities has created some positive sentiment amongst industry players. We began restarting our plant operations and our dealerships on May 7.

Although the market sen-

timents is poor and the road ahead is steep, DICV is in a relatively strong position.

How long will the CV segment take to recover?

The current situation is highly fluid and volatile. A lot depends on how long the COVID-19 situation persists and on the government's fiscal response.

The industry will witness a massive, never-before-seen drop in volumes, possibly going back to volume levels not seen since 2009 or maybe even worse. Capacity utilisation across the OEMs could suffer greatly in the range of 25-30%, making them financially weaker.

In the current situation, we expect that the Indian economy will return to its growth trajectory from 2022. MHCV segment will rebound in line with that. If the government introduces measures such as scrappage policy, reduces taxes or gives a big boost to infrastructure spending, the recovery could be faster.

Is there any change in your capital expenditure (capex) or sales target for 2020?

April 2020 was the first month in history that the Indian automobile industry recorded zero sales. While we do not share our sales targets for competitive reasons, it is clear that the total industry volume will have to be adjusted because of the pandemic.

For DICV, we are being cautious with our spending but we will not do anything that will hurt us in the long term. All our capex decisions are based on our determination to succeed in the long term.

The reduction of GST from 28% to 18% and implementation of an incentive-based scrappage policy will boost consumer sentiment

but we will not do anything that will hurt us in the long term. All our capex decisions are based on our determination to succeed in the long term.

This will be the first meeting of the FSDC, which comprises the RBI Governor and other financial sector regulators, after the pandemic outbreak.

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For DICV, we are being cautious with our spending but we will not do anything that will hurt us in the long term. All our capex decisions are based on our determination to succeed in the long term.

This will be the

ICC finalises election procedure

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI

The International Cricket Council (ICC) Board met on Tuesday to finalise the election procedure for the chairman's post.

The decisions of the Board, headed by Shashank Manohar who is set to vacate the post after serving as the first independent chairman for four years, will be announced after a crucial meeting on Thursday to discuss the fate of the T20 World Cup, scheduled to be held in Australia in October-November this year.

SAI opens stadia for training

UTHRA GANESAN
NEW DELHI

Sports activities finally resumed in the city with the Sports Authority of India opening up the stadia under its charge on Tuesday in adherence to guidelines issued by the Sports and the Home Ministries earlier this month.

However, only non-contact sports with minimal sharing of equipment have been allowed at the moment. The Shyama Prasad Mookerjee Swimming Complex remains closed.

Archery, table tennis, badminton and tennis have been approved at the Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium and the Major Dhyan Chand National Stadium.

SAI is still working on the logistics of opening up Indira Gandhi Indoor Stadium and Karni Singh Shooting Ranges.

Nakamura in semifinals

RAKESH RAO
NEW DELHI

Hikaru Nakamura drubbed Levon Aronian 3-1 to enter the semifinals of the \$150,000 Lindores Abbey Rapid Challenge on Monday.

Quarterfinal results: Second mini-match: Hikaru Nakamura (USA) bt Levon Aronian (Arm) 3-1; Ding Liren (Chn) bt Yu Yangyi (Chn) 2.5-1.5.

BCCI mulls change in Ranji format

The proposal is for having a shorter tournament with fewer group-stage matches

P.K. AJITH KUMAR
KOZHIKODE

The BCCI is considering a change of format for the Ranji Trophy.

The proposal is to split the Elite teams into five groups instead of the current three, *The Hindu* has learnt. At the moment, Elite Groups A and B have nine teams each while Group C has 10. The Plate group has 10 teams.

In the new avatar, each Elite group will have six teams, while the Plate group will consist of eight (the top two from the previous season will be promoted to Elite Group E).

Toppers qualify

The teams that finish on top of the five Elite groups will qualify directly for the quarterfinals.

The three remaining spots in the last eight will be identified from playoffs featuring



Pick of the lot: Team Saurashtra, the reigning Ranji Trophy champion. ■ FILE PHOTO: VIJAY SONEJI

the five second-placed teams and the Plate winner.

This means the number of matches will reduce drastically – from 169 to 113.

The proposal was submitted before the outbreak of the novel coronavirus, but with the pandemic disrupting the sports calendar the

world over, the BCCI could be tempted to test it for the next season, which is almost certain to be shortened.

Some BCCI officials feel that the new format could make the domestic season less crowded, reduce travel and lessen the workload for several players who feature

in the IPL and in matches for India-A. "The BCCI's (yet-to-be-appointed) cricket committee will have to take a decision on this, of course," a BCCI official said.

It will be interesting to see how the players respond to the proposal.

Those on the fringe may

not want to lose three matches per season (at present, they can play eight games in the league phase, but that number will come down to five in the new format).

Fewer games would mean less money, too. A player gets approximately ₹1.4 lakh per four-day match.

Shield and County

So how many games do First Class teams in England and Australia – two countries with a robust domestic structure like India – play?

A top-division English county team participates in 14 First Class matches per season (eight teams play each other, home and away). Australia's Sheffield Shield is also played on a double round-robin format: all six sides play 10 games each and the top two clash in the final.

Saliva ban may make cricket boring: Starc

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
SYDNEY

Australian paceman Mitchell Starc warned Tuesday that cricket risks becoming "pretty boring" if ball-tampering rules are not relaxed in response to a coronavirus-linked ban on using saliva to shine the ball.

Starc said swinging the ball in such a manner was a crucial part of the contest between bowler and batsman. "We don't want to lose that or make it less even, so there needs to be

something in place to keep that ball swinging," he told reporters in an online press conference.

"Otherwise people aren't going to be watching it and kids aren't going to want to be bowlers. In Australia in the last couple of years we've had some pretty flat wickets, and if that ball's going straight it's a pretty boring contest."

Starc said if bowlers were disadvantaged by a saliva ban, they should be given more leeway elsewhere.

IN BRIEF



SL cricketer suspended for possessing drugs

COLONBO
Sri Lanka Cricket on Tuesday suspended pace bowler Shehan Madushanka from all forms of the game, two days after he was arrested allegedly in possession of 2 grams of heroin. Madushanka, who took a hat-trick against Bangladesh on his ODI debut in 2018 and has played two T20I matches, has not played an international since due to injuries. AFP

Cancelling Slams than play without fans: Kvitova

PRAGUE
Two-time Wimbledon winner Petra Kvitova has said she would prefer Grand Slams did not take place as opposed to playing them behind closed doors due to COVID-19. "Of course, I would like to play another Grand Slam. But, playing without fans who are our engine doesn't look nice to me and the Grand Slams don't deserve it," said the 30-year-old Czech. AFP



McIlroy thinks Ryder Cup will be moved to 2021

LONDON
Rory McIlroy believes the Ryder Cup will be moved back to 2021 under pressure from players. "They want to play in front of crowds, that makes the Ryder Cup so special. "At the end of the day, the players are the ones that make the Ryder Cup and if they don't want to play then there isn't a Ryder Cup," said the four-time Major champion. AFP

Ibrahimovic has calf injury: AC Milan

MILAN
Zlatan Ibrahimovic has picked up a calf injury and not ruptured his Achilles tendon as feared, AC Milan confirmed on Tuesday. "Ibrahimovic has sustained an injury to his right soleus muscle during Monday's training session. The Achilles tendon is perfectly



intact. The player will undergo a scan in 10 days' time," said the Serie A team. AFP

Yuki and Sumit in entertaining fare

The former, a junior Oz Open winner, targets 2021 return

KAMESH SRINIVASAN
NEW DELHI

They are two of the best players in Indian tennis in recent years. Yuki Bhambri and Sumit Nagal, who have both won junior Grand Slam titles to act as foundations to their professional careers, entertained tennis enthusiasts on the show, Chai with Raja, hosted by fellow player Purav Raja.

Smart answers

Former junior World No. 1, Yuki, who had won the Australian Open junior title in 2009, was not sharp with his

memory, and thus 22-year-old Sumit, who came up with smart answers, won the hearts and was declared the winner by judge Karman Kaur Thandi.

Having reached a career-best rank of 125, Sumit remembered the names of the current top-50 men's players who were part of the doubles draw when he won the Wimbledon junior doubles crown with Vietnam's Nam Hoang Ly.

Stefanos Tsitsipas, Denis Shapovalov, Alex de Minaur, Taylor Fritz, Reilly Opelka, Casper Rudd, Miomir Kecmanovic, ranked at their best from No.5 to 47, figured in junior doubles draw in 2015.

Yuki felt that he could have broken into the top-50 in 2018, but for the knee injury, and declared that the job was not done. "Watch out for me in 2021," he said.

He chose sister Sanaa for mixed doubles and added that he would like to be remembered as one "who realised his potential".

Nagal said that he would love to have Tiger Shroff or Varun Dhawan act his role in a film, in which a kid passionate about cricket gets into tennis and nearly quits the game, before journeying across Bengaluru, Canada and Germany and finding the way.

Sumit conceded that he would not challenge the ultra-fit Somdev Devvarman over an 800-metre race, as he had lost to him.

When asked what car he would buy for his dad, Nagal said that he would rather buy him a 'Bullet' as the one he had bought for him was stolen.



Talented duo: Sumit Nagal and Yuki Bhambri have been two of the best Indian players in recent times. ■ FILE PHOTO

Spreading the gospel will take a back seat to attracting the moolah

neither in which fans consume the activity.

While in the short term there might be a great hunger for any form of competition, anything live on television, we can't be so sure of the long term.

The new normal, as the new cliché goes, might just as easily see a decline in viewership. Priorities change when real life crashes into sport with such force. It is impossible to say now which way the wind will blow.

What is likely, however, in the short term is that cricket's missionary zeal to spread the gospel (so to speak) will get much weaker.

Forget the non-Test nations, even

many of the Test nations will find themselves out of the loop as the emphasis shifts to the top four or five teams that can bring in the moolah.

The caste system which already exists will thus be endorsed. The 'lesser' associate members will find even less encouragement than they do now. It is possible that the caste system will be sanctified by dividing teams into two groups with promotions and relegations.

Spectre of corruption

Corruption is an issue with many boards. Last year the ICC called the Sri Lanka board the most corrupt in the world. Zaheer Abbas recently accused the Pakistan board of being soft on corruption. When the ICC banned Zimbabwe, it had as much to do with political interference as corruption.

Against this background, the BCCI might have an argument for not only claiming the lion's share of the money in cricket (after all they generate the lion's share too), but hanging on to it for the growth of the game in this country. In October, the BCCI and the ICC are set to come into conflict (which will, of course, be resolved much earlier). The IPL might be scheduled then, leading to the postponement of the World T20 in Australia.

The cancellation of the IPL will mean a loss of \$530 million, the BCCI has said; even without Ganguly in the ICC, therefore, it is likely that a World championship will make way for a domestic club tournament.

This was proposed by the then recently-elected BCCI president Sourav Ganguly, and called "innovative" by Australia. And now Ganguly seems to be the favourite to take over from

the body that will be paying the piper, the Board of Control for Cricket in India will be calling the tune. No surprises here. That's been the case for about a quarter century now.

The virus which has halted all sporting events might also change the man-

Ayushi resumes training after cyclone Amphan

Y.B. SARANGI
KOLKATA



After protecting her guns and other equipment from Cyclone Amphan, promising shooter Ayushi Podder has shifted her focus back to training at home.

Anticipating that the cyclone would be a severe one, Ayushi's father and coach Pankaj wrapped her kit bag and other equipment in polythene sheets and stored them in the shower cubicle of his flat's bathroom.

As the cyclone hit on May 20, water gushed in through a window of the Podder flat,

situated on the fourth floor of a housing society on the outskirts of the city in Hooghly district.

"Our house was flooded with rain water. Since we don't have cupboards in the house, at least 10 pairs of Ayushi's sports shoes and some clothes got drenched. We had to give the shoes away to needy people.

Sumit conceded that he would not challenge the ultra-fit Somdev Devvarman over an 800-metre race, as he had lost to him.

When asked what car he

would buy for his dad, Nagal said that he would rather buy him a 'Bullet' as the one he had bought for him was stolen.

However, we saved the gun and equipment by storing them in the shower cubicle (which is compact and has a raised platform)," Pankaj, also a shooter, told *The Hindu*.

With uncertainty sur-

rounding the resumption of the National camp and competitions due to the lockdown, 19-year-old Ayushi will continue to train at home.

"Ayushi has begun her training again by doing simulation at home. Sometimes, we go downstairs to the makeshift range to train. Since the lift is not functioning, going down these days is a tough job," said Pankaj.

With uncertainty sur-

rounding the resumption of the National camp and competitions due to the lockdown, 19-year-old Ayushi will continue to train at home.

"About 60% museums in China opened in the first week of May, 19 of them in Beijing alone. The average turnout [of visitors] was only around 250, while earlier it used to be in the thousands," he added.

"The idea should be for

museums to go to people rather than people coming to you. You can redefine museology and become a world leader in museums," Mr. Daniel told *The Hindu*.

Worldwide, museums are dependent largely on govern-

ment funding and gate tickets, besides cafes, bookshops and restaurants within the premises. But with governments across the globe tightening the belt, they have to look at other priorities. "The fall in funding is likely to be about 60%.

In India, as most museums depend on government funding, there might be only enough money to pay salaries and not to undertake major renovations," he said.

Mr. Daniel, who is also chairman of the Board for

AusHeritage, a network of people coming into mu-

seums in limited numbers as social distancing norms are put in place.

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"The online model can be

very successful through a

partnership approach. It can

be done by getting compa-

nies to spend a bit of their

CSR (corporate social re-