

on Sunday



TDP leader Prabhakar,
son held for using fake
papers to register trailers
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Supreme Court to hear
Vinod Dua's plea for
quashing FIR today
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ICMR study hints at
underestimation of
COVID-19 cases
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Local officials disagree
with Putin on holding
Victory Day parades
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State records
3,427 more
cases; 113 die

JYOTI SHELAR
MUMBAI

Maharashtra added 3,427 more cases of COVID-19 on Saturday. The third highest single-day rise pushed the State's total to 1,04,568. The State also recorded 113 fatalities, taking its death toll to 3,830.

The daily average of cases and deaths in the State have risen exponentially since June 1, when it began easing the lockdown. In just 13 days, it has clocked 36,916 cases and 1,544 deaths, which is 35% of the total cases and 40% of the total deaths in the country.

Of the latest fatalities, 87 were reported from Mumbai and its neighbouring regions. Mumbai alone recorded 69 deaths while Pune recorded 10.

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Nepal passes amendment on new map

Unanimous vote by Pratinidhi Sabha gives legal stamp to inclusion of Indian territory

KALLOL BHATTACHERJEE
NEW DELHI

The Lower House of Nepal's Parliament on Saturday unanimously voted for the Second Constitution Amendment Bill, which guarantees legal status for the new political map of the country that includes part of Indian territory in Uttarakhand.

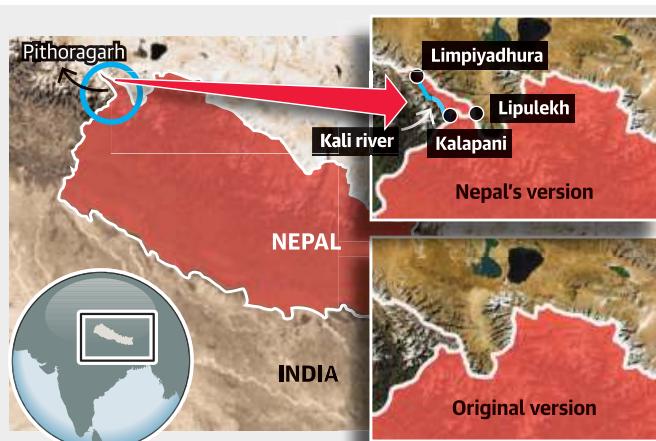
The voting in the House of Representatives came after day-long discussions, which included praise from co-chair of the Nepal Communist Party Pushpa Kamal Dahal "Prachanda" for the Nepalese democracy, which, he said, is reversing centuries of diplomatic humiliation.

Not tenable: India
Responding to the development, the Indian Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said it had "noted" the legislative process.

"The artificial enlargement of claims is not based

Border trouble

On Saturday, Nepal's Parliament unanimously approved a new map which shows places such as Limpiyadhura, Kalapani and Lipulekh, including the strategically important Lipulekh pass, which are in Uttarakhand's Pithoragarh district, as part of that country's territory



on historical fact or evidence and is not tenable. It is also violative of our current understanding to hold talks on outstanding boundary issues," said MEA spokesperson Anurag Srivastava.

The territorial dispute stems from the fact that Nepal claims the land to the east of river Kali, which forms the country's western

border. As per Kathmandu's understanding, the river originates from Limpiyadhura in the higher Himalayas, giving it access to a triangular-shaped land defined by Limpiyadhura-Lipulekh and Kalapani. India opposes the notion and says the origin of the river is much further down, which reduces Nepal's territorial demand.

Saturday's amendment was approved through a voice vote, following which all the members of the House of Representatives (Pratinidhi Sabha) gave individual signatures to the Bill which completed the voting process.

The voting showed that members from all the political parties of the Pratinidhi Sabha voted in favour of the motion moved by the government of Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli.

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Apart from the ruling Nepal Communist Party, the amendment received support of the Nepali Congress and the newly formed Janata Samajvadi Party-Nepal.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 6

Indian freed by Nepal police

The Indian national detained by the Nepal Armed Police Force on June 12 from the border in Sitamarhi district of Bihar was released on Saturday. "Lagan Kishore Rai was released early on Saturday," said IGP of Sashastra Seema Bal, Patna frontier, Sanjay Kumar. ▶ PAGE 7

Cong. has numbers in Rajasthan: Pilot

'We will win the 2 RS seats comfortably'

SANDEEP PHUKAN
NEW DELHI

The Congress is more than comfortable in terms of numbers to ensure the win of two of its nominees in the upcoming Rajya Sabha polls, Rajasthan Deputy Chief Minister Sachin Pilot said on Saturday.

In an exclusive interview with *The Hindu*, Mr. Pilot, who also heads the party in Rajasthan, said the BJP may have approached Independent MLAs, but ruled out that "there was ever a crisis in the Congress camp".

"The fact is that the two candidates were chosen by Ms. Sonia Gandhi and as the Rajasthan Congress chief, it is my duty to get them elected, no matter what," Mr. Pilot said.

He said while the Congress needed only 101 votes to get its members elected, the party had 107 MLAs of its own. The 12 Independent MLAs supporting the government will only add to the ruling party's strength.

Last Wednesday, Mahesh Joshi, Chief Whip of the Congress in the Rajasthan Assembly, went to the Anti-Corruption Bureau, alleging that MLAs were being "lured with money to topple the government".

Countering the BJP's charge of internal divisions within the Congress in Rajasthan, Mr. Pilot said the BJP should first put its own house in order.

"As far as the BJP is concerned, there are more factions in the State BJP than I can count on my hands. And the sidelining of Vasundhara Raje is obvious and apparent," Mr. Pilot said, avoiding a direct reference to his reported differences with the Chief Minister, Mr. Gehlot.



A lesson on BJP policies

Amid the political slugfest over the alleged attempts to poach legislators ahead of the Rajya Sabha polls, Congress MLAs attended a workshop on the BJP's policies on Saturday. The MLAs, staying at a private resort, were shifted to a hotel in Jaipur. The workshop covered the COVID-19 lockdown, the crisis faced by migrant workers, the state of the economy, the weakening of democratic institutions, promises made to farmers and price rise. ▶ PAGE 7

ty Chief Minister.

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China border situation under control, says Army chief

A lot of 'disengagement' has happened, says Gen. Naravane

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Indian and Chinese troops are "disengaging" in a phased manner from the stand-off areas along the border following a series of ground talks and a lot of disengagement has happened in the Galwan river valley, Army chief Gen. Manoj Naravane said on Saturday.

This is the first time the Army has officially acknowledged that stand-offs had taken place at several areas, including Galwan river.

Gen. Manoj Naravane

"The situation along our borders with China is under control. We are having a series of talks that started with Corps Commander-level talks on the 6th of this month. This has been fol-

lowed up by a number of meetings of the local commanders of equivalent rank. As a result of this, a lot of disengagement has taken place," Gen. Naravane said, speaking to the media at the Indian Military Academy in Dehradun.

"Both sides are disengaging in a phased manner. We have started from the north from the area of Galwan river, where a lot of disengagement has happened."

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 6

Dr. Reddy's, two others to make Gilead's Remdesivir Drug has nod for emergency use

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD

Dr. Reddy's Laboratories on Saturday said it has signed a non-exclusive licensing agreement with Gilead Sciences to register, manufacture and sell the U.S. bio-pharmaceutical firm's anti-viral drug Remdesivir that has emerged as a potential treatment for COVID-19.

Biocon firm Syngene and Zydus Cadila Healthcare have also entered into similar agreements with Gilead, under which they get to ma-

nufacture the product for distribution in 127 countries.

They join Hetero Labs, Jubilant Lifesciences and Mylan, who had signed the agreement last month with Gilead.

An investigational antiviral therapy, Remdesivir has received Emergency Use Authorization (EUA) from the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (USFDA) to treat COVID-19.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 6

Two militants killed in gunfight with security forces in Kulgam

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
SRINAGAR

Two militants were killed in an operation in Kulgam district of Jammu and Kashmir on Saturday.

"During a search operation in village Nipora Zadpora, the hiding terrorists were given an opportunity to surrender. However, they opened fire and lobbed grenades on the search party. Both were killed in the retaliatory fire," said Vijay Kumar, Inspector-General of Police, Kashmir.

The police said the bodies



tion were recovered, they said.

Fourteen militants were killed in three operations in Shopian earlier this month.

IED defused

The police said an improvised explosive device was detected and defused in north Kashmir on Saturday. A road opening party of the CRPF's 3rd Battalion spotted the IED, fitted to a gas cylinder, on the roadside at the Lawdara Crossing near Nadiyal on the Bandipora-Srinagar Highway.

were recovered from the site of the gunfight. The identity and the affiliation of the terrorists were being ascertained. Arms and ammu-

Erode Collectorate sources said the driver and his friend used an Internet centre at Kuruppanackenpalayam village three days ago and applied for the e-pass.

On Thursday, he got a call from an official at the Thoothukudi Collectorate, who had verified his details. "When will I get the e-pass?" the applicant asked the official, to which he got an instant reply: "You have submitted a fake wedding invitation as a supporting document." An order to appear for inquiry at the Erode Collectorate on Friday followed.

At the inquiry, the driver

told officials that the idea behind the invitation came from the staff of the Internet centre. When he explained his predicament and said he had already tried thrice, he claimed they told him that only if he submitted a marriage invitation would he get an e-pass for Thoothukudi.

The applicant claimed the staff at the browsing centre appeared to have prepared a fake invitation and uploaded it, and that he had no knowledge about it.

His three failed applications had given the reason as "travel for looking for marriage alliance". As he was frustrated, his friend encouraged him to seek the help of the browsing centre.

State cuts test rates at pvt. labs

Home collection of samples to cost only ₹2,800 now

JYOTI SHELAR
MUMBAI

The Maharashtra government on Saturday cut the cost of the COVID-19 test at private laboratories from ₹4,500 to ₹2,800 for home collection of samples. The rate is ₹2,200 if samples are collected from hospitals.

Health Minister Rakesh Tope said there was a growing demand for slashing the cost. "We had set up a committee to look into the pricing. It studied all the aspects and has decided on the rates," he said in a video released by him. "There are plenty of testing kits available now, and the price of kits has also come down. Therefore, laboratories should not look at profiteering," he said.

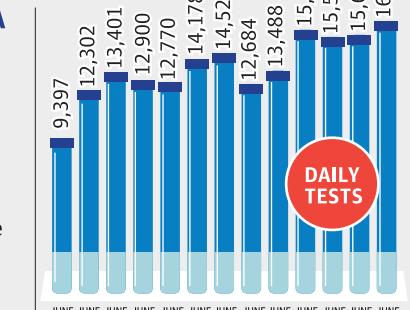
Maharashtra has so far carried out over 6.4 lakh tests, including 2.5 lakh in Mumbai. While the State's daily average has gone up to 15,000 in the past three days, Mumbai's daily average is 4,500. Maharashtra's case positivity rate is 16.18% and Mumbai's 22%.

"With such a high positivity rate, especially in Mumbai, the incidence of cases will be much higher. Therefore, the testing has to go up," said Soumitra Ghosh, a professor of the School of Health System Studies at the Tata Institute of Social Sciences. He said one of the major flaws in dealing with the outbreak was the lack of aggressive contact-tracing. "The staff on duty surely is tired. But the government has to strategise and bring in new hands to do the job," he said.

AFFORDABLE TESTING

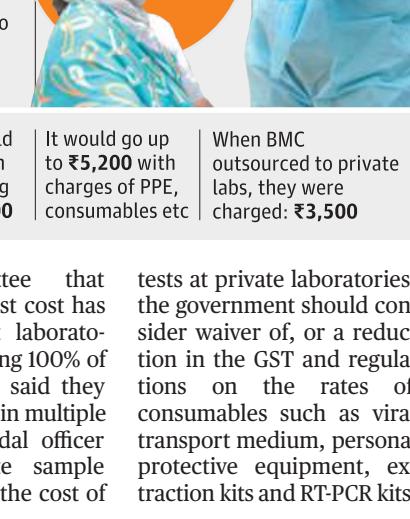
CATEGORY A ₹2,200

Pick up sample from collection site, transport and reporting of sample (cost of all necessary consumables like viral transport medium (VTM), PPE, etc., for collection to be borne by sample provider)



CATEGORY B ₹2,800

Collection of patient sample from health care facility/residence, transport of sample, testing and reporting of sample (cost of all necessary consumables like VTM, PPE, RNA extraction kit, RT-PCR kit etc., to be borne by the laboratory)



Tying himself in knots to see a prospective bride

Tamil Nadu applicant who wanted to travel used a wedding card that wasn't

S.P. SARAVANAN
ERODE

People are desperate to travel between districts and States after lockdown restrictions were lifted and employ several tricks to get the elusive e-pass, but not everyone gets past the barriers. A 35-year-old van driver of Kurichi village, located nearly 30 km from Erode, learnt this the hard way. He had tried three times to visit Thoothukudi during the lockdown to meet a prospective bride chosen by his parents, but failed to get a pass.

In the fourth attempt, he submitted an application

attaching a fake printed wedding card and found himself summoned for an inquiry at the Erode Collectorate.

The wedding "invitation" was used to bolster his case to go from Erode to Thoothukudi, although the purpose was only to explore the marriage alliance. Alert officials found that not everything added up, thanks to a detail in the card. An official at the Thoothukudi Collectorate noticed that the man from Bhavani taluk gave the place of wedding as



Chennai in the invitation, but sought to travel to Thoothukudi for the wedding ostensibly scheduled for the next week.

At the inquiry, the driver

tests at private laboratories, the government should consider waiver of, or a reduction in the GST and regulations on the rates of consumables such as viral transport medium, personal protective equipment, extraction kits and RT-PCR kits.

Chartered flight brings 180 from Dubai

Businessman steps in to repatriate Mumbai, Pune residents after lack of Vande Bharat flights

ADITYA ANAND
MUMBAI

The first of several chartered repatriation flights for Indians in the United Arab Emirates (U.A.E.), organised by the Maharashtrian community, brought back 180 people to Mumbai on Saturday evening. A second flight is scheduled to arrive in Pune on Sunday.

The chartered flights are a result of the efforts of Rahul Tulpule, a 44-year-old Dubai-based businessman. Mr. Tulpule stepped in to coordinate after 13,000 people registered with the Indian diplomatic mission in the U.A.E. to fly back to Mumbai and Pune. Even after three phases of the government's Vande Bharat Mission, there had been only one flight from Abu Dhabi to Mumbai.

Motivated by live video
Speaking to *The Hindu* over the phone from Dubai, Mr. Tulpule, the vice president of the Maharashtrian Business Forum, said he was moved by a video posted online that got him organise the flights. He liaised with the Indian Consulate and the Ministry of External Affairs in Delhi to make it possible for these Indians to return.

The live video was posted on Facebook by Sharjah-resident Dhanashree Patil, who highlighted how people's problems were getting worse by the day in the absence of



Heading home: Citizens of Mumbai and Pune wait to board a chartered flight from Dubai airport; (above) the passengers seated in the aircraft. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

flights to Mumbai or Pune under the Vande Bharat mission. She also pointed out that there were multiple connections available to Kerala, whose community members were working in better coordination to ensure its people can return home.

For several weeks now, I have been spending my time... counselling Maharashtra stuck in the U.A.E.
DHANASHREE PATIL
Event manager

came to the country for short visits or to hunt for jobs and have medical issues. There are also those who have lost someone in the family, and those who need to return.

Community to the rescue
"In the last few months, I have come across many desperate Maharashtra expatriates – pregnant women whose husbands had lost their jobs and they could not afford a child's delivery here and old and sick people stranded on visit visas – who wanted to go home," Mr. Tulpule said.

Among those who are a priority for repatriation are pregnant women who have no insurance, individuals who have lost jobs due to the pandemic, senior citizens, and several people who

pule said. While many of those being repatriated managed to fund their own tickets, there are many whose travel is being funded by individuals in the Indian community.

Accordingly, Mr. Tulpule sought quotations from various airlines so he could cut the best deal for the people.

"We chose Fly Dubai, a local airline because it already had several local aviation clearances in place, saving time, which was essential. It eventually took only 48 hours to get the paperwork cleared and the process going," he said.

Among those on the Mumbai flight was a woman who went to Dubai in order to hunt for a job when the U.A.E. announced a lockdown a few days before India did. A single mother of two

little twins left behind with her parents in Maharashtra, she had no where to go. "Eventually, the community came together, providing ration and rent to her and many others. Some even lived in balconies of apartment blocks," Ms. Patil said.

With one flight gone and another to fly on Sunday, Mr. Tulpule is set to meet the Consul General of India in Dubai, Vipul, to arrange for a few more flights.

'Organise more flights'

"There are reports of private carriers being allowed in the Vande Bharat Bharat Mission and that would help a lot. I would be happier to see community organisations take advantage of the process I managed to establish and organise more chartered flights," Mr. Tulpule said.

K.J. Somaiya asked to reply to overcharging allegations

Are beds available under EWS quota?: HC

SONAM SAIGAL
MUMBAI

The Bombay High Court on Friday noted that there are "serious allegations" against K.J. Somaiya Hospital for charging patients exorbitantly for COVID-19 treatment, and asked the hospital if it has any beds available under 10% quota for economic weaker sections (EWS) of the society.

A Division Bench of justices R.D. Dhanuka and Madhav Jamdar was hearing a plea filed by Abdul Shoaib Shaikh and six others. The slum dwellers, who reside at Bharat Nagar, Bandra (East), were admitted to the hospital on April 11. When they were discharged on April 28, the hospital charged them over ₹10 lakh.

However, they have now filed a plea through advocate Vivek Shukla, challenging the bills raised by the hospital. They have also sought direction from court to the State and the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation to regulate fees of priv-

ate and corporate hospitals for treatment of COVID-19.

According to the court, perusal of the bills indicate that the hospital has charged towards anaesthetist fees, while Mr. Shukla stated that none of the patients availed such services.

The court also directed the hospital, which is admittedly a charitable hospital, to disclose in the affidavit if any beds were available under 10% EWS quota, and if similar charges were recovered from other patients of COVID-19.

The State government, charity commissioner, Principal Secretary of Health Department and Collector of Mumbai have been directed to file an affidavit on whether the hospital is liable to reserve 10% beds for the EWS category. The authorities shall also enquire if the hospital fulfils such conditions.

The court has ordered the authorities to file the affidavit on or before June 19, and posted the matter for hearing on June 23.

AJEEET MAHALE
MUMBAI

The Brihanmumbai Electric Supply and Transport (BEST) Undertaking has not paid salaries of several conductors and drivers for the month of May. The move, aimed at reducing absenteeism within the traffic department, has been strongly opposed by BEST Sanyunka Kamgar Kruti Samiti (BSKKS), an umbrella body of the BEST unions. The BSKKS has alleged that salaries of nearly 15,000 employees have been cut, with several getting 'zero' on their salary slips.

The BEST administration has, over the past one week, issued charge sheets to nearly 2,000 employees, including drivers, conductors and engineers, for not reporting to work. Shashank Rao, BSKKS leader, said the move flouts the directives of the State and Central governments who have directed even private companies to continue paying salaries during the lockdown.

"By not paying any salary, they have left thousands of

workers in the lurch as many would have EMI payments, and school fees to pay. What will they do now? Many of the employees, whose salaries have been cut, are those who were under quarantine or were over 55 years, and in many cases stuck in their homes with no means to return," Mr. Rao said, adding that if any action needed to be taken it should be done on a case by case basis.

Manoj Varade, Public Relations Officer, BEST, said that the figure quoted by BSKKS was inflated. He said the move has been taken only against those staff members who have not reported to work for a single day in May. "Due to absenteeism of drivers and conductors, we have been unable to run more buses or cater to the increasing demand over the last one week. This is the reason why there are long queues, and physical distancing measures are being flouted by the public," he said. Moreover, the continued absenteeism was putting undue pressure on those who worked during

the lockdown period and were unable to even take their weekly offs.

Senior BEST officials said they had taken this extreme step after already having issued show cause notices and charge sheets. They were only able to operate between 2,400 and 2,500 buses out a schedule of around 3,000 buses every day, affecting frequency. Since Monday, BEST has been ferrying around four lakh passengers daily. The officials added that out of 20,500 drivers, only around 16,000 were reporting to work.

Suhas Samant, leader of the BEST Kamgaar Sena, said the government had assured that workers will get paid if they had to be under quarantine or stay at home for some other reason.

"The Kruti Samiti is only trying to tarnish this government's efforts. They had threatened to strike earlier, which did not work. Today BEST is the only organisation that is providing transport service and people can't just sit at home enjoying their wages," he said.

Under pressure: The BEST has been unable to cater to increasing demand due to absenteeism. ■ ARUNANGSU ROY CHOWDHURY

the plastic sheet will provide safety for our drivers. Though the government has allowed taxis to ply with two passengers, many have not hit the road.

C The government has allowed taxis to ply with two passengers, but many have not hit the road
A.L. QUADROS
Mumbai Taximen's Union

Vicky Nagpal, who owns Sound FX garage in Andheri (East), said was getting a lot of private cabs to install these sheets earlier, but now many rickshaw and taxi drivers have also approached them.

Thampi Kurien, who heads the Mumbai Rickshawmen Union, said though the PVC sheets may provide some safety to rickshaw drivers, many are still hesitant to ply autos as several of them have been fined since June 5. "There is no clarity on emergency or essential travel. A rickshaw driver is not going to ask a customer what his purpose of travel is. There is fear of contracting the virus, but there is also the fear of getting fined," he said.

3 cars collide while trying to avoid woman, dogs

The incident occurred on Marine Drive

ABHA GOKHALE
MUMBAI

In an attempt to avoid two dogs and their walker, three cars collided causing minor injuries to its occupants at Marine Drive on Saturday.

The walker identified as Heena Kamat (34) was returning home with her two dogs when they started pulling her while she was crossing D-Road-Marine Drive crossing at 11.40 a.m.

Police said Ms. Kamat is a housewife and a resident of Keval Mahal on Marine Drive and a case was booked against her. She is said to have been crossing the road at a spot where there was no zebra crossing.

As the dogs pulled Ms. Kamat, the cars driving in her direction swerved to avoid hurting them. Two of the cars – a Toyota Corolla and Maruti Ciaz – suffered most damage, leaving a Honda City with lesser damage done.

"Even though it was a ma-

C Ms. Kamat has minor injuries on her face and refused to be taken to a government hospital

MURTYUNJAY HIREMATH
Senior police inspector, Marine Drive police station

jor accident with a lot of damage to the cars, no grievous injury other than a dislocated shoulder and scratches have been sustained by the three drivers and one passenger in the cars. Ms. Kamat has minor injuries on her face and refused to be taken to a government hospital after assistance was offered by us," senior police inspector Murtyunjay Hiremath, Marine Drive police station.

A case was registered against Ms. Kamat under Sections 289, 336 and 337 of the Indian Penal Code along with Section 102 and 117 of the Maharashtra Police Act.

"Even though it was a ma-

Constable dissuaded from ending life after four hours of counselling

Police, fire brigade join hands to save 29-year-old

SHREYA SHARMA
MUMBAI

A residential society in Dadar was witness to high intensity drama on Saturday morning, as a 29-year-old constable with the Mumbai Police was successfully dissuaded from committing suicide after close to four hours of counselling.

Residents called police
According to the Bhoiwada police, residents of the Shinwadi area noticed the constable pacing on the terrace of the building for a long time. Since it is an area with a high number of COVID-19 cases, they wondered who he was and why he was outdoors for so long, and ultimately called the police around 11 a.m.

The police and fire brigade officials rushed to the area and surrounded the building. "The man had climbed up on the ledge of

Helplines

BMC mental health helpline:
022 24131212 (24x7)

Vandrevala Foundation:
18602662345/18002333330 (24x7)

I Call:

022-25521111

(8 a.m. to 10 p.m.)

(Monday to Saturday)

The Samaritans Mumbai:

8422984528/8422984529/8422984530

(5 p.m.- 8 p.m. all days)

the terrace and we set up inflatable sheets and mattresses just in case he fell while efforts were on to change his mind," Chief Fire Officer Prabhakar Rahangdale said.

A small group of policemen, meanwhile, headed to

Drug racket operating through dark web busted

Accused ordered hydro weed online, sold it to college students

GAUTAM S. MENGLE
MUMBAI

The Mumbai Police Crime Branch has arrested two accused who were allegedly part of a well-organised drug trafficking ring, where cannabis of superior quality was ordered through the dark web and sold to college students in Bandra and nearby areas.

According to Crime Branch officials, assistant police inspector Sudhir Jadhav with the Unit XI received a tip-off that two suspects would be coming to Bandra with "hydro weed".

Also known as hydroponic cannabis, hydro weed is grown indoors by injecting soil nutrients directly into the marijuana plant, coupled with artificial lighting and pumped water.

With one flight gone and another to fly on Sunday, Mr. Tulpule is set to meet the Consul General of India in Dubai, Vipul, to arrange for a few more flights.

'Organise more flights'

"There are reports of private carriers being allowed in the Vande Bharat Bharat Mission and that would help a lot. I would be happier to see community organisations take advantage of the process I managed to establish and organise more chartered flights," Mr. Tulpule said.



Caught red handed: Faiz Bhiwandiwala and (right) Arif Mithaiwala. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

encryption, which makes messages exchanged on the platform close to impossible to track," the officer said.

Less severe penalty

According to Crime Branch sources, hydro weed is gaining popularity among consumers of illegal drugs in India, as it is more potent and can be bought in smaller quantities. The NDPS Act makes a distinction between "personal" and "commercial" quantities of drugs, with the former category attracting less stringent penal measures.

"This case is a classic example. Despite the potency of the drugs, the quantity falls under the personal category. Both accused were granted bail when they were produced in court on Saturday," another officer, who was part of the operation, said.

PVC screens to separate drivers, passengers

Drivers rue fines, lack of clarity on rules

AJEEET MAHALE
MUMBAI

Drivers of taxis and autorickshaws are planning to put up plastic sheets as separators for protection and also to instill confidence among passengers about the hygiene protocols adopted by them. However, union officials said this will only be possible if more taxis and autos start running and drivers feel positive about getting business.

"The plastic sheet will provide safety for our drivers. Though the government has allowed taxis to ply with two passengers, many have not hit the road.

While there is no clarity on emergency or essential travel. A rickshaw driver is not going to ask a customer what his purpose of travel is. There is fear of contracting the virus, but there is also the fear of getting fined," he said.

Monsoon arrives in most parts of State

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MUMBAI

Heavy rainfall was reported at two places in Ratnagiri at 8.30 a.m. while some parts of Sindhudurg, also a coastal district, witnessed "very heavy" rainfall, said Deputy director general, K.S. Hosalkar.

The Regional Meteorological Centre, Mumbai, has issued warning for "thunderstorms accompanied with lightning, intense spells of rain" at isolated places in Mumbai, Palghar, Hingoli, Parbhani and Jalna.

The IMD has forecast heavy to very heavy overnight rains in parts of north central Maharashtra, Marathwada and Mumbai.



Casting a shadow: Monsoon clouds gathered over Mumbai on Saturday evening. ■ VIVEK BENDRE

Maharashtra COVID-19 tracker

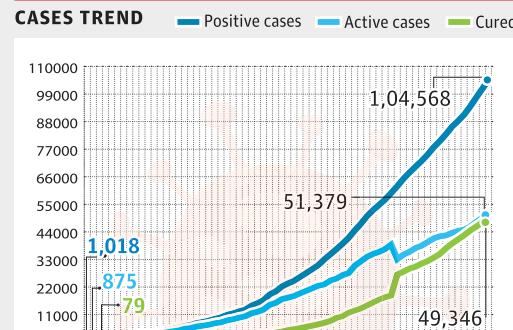
TOTAL CASES	NEW CASES	ACTIVE CASES	RECOVERED	DEATHS
1,04,568	3,427	51,379	49,346	3,830

DISTRICTS AFFECTED: 35

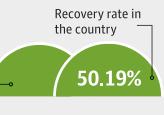
DISTRICT	CASES	DEATHS	DISTRICT	CASES	DEATHS
Mumbai	56,831	2,113	Hingoli	236	1
Thane	17,306	425	Sangli	221	7
Pune	11,722	469	Nanded	204	10
Aurangabad	2,560	128	Yavatmal	176	3
Nashik	1,852	102	Latur	163	8
Palghar	2,216	48	Osmanabad	143	3
Raigad	1,781	64	Sindhudurg	150	0
Solapur	1,738	128	Buldhana	117	3
Jalgaon	1,633	129	Parbhani	81	3
Akola	990	40	Gondia	69	0
Nagpur	982	12	Beed	74	2
Satara	731	28	Gadchiroli	49	1
Kolhapur	692	8	Chandrapur	46	0
Ratnagiri	392	15	Nandurbar	48	4
Dhule	353	26	Bhandara	49	0
Anravati	335	21	Wardha	14	1
Jalna	258	6	Washim	41	2
Ahmednagar	235	9			

POSITIVE CASES OVER LAST 15 DAYS

1,380 (40.2%) of Saturday's cases are from Mumbai

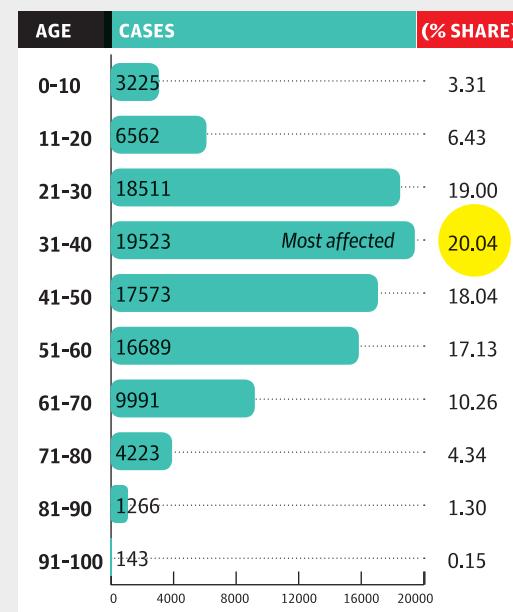


47.19% is the State recovery rate

**MORTALITY RATE**

Maharashtra 3.66%

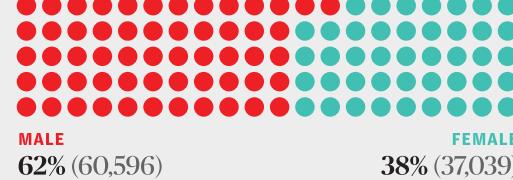
India 2.86%

AFFECTED (AGE-WISE)**QUARANTINE NUMBERS**

5,83,302 | 28,200



Home quarantine

**CASES (GENDER-WISE)****DEATH (GENDER-WISE)**

70% 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: ssuumarashtra@gmail.com

CITY-WISE HELPLINE NUMBERS

Mumbai city: 022 22664232 | Palghar: 02525 297474 | Raigad: 02141 222118 | Ratnagiri: 02352 226248 | Sindhudurg: 02362 228847

Source: Public Health Department, Maharashtra, BMC

Mumbai tally nears 57,000; 69 more deaths recorded

1,019 patients critical; 98% of city's 1,177 beds occupied

JYOTI SHELAR
MUMBAI

Mumbai recorded 1,380 new cases of COVID-19 on Saturday, taking its tally to 56,831. The city also reported 69 more fatalities, pushing its death toll to 2,113.

Mumbai now accounts for 54% of Maharashtra's cumulative cases and 55% of the total deaths. Of the latest fatalities, 47 were men and 22 were women. Nearly 47 victims had comorbid conditions such as diabetes, hypertension, and heart disease.

The city currently has 1,019 critical patients and intensive care unit (ICU) beds are crucial in saving their lives. Even through the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) has augmented the number of ICU beds, there continues to be a shortfall. On Saturday, 98% of the city's 1,177 beds were occupied.

"We are acquiring ICU beds at the ward level and the number of beds is being increased every day. For example, the Holy Spirit Hospital in Andheri was not on the list and the assistant commissioner has now added beds from there," said Dr. Daksha Shah, deputy executive health officer, BMC. She said the city has more than 8,000 patients, who are under home isolation and are being followed up through calls.

Most cases in K East ward
K East ward, comprising Vile Parle (East), Andheri (East) and Jogeshwari (East), now has the highest number of COVID-19 cases at 3,782. It is followed by G North (Dharavi, Dadar, Mahim), with 3,729 cases, and L Ward (Kurla, Sakinaka), with 3,373 cases. Dharavi recorded 17 more cases, taking its tally to 2,030.

With limited intervention at hand to fight the virus, the BMC is now pushing for convalescent plasma therapy at its Indian Council of Medical Research approved trial sites: Kasturba and Nair hospitals.



Under the scanner: A Home Guard personnel undergoes thermal screening at a health camp organised in Dharavi on Saturday. ■ RAVI NADAR



We are acquiring ICU beds at the ward level and the number of beds is being increased every day

DR. DAKSHA SHAH

Deputy executive health officer, BMC

While seven patients have received plasma therapy in Kasturba, six have received it in Nair.

31 plasma donors
So far, 31 recovered patients with antibodies have come forward to donate their plasma. Nair hospital has introduced a technique called chemiluminescent immunoassay, which checks if the donor has adequate levels of antibodies. The technology will be made available at other BMC hospitals, including KEM, which will start collecting plasma soon.

With five deaths – two in Turbhe and one each in Koparkhairane, Nerul and Belapur – the death toll has gone up to 114. In all 2,186 patients have recovered with 62 people discharged on Saturday. Currently, the number of active cases under NMMC is 638. Currently PMC has 251 active cases.

Till date 3,739 people have been tested, and 100 reports are pending. Panvel rural has reported 16 new cases making the total number to 287. With two recoveries, total recovery number is 212. Currently, the number of active cases are 64.

Second-highest single-day spike in Navi Mumbai

With 191 new cases, tally rises to 3,734

RAINA ASSAINAR
NAVI MUMBAI

The Navi Mumbai Municipal Corporation on Saturday, reported 191 new COVID-19 cases, its second-highest single-day spike, taking the total cases to 3,734.

The highest number of cases, 46, were reported from Airoli, followed by 41 from Nerul.

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Till date 3,739 people have been tested, and 100 reports are pending. Panvel rural has reported 16 new cases making the total number to 287. With two recoveries, total recovery number is 212. Currently, the number of active cases are 64.

Of the 14,768 people tested till now, 10,612 people were found negative and 422 people are still pending. In the mass screening programme, the NMMC has screened

Four more policemen succumb to virus

Death toll in Mumbai Police rises to 26

GAREEMA BANGAD
MUMBAI

Four more personnel from the Mumbai Police succumbed to COVID-19 between Friday night and Saturday afternoon, taking the death toll among the city's police force to 26. This is the highest number of lives lost to the dreaded virus in a span of 24 hours.

Police officers said the deceased include an assistant sub inspector, a head constable, and two police constables. A senior officer said, "The head constable, who was a resident of Goregaon (West), was diagnosed with COVID-19 and admitted to SevenHills Hospital in Andheri on June 4. He also had diabetes. His family members are in perfect health."

The head constable and one of the two constables were posted in police stations in northern Mumbai, while the assistant sub inspector was posted with a police station in western Mumbai. The other constable was posted with a side branch, officials said.

"The total number of deaths among the Mumbai Police due to the novel coro-

navirus stands at 26 as of Saturday," Mumbai Police spokesperson Deputy Commissioner of Police Pranaya Ashok said.

Police officers across ranks expressed concern over monsoon-related diseases exacerbating health issues and further lowering immunity, making on-ground personnel more vulnerable to COVID-19.

'Lax behaviour'

"The general sentiment that we are picking up while on patrolling rounds is that people seem to believe COVID-19 is gone just because the lockdown is being eased. Most of the people that we have stopped over the last few days include those stepping out for completely unnecessary reasons like joyrides, 'enjoying' the first few rain showers or taking walks," an officer posted in south Mumbai said.

On Saturday, the Oshiwara police started enforcing strict restrictions on joggers' parks in their jurisdictions, forbidding entry from 7 p.m., after a surge in joggers was observed over the last few days.

COVID-19 claims 8th victim in fire brigade

91 staffers have tested positive so far

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI

A fire personnel attached to the Vile Parle fire station succumbed to COVID-19 on Saturday. He was admitted at SevenHills Hospital and was shifted to the intensive care unit after his condition rapidly deteriorated.

He is the eighth official of the Mumbai Fire Brigade to succumb to the novel coronavirus. So far, 91 staff members have tested positive from the department and 22 have been admitted to various hospitals.

In a report, the Mumbai Fire Brigade said till 2 p.m. on Saturday, 33 personnel had been discharged. "We have lost eight of our men

so far. Right now, 22 officers and staff members are in hospital undergoing treatment for COVID-19. Besides this, 28 other officers and staff members have been placed under quarantine," chief fire officer Prabhat Ranhangale said.

The Mumbai Fire Brigade has been on its feet during the pandemic with little respite.

On Thursday, fire personnel attended to a call from Crawford Market, where a fire broke out, while on Saturday they were involved in preventing a suicide attempt by a man.

This is in addition to being involved in sanitisation of hospitals across the city.

Don't ostracise frontline workers, says HC

Court dismisses plea demanding healthcare staff to be kept in isolation

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

MUMBAI

The Bombay High Court on Friday said frontline COVID-19 workers should be encouraged to discharge their duty without fear and not be ostracised for travelling to work daily.

A

OBITUARY & REMEMBRANCE

DEATH



KOKILA THANU
wife of, and force behind late N.Thanu, Cartoonist & Founder of Brilliant Tutorials, mother of Geetha Ravishankar and late T. Neelakantan, passed away at 6pm on 13th June, 2020.

She was 88 years old. She is survived by her sister, daughter, son-in-law, daughter-in-law, four granddaughters and three great grandchildren Ph: 044-24984401

DEATH



Mr.K.NADANASUNDARAM
DOB: 02.09.1937 DOD: 12.06.2020
Vice President(Retd)
T.I. Diamond Chain Ltd.
Ambattur, Chennai-53
"A Leader par excellence,
team builder, humane approach
and loved by one and all."
Deeply mourned by
Ex-TIDC Employees

DEATH ANNIVERSARIES



B.M.C.NAYAR
Diplomat & Author
Fondly remembered by
Family & Friends

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Tripura COVID-19 cases cross 1,000 mark
AGARTALA

Tripura crossed the 1,000 mark of COVID-19. With 37 new detections, the tally has climbed to 1,001 on Saturday. People detected with infections have travel history, informed CM and Health Minister Biplob Kumar Deb.

For enquiries on Obituary Announcement / Death Anniversary, Please contact Mr. M Bala at the following number between 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.
Mumbai : 022-22021099
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Patients from Delhi coming to Punjab for free treatment'

Two deaths take fatality toll to 65 in Punjab; 77 fresh cases

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHANDIGARH

The Punjab government on Saturday said several symptomatic people who failed to get any treatment in Delhi were coming to the State to get tested for COVID-19. "About 97% of those coming from Delhi since one month have tested positive and treated by the Punjab government," said State Health Minister Balbir Singh Sidhu.

He said it was a matter of concern that a large number of symptomatic people were moving from Delhi to Punjab to get free treatment. "Due to the massive outbreak in Delhi, people are battling for test, besides for beds in go-



Punjab Health Minister Balbir Singh Sidhu. ■ FILE PHOTO

vernment hospitals," he said.

Punjab recorded 77 fresh cases on Saturday and reported two more deaths, taking the toll to 65, according to an official statement.

The number of positive cases in the State has reached 3,063. Eleven cases

were reported from S.A.S. Nagar and six from Pathankot district. The patients who died were from Amritsar district.

Taking cognisance of reports of exorbitant cost of treatment in private hospitals, Mr. Sidhu warned of stringent action against such facilities, including cancellation of licences.

overnment hospitals," he said.

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The number of positive cases in the State has reached 3,063. Eleven cases

Faulty data behind AMU's slide in national rankings'

V-C urges HRD Ministry to rectify error

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Aligarh Muslim University has 2,911 full-time research scholars. According to the Centre's National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF), however, the university has only 33. The faulty data resulted in AMU slipping from 18th to 31st place in the rankings released earlier this week.

"This discrepancy in the number of PhD students enrolled at AMU has resulted in a false steep decline in our ranking," university's Vice-Chancellor Tariq Mansoor said in a letter to the National Board of Accreditation and Human Resource Development Minister Ramesh Pokhriyal Nishank on Fri-

day. "A higher NIRF ranking not only translates into better employment opportunities for students, but also forms an important basis for future funding, infrastructure support and other assistance by various government and other agencies."

He urged the HRD Ministry to rectify the discrepancy immediately.

NIRF sources much of the data from institutions themselves. Prof. Mansoor said correct data, sent by email in March 2020 and also uploaded on the AMU website, showed the number of full time PhD graduates over the last three years was between 312 and 387. However, the NIRF site shows only 8-10 each year.

Odisha reports 225 new cases

STAFF REPORTER
BHUBANESWAR

Odisha reported the highest single-day spike of 225 COVID-19 cases, taking its tally to 3,723 on Saturday. While 196 among them were reported from quarantine centres, 29 were traced from the community. Cuttack reported 92 cases, followed by Ganjam (20) and Khordha (19).

Two lady doctors tested positive in Kalahandi

Bengal Governor, TMC leaders spar over 'fake news'

Dhankar takes on State govt. over handling of bodies by municipal workers

SHIV SAHAY SINGH
KOLKATA

The Trinamool Congress leadership on Saturday launched an attack on West Bengal Governor Jagdeep Dhankar, accusing him of spreading "fake news". Senior Ministers and party MPs took to social media and made public statements against the Governor.

Mr. Dhankar responded by saying that senior leaders

have taken to "tweeting rather than apologise for shaming our State".

What triggered the accusations were tweets by the Governor, where he raked up the issue of the video outside a city crematorium where civic workers are seen mis-handling the bodies and called for an "immediate apology to society at large". Mr. Dhankar tagged the Chief Minister. The Governor

said the Kolkata Municipal Corporation Commissioner had updated him "about sad saga of dead body disposal."

The video surfaced two days ago showing decomposed bodies being dragged into a KMC van in broad daylight. It was allegedly shot outside the Garia Crematorium where locals objected to the cremation.

The administration has

clarified that the bodies were not related to COVID-19 patients.

Senior TMC Minister Partha Chatterjee said "all we expect from the Honourable Governor is to help us by not spreading Fake News". Urban Development Minister Firhad Hakim said while the government is working for people, "others" are just interested in spreading "fake news".

CLASSIFIEDS

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MATRIMONIAL

BRIDEGRoOMS WANTED

INDEX OF MATRIMONIAL

BRIDEGRoOMS WANTED

BRIDES WANTED

BRIDES & GROOMS WANTED

Classification common for Brides, Bridegrooms, Brides & Grooms

Assamese

Awadhi

Bengali

Bhojpuri

Bihari

Chhattisgarhi

English

Gujarati

Haryanvi

Hindi

Kannada

Kashmiri

Konkani

Malayalam

Manipuri

Marathi

Marwari

Nepali

Oriya

Parsi

Punjabi

Saurashtra

Sindhi

Tamil

Telugu

Tulu

Urdu

Advocate

Business

Defence

Doctor

Engineer

Finance/ Banking

Government/ Quasi-Govt.

IAS/ Allied Services

Information Technology

MBA/ CA/ ICWA

NRI

Cosmopolitan

Divorcee

Physically Challenged

MARRIAGE BUREAUS

WEDDING ARRANGEMENTS

TAMIL

TAMIL

TAMIL

TELUGU

TAMIL

TAMIL

TELUGU

RC CHRISTIAN 30yrs 6'162 Engineering Graduate Non-IT Working Corporate Co at Chennai Sectors R&D/CS/ Non-IT Engineering Graduate Employed Groom settled at Chennai Cast No 9449531257

CSI CHRISTIAN Nadar Girl Fair, Good Looking, 03-04-1986 born, 152cm / M.Sc Phil, working as Assistant Professor in a Reputed Women's College, Mount Road, Chennai. Both Parents Doctors (Private), Suitable Alliance, Employed to Socialite. Contact: 0981182514

HINDU SC PR Kongu 1984 MBBS DCH Doctor, working in Govt hospital sees suitable groom. C:94436 80973

25/17,M.S. IN U.S., Fair, Affluent, seeks handsome PG well settled boy. No bar. Contact: 9944935653

CHRISTIAN TELC AD Girl 25yrs/ 165cm MBBS good looking seeks Doctor Groom. C:9578815447.

ROMAN CATHOLIC Sozhiya Vellalar 36 / Tamil Girl 44/58 MBA / Wheatish, Good Looking. Never Married. Employed in Bangalore. Earning Hand-some Salary. Seeks suitable Bride-groom. Caste no bar. Willing to relocate. Ct Clement: 9940228828 between 7pm & 10pm

ENGLISH MS- SURGERY Final Year, aspiring M.Ch, 25 years, Pretty, 5'8" Rohini/ Rishabha, Saiva Pillai seek DM/ M.Ch pursuing Handsome groom less than 30 years Vegetarian Groom. Caste no bar. Fwd BPH. rwwt2019@gmail.com

IAS / ALLIED SERVICES AN AFFLUENT Bengali family, with own house & car South Kolkata, seeks Doctor/ IAS/ IPS/ Industrialist/ similarly placed grooms, within 36 yrs from Elite, liberal, progressive minded families, for their only offspring, 30 years (looks much younger), preparing for Civil Services, 5'2", very fair, slim, beautiful, highly glamorous, deeply intellectual, convention educated, MA in English (1st Class, C.U.). Both parents Rtd Ctrl Gvt Officers/Caste, Community, religious NO BAR. 900752249

MALAYALAM CSI CHRISTIAN Nadar girl 152 cm, age 31, doing last phase of PhD in veterinary science. Alliance invited from same community. Contact: 9446277699

NAIR GIRL,26 years,Chothi,159 cms, Officer in Chemistry(Executive) at National Thermal Power Co. at Madhyapradesh.Job transferable. Propose invited from well employed boys from same community probably from Delhi,Chennai,Nagpur,Vishakapatnam. 9446980536, 9495477397

SAIVA VELLALA girl, 28/165 cms, based at Trivandrum, looking for educated match around 31 yrs. Preferably settled abroad. Sub seek Nair or Con- tact: 9947736774, 9947007003

HINDU SC DVK daughter of Teacher- Advocate Thiruvathirai Mithunam clear horoscope 25/150 BE, MA, ME Final Coimbatore seeks suitable groom for First marriage below 30 years must be a Govt Servant Hindu Devendra Kulasekaran. Good looking, Educated & well placed person who can be a dependable and caring partner to our daughter. Preference: Kerala Iyer. People who find her profile suitable can feel free to get in touch with us. Ct: 08056796435

NAGARATHAR/CASTE NO Bar, Divorced, No Children, 35, 162 cms, Good Looking, B.E. Working as Software Analyst, Lives in Chennai. Father is Businessman, Family financially well off, Looking for a Like minded, well settled family. Contact: 9944313142 or mail to director@kkoh.in

HINDU PILLAI (Kaartha), 29yrs/ 165cm, Sc. Computer Science, D.F. Consultant in Chennai. Looking for a match in India/Absurd. Contact: 9962873777

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TAMIL

Display real time info on facilities on websites: HC to hospitals, clinics

'Minimise inconvenience caused to patients'

SONAM SAIGAL
MUMBAI

The Bombay High Court on Friday asked government, municipal and private authorities to consider displaying on their websites real time information on the availability of facilities at hospitals run by them for the benefit of COVID-19 patients and those suffering from other diseases.

A Division Bench of Chief Justice Dipankar Datta and Justice A.A. Sayed was hearing a bunch of petitions on the lack of adequate testing facilities and personal protective equipment for frontline workers; exploring the option of using anaesthesia machines as ventilators; ineffectiveness of the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation's (BMC) 1916 helpline in catering to the needs of non-COVID-19 patients; and the State's reluctance to cap the prices of pathological tests.

The court said the authorities must consider organising a drive for robust detection of positive cases, intensive contact tracing, aggressive testing, extensive spread of information and awareness of norms to keep one safe for a better future. The Bench suggested to the authorities to "develop a wholesome strategy for dealing with all classes of patients, balancing healthcare for COVID-19 patients and patients suffering from other diseases alike".

The 96-page judgment said, "Authorities must consider displaying on websites, all information relating to real time availability of facilities at government/BMC-run hospitals/clinics as well as private hospitals for COVID-19 patients and pa-

tients suffering from other diseases for minimising harassment and inconvenience to the extent possible." The court said though unavailability of beds is no excuse for refusing admission to patients, efforts should be made to give preference to patients who genuinely deserve treatment and care in hospitals over those who seek admission out of sheer fear.

Learning a lesson'

The Bench noted, "COVID-19 has taught a good lesson."

The desirability of increasing the budgetary allocation for public health and care for setting up more modern facilities to cope with similar challenges may be given a serious thought."

The court said it has learnt through the course of the proceedings that the claims made by the State and the BMC appear attractive only on paper. The court said, "The tall claims being made that everything is under control and that the facts and figures given on affidavits and presentation of the war room dashboard regarding availability of all facilities/arrangements are nothing more than paperwork to suppress the real state of affairs."

'Non-negotiable'

In concluding remarks, the court said physical distancing is non-negotiable and has to be practised "no matter what the inconveniences are".

The Bench said, "By maintaining proper hygiene, proper protection and social distancing, each one of the citizens can contribute to fewer people contracting the infection."

State has not given a single rupee to cyclone victims, says Fadnavis

Leader of Opposition meets Chief Minister, submits charter of demands

ALOK DESHPANDE
MUMBAI

Leader of Opposition Devendra Fadnavis on Saturday met Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray and submitted a charter of demands from the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) to provide relief to cyclone-hit areas in the State.

Mr. Fadnavis claimed the State government has not provided even a single rupee to the victims of Cyclone Nisarga in Raigad and Ratnagiri districts.

In his letter, Mr. Fadnavis said, "Even 10 to 11 days after the cyclone, the visibility of the government and administration is zero. At some places, people have received aid in the form of two biscuit packets and three candles. Nobody has received the ₹10,000 in aid announced by the government. Even the work to rebuild electricity poles is slow and delayed."

Mr. Fadnavis and Pravin Darekar, Leader of Opposition in the State Council, had toured the cyclone-hit regions over the last two days. Mr. Fadnavis said horticulturists have suffered



Plea for help: Leader of Opposition Devendra Fadnavis interacts with Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray (right) after submitting a letter seeking relief for cyclone-hit regions on Saturday. • SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

major losses and the aid announced by the government is insufficient for them.

'Waive loans'

"I have urged the CM to change the basis of providing aid and waive the loans of horticulturists and fisher-folk. We have also put forth our demands related to the tourism sector there. Even

electricity has not been restored. This should be done at the earliest," he said.

On Friday, Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) chief Sharad Pawar held a meeting with Mr. Thackeray, apprising him about the situation in Raigad. Mr. Pawar had also embarked on a two-day tour of Raigad and

Ratnagiri districts to take stock of the damage caused by the cyclone.

State Revenue Minister Balasaheb Thorat on Saturday toured the cyclone-hit regions. He said, "Each and every person who has suffered losses and damages due to the cyclone will be compensated. The aid will reach them at the earliest."

Goa orders testing at slums near COVID-19 hospital

Mangor Hill in South Goa, Ghodemal in North Goa declared containment zones

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
PANAJI

wajit Rane said people living in slum areas around ESI Hospital will be tested for the novel coronavirus.

Earlier this week, a few staffers of the hospital tested positive. "In view of cases detected at ESI quarters, I have directed the health secretary to test all employees

there," Mr. Rane said.

Apart from this, random testing will be conducted in the slums of Azad Nagar and Moti Dongar, which are located near the hospital, the health minister said.

Leader of Opposition Digambar Kamat, who is also Margao MLA, had requested

for tests to be conducted.

As on Friday, Goa has recorded 463 cases of COVID-19, of which 69 patients have recovered so far. The government has declared Mangor Hill in Vasco town of South Goa and Ghodemal in Sattari taluka of North Goa as containment zones.

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 Sunday: Heavy/heavy rainfall likely at a few/isolated places over Sikkim, Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram, Tripura, Uttarakhand, Madhya Pradesh, Vidarbha, Chhattisgarh, Bihar, Jharkhand, Saurashtra & Kutch, Marathwada, Konkan & Goa, coastal Karnataka and Kerala

CITY **RAIN** **MAX** **MIN** **CITY** **RAIN** **MAX** **MIN**

Agartala	37...	28.6...	25.6...	Kozhikode	12.2...	31.6...	24.0...
Ahmedabad	...	34.1...	24.6...	Kurnool	...	30.6...	24.7...
Aizawl	...	25.8...	19.8...	Lucknow	...	38.2...	29.0...
Allahabad	...	38.7...	30.4...	Madurai	...	41.2...	26.1...
Bengaluru	...	27.8...	19.8...	Mangalore	29.6...	30.0...	22.6...
Bhopal	8.8...	35.0...	23.4...	Mumbai	2.1...	32.6...	26.6...
Bhubaneswar	20...	34.0...	26.5...	Mysuru	...	29.1...	21.0...
Chandigarh	...	39.3...	30.8...	New Delhi	...	39.4...	30.2...
Chennai	...	38.6...	29.3...	Patna	...	32.6...	27.6...
Coimbatore	0.5...	33.0...	22.8...	Port Blair	6.3...	31.4...	24.4...
Dehradun	7.3...	34.0...	25.1...	Puducherry	...	38.9...	27.5...
Gangtok	0.2...	24.7...	16.3...	Pune	...	32.2...	23.6...
Goa	51.5...	28.2...	24.2...	Raipur	...	33.0...	26.0...
Guwahati	3.8...	34.8...	25.4...	Ranchi	17...	29.5...	23.8...
Hubballi	...	26.0...	22.0...	Shillong	20...	23.1...	—...
Hyderabad	10.7...	31.9...	22.5...	Shimla	...	30.6...	21.0...
Imphal	8.6...	30.9...	22.2...	Srinagar	...	10...	11.8...
Jaipur	...	39.4...	32.3...	Thiruvananthapuram	3.3...	32.4...	25.3...
Kochi	4.4...	31.4...	24.8...	Tiruchi	...	38.7...	26.0...
Kohima	4.8...	26.6...	17.8...	Vijayawada	0.2...	—...	25.8...
Kolkata	43...	31.2...	26.6...	Visakhapatnam	19.1...	—...	26.5...

(Rainfall in mm; temperature in Celsius)

Pollutants in the air you are breathing

CITIES **SO₂** **NO_x** **CO** **PM_{2.5}** **PM₁₀** **CODE**

Ahmedabad	18	31	.46	36	.64	■
Bengaluru	14	13	.52	30	.39	■
Chennai	.4	31	.55	72	—	■
Delhi	9	60	115	179	191	■
Hyderabad	.7	49	.16	16	.25	■
Kolkata	.4	13	.19	18	.29	■
Lucknow	.4	3	.48	164	—	■
Mumbai	64	30	15	25	.26	■
Pune	13	5	.50	16	.16	■
Visakhapatnam	—	—	.40	—	—	—

In observation made at 4.00 p.m., Punjab recorded the overall air quality index (AQI) score of 252 indicating an unhealthy level of pollution. In contrast, Aizawl, Mizoram recorded a healthy AQI score of 11

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

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

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

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

PM_{2.5} & PM₁₀: Particulate matter pollution can cause irritation of the eyes, nose and throat, coughing, chest tightness and shortness of breath, reduced lung function, irregular heartbeat, asthma attacks, heart attacks and premature death in people with heart or lung disease

Yesterday

+

Pilgrims' progress



Spiritual journey: Warkaris carry the padukas (footprints) of saint Dyaneshwar as part of a 800-year-old tradition, on Saturday. The Maharashtra government has allowed pilgrims to carry the padukas by road or air to Pandharpur on June 30. • JIGNESH MISTRY

8 diamond firms partly shut in Surat

23 workers test positive for COVID-19; other staffers ordered to be in quarantine

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
SURAT

With 23 workers employed in some diamond units in Surat city of Gujarat testing positive for COVID-19, the civic authorities have ordered partial closure of eight such firms and asked their other staff members to undergo 14-day quarantine.

The Surat Municipal Corporation (SMC) said it has ordered closure of certain floors and departments of these eight diamond units located in the city's Katargam locality, to contain the spread of the virus.

Surat is the biggest diamond cutting and polishing hubs of the country. "In the last three days, 23 diamond workers have tested positive and the number is rising," SMC's deputy municipal commissioner, Ashish Naik, said on Saturday.

With the detection of several positive cases, certain departments of diamond units



In close proximity: Employees resume work at a diamond manufacturing unit in Surat. • FILE PHOTO

including Shivam Jewellers, SRK Empire, Dharmendar Diamonds, Rinkle Impex, C Dinesh and Co, JB and Brothers, and Royal Diamonds, have been shut, the civic body said.

₹10,000 penalty

The SMC also said the units where physical distancing

norms were not being followed have been slapped with a penalty of ₹10,000 each. The SMC said it will continue to check diamond units to see whether norms like physical distancing, use of masks and sanitisers, were being followed to prevent the spread of the virus.

All the workers in the dia-

mond polishing units sit in close proximity while working. Over 20 people, who recently tested positive, worked at these units. Civic officials said family members of these workers have also been quarantined.

Regional President of Gems and Jewellery Export Promotion Council, Dinesh Navadiya, said the diamond industry employs around 6.5 lakh workers in Surat. "There are around 6,000 diamond units in Surat that employ around 6.5 lakh workers. As per our calculation, from June 1, when these diamond units were allowed to reopen after lockdown, 2 lakh to 2.25 lakh workers have started working in these units," he said.

"We will meet SMC officials to discuss the matter. We will try to find a way out," he said. Diamond polishing units restarted their operations this month after lockdown was relaxed.

Pune firm develops digital font of P.L. Deshpande's handwriting

PuLa100 available for free to readers of Marathi litterateur

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
PUNE

Fans of late Marathi litterateur P.L. Deshpande, popularly known as Pu La, can now enjoy reading his original handwriting in a digital font.

The font, PuLa100, has been developed by city-based social media professional Ghandhar Sangoram. The font was formally unveiled and made available for readers for free on June 12, the 20th death anniversary of the writer.

"The

FROM PAGE ONE

Nepal amendment on new map passed

The total votes cast in favour were 258 and no one voted against the bill though 11 members remained absent or abstained. It is not clear yet why they did not vote. Four members including Bijaya Kumar Gachchhadar, the leading figure of indigenous Tharu community, have been suspended and could not participate in the proceedings.

Nepal claims right to the region and says India was allowed to station troops there in the 1950s and that Delhi has refused to remove forces from the region ever since.

Nepal's Minister for Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs Shiva Maya Tumbangphe tabled the amendment bill on May 31 and the necessary month long discussion was fast tracked.

The concluding session witnessed passionate speeches by the members of the parliament. The most important intervention of the day came from Prachanda, who described the day as a historic moment for Nepal.

"We are working to ensure territorial integrity national sovereignty and freedom of our people. The kings of Nepal lost our territory, but today we republicans are restoring it," he said to applause from the other members. The unanimous voting was made possible by the cross party support ensured by Mr Oli's government.

Nepal unveiled the new map on May 20 after Defence Minister Rajnath Singh inaugurated Darchula-Lipulekh link road on

May 8. Nepal had earlier strongly protested when the updated Indian map published in November last year, showing the region as part of Uttarakhand.

Kerala reported 85 cases and 46 recoveries on Saturday.

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Eight more COVID-19 patients died in Telangana, taking the toll to 182 on Saturday. Andhra Pradesh witnessed two more deaths and 222 fresh cases. Karnataka reported 308 new cases and three deaths.

Kerala reported 85 cases and 46 recoveries on Saturday.

COVID-19

day, taking its number of active cases to 1,342.

Of the new cases, 71 were imported cases of infection diagnosed in people who came from abroad, while 14 were cases of local transmission.

The confirmation of SARS-CoV-2 infection in an assist-

Marching ahead

During Unlock 1.0, the Telangana government is relaxing the lockdown norms in phases



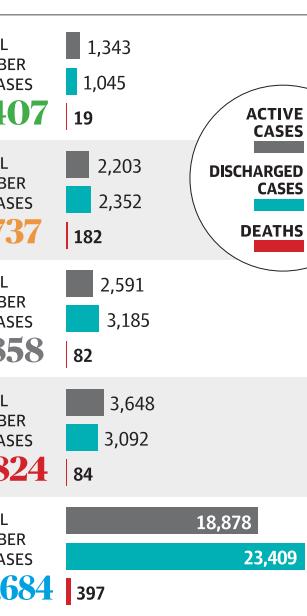
Masked and shielded: Cadets of the Technical Entry Scheme from the Cadets Training Wing of the Military College of Electronics and Mechanical Engineering at the passing-out ceremony in Hyderabad on Saturday. ■ AFP

tant terminal manager at Calicut International Airport, Karipur, led to apprehension among expatriates and their relatives who use the airport.

About three dozen peo-

ple, including the airport director, were asked to go into quarantine. All had interactions with the airport official who tested positive.

He was one of the eight



leged that there was a deliberate attempt to tarnish the image of Karipur airport. The forum said fabricated stories were doing the rounds on social media that Karipur would soon be closed down.

In a memorandum to the government, the Forum demanded that the government stop insisting that NRIs returning by chartered flights prove themselves COVID-19 negative through expensive tests.

Andhra Pradesh had 222 fresh cases, a new single-day high. Of the total fresh cases, 186 were of local residents reportedly due to community transmission.

The death toll rose to 82 and the tally mounted to 5,858, the Health Department said. With the recovery of 94 more patients, the number of recovered patients stood at 3,185 and the active cases at 2,591.

The tests per million population ratio was 10,051, considering the State's estimated population of 5.34 crore.

Telangana recorded 253 positive cases, its highest daily number yet. The total cases stood at 4,737.

Of the 253 cases, 179 were in Greater Hyderabad, 24 were from Sangareddy, 14 from Medchal, 11 from Rangareddy, four from Mahabubnagar, two each from Warangal Urban, Warangal Rural, Karimnagar, Nalgonda, Mulugu, Siricilla, Mancherial, one each from Siddipet, Khammam, Medak, Nizamabad, Nagarkurnool, Kamareddy and Jagtial districts.

Karnataka reported 308 new cases and three deaths. Bengaluru Urban saw 31 cases on Saturday, including a three-member family of an orthopaedic doctor.

(With inputs from Vijayawada, Hyderabad and Bengaluru bureaus)

TDP leader, son held in BS-III vehicles case

They are accused of producing fake NOC from police

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
ANANTAPUR

Former Tadipatri MLA and Telugu Desam Party leader J.C. Prabhakar Reddy and his son J. Ashmit Reddy were arrested from their Jubilee Hills residence on Saturday and produced before a judge, who remanded them in 14 days judicial custody.

Based on complaints from Transport Department officials that the accused had produced fake documents while registering lorries, the Anantapur police, led by Tadipatri DSP A. Srinivasulu, conducted searches in their house for two hours from 2 a.m. and shifted them in a car to the Anantapur I Town police station by 11 a.m.

Army sources stated that at Galwan area, limited "disengagement" had begun earlier and was underway in Gogra and at PP 15 and 17A.

The Transport Department had filed 27 FIRs with the police, pertaining to the purchase of 154 BS-III-com-



Former Anantapur MP J.C. Diwakar Reddy addressing a press conference in Anantapur on Saturday. ■ R.V.S. PRASAD

pliant lorry-trailers in scrap from Ashok Leyland and getting them registered as BS-IV vehicles at Kohima in Nagaland by producing fake invoices, insurance certificates and police no-objection certificates.

Anantapur Deputy Transport Commissioner N. Sivaram Prasad had filed complaints against the directors of Jatadhara Industries Private Limited, J. Ashmit Reddy and J.C. Uma Reddy (wife of Mr. Prabhakar), and

C. Gopal Reddy & Co. director Gopal Reddy.

"As part of investigation, the police found that the 'Police NOC' provided by the representatives of the companies were fake and produced by some persons on demand from Mr. Prabhakar and Mr. Ashmit Reddy.

Based on the assertions of those people, the police registered cases of cheating and forgery and arrested the duo," Deputy Superintendent of Police G. Veeraghava Reddy told *The Hindu*.

Naidu denied entry into govt. hospital

STAFF REPORTER
GUNTUR

High drama unfolded at the Government General Hospital here on Saturday after TDP national president N. Chandrababu Naidu was denied entry to see party leader K. Atchanna Naidu.

Mr. Atchanna Naidu was brought to the hospital for treatment amidst tight security, a day after he was arrested from his home in Srikakulam.

Mr. Naidu was stopped at the main gate by the police, who said they couldn't allow him without permission from the magistrate. Later, he interacted with the GGH medical superintendent, who told him that all possible medical care was being given to Mr. Atchanna Naidu.

Places of worship to be open during total lockdown

Competitive exams will be conducted

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Temples, churches, and mosques can admit devotees in limited numbers on total lockdown day on Sunday in Kerala.

However, pregnant women, persons above the age of 65 and children below 10 will not be allowed.

The number of persons at a time in a place of worship should not exceed 100. The government has circumscribed the space for 15 persons to a 100 sq ft (9 sq m.)

Worshippers should wear masks and maintain a minimum physical distance of 6 ft (1.8 m).

Devotees should register their names, mobile phone numbers and addresses at the entrance. They should desist from communal prayers and chanting and singing in groups.

Those praying at mosques should not use tank water for washing and instead rely on piped running water. They should wear masks, bring their prayer mats and keep footwear separate.

Temple priests should avoid the practice of distributing food, "prasadam and theertham" and desist from sprinkling water on devotees.

Rituals, such as the first communion in churches, should be held with minimum physical contact.

Several competitive examinations have been scheduled for Sunday. Hence, the government has exempted the conduct of tests from Sunday's lockdown.

Students, invigilators and other allied staff were allowed to travel to the examination centres.

IN BRIEF



No plan to return to UDF, says Kerala Congress (B)

KOLLAM
The Kerala Congress (B) is very comfortable in the Left Democratic Front and all reports about a possible return to the Congress-led UDF are baseless, said KC(B) chairman R. Balakrishna Pillai (in picture) here on Saturday. Ending speculation and extending all support to the LDF government, he added that the State was doing a commendable job in fighting COVID-19.

Kerala begins online classes from tomorrow

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM
After a two-week trial, fresh classes will be aired through the KITE Victors TV channel and online platforms from Monday as part of the Kerala government's 'First Bell' online programme for school students. The online classes will be telecast from 8.30 a.m. to 5.30 p.m. All classes can be viewed in real time on the Facebook page of KITE Victors and later on YouTube. There will be repeat telecast of sessions as well.

Two held in Telangana with pangolin scales

BHADRADRI-KOTHAGudem
Forest officials busted a gang allegedly involved in the sale of pangolin scales, at Mulakalapalli mandal here in Telangana on Saturday. Two members of the gang were held and 445 gm of pangolin scales seized from them during a pre-dawn raid on a house at Jinnelagudem village. Officials conducted the raid based on confession by two other suspected members of the gang, who were arrested on Friday.

NGT gives Kerala 1 month to report on forest fire prevention steps

Calls for status report on implementation of national plan

G. KRISHNAKUMAR
KOCCHI

The Southern Bench of the National Green Tribunal has given one month to the Kerala Forest Department for submitting its report on the steps taken to prevent forest fires and implement the National Action Plan on Forest Fire in the State.

An order by the Bench, comprising Justice K. Ramakrishnan and expert member Saibal Dasgupta, on June 11 said three months had passed after it directed the Principal Chief Conservator of Forests and the Head of the Forest Force in Thiruvananthapuram to submit a report on the steps taken to prevent such incidents in the aftermath of a fire that killed three forest guards at Kottambathur,



No time to lose: A file photo of fire devouring trees at Ponkuzhiy in the Wayanad wildlife sanctuary.

near Desamangalam, in Thrissur on February 16.

More time sought
The government sought two months for filing the report when the case was taken up on Thursday.

The order said regarding implementation of the National Action Plan on Forest Fire, an action taken report

could have been prepared and submitted based on available records, for which two months was not required.

"Considering the circumstances, we grant one-month time to the official respondents to comply with the direction issued by this tribunal by order dated 27.02.2020," said the order.

Theatre group invites thespians for video series on future of drama

Samudaya has been hosting a series of talks on the way ahead; it is also meant to help the community reflect on the challenges ahead



Stage of uncertainty: Theatre personalities sharing their views. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

the way ahead.

Theatre person Prasanna, who was one of the leading lights of the Samudaya theatre movement, delivered the inaugural talk. He said "social distancing" was inimical to theatre, which brought people together. "Though we are forced to practise distancing due to COVID-19, social distancing is in itself a disease that has ruined our society. Theatre has the potential to bring society together again," he said. "None of us

should stop theatre. If we are unable to begin staging plays again in the near future, we need to reinvent ourselves."

Maybe, we can begin by staging plays at homes with a handful of spectators..." he said.

Meanwhile, theatre groups have taken to streaming plays online. Rangashankara, the leading theatre group in the city, hosted a series of soliloquies by noted actors on their social media handles, and is even hosting their an-

ual 'Mango Party' online on June 14.

Professor Purushottam Bilelme, Kannada Language Chair, Jawaharlal Nehru University, said theatre practitioners need to reinvent theatre to reflect the uncertainty that migrants face and bring to the stage the unseen vagaries of life in the country today. The series is aimed at helping the community reflect on the challenges ahead, said J.C. Shashidhar, of Samudaya, which is hosting the talks on YouTube.

IN BRIEF



Attorney-General may get one-year extension

NEW DELHI
Attorney-General K.K. Venugopal is all set to get a one-year extension, government sources said on Friday. His three-year tenure comes to an end on June 30. Mr. Venugopal, 89, was appointed in 2017 after then AG Mukul Rohatgi resigned citing personal reasons.

₹225 crore tax evasion comes to light, 3 held

NEW DELHI
The Central GST Intelligence has arrested three persons for allegedly evading tax of ₹225 crore in the past nine months by clandestinely manufacturing and selling pan masala and tobacco products in Indore, Madhya Pradesh. Tax evasion over the past two years is suspected to be about ₹400 crore.

12 booked under NSA for thrashing Dalits in U.P.

AZAMGARH
The Uttar Pradesh police have arrested 12 persons for their alleged involvement in a clash following the molestation of Dalit girls, and booked them under the National Security Act (NSA), officials said on Saturday. The clash took place at Sikandarpur Aima in Azamgarh district earlier this week. PTI

Punjab police arrest another LeT operative

CHANDIGARH
The Punjab police said on Saturday that they arrested another Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) operative, Javed Ahmed Bhat, as he tried to escape to Kashmir. His arrest came two days after LeT operatives Aamir Hussain Wani and Wasim Hassan Wani were caught trying to smuggle weapons to the Valley.

CBI files 7 cases to probe chit fund scams in Bengal

NEW DELHI
The CBI has registered seven cases to probe chit fund scams in West Bengal in compliance with the Supreme Court's directive in May 2014. The first case was initially registered against six accused in the South 24 Parganas in 2013. It was alleged that they collected funds on the promise of huge returns against investment in a social welfare trust named Hasper Micro Finance Institution.

Govt. taxing people with fuel prices: Sibal

'Global rates are falling but common man is paying more'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Congress on Saturday accused the Centre of profiteering at the cost of the common man and claimed that it earned ₹2 lakh crore since early March by imposing high taxes on petrol and diesel.

Addressing an online press conference, former Union Law Minister Kapil Sibal said that while international crude oil prices were at the lowest level in 15 years, retail prices of petrol and diesel were going up and the common people were suffering under the Narendra Modi government.

Instead of passing on the benefit of lower crude prices to consumers, petrol and diesel prices were hiked for the seventh day in a row on Saturday.

"The government earned as much as ₹44,000 crore in the last six days due to hike in petrol, diesel prices. Since March 5, the government has earned as much as ₹2.5



Centre has earned as much as ₹2.5 lakh crore from rising petrol, diesel prices

KAPIL SIBAL
Congress leader

lakh crore by way of increasing petrol, diesel prices.

"If the government had even the slightest feelings for the common man, instead of benefiting the companies and the government, the Prime Minister would have helped the common man with reduced fuel prices," Mr Sibal said.

The Congress leader also reminded how Mr. Modi

used to taunt the UPA government over fuel prices but had been consistently increasing them after coming to power.

According to a report by Care Ratings, he said the hike effectively meant that the Central government was collecting around 270 per cent taxes on the base price of petrol and 256 per cent in case of diesel.

The former Union Minister said petrol was selling at ₹71.41 in Delhi on May 1, 2014, when international crude oil price was \$106.85, while on June 12, 2020, the price of petrol was ₹75.16 when the crude oil was at \$38.

He said the central excise and VAT cumulatively accounted for 69 per cent of the tax on fuel in India which was higher than anywhere else in the world. "The tax on fuel in the U.S. was 19 per cent, Japan 47 per cent, the U.K. 62 per cent, France 63 per cent and Germany 65 per cent," he said.

Cong. targets PM over his visits to China

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Senior Congress leader Ahmed Patel on Saturday targeted Prime Minister Narendra Modi over alleged Chinese "intrusion" in the Ladakh sector and questioned Mr. Modi's repeated visits to China.

"Since 1947, Modiji is the only Prime Minister who made 9 official visits to China – 5 times as PM & 4 times as Chief Minister [Gujarat]. Dr. Singh visited only twice while Panditji, Rajivji, Vajpayeeji and Nar-simha Raoji visited only once. Apart from them, other PM's didn't even visit China. Despite numerous visits by the incumbent PM we have this situation," Mr. Patel tweeted.

In a series of tweets, the Congress leader asked if Mr. Modi's principle of diplomacy of giving a mile for an inch extended to borders. "For Indo-China ties, the present government gave a slogan 'Inch to Miles'. Was it meant for what is happening at our border or for diplomatic relations," Mr. Patel said.

The arrival of leaders such as Deepender Hooda, Rajeve Satav, Qazi Nizamud-

Congress MLAs attend session on BJP policies

Party moves its flock to Jaipur hotel ahead of RS elections

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
JAIPUR

Amid the political slugfest over the alleged attempts to poach legislators ahead of the Rajya Sabha elections, the ruling Congress MLAs, holed up in a luxury hotel here, attended a workshop on the BJP's policies on Saturday.

Senior Congress leaders accused the BJP of damaging the country's social fabric by its "criminal mismanagement" during the last six years in power.

The MLAs, who were earlier staying at a private resort on the outskirts of Jaipur, were shifted to JW Marriott Hotel. Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot and Deputy CM Sachin Pilot, camping in the hotel since Friday, devised a training programme for legislators and finalised a mock drill for polling for the three Rajya Sabha seats from the State.

The arrival of leaders such as Deepender Hooda, Rajeve Satav, Qazi Nizamud-



Pep talk: Congress legislators at a training programme in a hotel in Jaipur on Saturday. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

din and Devendra Yadav at the hotel and their participation in the workshop indicated the significance being attached by the party's central leadership to the Sachin Pilot camp.

The half-day workshop covered the subjects of COVID-19 lockdown, crisis faced by migrant workers, present state of economy, weakening of democratic institutions, promises made to farmers and price rise.

Congress national spokesperson Randeep Singh Surjewala said the BJP had promised to support Congress during the June 19 Rajya Sabha polls.

adopted the policy of "maximum government, zero governance" at the Centre. "All major decisions, such as demonetisation, GST implementation and lockdown, were taken by an individual, bringing misery to the people," he said.

Independent MLAs supporting the State government were also staying at the hotel. Mr. Gehlot has claimed that the two Bharatiya Tribal Party MLAs had

5 killed in M.P. lime quarry accident

STAFF REPORTER
Bhopal

Five workers were killed and another five injured on Saturday after a lime quarry collapsed due to rain in Shahdol district, said officials.

"The administration has launched an operation to rescue another five to six workers who buried under the rubble," District Collector Satendra Singh said.

"We have called in earthmovers to rescue those buried at the mine near Beohari. We are yet to establish if the quarry was being run illegally," said a district official.

Later, Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan directed the district administration to immediately pay a compensation of ₹4 lakh to each family of the deceased and ensure complete care for the injured.

Shops open in Srinagar after 83 days

People rush to the city's main markets as the first phase of unlocking begins



Back to business: A merchant displays fresh stocks in Srinagar on Saturday. ■ NISSAR AHMAD

PEERZADA ASHIQ
SRINAGAR

A semblance of normality returned to Srinagar, Jammu and Kashmir's summer capital, on Saturday as the administration allowed 50% opening of shops after 83 days of lockdown enforced to contain COVID-19.

Shoppers rushed to Nowhatta, Kukar Bazaar and Lal Chowk, the city's main markets. The police were monitoring the adherence to standard operating procedures (SOPs), including wearing of masks and maintaining of physical distance.

"I have come to buy toys and self-reading material for my children. It has been tough for them to stay within the confines of home for almost three months," said Sajida Khan, a shopper, at Nowhatta. The Srinagar administration has come up with a calendar for shop-

keepers to open phase-wise and sector-wise during 'Unlock 1'. "We are running short of cash now. We would sell goods and earn daily and the money ran the family. But it has been so many days without any business," said Nazir Ahmad, a crockery shop owner, at Kukar Bazaar.

Restaurant owners have welcomed the government's decision to allow takeaways in the first phase. "It is a considerate decision to allow takeaways. The restaurant and cafe owners are duty-bound to follow COVID-19 guidelines. People should realise that economic activities are

important, but they should not spread the virus," said Jammu and Kashmir Hotelier Club member Tariq Ghani.

He urged Deputy Commissioner Shahif Iqbal Choudhary "to take immediate steps for reopening of hotels so that tourism starts as the earliest".

SC to hear Vinod Dua's plea today



Vinod Dua

Himachal police booked him on sedition charges

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

A three-judge Bench of the Supreme Court will assemble on Sunday to hear an urgent plea made by Padma Shri awardee and senior journalist Vinod Dua to quash a "bogus" FIR registered by the Himachal Pradesh police accusing him of sedition.

Judges U.U. Lalit, Mohan M. Shantanagoudar and Vineet Saran will hear the petition at 11 a.m. through virtual proceedings.

The Himachal Pradesh police had appeared at Mr. Dua's residence on June 12 and ordered him to be present at the Kumarsain police

station, at least a 20-hour drive from Delhi, at 10 a.m. the next day (June 13).

June 12 was the day when the Delhi High Court stayed an earlier "bald and frivolous" FIR registered by the Delhi police against Mr. Dua, represented by senior advocate Vikas Singh and advocate Nitin Saluja, pointed out that Himachal Pradesh has institutional quarantine for 15 days for people coming from the red zones. The police insisted on his appearance knowing well that Delhi was categorised as a red zone and he would not be able to be present in the police station at the designated time.

"It is rather astonishing since the police station is 20

hours away from Delhi and they were here in 12 hours," Mr. Dua said. His pleas to the Himachal Pradesh police to join the probe through emails or online were met with silence. Mr. Dua also expressed apprehensions about travelling during the pandemic as he had co-morbidities.

In his letter to the Supreme Court, pleading for an urgent hearing, Mr. Dua, represented by senior advocate Vikas Singh and advocate Nitin Saluja, pointed out that Himachal Pradesh has institutional quarantine for 15 days for people coming from the red zones. The police insisted on his appearance knowing well that Delhi was categorised as a red zone and he would not be able to be present in the police station at the designated time.

This committee should comprise the Chief Justice of the High Court concerned or a judge designated by the Chief Justice, the Leader of the Opposition and the State Home Minister, the petition said.

"Preliminary work of arranging facilities for the well control operation began today [on Saturday] after the six foreign experts carried out a joint survey of the site, along with our officials and specialists from

"There is a recent trend against the media where State governments that do not find a particular telecast to be in sync with their political ideologies register FIRs against persons of the media primarily to harass them and to intimidate them so that they succumb to the line of the State or else face the music at the hands of the police," Mr. Dua said.

Mr. Dua also sought a direction that no FIR be registered against journalists with at least 10 years of standing unless cleared by a committee constituted by the State governments.

"This committee should comprise the Chief Justice of the High Court concerned or a judge designated by the Chief Justice, the Leader of the Opposition and the State Home Minister, the petition said.

"Preliminary work of arranging facilities for the well control operation began today [on Saturday] after the six foreign experts carried out a joint survey of the site, along with our officials and specialists from

OIL flies in three more experts to control fire

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GUWAHATI

Oil India Limited (OIL) flew in three more disaster-control experts from the U.S. and Canada late on Friday night to help control the Baghjan natural gas-producing well that burst into flames almost two weeks after a blowout.

The exploration major had flown in three oil well disaster specialists from Singapore on June 8, a day before the Baghjan well in eastern Assam's Tinsukia district caught fire.

"The production loss on Saturday was 500 metric tonnes of crude oil and 0.46 million metric standard cubic meter per day of natural gas due to the protests," the spokesperson said.

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India may have undercounted cases

ICMR study hints at 7 lakh infections even in early May

JACOB KOSHY
NEW DELHI

The findings of a serological survey by the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) from 69 districts across 21 States indicate that an estimated 7,00,000 people could have been infected by the SARS-CoV-2 virus in these districts even in early May.

The number indicated by the survey is twenty times higher than the 35,000 confirmed cases of COVID-19 reported as of early May in the entire country, suggesting that the actual COVID-19 count overall could be underestimated by a factor of at least 20. Confirmed infections have since swelled to more than 3,08,000 as of Friday (June 12), with more than 8,900 people having died of the disease.

Tested for antibodies

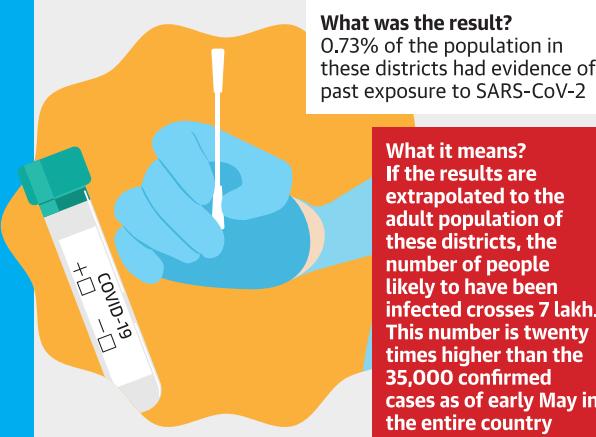
According to a research paper published in May in the ICMR's in-house *Indian Journal of Medical Research* describing the methodology of the survey, blood samples of 24,000 adults were ex-

Missing numbers

Results from an ICMR serological survey suggests that the actual COVID-19 case count, by early May, could have been at least 20 times more than what was detected in India at that time

What is a serological survey?
Blood samples of general population are analysed and if specific antibodies are detected, they are labelled as infected with SARS-CoV-2 in the past

Who were tested?
In May, ICMR conducted a serological survey across 69 districts in the country. About 24,000 blood samples of adults were examined for antibodies produced specifically by SARS-CoV-2



What was the result?
0.73% of the population in these districts had evidence of past exposure to SARS-CoV-2

What it means?
If the results are extrapolated to the adult population of these districts, the number of people likely to have been infected crosses 7 lakh. This number is twenty times higher than the 35,000 confirmed cases as of early May in the entire country

mined for antibodies produced specifically for SARS-CoV-2 via an ELISA test.

On Thursday, Director General of ICMR Balram Bhargava at a press conference said 0.73% of the "population in the districts surveyed had evidence of past exposure to the virus."

In other words, the survey revealed that 0.73% of those sampled showed evidence of IgG antibodies.

The survey began around May 12 and given that it takes an average of two weeks for

IgG antibodies to be detected, April 30 was considered to be the date on which the individuals were likely infected by the virus.

NEWS ANALYSIS

The adult population of these districts, according to the 2011 census was 60% of the overall population (160 million) and this works out to around 96 million persons.

If the results of the survey are extrapolated to the adult population of these districts,

the total number of people likely to have been infected adds up to 7,00,000; the numbers could be even higher if the growth of the population in the last nine years is factored in. *The Hindu* corroborated these findings with a scientist, who didn't want to be identified, but was part of the survey design and analysis.

Antibodies produced in response to being infected by the virus confer immunity but are also evidence of being exposed to the infection.

Because they rely on blood samples and are only an indirect evidence, they aren't as accurate as PCR tests.

Academic literature has suggested that there is a higher chance of "false positives" being reflected in serological surveys if there is a low prevalence of the disease. The survey measured prevalence in regions that had highly variable incidence of the disease and 7,00,000 infections is an average of a wide range – the details of which, again, aren't yet available – of infection values.

The scientist *The Hindu* spoke to said while the prevalence percentage accounted for the limitations of this test, 7,00,000 was an "accurate estimate" of the level of infection in these districts. The ICMR is expected to detail, in the coming days, the results of its sero-survey.

Another expert familiar with serology said, "Twenty cases for every single confirmed one is reasonable for a country's India's size and does show a fair degree of containment. However, these true infection numbers ought to have been disclosed by the ICMR." *The Hindu* reached out to Dr. Bhargava, but couldn't get a response.

The new protocol includes use of remdesivir and off-label use of tocilizumab and convalescent plasma therapy on specific groups of patients. Also, while HCQ will continue to be in use, antibiotic azithromycin is no longer a part of the treatment protocol. The Ministry said patients are reporting symptoms like fever, cough, fatigue, shortness of breath, among others.

"Loss of smell (anosmia) or loss of taste (ageusia) preceding the onset of respira-

Centre for early use of HCQ

'It must be avoided in severe cases'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Health Ministry on Saturday said the anti-malarial drug hydroxychloroquine (HCQ) should be used as early as possible in the course of COVID-19 treatment to achieve meaningful effects and should be avoided in patients with severe disease.

A 22-page national clinical management protocol provides for the management of cases based on the clinical severity of mild, moderate or severe, the Ministry said.

India records 11,819 fresh cases

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI

India on Saturday recorded a massive spike of 11,819 COVID-19 cases and 306 fatalities, according to data from the State Health Departments.

The overall tally rose to 3,21,375, out of which 1,49,654 are active cases. The death toll stood at 9,196, while 1,62,525 people have recovered.



PM takes stock of COVID-19 situation

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday reviewed the response to the COVID-19 pandemic at a meeting with Ministers and officials where Vinod Paul, convenor of the Empowered Group of Medical Emergency Management Plan, said two-thirds of the cases are in five States with an overwhelming proportion in big cities.

"In view of the challenges being faced, particularly by the large cities, it was discussed to augment testing and the number of beds and services to effectively handle the peak surge of daily cases," a government release said. The release said the Union Health Ministry has been asked to undertake emergency planning in consultation with the States/UTs.

Assam govt. may reimpose lockdown

It will conduct 50,000 tests in Guwahati

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GUWAHATI

The Assam government may reimpose lockdown depending on the outcome of 50,000 COVID-19 tests to be conducted in Guwahati, Health Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said on Saturday.

Till 4 p.m. on Saturday, Assam had recorded 3,718 positive cases with 1,923 of active cases and 1,784 discharged. Eight people have died so far while three migrated to other States.

Mizoram, one of Assam's neighbours in the north-east, had reimposed lockdown for two weeks from June 9 in a bid to handle the flow of people returning to the State.

Sources said a plan revolving around the "joint efforts of all the agencies possible" was on the anvil. This was also likely to include opening up of the "unutilised" municipal hospitals, dispensaries and properties, said a source.

The first meeting, scheduled for 11 a.m., will be attended by the Union Home and Health Ministers, Mr. Baijal, Mr. Kejriwal and Dr. Guleria. The second meeting, at 5 p.m., will also have the Mayors and Commissioners of the three BJP-ruled civic bodies.

No travel history

The government has decided to intensify surveillance in Guwahati after 25 people without any travel history



Ramping up: A 1,050-bed quarantine facility for COVID-19 patients being readied at Richardson and Cruddas Mill in Mumbai on Saturday. ■ SALMAN ANSARI

Maharashtra records 3,427 more cases, 113 fatalities

State accounts for 40% of deaths in the country

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI

Maharashtra added 3,427 more cases of COVID-19 on Saturday. The third highest single day rise pushed the State's total to 10,4568. The State also recorded 113 fatalities taking its death toll to 3,830.

The daily average of cases and deaths in Maharashtra have risen exponentially since June 1, just when the State began easing the lockdown. In just 13 days, the State has clocked 36,916 cases and 1,544 deaths, which is 35% of the total cases and 40% of the total deaths in the country.

Of the latest fatalities, 87 were reported from Mumbai

and its neighbouring regions like Thane, Navi Mumbai, Panvel and Kalyan-Dombivali. Mumbai alone had recorded 69 deaths, Pune recorded 10, Solapur recorded eight, Aurangabad recorded three and Latur recorded two. Satara, Nanded and Yavatmal had recorded one death each.

State's surveillance officer Dr Pradeep Awate said 73 of these deaths were from last two days while the rest were from the period between May 27 and June 10. Nearly 80% of the 113 deceased had comorbid conditions like diabetes, hypertension, asthma etc.

The case fatality rate in Maharashtra stands at 3.6%,

which is much more than the nation's rate at 2.8%. Maharashtra has the highest number of cases in the country followed by Tamil Nadu (40,698) and Delhi (36,824).

Three districts – Dhule, Jalgaon, Solapur – remain a cause of concern with the highest case fatality rate at 7.3%.

Other districts with high case fatality include Amravati at 6.2%, Nashik at 5.5% and Aurangabad at 5%.

On Saturday, 1,550 patients were discharged, taking the total number of recovered patients to 49,346.

The State's recovery rate

has now jumped to 47%. At present, the State has more than 51,000 active patients.

father has suffered paralysis stroke. None of them could go to the hospital to find his whereabouts, he said.

"We visited all the wards, looked into every nook and cranny of the hospital but could not find Raulji. The hospital authorities showed a computer entry which said he was discharged at 7.30 p.m. on May 27," said Mr. Thakor.

"The hospital did not provide us any discharge papers," he said.

They have lodged a missing complaint at Shahibaug police station on the basis of the computer entry.

Resident Medical Officer Sanjay Kapadia maintained that the hospital had discharged him on May 27.

"We contact family members on phone before discharging a patient," he said.

Inspector A.K. Patel of Shahibaug police station said they were looking into the case.

With ever-growing number of coronavirus cases, instances of Civil Hospital authorities failing to keep track of patients have come to light.

The district has reported over 16,306 cases so far with 344 new cases being reported on Saturday.

Mr. Raulji's wife is unwell, his mother is old, and his

M.P. Youth Cong. chief tests positive

STAFF REPORTER
BHOJAL

Congress MLA and Madhya Pradesh Youth Congress president Kunal Choudhary on Saturday morning tested positive for COVID-19, sending jitters across the party preparing for the forthcoming Raja Sabha election and the Assembly byelection.

The Bhopal district administration was tracing the contacts of Mr. Choudhary, an MLA from Kalapipal, who resided in 74 Bungalows of Bhopal, a residential enclave for Ministers, said a district official.

"His sample was collected on Friday night," he said.

"Over the past few days, Mr. Choudhary had met several senior party leaders and workers and visited his constituency too ... his role in the upcoming election is pivotal," said a senior Congress leader.

SUDOKU

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

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★

Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

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

CM
YK

COVID-19 taking an emotional toll on children

Anxiety and stress rising among all age groups, from two-year-olds to teenagers

JOYOTI SHELAR
MUMBAI

fear of death as they try to comprehend the severity of the infection.

"Many of these children have grandparents in the hospital, others have lost their grandparents to the infection. This sets in the fear," she said.

Dr. Udani cited the example of a 12-year-old, who was quarantined after his grandmother tested positive. "

Australian cities see big equality protests

In Perth, several thousand people gather in park waving 'Black Lives Matter' signs and Aboriginal flags

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

PERTH

Thousands of protesters rallied for racial equality in cities across Australia on Saturday despite official warnings the demonstrations could undermine the country's success in suppressing the coronavirus.

The biggest demonstration took place in the Western Australian capital, Perth, where several thousand people gathered in a park waving "Black Lives Matter" signs and Aboriginal flags.

Smaller protests for Aboriginal rights were held in Darwin, capital of the Northern Territory, and towns in neighbouring Queensland – both regions with numerous indigenous communities.

400 custody deaths

"We are here to support our future as indigenous people and to walk against the injustices... what happens to our people, with over 400 black deaths in custody," one unidentified protester told public broadcaster ABC at the Darwin march.

With the exception of the Darwin demonstration, which had authorisation, the other protests violated official injunctions against mass gatherings instituted three months ago to curb the spread of COVID-19. But organisers made efforts to keep the protesters spread out and mostly wearing face masks, and police did not intervene.

It was the second straight weekend of large protests in Australia, initially organised in solidarity with the Black Lives Matter movement in the United States following the killing by a white policeman of African-American George Floyd. The movement has resonated particularly strongly with many in



Calls for equality, Down Under: Protesters taking part in the 'Black Lives Matter' rally at Langley Park in Perth, Australia, on Saturday. ■ GETTY IMAGES

Australia, a country also wrestling with the legacy of racial injustice towards the country's indigenous peoples. Aboriginal Australians are vastly over-represented in the prison population, and there have been more than 400 indigenous deaths in custody in the last three decades. No prosecutions have been brought over the deaths, despite dozens of investigations, inquests and in some cases video evidence of abuse.

Many protesters carried signs reflecting the Aboriginal experience, including "Stop deaths in custody" and "White Australia stop lying to yourselves". In parallel with the Black Lives Matter rallies, dozens of people protested in Brisbane, Sydney and Mel-

bourne against the prolonged detention of asylum-seekers under the government's tough refugee policies.

Health regulations

Police had banned all those protests for violating COVID-19 health regulations, but they took place largely without incident.

Australia has been one of the most successful countries in containing the epidemic, with some 7,000 cases and 102 deaths for a population of 25 million. Health officials said this week that the virus had been virtually eliminated in many regions of the country, though there continue to be some new cases daily in the most populous States of New South Wales and Victoria.

Video emerges of Canadian aboriginal chief's arrest

ASSOCIATED PRESS

TORONTO

Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said on Friday that black and indigenous people in Canada do not feel safe around police after a police video emerged of the violent arrest of a Canadian aboriginal chief. The arrest has received attention in Canada as a backlash against racism grows worldwide in the wake of the death of George Floyd.

The 12-minute police video shows an officer charging at Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation Chief Allan Adam with his arm and elbow up as he tackles him to the ground. It also shows the officer punching him in the head. Mr. Trudeau called the video "shocking." Pictures show Mr. Adam was left bloodied with his face swollen. Alberta's police watchdog agency is investigating. Police charged Mr. Adam with resisting arrest and assaulting a police officer.

The Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation said the Royal Canadian Mounted Police dash camera video was released publicly as part of a court application to get criminal charges against Mr. Adam removed.

The Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation said the Royal Canadian Mounted Police dash camera video was released publicly as part of a court application to get criminal charges against Mr. Adam removed.

The entire Xinfadi market was shut down at 3 a.m. on Saturday (1900 GMT on Friday), after two men working at a meat research centre who had recently visited the market were reported to have the virus. It was not immediately clear how they

Beijing district goes on high alert after infections emerge

45 cases centred around a wholesale market reported

REUTERS

BEIJING

A Beijing district put itself on a "wartime" footing and the capital banned tourism and sports events on Saturday after a cluster of novel coronavirus infections centred around a major wholesale market sparked fears of a new wave of COVID-19.

Forty-five people out of 517 tested with throat swabs at the Xinfadi market in the city's southwestern Fengtai district had tested positive for the coronavirus. Chu Junwei, a district official, told a briefing. None were showing symptoms of COVID-19, he said, but added that 11 neighbourhoods in the vicinity of the market, which claims to be the largest agricultural wholesale market in Asia, had been locked down with 24-hour guards put in place.

"In accordance with the principle of putting the safety of the masses and health first, we have adopted lockdown measures for the Xinfadi market and surrounding neighbourhoods," Mr. Chu said. The district is in a "wartime emergency mode," he added.

Concerns on 2nd wave

The closure of the market and new restrictions come as concerns grow about a second wave of the pandemic, which has infected more than 7,66 million people worldwide and killed more than 420,000.

The entire Xinfadi market was shut down at 3 a.m. on Saturday (1900 GMT on Friday), after two men working at a meat research centre who had recently visited the market were reported to have the virus. It was not immediately clear how they



Taking no chances: Paramilitary officers deployed at the entrance to the Xinfadi market in Beijing on Saturday. ■ AFP

had been infected. On Saturday, market entrances were blocked and police stood guard. Beijing authorities had earlier halted beef and mutton trading at the market and had closed other wholesale markets around the city. They plan for more than 10,000 people at the Xinfadi market to take nucleic acid tests to detect COVID-19 infections.

Highlighting the new sense of alarm within the city, health authorities visited the home of a Reuters reporter in Beijing's Dongcheng district on Saturday to ask whether she had visited the Xinfadi market, which is 15 km away. They said the visit was part of patrols Dongcheng was conducting.

Salmon food removed

And following reports in state-run newspapers that the coronavirus was discovered on chopping boards used for imported salmon at the market, major supermarkets in Beijing removed salmon from their shelves.

That concern also spread to other cities, with a major agricultural wholesale market in Chengdu, the capital of the Sichuan, saying it would remove salmon products from its shelves from Saturday. In Nanjing, capital of the eastern province of Jiangsu, a local association of restaurants said it would halt the serving of foods containing raw seafood or animal products.

Nepal police arrest 10, including 7 foreigners, over anti-govt. protest

Demonstrators were demanding better testing facilities



Gesture of peace: A demonstrator offering a flower to a policewoman during a protest in Kathmandu. ■ REUTERS

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

KATHMANDU

Nepali police arrested 10 protesters including foreign nationals from Australia, the U.S. and China on Saturday as hundreds staged a demonstration in Kathmandu against the government's handling of the virus crisis.

Demonstrators have defied a nationwide lockdown for several days this week to demand better testing and quarantine facilities for returning migrant workers.

Police official Sushil Kumar Yadav said that seven of those arrested were foreigners. Three of them were Chinese, with one each from the U.S., Australia, Canada and Norway, he said. At the protest on Saturday, participants showed up in masks, carrying banners reading "enough is enough".

While that protest ended peacefully, police had used

water cannon, batons and tear gas to disperse demonstrations near the Prime Minister's residence earlier this week.

Nepal imposed a nationwide lockdown in March in a bid to halt the spread of the pandemic. It currently has 5,062 cases of COVID-19, with 16 deaths.

The Home Ministry has warned that protesters could face a six-month jail term if they stage rallies during the lockdown. Tens of thousands of migrant workers have returned however from India and West Asia after losing their jobs, overwhelming testing and quarantine facilities.

Australian sentenced to death for drug trafficking

This could inflame tensions with China

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

BEIJING

An Australian national has been sentenced to death in China for drug trafficking, in a ruling that could further inflame tensions between Beijing and Canberra.

Australia's Foreign Ministry said it was "deeply saddened" by the verdict and reiterated the country's opposition to capital punishment.

The man, named in Chinese pinyin as "Kamu Jielaisi" and identified by Australian media as Cam Gillespie, was handed the death penalty by Guangzhou Intermediate People's Court on Wednesday, according to a notice posted on the court website.

Beijing subsequently imposed tariffs on Australian barley and issued travel warnings to tourists and students over virus-linked racism against ethnic Asians in the country.

Airport, northwest of Hong Kong, in December 2013 with more than 7.5 kg of methamphetamine in his checked luggage. A spokesperson for Australia's Foreign Ministry said consular assistance was being provided to the man, but they would not confirm his identity citing privacy obligations.

China is Australia's largest trading partner, as well as a major source of lucrative international students and tourists.

But relations have been troubled in recent years and worsened after China reacted furiously to Australia's call for an independent probe into the origins of the deadly COVID-19 pandemic. Beijing subsequently imposed tariffs on Australian barley and issued travel warnings to tourists and students over virus-linked racism against ethnic Asians in the country.

ELSEWHERE



Pak. ex-PM Gilani tests positive for COVID-19

ISLAMABAD

Pakistan's former Prime Minister Yusuf Raza Gilani tested positive for COVID-19 on Saturday, becoming the latest top figure to contract the virus. Mr. Gilani tested positive after attending a hearing of the National Accountability Bureau in a corruption case. PTI

Trump postpones key campaign rally

WASHINGTON

U.S. President Donald Trump has postponed a controversial rally scheduled for the same day as a holiday commemorating the end of slavery in the U.S., following fierce criticism, he announced on Friday. The rally in Tulsa, Oklahoma had been due to mark Mr. Trump's return to the campaign trail. AFP

Stop denuclearisation talk, North Korea warns South

Pyongyang accuses Seoul of meddling

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

SEOUL

North Korea on Saturday issued another angry statement against Seoul, this time excoriating it for "nonsensical" statements on the stalled dialogue about Pyongyang's nuclear weapons.

South Korea has been the target of a wave of angry statements recently from the North. The latest statement was in response to a South Korean Foreign Ministry official reportedly saying Seoul would continue "efforts for denuclearisation", referring to the long-stalled nuclear talks between the United States and North Korea.

"It is really preposterous to hear the balderdash of South Korean authorities... who do not have either any qualification to discuss, or... poke their noses into the matters between" Pyongyang and Washington,



A pro-unification rally in Seoul, South Korea, on Saturday. ■ AFP

Kwon Jong-gun, the North's foreign affairs official in charge of negotiating with the U.S., said in a statement. Mr. Kwon denounced Seoul for trying to "meddle" in the process in the statement, which was carried by North Korea's official KCNA news agency and concluded with the warning: "It is better to stop a nonsensical talking about denuclearisation."

While that protest ended peacefully, police had used water cannon, batons and tear gas to disperse demonstrations near the Prime Minister's residence earlier this week.

Nepal imposed a nationwide lockdown in March in a bid to halt the spread of the pandemic. It currently has 5,062 cases of COVID-19, with 16 deaths.

The Home Ministry has warned that protesters could face a six-month jail term if they stage rallies during the lockdown. Tens of thousands of migrant workers have returned however from India and West Asia after losing their jobs, overwhelming testing and quarantine facilities.

According to Chinese local media, the man was arrested at Guangzhou Baiyun

Local officials disagree with Putin on holding Victory Day parades

12 cities have said they won't allow functions on July 24, when the President wants to celebrate World War anniversary

ANTON TROIANOVSKI

MOSCOW

When President Vladimir Putin ordered Russia's annual military parade to be rescheduled for later this month, he cast it as a sign of life returning to normal in his virus-stricken nation.

But when a Muscovite named Zoya asked the capital city's Mayor, Sergei S. Sobyanin, on state TV this week about planned events for the day of the parade, he told her bluntly to stay home. "Zoya, I would not recommend you go anywhere," Mr. Sobyanin said.

Feel-good patriotism

The Kremlin is scrambling to drum up feel-good patriotism ahead of a delayed nationwide referendum that would allow Mr. Putin to stay in office until 2036. But the



War victory at 75: Military planes flying over Moscow on May 9. While some events were held on the Victory Day, COVID-19 caused parades to be postponed to a later date. ■ NYT

virus keeps getting in the way, with Mr. Putin struggling to solve Russia's biggest domestic crisis in decades even as he casts himself as a tough problem-solver who is in control of events.

Mr. Putin's approval rating has already slumped to a 20-year low of 59% amid public

would hold postponed festivities marking the 75th anniversary of the Soviet Union's victory over the Nazis in Second World War.

In Moscow, where the country's main parade is still on, city authorities are signaling they will try to arrange the event without the usual throngs of residents pushing up against barricades. "Yes, official events will take place," Mr. Sobyanin said, "but it's best you watch them on TV."

Typically celebrated on May 9, Victory Day is Russia's most revered holiday, and Mr. Putin has used his perch to cement his image as the commander in chief who rebuilt the country. This year, Victory Day was supposed to be especially grand, and it would have given him a platform to celebrate a constitu-

tional overhaul prolonging his ability to rule Russia by two six-year terms.

Referendum in July

Mr. Putin postponed the referendum to approve the constitutional changes to July 1 from April. The rescheduled parades, then, appeared timed to give Russians something to celebrate just before the referendum. But now the delayed Victory Day celebrations are emerging as a test of Mr. Putin's claim that Russia has overcome the worst of the COVID-19 pandemic. The result is a rare clash in tone between Mr. Putin and regional leaders.

"We decided not to risk people's health and, most importantly, the health of our dear veterans," Mikhail Vedernikov, Governor of

Pskov region in western Russia, posted on Instagram on Wednesday. It was too soon for the elderly to take part in public events, and holding the parade without veterans would "contradict the very spirit" of the holiday, he wrote. In Moscow, the parade is going ahead despite the concerns of Mr. Sobyanin, the Mayor, that the virus remains a risk in the dense capital of 13 million people.

Across Russia, at least two dozen cities are still expected to hold parades June 24. The 14,000 service members marching in Moscow are being tested three times a week for COVID-19, the Defense Ministry's official newspaper reported. At least 12 foreign leaders, mainly from former Soviet countries, will attend, said Sergei V. Lavrov, the Foreign Minister. NY TIMES



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Last Date: 28.06.2020

Adv. No.10/2020 (No.NIRDPR/Admin.A/45/2020/SIA-CICT/16)

Sd/- Assistant Registrar (E)

डॉक्टर हरीसिंह गौर विश्वविद्यालय, स

SNAPSHOTS



Vital volcanoes

Despite existence of bacteria, the levels of oxygen in Earth's atmosphere rose to a high only 2.4 billion years ago, known as the Great Oxidation Event. A study published in *Nature Communications* finds that understanding volcanic activity is key and that the mantle's evolution could possibly control that of life.



Baby dragons

Three rare aquatic creatures officially called proteus or olms, also known as baby dragons, are going on display in an aquarium at Slovenia's Postojna Cave. The olms have pale pink skin, no eyesight, a long thin body and four legs. They live only in the waters of dark caves of the southern European Karst region.



Protecting the Earth

Approximately half the Earth's ice-free land is without significant human influence, according to a study published in *Global Change Biology*. Among these are boreal forests, tundra and vast deserts. The study advocates that protecting these would be beneficial in climate change mitigation.

Hydroxychloroquine does not reduce mortality, RECOVERY trial finds

Participant enrolment to hydroxychloroquine arm was stopped with immediate effect

R. PRASAD

The RECOVERY trial, a large randomised controlled trial in the U.K. to test five drugs, including hydroxychloroquine, has found no clinical benefit from use of hydroxychloroquine in hospitalised patients with COVID-19. The trial investigators found that there was no significant benefit in mortality reduction in the intervention group, which was the primary objective.

The RECOVERY trial began in March. It is a dynamic trial assessing five candidate drugs and convalescent plasma therapy for treating COVID-19 in patients in U.K. hospitals. The trial has enrolled over 11,000 patients.

On June 4, following the retraction of *The Lancet* paper on use of hydroxychloroquine, the U.K. Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency wanted the independent Data Monitoring Committee of the RECOVERY trial to carry out an additional review. It also asked the investigators to look at the unblinded data in the hydroxychloroquine arm.

No beneficial effects
It then came to light that the drug did not have the desired beneficial effects. "We have concluded that there is no beneficial effect of hydroxychloroquine in patients hospitalised with COVID-19. We have therefore decided to stop enrolling participants to the hydroxychloroquine arm of the RECOVERY Trial with immediate effect," a June 5 press release says.

According to the release, a total of 1,542 patients were ran-



No benefit: There was no evidence of reduction in hospital stay duration. ■ AFP

domised to receive hydroxychloroquine for 10 days while 3,132 patients in the control arm received only standard care. The researchers found that there was "no significant difference in the primary endpoint of 28-day mortality". While mortality was 25.7% in the intervention group, the control group had 23.5% mortality, which is not statistically significant.

There was no evidence of beneficial effects in hospital stay duration and other endpoints, either.

Outcomes measured

The primary outcome tested was reduction in all-cause mortality within 28 days of randomisation. The secondary outcomes measured were to assess any reduction in duration of hospital stay and need for and duration of ventilator or ECMO within 28 days and up to six months after randomisation.

"These data convincingly rule out any meaningful mortality benefit of hydroxychloroquine in patients hospitalised with COVID-19," the release says. The researchers will soon make the results available.

"Hydroxychloroquine and chloroquine have received a lot of attention and have been used very widely to treat COVID patients despite the absence of any good evidence. The RECOVERY trial has shown that hydroxychloroquine is not an effective treatment in patients hospitalised with COVID-19," Peter Horby, Professor of Emerging Infectious Diseases and Global Health at the Nuffield Department of Medicine, the University of Oxford, and Chief Investigator for the trial, says in the release.

Huge speculation

Deputy Chief Investigator Martin Landray from the University of Oxford says: "There has been

huge speculation and uncertainty about the role of hydroxychloroquine as a treatment for COVID-19, but an absence of reliable information from large randomised trials. The preliminary results from the RECOVERY trial are quite clear – hydroxychloroquine does not reduce the risk of death among hospitalised patients with this new disease."

"The RECOVERY trial, in addition to the signals from other studies we have received so far, are enough to convince me to not offer hydroxychloroquine to hospitalised patients," Nahid Bhadelia, a physician at Boston Medical Center, told *Science*. Prof. Landray added to this, saying: "If you, your spouse, your mother gets admitted to hospital and is offered hydroxychloroquine, don't take it."

Post-exposure prophylaxis

Another trial found that hydroxychloroquine drug was not effective even as a post-exposure prophylaxis in asymptomatic participants who have had high-risk exposure with a confirmed COVID-19 case. Nearly 88% (719 of 821 participants) had such high-risk exposure. The results of the trial published in *The New England Journal of Medicine* found that the incidence of COVID-19 illness was not statistically significant in the group that received the drug compared with the control group. While 49 of 414 (11.8%) participants who received the drug developed illness, 58 of 407 (14.3%) participants who got the placebo fell ill. Side-effects were more in the intervention group but no serious adverse events were reported.



Indigenous: The sequences revealed evolution in India, with specific mutations that conferred viral fitness in the *Aedes* vector. ■ GETTY IMAGES

Persistent global transmission of chikungunya from India

A new Indian subcontinent sub-lineage emerges

ASWATHI PACHA

Studying the geographic distribution and evolution of the chikungunya virus over the period from 2005-2018, a team from ICMR-National Institute of Virology, Pune, has noted India as an endemic reservoir for the virus with persistent global transmissions from the country. The paper published recently in *Infection, Genetics and Evolution* adds that "dispersal of the strains from India was noted to neighbouring and distant countries" such as Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and China.

The team studied newly sequenced chikungunya viruses isolated during outbreaks that happened between 2014 and 2018. During these years, the virus showed activity in India, Karnataka, Maharashtra and New Delhi accounted for a majority of the cases.

Indian Ocean lineage

The whole-genome sequencing study revealed that the isolates belonged to the Indian subcontinent sub-lineage of the Indian Ocean lineage. The Indian Ocean lineage is a subgroup within the East Central South African genotype. It was responsible for the resurgence in the epidemic on La Reunion island and other neighbouring islands in the Indian Ocean and in the Indian sub-continent during 2004-2005. This study helped understand the overall evolution and epidemiology of the Indian Ocean lineage.

Analyses of about 207 whole genomes, including the eleven whole genomes of this study and 39 additional whole genomes from India,

showed two separate clusters of Indian Ocean islands sub-lineage and Indian subcontinent sub-lineage. It is already known that Kenya was the most likely ancestral location for both the sub-lineages, and the study further confirmed this.

Spread from clusters

Observations from the phylogeography study based on the genome sequences over the period from 2005 to 2018, showed persistent global transmissions from India. The strains from these clusters were noted to have spread to China, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, and Southeast Asian countries including Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore and Papua New Guinea beyond mid-2006. Transmissions to Yemen, China, Japan, Hong Kong, Pakistan, Australia, Bangladesh and Italy were also noted later on.

Further studies of the chikungunya sequences revealed indigenous evolution in India at least at three time points over the period 2005-2018, with specific mutations that conferred viral fitness in the *Aedes* vector species.

The authors add that there is a possibility of further diversification as this is an RNA virus and continues to acquire mutations. They add and that surveillance is a continuous process and that their laboratory continues to monitor the changes in the viral strains.

The authors write in the summary of the paper that sustainable efforts towards vector control might help in reducing the transmission of the chikungunya virus.

Scientists find ancient mammal 'stepping stone'

REUTERS

ral History Museum of Chile. It is the southernmost record of Gondwanatheria, a group of long-extinct early mammals that co-existed with dinosaurs.

Stepping stone species
Alexander Vargas, a researcher at the University of Chile, described the mammal as an evolutionary stepping stone between "egg-laying mammals, like the platypus ... and marsupial mammals."

Vargas said the beast was not a rodent but had evolved "rodent-like chewing teeth."

Gondwanatheria remains from the Cretaceous era are extremely rare, particularly in this part of southern South America, according to the Chilean Antarctic Institute.

The small mammal would have lived in southern Patagonia during the late Cretaceous era, alongside dinosaurs, crocodiles, turtles and birds, according to an article published in the bulletin of the Natu-

ral History Museum of Chile. It is the southernmost record of Gondwanatheria, a group of long-extinct early mammals that co-existed with dinosaurs.

Main commensals

The human gut microbiome has a huge number of beneficial bacteria, collectively called commensals, living in it.

Key among these are the bacteria of the *Bifidobacterium* genus. *Bifidobacterium adolescentis* and *B. longum* are found in adult human gut whereas *B. bifidum* are found in infant gut. More than 80 species of *Bifidobacterium*

are found in the human gut of which 36 strains comprising 20 species have been studied by the researchers through metabolic network modelling. *Bifidobacterium* is one of the largest genera among gut bacteria and its species are known to be early colonisers of the breastfed infant gut.

Metabolic differences

Little is known about the key metabolic differences between different strains of this genera and consequently their individual commercial uses.

This work has classified the studied strains of these bacteria into three groups.

Specifically, the researchers estimate the ability of the bacteria to produce short-chain fatty acids, which maintain the acidity level (pH) of the gut milieu. In the

studied strains of bacteria, the researchers find that acetate production is strain-specific, unlike the production of lactate.

"Knowing which bacteria can produce acetate and lactate under a variety of conditions is very helpful. It determines the power of these

bacteria to acidify the gut and make it harder for harmful bacteria to grow," says Karthik Raman in an email to *The Hindu*. Dr. Raman and Dr. N.T. Devika, the first author, are from the Bhupat and Jyoti Mehta School of Biosciences at IIT Madras, Chennai. The results of their study

have been published in the journal *Scientific Reports*.

The group also identified critical enzymes essential for the metabolism of some strains. "We [identify significant] reactions across these organisms, which are important for their survival – it would help if antibiotics do not mess with these reactions, as it would cause further insult to the gut. This knowledge, in the longer run, will be very useful to systematically design probiotic cocktails," explains Dr. Raman.

The group uses the technique of constraint-based modelling of the system. "This is like a model of cellular trafficking of molecules," says Dr. Raman. It amounts to estimating which are the reactions that lead to production of various molecules and

under what different conditions. "These conditions could arise out of different diets, and finally impact the gut microenvironment, and ultimately the growth and composition of the different bacterial species in the gut," he says.

Methodical approach

The study underlines the power of analysing metabolic capabilities to define the properties of the human gut microbiota and also can be leveraged for commercial purposes to produce probiotics. While in the last few years, there has been significant improvement in the composition of probiotics, their development is still predominantly by trial and error, and this study is a step towards a more methodical approach.

'No hard scientific evidence showing there are less virulent strains'

MEERA SRINIVASAN

SARS.
One reason for this is in the case of SARS, most of the transmission took place five or six days after the patient developed symptoms. But in the case of COVID-19, patients are transmitting immediately from the time they develop symptoms and even before.

The other big difference is that whereas with SARS most of the patients who got infected had symptoms, in the case of COVID-19, quite a number of patients who get infected have no symptoms at all.

Contact tracing and quarantine are very important to break the chain of transmission.

How can countries with large, dense populations, like you have in South Asia, where public health infrastructure is uneven, get ahead of the virus?

Yes, public infrastructure is crucial to carry out testing, contact tracing and quarantine. In the absence of these, the only tools you have are the lockdowns. Basically, in a lockdown, you bottle the vi-



Malik Peiris

clear diagnosis. [Then] patients with fever and cough or flu-like illness, which can be caused by many viruses [must be tested] – but COVID-19 also presents like that.

From your study of the viruses, do you see different strains of it that manifest in different intensities in patients?

It is an RNA virus, and these undergo mutations as they spread. With the mutations, if you sequence the virus genome, you can identify different patterns.

When the virus is spreading in one particular area – all the viruses are very closely related – they may acquire very characteristic mutations. Elsewhere, they may acquire other characteristic mutations.

These mutations can be used to try and trace who gave the virus to whom and also trace which part of the world it came from, because of these signatures. But it does not mean that these strain variations are related to any difference in severity.

There is no hard scientific evi-

dence showing there are highly virulent strains and less virulent strains.

The virus can be very mild in many people. In some, particularly older people who have underlying heart or lung diseases or diabetes, it can be severe. This is the typical pattern of the disease, and this hasn't changed, necessarily.

From your research on different viruses, what has COVID-19 shown us about our immune system and resilience? Is it telling us something we didn't know before?

To be honest, probably not. Many of us, who have been studying these epidemics for quite some time, were predicting we were going to get a very serious epidemic sooner or later.

If you look at the last 25 years – in 1997, we have had avian flu H5N1; in 2003, we had SARS; in 2009, we had the swine flu-H1N1 pandemic; in 2013, we had MERS in the Middle East; in 2014-15, we had Ebola and, in 2018, we had Zi-

ka.

Every two or three years we have had completely new epidemics. Until this time, we have managed to dodge the bullet. In the case of SARS, it was possible, with great global cooperation and aggressive diagnosis and public health measures to stop it, which was amazing. The 2009 pandemic just went like a bomb, but luckily, it was very mild. This is why many of us were saying that we can't keep on being lucky every time; sooner or later, one of these viruses is going to be nasty, and this is it.

I am afraid it is the lack of preparedness that has left the world vulnerable to this pandemic.

What specifically should have been done in your view?

When SARS emerged, it was a huge economic loss, and everybody was really concerned. But then, it was controlled. In 2003, many groups across the world, including ours in Hong Kong, were developing drugs and vaccines for SARS.

We developed them in test tubes and tested them in animal models, but then we needed to take the next step of human clinical trials, which is very expensive. By that time, SARS had been controlled. There was no more funding or interest to take these experimental vaccines further. It all stopped there. If we had taken those further, we would have at least known how to make a vaccine for this group of viruses. When COVID-19 came, it would have been just a matter of using the same strategy.

At the moment, we are starting from scratch. Until now, our model has been to rely on the pharmaceutical industry to make vaccines and drugs. How can a vaccine company whose motive is profit invest millions – it takes a huge amount of money to take a vaccine all the way to clinical trial and efficacy trial – when there is no certainty that this vaccine is going to be needed? This is the problem.

(The full interview can be found online at <https://bit.ly/MalikPeirisInterview>)



WHO, on the virus

What role do people without symptoms play in spreading COVID-19? What is the World Health Organization's assessment?

JACOB KOSHY

The story so far: On June 8, the technical lead of the World Health Organization (WHO), on the COVID-19 pandemic, said transmission by people without symptoms is "very rare". Following a firestorm of protests by health experts, WHO retracted the claim on Tuesday, calling it a "misunderstanding". WHO has been engaged in a series of controversial statements on the role of asymptomatics – those who have been infected with the virus but do not display symptoms – in spreading SARS-CoV-2.

What did the World Health Organization (WHO) say about the role of asymptomatics?

On Monday, June 8, at a virtual press conference, Dr. Maria van Kerkhove, WHO's technical lead on the COVID-19 pandemic, said in response to a question by a journalist, that current evidence seemed to suggest that many countries monitoring asymptomatic cases and their contacts were not finding enough evidence to suggest that they were actually transmitting the disease. She said, "It's very rare and much of that is not published in the literature... We are constantly looking at this data and we're trying to get more information from countries to truly answer this question. It still appears to be rare that an asymptomatic individual actually transmits onward... What we really want to be focused on is following [t]he symptomatic cases." These comments provoked opposition from infectious disease experts and doctors – primarily on social media – arguing that Dr. Kerkhove may have downplayed the significance of this mode of transmission. Even more significantly, a recommendation to "focus on asymptomatics" would mean ignoring infections by a category called "presymptomatics". These are people who carry the virus and are asymptomatic, but over time show few or mild symptoms. The next day Dr. Kerkhove appeared to backtrack. "I used the phrase 'very rare' and I think that it's a misunderstanding to state the asymptomatic

The current understanding of the disease is that people are most infectious when symptoms start to manifest. It is not clear if asymptomatics, who do not show symptoms, are much less likely to transmit the disease

Why do WHO's observations matter? Asymptomatics are those people who never show symptoms of the disease but test positive for the virus. WHO and infectious disease specialists assert that asymptomatic patients exist but it is not known how many there are and in what proportion. The current understanding of the disease is that people are most infectious when symptoms start to manifest, or are "presymptomatic".

It is not clear if asymptomatics are much less likely than presymptomatics and symptomatics to transmit the disease.

WHO's emphasis on symptomatics could imply that asymptomatics are "safe" and this undermines the widespread adoption of face masks and social distancing. WHO moved slow on the use of face masks and formally recommended it only after it was a widely accepted practice in several Asian countries. A potentially greater role of asymptomatics and presymptomatics means that isolating and quarantining ought to be more aggressive. However, when numbers are large, as in India, the vast majority are not likely to suffer from serious infection and the focus is on treating only the manifestly ill – as is now being followed in several States – and opening up restrictions on movement. This way, many experts say, it is more feasible to focus on symptomatics and their contacts.

Do genes have a role in determining the degree of sickness?

This is still an open question and researchers across the world are comparing the genes of those with the disease and trying to find correlations with the severity of illness. Being a novel coronavirus, by definition, a large population is susceptible and no natural immunity prevails anywhere. Genetic factors are known to play a role in severe malaria. Chronic health conditions such as diabetes and hypertension increase susceptibility to severe COVID-19 disease. A recent study, that is still being peer reviewed, associated severe respiratory failure to genes that determine blood type. Blood type A was found to be more susceptible to respiratory disease than O. There were also other genes found that influenced how the immune system responded to the virus. A lot of focus in collaborative human genome studies is on understanding the role of certain genes in the Human Leukocyte Antigen complex, which is an important part of the immune system. The virus, as it is now understood, is able to spread easily because of a mutation in its spike protein; this helps it to lodge itself better in the lung cells. It is the variation in the HLA cross populations that can reveal immune response. But there is no genetic link yet on why some people are asymptomatic.

Can a COVID-19 vaccine be developed soon?

Why is it taking time? What is the situation as far as vaccine candidates are concerned?

RAMYA KANNAN

The story so far: The great hope in the control of infectious diseases is always a vaccine. A vaccine could be a weakened biological or synthetic agent administered to humans that will protect them from contracting infectious diseases by supplying specific antibodies to neutralise the disease-causing pathogen, while not making a person actually sick from it. Vaccines have always sounded the bugle of relief from morbidity and mortality for societies. They have played an important role in the reduction of communicable diseases from the second half of the 20th century. In the last two decades with new infectious diseases emerging, particularly post the H1N1 influenza, global vaccine development activity has been rather frenetic. The COVID-19 pandemic has naturally seen renewed efforts at a rapid vaccine development, and multiple candidates are at various levels of processing and in the trial stages.

What are the concerns?

In their article, "SARS-CoV-2 Vaccines: Status Report" (<https://bit.ly/3d1RPg2>), in the open access journal, *Science Direct*, Fatima Amanat and Florian Krammer mark out the concerns in the development of a vaccine for this virus: "This time, we are facing a new challenge in the form of a virus that has just emerged in humans, and the response will be more complex because there are no existing vaccines or production processes for coronavirus vaccines."

The World Health Organization (WHO) site lists 10 vaccine candidates in clinical evaluation and 126 candidate vaccines in pre-clinical evaluation, as on June 9 (<https://bit.ly/37tdlcl>).

What is the process of vaccine development?

Vaccine technology has significantly evolved in the last decade, including the development of several RNA (ribonucleic acid) and DNA vaccine candidates, licensed vector-based vaccines, recombinant protein vaccines and cell-culture-based vaccines, Amanat and Krammer point out. However, despite the many advances, including using artificial intelligence to determine potential vaccine candidates, the core principles of ensuring safety and efficacy of the vaccine for use in humans remain unchanged. While technology might have quickened some of the processes, the trials for the vaccine need to stick by these principles that are time consuming for a reason.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) website, the general stages of the development cycle of a vaccine are: exploratory stage, pre-clinical stage, clinical development, regulatory review and approval, manufacturing and quality control. If vaccine candidates do make it to the third stage, clinical development is a three-phase process. It says: "During Phase I, small groups of people receive the trial vaccine. In Phase II, the clinical study is expanded and vaccine is given to people who have characteristics (such as age and physical health) similar to those for whom the new vaccine is intended. In Phase III, the vaccine is given to thousands of people and tested for efficacy and safety."

If a vaccine is approved by a licensing agency, then it can move into the manufacturing stage, but constant monitoring of the process and quality control measures must be put in place.



Vaccine production should comply with the current Good Manufacturing Practice standards to ensure constant quality and safety of vaccine.

What is the status of a SARS-CoV-2 vaccine?

To start with, the primary advantage with SARS-CoV-2 was that it was identified in record time, and its genomic sequence was made globally available by January. Amanat and Krammer say: "In addition, we know from studies on SARS-CoV-1 and the related MERS-CoV vaccines that the S protein on the surface of the virus is an ideal target for a vaccine... The structure of the S protein of SARS-CoV-2 was solved in record time at high resolution, contributing to our understanding of this vaccine target. Therefore, we have a target antigen that can be incorporated into advanced vaccine platforms."

Thanks to this, vaccine candidates are being generated. They further explain, "This is usually followed by two important steps that are typically needed before bringing a vaccine into clinical trials. First, the vaccine is tested in appropriate animal models to see whether it is protective. However, animal models for SARS-CoV-2 might be difficult to develop... Even in the absence of an animal model that replicates human disease, it is possible to evaluate the vaccine because serum from vaccinated animals can be tested in *in vitro* neutralisation assays... Second, vaccines need to be tested for toxicity in animals, e.g., in rabbits. Usually, viral challenge is not part of this process, because only the safety of the vaccine will be evaluated. This testing, which has to be performed in a manner compliant with GLP (Good Laboratory Practice), typically takes 3–6 months to complete."

The 10 candidates in clinical evaluation, as per WHO's list, are based on five platforms – non-replicating viral vector, RNA, inactivated, protein sub-unit, and DNA. The Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health in a paper, defined platform thus: "The process under which a vaccine is manufactured qualifies it as platform-based. If it has the capacity to form the basis of myriad other vaccines using some conserved structure, it can be classified as a platform. The spectrum of different

platforms ranges from viral vectored vaccines to nucleic acid vaccines."

Of these 10 candidates in clinical evaluation, the three that are in Phase 2 include Oxford University/AstraZeneca study (Phase 2b/3), the CanSino Biological Inc. and Beijing Institute of Biotechnology study, and the Moderna/National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases venture (in the U.S.). The other candidates are in the first phase and they include four trials in China – Wuhan Institute of Biological Products and Sinopharm, Beijing Institute of Biological Products and Sinopharm, Sinovac Research and Development, Institute of Medical Biology Chinese Academy of Medical Sciences – and two other American ones, Novavax, and BioNTech/Fosun Pharma/Pfizer.

In all, 126 candidate vaccines are in various stages of pre-clinical evaluation, including some in India. In mid-May, K. VijayRaghavan, Principal Scientific Adviser to the Union government, said there were nearly 30 'attempts' from India to develop vaccines. The leading attempts among them are: the Pune-based Serum Institute of India tie-up with Oxford University operating with a weakened adenovirus; the Indian Council of Medical Research's collaboration with the Hyderabad-based Bharat Biotech to develop a vaccine based on a SARS-CoV-2 strain isolated at the National Institute of Virology, Pune. Bharat Biotech is also involved in two other vaccine development projects with different groups, according to officials. On WHO's list is also a pre-clinical evaluation effort by the Hyderabad-based Indian Immunologicals Ltd. Except for the Oxford University trial, all others are in the pre-clinical stage.

The New York Times, meanwhile, has an updated status report on vaccines, as of June 12: 125-plus are in the pre-clinical stage (not yet in human trial phase), seven in the first phase (vaccines testing safety and dosage), another seven in the second phase (vaccines in expanded safety trials) and two in phase three trials (vaccines in large-scale efficacy tests). Some coronavirus vaccines are now in phase I/II trials, for example, in which they are tested for the first time on hundreds of people.

What about current projections and what happens next?

The development of vaccines for human use takes years normally. Many additional steps are needed before these vaccine candidates that have shown promise can be used in the population, and this process might take months, if not years, indicate Amanat and Krammer. "Because no coronavirus vaccines are on the market and no large-scale manufacturing capacity for these vaccines exists as yet, we will need to build these processes and capacities. Doing this for the first time can be tedious and time-consuming."

Experts say some of the other concerns for the development of an effective vaccine are the prospect of the virus mutating, and a waning of the antibody response. It is known that infection with human coronaviruses does not always produce long-lived antibody responses, and re-infection, likely to be mild [symptoms] in a fraction of individuals, is possible after an extended period of time, the *Science Direct* article points out.

It further adds that any effective vaccine must overcome all these issues in order to ensure protection against a virus that seems to have taken the world by surprise. However, current projections indicate that the virus is likely to become endemic and cause recurrent seasonal epidemics. In such a scenario, a vaccine will be the most effective tool to battle a virus the world is yet to fully understand.

What must schools do before reopening?

How soon can children return to their classes? What are the risks involved?

PRISCILLA JEBARAJ

The story so far: Schools in India have been shut since the first 21-day national lockdown from March 25, some from a week or two earlier, due to the novel coronavirus pandemic. With the number of COVID-19 cases spiking this week, there is a growing clamour to protect children from going to examination centres and keep them away from school for some time longer. Many schools are offering online classes, but that has its own perils.

What are India's schoolchildren doing now?

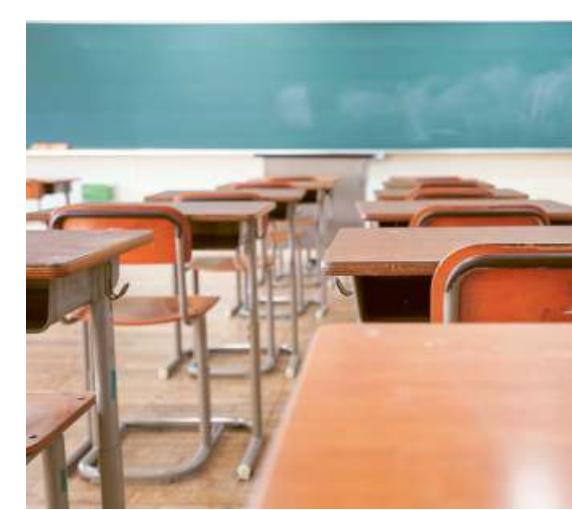
There are an estimated 25 crore schoolchildren in 15 lakh Indian schools (from the Unified District Information System for Education, or UDISE, 2018-19), who have all been at home since classes stopped across the country from March 16. Their current educational situation varies wildly, depending on age, location and socio-economic status. The Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) has largely left the decision on how to proceed to its affiliate schools, but has promised a syllabus reduction.

For the 33% of students in private schools, classes have gone online with teachers attempting to maintain a regular schedule. For others, the Centre has brought out an educational calendar with lesson plans and learning activities, and is also bearing classes through dedicated television channels in multiple languages, especially for older children. Teachers in government schools in Delhi are giving out assignments via WhatsApp, while Class 10 students in corporation schools in Chennai were to have got an Android phone so that classes can continue. However, given that this kind of distance education requires digital access and/or self-motivation and parental involvement, the vast majority of children in government schools have spent the last three months on an extended summer holiday.

When will schools reopen?

No one knows when schools can reopen. Human Resource Development (HRD) Minister Ramesh Pokhrayan 'Nishank' has said that physical reopening of schools will not take place till August 15, although some States such as Haryana have suggested a July reopening date. The Centre will announce the earliest possible date for reopening after consultation between the HRD, Health and Home Ministries, but the final call will be left to State governments. For those in containment zones, the wait may be longer, leading to worries about unequal educational opportunities among the same age cohort.

A growing number of parents, Right to Education activists and the Delhi government teachers' association are calling for 2020-21 to be treated as a "zero academic year", with no pressure to set a reopening date at all. "Zero year" means teaching and learning will happen to the extent possible, but there will not be grading or exams or promotion to the next class. An online poll by Local Circles found that 37% of parents want to send their child to school only 21 days after there are no new cases



in their districts, while another 36% say it should be three weeks after no new cases in the State or country. In fact, 13% do not want schools to restart until a vaccine is developed.

Apart from governments and parents, teachers and schools are also important stakeholders in this decision. It was the Tamil Nadu High and Higher Secondary School Graduate Teachers Association that successfully filed a court case against holding Class 10 board examinations in the State. Its president S. Bakthavatchalam pointed out that apart from the impossibility of teaching classes online in government schools, older teachers, especially those with comorbidities are also at risk from young students who cannot be expected to follow social distancing norms.

With some State governments announcing that fees cannot be collected for online classes, some private schools are divided between the need for income to pay teachers' salaries and the difficulty of ensuring they do not become infection hotspots. Experts point out that countries such as France and Israel saw cases shooting up when they tried to reopen schools.

What is the health protocol that needs to be in place before schools reopen?

The Centre is expected to release guidelines on this issue next week. HRD officials say some likely steps include temperature screening at the entrance to schools and classrooms, monitoring to ensure mask or shield-wearing and social distancing, sanitisation routines to clean all

furniture and facilities, isolation and hospitalisation protocols for infected students and staff, as well as plans for staggered attendance and blended learning to limit the number of students on the premises on any given day.

Public Health Foundation of India president K. Sripathi Reddy says that children are at more risk for clinical symptoms than earlier understood, and have been seen to develop a paediatric multi-system inflammatory condition associated with COVID-19, although they usually recover. The bigger danger is that because social distancing may be difficult for children, they will act as transmission agents to staff and older adults back home.

Dr. Reddy has also raised the issue of mental health risks from COVID-19 stress, due to economic or medical crises at home, or the psychological impact of increased isolation and treating everyone as a potential threat.

Is online education a viable alternative?

The Centre is preparing guidelines on digital education, including cybersafety. It is likely to include limiting the number of hours a child is online, with a one to three hour cap on synchronous interaction. Currently, some schools are trying to maintain a seven-hour teaching schedule, which creates stress and distraction.

Educational apps are largely in English, although multilingual apps are being developed.

Equity and access are the bigger problems with online education in India, says Minati Panda, a professor at JNU's Zakir Husain Centre for Educational Studies. Only 11% of Indian households have a computer. Although smartphone penetration is higher, only 24% have Internet facilities, which drops to 15% in rural areas, according to the latest National Sample Survey. A single device in a household cannot help multiple children, while poor students in an economically weaker section (EWS) quota in a privileged school may be the worst hit. If a government or school wants to run an online education programme, it must ensure equal access to all participants, says Dr. Panda.

How can evaluation be done?

This is the immediate battle, given that several boards, including the CBSE, are yet to conclude examinations from the previous 2019-20 academic year. The Board has exponentially increased the number of examination centres to 13,000 and is developing screening protocols, but the question of whether Class 12 examinations can be safely conducted in the first two weeks of July is currently in the Supreme Court. Children's health is more important than any academic advancement, says Ishwar Achanta who went to court to prevent his son from having to write an examination.

Schools are experimenting with multiple choice tests and uploaded answers for at-home evaluation options. If a zero academic year is considered, conceptual teaching and learning may continue through varied modes through the year, but without the pressure of evaluation and grading.



LAC

India-China: the line of actual contest

The long border between the two Asian countries has neither been delineated nor demarcated

ANANTH KRISHNAN

The ongoing military standoffs with China at multiple points along the India-China border has turned the spotlight to the single most important element that has helped keep the peace across the Himalayas: the Line of Actual Control (LAC). Yet, what exactly the LAC is remains a source of much confusion.

One possible reason for the confusion is that in the public imagination, it is sometimes spoken of in the same breath with that other contested three-letter abbreviation that is often in the news: the Line of Control (LoC) that separates India and Pakistan. They are different in one crucial way. With Pakistan, India has an international boundary, which has been agreed upon, and the LoC, which has been delineated on a map by both sides. In contrast, the alignment of the LAC has never been agreed upon, and it is has neither been delineated nor demarcated. There is no official map in the public domain that depicts the LAC. It can best be thought of as an idea, reflecting the territories that are, at present, under the control of each side, pending a resolution of the boundary dispute. In a strange irony, if the LAC is far less clear than the LoC, it has remained much more peaceful, with not a shot fired since 1975 at Tulung La.

Where does the LAC run? For the most part, in the western sector, it broadly corresponds with the border as China sees it. There are differences in several points here, including at the very start of the LAC, which India



reportedly pegs northwest of the Karakoram Pass, but China further south. In the eastern sector, it broadly corresponds with the border as India sees it, along the McMahon Line that separates Arunachal Pradesh from Tibet. In the middle sector and Sikkim, the LAC is broadly aligned with the borders as India and China see it, with minor differences here.

Following the Tulung La incident, Delhi's China Study

The LAC can best be thought of as an idea, reflecting the territories that are, at present, under the control of each side, pending a resolution of the boundary dispute

Group set patrolling limits that India would stick to, in order to assert its LAC alignment – limits that are still being followed today. The problem is India and China do not agree on the alignment of the LAC everywhere. Differences in perception, partic-

ularly in 13 spots in the western, middle and eastern sectors of the border, often lead to what are called "face offs", when patrols encounter each other in these grey zones that lie in between the different alignments. Some of these areas are Chumar, Demchok and the north bank of the Pangong lake in the western sector, Barahoti in the middle sector, and Sumdorong Chu in the east. Both sides agreed to protocols in 2005 and 2013 that describe the rules of engagement to handle such situations, but as the current stand-off at Pangong Tso reminds us, they haven't always been followed. At Pangong Tso, India's LAC runs at Finger 8, and China's at Finger 4. The "fingers" from 1 to 8 refer to mountain spurs that run from west to east on the lake's northern bank. Currently, Chinese troops have erected tents in the Finger 4 area and are preventing India from reaching its LAC at Finger 8, leading to a stand-off.

Genesis
In a November 7, 1959 letter to Jawaharlal Nehru, then Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai

suggested the armed forces of both sides withdraw 20 km, as he put it, "from the so-called McMahon Line in the east, and from the line up to which each side exercises actual control in the west". Yet where exactly each side believed it exercised control was a matter of debate, complicated by the fact that China's alignments kept changing. The "LAC" is referred to in 1960 and 1962 wasn't the same as 1959. When India and China signed the landmark Border Peace and Transparency Agreement (BPTA) in 1993, the first legal agreement that recognised the LAC, they avoided this problem by referring to the LAC at the time, and not the LAC of 1959, 1960 or 1962, all of which had different meanings.

It isn't widely known that many of the ideas in the BPTA had, in part, a Russian genesis. Following Rajiv Gandhi's 1988 visit to China, both sides were optimistic of pushing ahead on talks on the boundary. In this time, they were exploring regimes to maintain peace and tranquility, and looked at, among others, the ongoing China-Russia boundary negotiations. "It was not that we came to some Nirvana moment," recalls Nirupama Rao, a former Foreign Secretary and Ambassador to China who had, in 1991, engaged with the Russians on this question as the then Joint Secretary (East Asia) in the Ministry of External Affairs. "For instance, the concept of mutual and equal security, which we included in the agreement, was a Russian term. This was a borrowed idea, like Eve being born from the rib of Adam."

No other basis besides the LAC suggested itself, writes former National Security Adviser Shivshankar Menon in his book *Choices*. "The status quo was the LAC, irrespective of what had been said about it in the past. The reference to the LAC would be unqualified, making it clear that it was the LAC at the time the agreement was signed that would be respected, and not some notional idea of where it was in 1959 or 1962." As Mr. Menon writes, this unqualified reference to the LAC created "the unintended side effect of

further incentivising the forward creep to the line by both militaries", a consequence that both sides are currently dealing with at multiple points on the LAC.

Clarification

Both the 1993 BPTA agreement and the subsequent agreement on confidence-building measures in 1996 acknowledged that both sides would ultimately clarify the LAC. That process has, however, stalled since 2002, when China walked away from exchanging maps in the western sector. During a 2015 visit to China, Prime Minister Narendra Modi made a pitch to revive the process, saying in a speech in Tsinghua University that "a shadow of uncertainty always hangs over the sensitive because neither side knows where the LAC is in these areas," he said. China rebuffed his request.

Ms. Rao, the former Foreign Secretary, said that it

In Focus

- In the western sector, the LAC broadly corresponds with the border as China sees it
- In the east, it broadly corresponds with the border as India sees it, along the McMahon Line
- In the middle, it is broadly aligned with the borders as both countries see it

wasn't a surprise, and China had, in several territorial disputes, intentionally left its claims ambiguous. "The Chinese are masters at it. They don't stick to positions, and their actions on the ground constantly defy things they have done in the past. The Chinese line has kept shifting. There is always scope for redrawing, and we have never had the chance to look at their maps."

The current stand-offs, Ms. Rao said, have underlined the challenge India faces on its borders.

"If a problem has lasted so long, and there is no settlement in sight, we may need another generation or two to settle it. The only answer for us is to be prepared, continue to build our roads and improve our infrastructure, keep ourselves ready to deal with these contingencies, and play the game in a way that safeguards our interests." The contest across the line isn't going anywhere.



SHOPIAN

The battleground district

The famous apple bowl of Kashmir has turned into a hotspot of militancy

PEERZADA ASHIQ

Once known for its golden apples, pears and tall mountains, Shopian, the extreme southern district of the Kashmir Valley, is now in news mostly over militancy. Of around 116 militants killed in Jammu and Kashmir so far this year, 28 (24%) were killed in encounters in Shopian, including the district 'commander' of the Hizbul Mujahideen. Between June 7 and 10, 14 militants were killed in three separate encounters in the sector.

Spread over 412.9 sq. km and with a population of 2,66,000, Shopian is around 61 km away from Srinagar. Its boundary has a series of sky-scraping peaks of mountains of the Pir Panjal Range. These not-so-easily accessible mountainous ranges and dense forests have been providing shelter to local militants, turning this idyllic location into a hotspot of militancy in the Valley.

In recent times, many top militants had camped in the region, including Riyaz Naikoo, the operations 'commander' of Hizbul. Naikoo, who hailed from Pulwama, used to appear at the funerals of slain militants and fire a volley of bullets into the air to galvanise youth support to militancy. He was killed in Pulwama on May 6.

Last month, a local militant, identified by the police as Hidayatullah Malik from Shopian's Sharatpora area, had provided his car with



the intent to carry out a Pulwama-style attack in south Kashmir. However, Malik's car, which was filled with 40 to 45 kg of explosives, was timely tracked by the security agencies and the explosives were detonated. "Most of the commanders active in the area have been killed this year," said Vijay Kumar, Inspector General of Police, Kashmir.

Active militants
According to the police records, Shopian still has 27 active militants – Hizbul tops the list with 12, Jaish-e-Muhammad with seven, followed by the Lashkar-e-Taiba with six and Ansar Ghazwatul Hind with two.

Security agencies have been able to maintain an upper hand in Shopian, which has otherwise a tendency to go adrift due to frequent upheavals. In January 2009, when two women were found raped and dead, with fingers of suspicion pointing towards the security forces,

the region witnessed major protests. It resulted in a curfew-like situation for over 40 days and scores of youth died in clashes.

Long before Naikoo and another militant 'commander' Saddam Padder (who was killed in May 2018), a close associate of slain Hizbul commander Burhan Wani, became familiar with Shopian, the district was known as the apple bowl of Kashmir.

Shopian produced 2,72,000 tonnes of apples in 2018-19, the second highest among the 10 districts in Kashmir Valley after Kupwara. Around 21,669 hectares of land is used for apple cultivation, almost 70.5% of the total area.

Shopian has a distinction of harvesting apples till late November-December due to its different weather cycles – summer starts late but winter sets in fast.

The ancient imperial road commonly known as Mughal Road, puts the dis-

trict geographically on an important juncture. Mughals used Shopian to reach the Valley in summers. Its famed apple and accessibility to the plains of Poonch in the Jammu division made Shopian one of six Wazarat (district) headquarters in Kashmir between 1872 and 1892.

Jamaat bastion
Jamaat-e-Islami (JeI), which was floated in 1942 and drew its inspiration from Islamic theologian Abul Ala Maududi, has also built considerable influence in Shopian.

Saaduddin Tarbali, who became the first amir (head) of the JeI, imparted the Jamaat ideology in Shopian. The organisation held sway in Shopian, with its well-read cadre starting schools and welfare programmes across the district. The organisation was banned in February 2019 for a five-year period under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, second time since the militancy broke out in 1990s.

Militancy is not the only development that makes news in Shopian. The 2018 urban local bodies elections changed the political make-up of the district. The BJP fielded 13 candidates in 13 wards out of 17 and won unopposed. Of the 13 winning candidates, 11 were Kashmiri Pandits, who migrated in the face of militancy in the 1990s. Many of them have returned to serve people on many fronts.

JOE BIDEN

The journey to Washington

The former VP wins Democratic nomination at a crucial time for the U.S.

SRIRAM LAKSHMAN

Champ, the measure of a man is not how often he is knocked down, but how quickly he gets up. Joe Biden, the presumptive Democratic nominee for the White House, would repeat these words of his father, perhaps suitable for his own life of tragedies and triumphs. There will be more in store for Mr. Biden, as he and the incumbent, U.S. President, Donald Trump, battle it out at the polls this November.

Born into an Irish Catholic family in Scranton, Pennsylvania, in 1942, Mr. Biden moved to Delaware at the age of 11, as his father was in search of a stable job. Joe, the oldest of four siblings, struggled with a severe stutter and successfully overcame it and then going on to train as a lawyer. He worked at a law firm, before running for the U.S. Senate from Delaware.

In 1972, Mr. Biden's wife, Neilia and baby daughter Naomi, died in a car accident – his sons Beau and Hunter survived. Mr. Biden had just won one of the Delaware seats to the U.S. Senate. Eventually he would remarry and have a third child. Mr. Biden would remain a Senator until becoming Barack Obama's Vice-President in 2009. Tragedy struck him again in 2015, when Beau Biden died of brain cancer.

As someone who spent decades on Capitol Hill, Mr. Biden, unsurprisingly, has a

long track record which has won both praise and criticism. His long career has also meant shifts, over time, on positions. Mr. Biden has pitched himself as someone who can build consensus in Washington, and some of his legislative actions, he has explained as attempts to build compromise with Republicans.

Controversial votes
Other votes have been harder for Mr. Biden to defend. During the primary season, Mr. Biden was criticised for various votes, including his support in October 2002 for legislation authorising the President to use force in Iraq, or his opposition to court-mandated busing of students to desegregate schools.

In April 2019, the Biden campaign announced that the former Vice-President had reached out to Anita Hill, who had accused Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas of sexual ha-

rassment. Mr. Biden had expressed regret for how he handled Ms. Hill's accusations and her part in the process, when he was Chair of the Senate Judiciary Committee during the Thomas confirmation hearings in 1991. Also in 2019, there were allegations by women that Mr. Biden had made inappropriate physical contact with them. He reacted by saying that politics to him had always been about making connections but he would be more mindful in the future about personal space.

Then came Tara Reade, a woman from Nevada who briefly worked as a staff assistant in Mr. Biden's Senate office in the 1990s. Ms. Reade told a Nevada paper last year that Mr. Biden had touched her inappropriately when she worked at his office. This year, she said Mr. Biden had sexually assaulted her – a charge Mr. Biden has unequivocally denied.

Earlier this month, Mr. Bi-

den had won 1,991 delegates and has, all but formally, won the Democratic nomination contest. In order to mobilise maximum support for an agenda from moderate and progressive Democratic voters, the teams of Mr. Biden and Senator Bernie Sanders announced "unity" task forces to reach common ground on a range of policy areas – from climate to criminal justice reform. The two candidates differed significantly on several policy fronts – including healthcare and student debt.

Foreign policy

In terms of foreign policy, Mr. Biden has talked about restoring America's moral leadership. He has said he will bring the U.S. back into the Paris Climate Agreement and renew America's commitment to NATO. On China, Mr. Biden has proposed that the U.S. and its allies "get tough" while cooperating in areas such as health, climate change and so forth. He wants the "vast majority" of troops in Afghanistan and West Asia pulled out and an end to U.S. support for the Saudi-led war in Yemen.

Mr. Biden has consistently come out ahead of Mr. Trump in recent polls. With a raging pandemic, high levels of unemployment and widespread anger at the killing of George Floyd, Mr. Biden, if he wins the Presidency, will find himself occupying a crucial position in a world of chaos.

Haaland heads in Dortmund's winner

Ten-man Levante holds Valencia; Getafe blows first-half lead to lose against Granada

EURO LEAGUES

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Erling Braut Haaland came off the bench to score a 95th-minute winner for Borussia Dortmund in its 1-0 win at Fortuna Dusseldorf on Saturday that keeps Bayern Munich waiting for an eighth straight Bundesliga title.

Dortmund was heading towards a frustrating draw at relegation-threatened Fortuna when Haaland headed home Manuel Akanji's cross seconds from time to score his 11th goal in 12 league games.

Wait for Bayern

Hansi Flick's Bayern will have to wait until at least mid-week, when it faces Werder Bremen away, for its next chance to be crowned champion.

Ten-man Levante scored a



Rising high: Erling Braut Haaland's 11th goal in 12 league appearances gave Dortmund victory over Dusseldorf. • AFP

98th-minute penalty on Friday to snatch a 1-1 draw against Valencia as LaLiga completed its second day of fixtures since its return from

the coronavirus suspension. It was a miserable night for top-four hopefuls as Granada also came from behind to beat Getafe 2-1.

Valencia looked to have grabbed a later winner when Rodrigo Moreno diverted in at the near post in the 89th minute.

But Mouctar Diakhaby pulled down Ruben Vezo deep into injury-time and Gonzalo Melero made no mistake, equalising for Levante from the spot.

The results: Bundesliga: Wolfsburg 2 (Weighorff 14, 27-pen) drew with Freiburg 2 (Hoelter 43, Sallai 46); Fortuna Dusseldorf 0 lost to Borussia Dortmund 1 (Haaland 90+5); Hertha Berlin 1 (Piatek 24) lost to Eintracht Frankfurt 4 (Dost 51, Silva 62, 86, Nidicka 69); Cologne 1 (Cordoba 90+2) lost to Union Berlin 2 (Friedrich 39, Gentner 67); Paderborn 1 (Sabiri 66) lost to Werder Bremen 5 (Klaassen 20, 39, Osako 34, Eggestein 60, Fuellkrug 90).

LaLiga: Espanyol 2 (Bernardo 8, 45+3, Wu Lei 47) bt Alaves 0.

Friday: Bundesliga: Hoffenheim 0 lost to RB Leipzig 2 (Olmo 9, 11).

Friday: LaLiga: Granada 2 (Djene 70-og, Fernandez 79) bt Getafe 1 (Timor 20); Valencia 1 (Rodrigo 89) drew with Levante 1 (Metello 90+8-pen).

Vasant Raiji passes away at 100

Was oldest surviving Indian First Class cricketer

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

MUMBAI



Date to remember: Sachin Tendulkar and Steve Waugh with Vasant Raiji at his residence on his 100th birthday. • PTI

India's first home Test against Douglas Jardine's England at Bombay Gymkhana in 1933.

Nari Contractor, Sachin Tendulkar and Steve Waugh were among those who had personally wished him on his 100th birthday.

A Cricket Club of India player, he represented Bombay and Baroda. A right-handed batsman, Raiji played nine First Class games in the 1940s and scored 277 runs. Raiji made his first appearance for Bombay in 1941 under Vijay Merchant, against Western Provinces, at Nagpur.

His fascination for cricket began as a 13-year-old, watching Lala Amarnath notch up a debut century in

passion for playing and watching cricket was endearing. His passing away saddens my heart."

The cricketer-historian was also a founding member of Jolly Cricket Club in Mumbai.

He also took the lead in setting up CCI's Legends Club during the tenure of Raj Singh Dungarpur as president.

Tendulkar tweeted: I met Shri Vasant Raiji earlier this year to celebrate his 100th birthday. His warmth and

kindness will be missed.

holes.

After a bogey at 18, Varner closed with a flourish that started with a 31-foot birdie putt at the par-three fourth.

He made three more in a row, the last a 20-footer at seven, and closed with a 10-foot birdie putt at the ninth.

McIlroy opened at the 10th hole and birdied three times on the back side before sinking a 23-foot eagle putt at the par-five first hole and following with a 10-foot birdie putt at the second.

Back-to-back birdies at the sixth and seventh put McIlroy one stroke off the course record but a losing bogey dropped him two off Varner's pace.

Leading scores: 129 - Harold Varner (63, 66); 130 - Jordan Spieth (65, 65); Bryson DeChambeau (65, 65); 131 - Xander Schauffele (65, 66); Collin Morikawa (64, 67); Rory McIlroy (68, 63); 132 - Justin Thomas (64, 68), Daniel Berger (65, 67), Justin Rose (63, 69), Gary Woodland (65, 67), Brandon Grace (66, 66).

Varner leads as McIlroy charges in

Spieth and DeChambeau are tied second, one stroke behind

GOLF

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

FORT WORTH



Making amends: After a 68 in the first round Rory McIlroy fired a 63 in the second for a shared third spot. • AFP

Varner overcame a triple-bogey start to maintain the lead at the halfway stage of the Charles Schwab Challenge on Friday as the hard-charging Rory McIlroy and Jordan Spieth appear poised to strike.

Varner fired a four-under-par 66 at Colonial Country Club to reach 11-under 129 after 36 holes.

Jordan Spieth and Bryson DeChambeau are tied for second, one stroke back after a second consecutive 65s, while McIlroy fired a 63 to join Collin Morikawa and Xander Schauffele sharing third on 131.

This week's Charles Schwab Challenge is full of firsts, the biggest change being the absence of spectators.

"When that first birdie

putt went in and I didn't get a clapping... my hand was trying to go up to wave to someone in the gallery, but there's obviously no one there," McIlroy said later.

After an opening 63 for the first-day lead, Varner took a seven at the par-four

10th hole to begin his second round, soaring off the tee and finding a bunker and rough before reaching the green.

Varner bounced back with

birdies from four feet at 11

and 10 feet at the par-three

12th and par-three 16th

The Singh sisters and their inspirational journey

All five have successfully combined education and sports

KAMESH SRINIVASAN

NEW DELHI



Famous five: Priyanka, Divya, Prashanti, Akanksha and Pratima present a happy picture. • SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Without much of a sporting background, the Singh sisters - Priyanka, Divya, Prashanti, Akanksha and Pratima - who hail from Varanasi have made basketball popular with their achievements.

And the five talked about their remarkable success in combining education and sports through a webinar put together as part of the Sports Ministry's physical education drive.

"We all followed Priyanka and Divya to play basketball," said Prashanti, a former captain of the national team and recipient of the Arjuna and Padma Shri awards. "Our dad let us play, but only on the promise that we would get good grades in school."

Multiple degrees

Quite remarkably, all of them are post graduates, and Pratima, who is married to cricketer Ishant Sharma, is pursuing Ph.D. after having completed M. Phil. and topping the NIS coaching course.

Except the eldest Priyanka, the rest have represented India with distinction, competing in the Commonwealth and Asian Games, and the Asian Championships.

"If you have speed, good jump, quickness and agility, you can equalise for the lack of height in basketball," said Akanksha on how she was able to overcome a perceived physical drawback for hoopsters and became an indispensable part of the Indian team for more than a decade.

and sports management, is working as a coach with SAI.

Priyanka said that schools in Korea had separate physical education and athletic departments, to nurture the talent in the best possible way.

Praise for guru

"We started because of interest in sports. It became a habit, then it has become a lifestyle," added Priyanka.

All five praised their guru Amarjeet Singh, who coached and gave them a solid foundation.

"Success comes only after challenges. Without our physical education teachers, we wouldn't have known our potential," said Prashanti.

"I don't accept that players cannot get good marks. They are very sharp and can understand in five minutes what regular students may take an hour for. Don't be lethargic. Devote time for studies," said Pratima.

"Even if you are the best player, without education you don't have the confidence," said Divya, who after many stints of coaching

'Will be happy even if I play one Test'

IANS

NEW DELHI

Young leg-spinner Yuzvendra Chahal believes batsmen have more variations to deal with when he plays alongside Kuldeep Yadav for the Men in Blue.

Statistics show that when Chahal and Kuldeep play together, their numbers are excellent, and so is India's win percentage.

More variations

"We are both wrist spinners and have been bowling together since our younger days. When we play together, the batsmen have more variations to deal with."

"If I bowl a couple of good overs, something good will happen at Kuldeep's end," Chahal said in the latest episode of ESPNcricinfo 'One on One' show.

Chahal has so far played 52 ODIs and 42 T20Is in which he has scalped 91 and 55 wickets respectively in the two formats.

Although Chahal is known as white-ball specialist, he aspires to play Test cricket. "If I get a chance to play even one Test for India, or even if I am picked in the Test squad, I will be very happy. That is a very different feeling."

Pujara, Jadeja and Smriti among five players to get NADA notice

Failing to disclose their whereabouts draws action

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI



Smriti Mandhana. • FILE PHOTO: G.P.SAMPATH KUMAR

Five centrally contracted Indian cricketers including Cheteshwar Pujara, Ravindra Jadeja and K.L. Rahul have been issued notices by National Anti-Doping Agency (NADA) for failing to disclose their whereabouts as the BCCI cited "password glitch" as the reason for delay.

The other players to have received the notice include women stars Smriti Mandhana and Deepti Sharma, who are among the five cricketers in the 110-strong National Registered Testing Pool

whereabouts. "Well they have given an explanation which appears to be reasonable but a decision will be taken.

"They have said that there has been a glitch with regards to password in ADAMS. Now they have said that issue has been resolved," Agarwal added.

NADA DG added that "BCCI's explanation will be discussed as to whether it will be counted as one of three filing failures or not.

"It will be decided on the explanation given and how they (BCCI) proceed from here."

Harikrishna in second spot

SPORTS BUREAU

SHARJAH

P. Harikrishna was in the joint second position at the end of the opening day at the Sharjah World Stars online chess tournament. He scored four points from five rounds to share the second spot along with Rustam Kasimdzhanov of Uzbekistan.

Top seed Shakhiyar Mamedyarov of Azerbaijan was leading the tournament with four points. Harikrishna's only defeat came against him.

The standings: 1. Shakhiyar Mamedyarov (Aze) 4; 2-3. P. Harikrishna (Ind) & Rustam Kasimdzhanov (Uzb) 3; 4. Saleh (UAE) 2.5; 5. Radoslaw Wojtaszek (Pol) 2; 6. Bassem Amin (Egy) 0.5.

Competition should be fair, says Ishant

'Most important thing will be avoiding the use of saliva'

IANS

NEW DELHI



Ishant Sharma. • FILE PHOTO

"I feel that the most important thing will be avoiding the use of saliva on the ball and refraining from shining the ball."

"We will have to take special precautions for this as we are used to shining the ball, especially the red cherries," Ishant said on Star Sports show Cricket Connected.

New rules

According to new ICC rules, players will not be permitted to use saliva to shine the ball and if a player does apply saliva to the ball, the umpires will manage the situation with some leniency during an initial period of adjustment for the players.

But subsequent instances will result in the team receiving a warning.

A team can be issued up to two warnings per innings but repeated use of saliva on the ball will result in a five-run penalty to the batting side.

"If we don't shine the red ball, it doesn't swing. And if it doesn't swing then it becomes really easy

to bowl," said Ishant. "The batsman

will be able to manage the ball and it will be easier for the bowler to bowl the ball," he added.

"It is a good rule," said Ishant.

"It is a good rule," said Ishant.</