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NEARBY



More passengers leave than arrive in Mumbai

MUMBAI
Sixty-three days since the last domestic flight took off from the city, Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport on Monday operated 47 flights, with more people flying out of the city than landing into it. Several flyers were troubled by flight schedule changes and cancellations, apart from transport woes.

REGION ▶ PAGE 2

Jumbo NSCI Dome facility set to turn into hospital

MUMBAI
From a diamond merchant gasping for breath, cancer patients from Tata Memorial Hospital with compromised immunity, and policemen with co-morbidities to convicts from Arthur Road jail, the city's first jumbo isolation facility at National Sports Club of India's Dome in Worli has admitted 1,000 COVID-19 patients since it opened on March 21. This week, the isolation facility is all set to start a 40-bed intensive care unit that will transition it into a full-fledged makeshift COVID-19 hospital.

REGION ▶ PAGE 3

Air travel resumes but many seats on 532 flights go empty

39,000 passengers ferried; last-minute cancellations leave many frustrated

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Airlines ferried more than 39,000 passengers on 532 flights on Monday as domestic air travel was resumed after two months. But a large number of passengers were left stranded as airlines were forced to cancel half the flights just hours before take-off due to poor co-ordination between the Centre and the States.

Late on Sunday, airlines were told to curtail their operations after Maharashtra, Telangana and Tamil Nadu, with some of the busiest airports in the country – Mumbai, Hyderabad and Chennai – restricted the number of flights that could be operated. Others like West Bengal and Andhra Pradesh postponed the re-opening of their airports until May 28 and May 26, respectively.

"From no domestic passenger flights yesterday to 532 flights & 39,231 passengers today, action has returned to Indian skies. With Andhra Pradesh set to resume operations from tomorrow



Safe journey: Passengers coming out of the airport in New Delhi on Monday. ■ V.V. KRISHNAN

row & West Bengal from 28 May, these numbers are all set to increase further," Civil Aviation Minister Hardeep Puri tweeted on Monday.

Wary passengers
However, in a possible sign of reluctance among passengers to travel in the times of

COVID-19, occupancy was sparse with just 25%-50% seats filled. This has come as a surprise to the airlines as it was felt that there might be pent-up demand for travel, especially from people stranded in different States.

But many of those who did decide to fly despite the

tough protocols and health guidelines were hard hit by last-minute changes and cancellations. Airlines had their hands full reworking flight schedules and facing passenger re-arrangements.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8
EDITORIAL ▶ PAGE 6

Testing up in States seeing massive return of migrants

Country records 6,125 new cases and 151 deaths

NISTULA HEBBAR
BINDU SHAJAN PERAPPADAN
NEW DELHI

The Union Health Ministry has admitted that Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, West Bengal and Odisha, currently witnessing a large-scale return of migrant workers, and remote areas need aggressive COVID-19 testing capacity scale-up to clear any backlog.

The admission comes at a time when the country is among the top 10 hotspots of COVID-19 worldwide, adding

COVID-19

approximately over 6,000 cases every 24 hours in the fourth phase of the national lockdown.

On Monday, the State health departments reported 6,125 cases and 151 deaths. This takes the total COVID-19 tally to 1,44,659 cases, including 79,959 active ones. The total death toll stands at 4,170.

"The heavy influx of migrant workers into States like Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, West Bengal and Odisha has

Maharashtra Public labs: 40; Private labs: 31
Ladakh 0
J&K 7;0
Gujarat 20;15
Rajasthan 19;3
U.P. 23;5
M.P. 14;7
W.B. 13;4
Telangana 10;13
Karnataka 37;21
Andhra Pradesh 54;0
Tamil Nadu 38;28

Ramping up
Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu have the highest number of COVID-19 testing labs in the country. The States are coloured based on the number of labs. Darker the shade, more the labs

forced the Indian Council of Medical Research to scale up its testing laboratories. So far, we have scaled up with 15 testing laboratories in Bihar, 17 in Odisha, 28 in Uttar Pradesh and 36 in West Bengal. This has been paired with supplies of testing materials to all the States and

the UTs. We are using indigenous vendors and manufacturers to produce swabs for sample collection, RNA extraction kits and RT-PCR diagnostic material," said a senior official.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8
MORE REPORTS ▶ PAGES 8 & 10

Deliberations on to end LAC tensions

India and China deploy more troops

DINAKAR PERI
NEW DELHI

Deliberations are continuing on a daily basis between military commanders of India and China on the ground, in addition to other channels of communication, to resolve the situation along the Line of Actual Control (LAC), official sources said on Monday.

Discussions were on daily at different levels on the ground, including at the Brigade Commander and Division Commander levels, the sources said. However, tensions continue at various places along the LAC with both sides digging in with reinforcements, and a wait and watch situation was unfolding, the sources stated.

The green top hill above the finger area of Pangong Tso (lake) seems to be the latest friction point, with re-

ports stating that 18 Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) personnel from a larger patrol party were detained by Chinese soldiers. However, the Indian Army on Sunday denied any such "detention".

The other area that continues to see major tensions is the Galwan Nalah area with tensions at two to three points. A road branching from the 255 km Darbuk-Shyok-Daulat Beg Oldi road towards the Galwan Nalah seems to be the reason for Chinese objections. "This stand of China is not tenable as the Galwan area has never been a point of contention earlier," multiple sources said. This amounted to a change in the status quo and would not be acceptable to India, they said.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

Working away the blues



Employees busy at work in a small-scale unit at the SIDCO Industrial Estate in Coimbatore on Monday. Factories are operating with curtailed staff strength amid the continuing COVID-19 lockdown. ■ M. PERIASAMY

A marriage midway on the Assam-West Bengal border

Groom travels 175 km and bride 55 km for minimalist wedding beside an entry check-gate

RAHUL KARMAKAR
GUWAHATI

Assam's Kajol and West Bengal's Om Prakash expected a routine union when their marriage was fixed six months ago. But the lockdown literally turned it into an event on the edge.

They tied the knot late on Saturday (May 23) night beside a check-gate at Sagolia on the Assam-West Bengal border.

It was a minimalist ceremony. About 20 persons, including priests from both sides, were present along with local MLA Ashwini Ray Sarkar.

The couple's parents had thought of deferring the marriage. But the horoscope came in the way; priests said it would be now or never. "Besides, there was no certainty when normal life would return to organise the marriage at home as we would have liked," said Ms. Kajol's father Mahesh Sha, a



Two States: Kajol and Om Prakash with MLA Ashwini Ray Sarkar, right, after the wedding. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

resident of Dhubri town, about 280 km west of Guwahati.

Assam bars entry

A marriage devoid of the usual gloss could have been organised at the bride's home. But the Assam government on May 8 barred the entry of people from West Bengal, except

for patients, after two persons from that State tested positive.

"The family sought a way out. The administration of Dhubri district and Jalpaiguri district (West Bengal) coordinated for the marriage to happen while the local police helped out," Mr. Sarkar, who represents the BJP from the Golakganj Block in Dhubri district.

60 more die in Maharashtra, Mumbai death toll crosses 1,000

With 2,436 new cases, total COVID-19 cases in State reach 52,667

SHOUMOJIT BANERJEE
PUNE

Maharashtra reported 2,436 more COVID-19 cases on Monday with total cases reaching 52,667, and 60 more deaths, taking its total death toll to 1,695.

The State has been recording more than 2,000 new cases every day since May 17, with Sunday recording the highest single-day surge yet, of 3,041 cases.

Mumbai's death toll crossed the 1,000 mark, as it accounted for 38 of the 60 deaths on Monday. The State capital has now reported 1,026 fatalities from the pandemic. Eleven fatalities were reported from PUNE district, its total death toll reaching 280.

Diabetes and hypertension have emerged as the most lethal co-morbid conditions in patients who have succumbed to COVID-19. About 67% of those that



Healthcare workers check the temperature of residents of Bhagavate Wadi Chawl, Vile Parle (East), on Monday. ■ VIJAY BATE

have died in Mumbai had some underlying conditions like diabetes, hypertension, asthma or heart disease.

Across the State, the same metric is around 71%.

State surveillance officer Dr. Pradeep Awate said, "78% of the death cases reported on Monday had high-risk co-morbidities such as diabetes, hypertension, asthma, and heart disease.

hotbed to 1,301. Over the past fortnight, Aurangabad had been reporting an average of over 60 cases a day.

The number of active cases has now reached 35,178, with 1,186 patients being discharged, to take the total recoveries to 15,786. Of the new cases reported on Monday, Mumbai accounted for an overwhelming 1,430 as its total tally reached 31,972 cases.

Besides Mumbai, Thane in the Mumbai Metropolitan Region continued to see a surge in fresh infections with 185 new cases taking the district's total tally to 3,196. Navi Mumbai reported 61 new cases as its total tally reached 2,068. Kalyan-Dombivli recorded more than 50 new cases to take its cumulative tally to 941.

Dr. Awate said there are 2,391 active containment zones in the State.

MORE REPORTS ▶ PAGES 2, 3, 5

A-BME

As flights resume, more passengers leave than arrive in Mumbai

24 flights depart from city, while 23 land; seven airlines carry 4,852 passengers to and fro; highest passenger load to Delhi

ADITYA ANAND
MUMBAI

Sixty-three days since the last domestic flight took off from the city, the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport (CSMIA) on Monday saw 47 flights arriving and leaving to 14 sectors, with more departing passengers than those arriving.

IndiGo, SpiceJet, Vistara, Air India, Air Asia India, Alliance Air and Air India Express together carried 4,852 passengers, which included 3,752 passengers at departures and 1,100 at arrivals. The highest passenger load capacity from Mumbai was seen on the Delhi route.

While six flights left for Delhi, two each left for Bengaluru, Hyderabad, Kochi, Patna and Varanasi, followed by one each to Nagpur, Jaipur and Bhuj. Officials at Bhuj airport said the Alliance Air flight from Mumbai brought six passengers and flew back with seven.

Passenger confusion
Due to operational reasons, airlines flew 47 flights, comprising 24 departures and 23



Waiting to take off: Travellers queue up at Mumbai airport as flight operations resume on Monday. ■ ARUNANGSU ROY CHOWDHURY

arrivals. This was three short of the allowed quota of 25 arrivals and departures each as mandated by the Maharashtra government.

The first departure was an IndiGo flight to Patna at 6.45 a.m. The first arrival was also an IndiGo flight, from Lucknow at 8.20 a.m.

Airport officials said arrival of a large number of pas-

sengers who had not checked revised flight schedules was not something they had anticipated. CSMIA encouraged passengers to check the status of their flights prior to arriving at the airport. Several passengers were seen trying to get their flights reconfirmed.

Though the State government Standard Operating

Procedure mentioned 14-day home quarantine, passengers' hand stamps mentioned validity till June 2, making it seven days. This was also mentioned by CSMIA in its statement.

Officials said only a small percentage of those who arrived at the airport expected an autorickshaw, taxi or cab aggregator service like Ola or Uber. Most had their own vehicles. Pre-paid taxis were made available by members of the union.

Stamp on arrival

"All arriving passengers will be stamped on their left hand for identification and will have to compulsorily undergo home isolation for 14 days as per the protocol of the Brihanamumbai Municipal Corporation. Passengers who are coming in for a short duration and have planned a return or onward journey, will have to share the details and will be exempted from the isolation," a Mumbai International Airport Limited spokesperson said.

The airport is being sanitised and fumigated constantly. CSMIA said it was putting special emphasis on the need for passengers to wear masks, and allowing passengers to carry 350 ml hand sanitiser on board. Additionally, it has stationed hand sanitiser at all touchpoints at the airport and is encouraging passengers to web check-in from home.

Passengers' body blames govt. for sloppy first day

ADITYA ANAND
MUMBAI

The Air Passengers Association of India (APAI) on Monday blamed the government's sloppy handling of domestic flight resumption for large-scale flight cancellations and passengers not knowing State-wise standard operating procedures.

Officials of Mumbai International Airport Limited said there were many passengers who turned up without checking their flight status, only to find them cancelled.

Mr. Reddy also observed that the cancellations were being put in credit shells, which was not a passenger-friendly move.

Travel portal ixigo said travellers were looking for reassurance on refunds in case they need to cancel their flights. It launched a full refund guarantee up to ₹5,000 for cancellations made by travellers, for any reason whatsoever, prior to the date of departure.

trauma of institutional quarantine whose regulations literally came on Sunday evening, while bookings remained open for the past few days," Mr. Reddy said.

The APAI said several passengers did not know of the cancellations till they reached the airports.

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'Original bhai', friend held for firing countrymade gun in Diva

Accused wanted to establish himself as gangster with murder

GAUTAM S. MENGLE
MUMBAI

As if enforcing the lockdown and bandobast for Eid celebrations were not enough, the Mumbai police on Sunday night had to contend with a wannabe gangster who fired three rounds at a Diva resident to prove that he was an "original bhai" and not just a "Facebook ka bhai" (a Facebook gangster).

The man and his friend were arrested within six hours of the offence being committed.

According to the Mumbai police, the incident occurred around 9 p.m. on Sunday at Agasan Gaon, where the complainant, Dinesh Munde, stays with his family. The accused, Akshay Patil (24), and his friend Arun Bhatia (20) are known

to Mr. Munde and called him near a cremation ground to have a drink with them.

"As soon as Mr. Munde reached the spot, Mr. Patil aimed a countrymade pistol at Mr. Munde, saying he would establish himself as an 'original bhai' by killing Mr. Munde. The latter lunged at Mr. Patil's hand and dodged the bullet. Mr. Bhatia rushed to help Mr. Patil and in the ensuing scuffle, two more rounds were fired," a police officer said.

Residents disturbed

The officer said the gunfire woke up residents of the area, who started coming out of their houses. Worried that someone would call the police, Mr. Patil and Mr. Bhatia fled the scene. Hours later, while Mr. Munde was on

his way to the police station, he received a call from Mr. Patil saying he was going to finish the job soon.

While the police were checking CCTV camera footage after getting calls from eyewitnesses, an FIR was registered after Mr. Munde reported the matter to them.

"Working with local informants, we picked up both the accused. Inquiries indicate Mr. Patil had demanded extortion money from Mr. Munde, who did not take him seriously. The insult rankled and led to Sunday's incident. We are finding out where Mr. Patil got the gun from," the officer said. The two have been charged with attempt to murder and criminal intimidation under the Indian Penal Code, and sections of the Arms Act.

Grocery and grain market in APMC reopens

Pune district sees highest single-day surge of more than 450 cases

SHOUMOJIT BANERJEE
PUNE

After being intermittently shut in the last 50 days owing to the COVID-19 pandemic, the grocery and grain wholesale market in Pune's Gultekdi resumed operations on Monday. Pune district reported over 450 new positive cases, making it the highest single-day surge, with 13 fatalities. The district's cumulative tally has now risen to 6,153 while its death toll has shot to 280.

The Agricultural Produce Market Committee (APMC) had shut down the foodgrain market after nine traders tested positive last week. However, the vegetable and fruit markets have been completely shut since early April as most of the people doing



Shut for safety: Sweepers clean Market Yard in Pune after it was closed last month. ■ FILE PHOTO

business in the Yard came from the 'highly infected' areas within Pune city.

"While we were forced to

shut down even the essential

grain market, we decided to

resume operations as we will

have to learn to live with the

novel coronavirus. Stringent

precautionary measures will

be followed and every person – vendor, farmer and la-

bourer – entering the place

will be tested by thermal

guns for temperatures, while

physical distancing norms will be adhered to," said APMC administrator B.J. Deshmukh.

He added that the whole area will be sanitised daily.

He said following a meet-

ing of traders on Tuesday,

the APMC will review the

situation and will probably

take a call on opening up the

vegetable and fruit markets

as well.

Pune Divisional Commiss-

ioner Deepak Mhaisekar,

es. As many as 210 among these were 'critical', he said.

After Pune, Solapur is a major virus hotspot in the region, reporting 20 new cases on Monday, to take its total tally to 590. "Solapur has 273 active cases while Satara reported 31 new cases, to take its total case tally to 309, of which 182 are active," Mr. Mhaisekar said.

With a massive influx of people from Mumbai and other areas following easing of lockdown rules, Kolhapur reported a spike of 55 new cases, to take its total to 341, of whom 326 are active.

The district has seen an increase of more than 200 new cases in a week. With six new cases, Sangli's total case tally stands at 79, of whom 37 are active.

"The samples of 72,855 people have been tested across the division so far, of which those of 64,607 have been received while the test results of the rest are awaiting," he said.

When hockey legends took on the world of films

NANDAKUMAR MARAR
MUMBAI

Balbir Singh Dosanjh, better known as Balbir Senior, had scored goals for India at the highest level. He managed the national team at a time when hockey players were treated as celebrities by the movie world. He was invited to post-victory felicitations by famous film stars.

At the 1948 London Olympic Games hockey final, he scored twice in India's 4-0 rout of home team England. A delirious independent India, free from the British rule a year earlier, erupted in joy as Balbir and teammates returned with the gold medal. The sports movie, *GOLD*, features part of his life story.

After winning two more Olympic golds (1952 Helsinki and 1956 Melbourne), he was appointed the manager for India's 1975 Hockey World Cup campaign in Kuala Lumpur and flew from Malaysia with the title and trophy, a delighted nation's first ever World Cup gold. India beat Pakistan in the final, with the goals from the late Surjit Singh and Ashok Kumar.

The late Raj Kapoor invited Team India, captained by mid-fielder Ajitpal Singh, to a felicitation programme in Mumbai, and arranged an exhibition match against the film world. The world champions took on hockey stick-wielding actors on a makeshift pitch on the grass carpet at the city's Wankhede stadium.

On that day at Wankhede, Balbir Senior watched his players showcase their skills against artistes of another craft. "We played with a team of 11," recollects Ajitpal, adding "They were 20,

actors coming in and going out. It was an exhibition tie for all to enjoy."

He recalled Dara Singh, Danny Denzongpa and Navin Nischol among others on the pitch that day when the film world rubbed shoulders with the world-beaters in India colours.

Mumbai's Onkar Singh, a World Cup winning team player, whose personal album includes images from the exhibition tie, said, "Hockey drew packed crowds across the nation. India players had fans everywhere; the public followed the sport closely. I hope more hockey movies are made; India has hockey legends whose life stories can be inspiring."

He remembered seeing Rakhee and Bindu at Wankhede, but was not sure who among the actors played.

OPERATION OF PRS COUNTERS AT NOMINATED STATIONS OVER MUMBAI DIVISION OF WESTERN RAILWAY

For the convenience of the passengers, functioning of PRS counters at nominated stations over Mumbai division of Western Railway has been restarted w.e.f. 22nd May, 2020.

Accordingly, PRS counters are being operated at Churchgate, Mumbai Central, Vasai Road, Valsad, Surat & Nandurbar stations w.e.f. 22nd May, 2020 to book reserved tickets in special trains through cash/POS. In addition to above, PRS counters at Andheri, Borivali & Vapi will be operated w.e.f. 27th May, 2020.

In continuation to this, it has also been decided that the refund of reservation tickets for the trains cancelled for the journey between 22nd March, 2020 to 30th June, 2020 will be granted as per below schedule:

Journey Commencement Date	Date of Refund on PRS Counters
22.03.2020 to 31.03.2020	From 27.05.2020 onwards
01.04.2020 to 14.04.2020	From 03.06.2020 onwards
15.04.2020 to 30.04.2020	From 09.06.2020 onwards
01.05.2020 to 15.05.2020	From 16.06.2020 onwards
16.05.2020 to 31.05.2020	From 23.06.2020 onwards
01.06.2020 to 30.06.2020	From 28.06.2020 onwards

It is worth mentioning that passengers can avail the refund within 180 days from the date of journey as stipulated by Railways.



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THE HINDU

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OBITUARY & REMEMBRANCE

DEATH



12.03.1946 - 24.05.2020

DEVI RAVINDRANATHAN
wife of Ambassador C.P. Ravindranathan, Bangalore and mother of Sadhana Ravindranathan, Montreal, Canada and Thangam Ravindranathan, Providence, United States.

Tamaso ma jyotirgamaya
Mrtyorma amrtam gamaya | ravindranathan@yahoo.com

BIRTHDAY REMEMBRANCE

Birthday Remembrance
Grace Clarke
passed away in Fremont, USA
on 31.03.2020

Former Principal of Bishop Cotton Girls School, Bangalore & Former Headmistress of Vidya Dyal Girls High School, Chennai. A visionary and an

Maharashtra COVID-19 tracker

TOTAL CASES	NEW CASES	ACTIVE CASES	RECOVERED	DEATHS
52,667	2,436	35,178	15,786	1,695

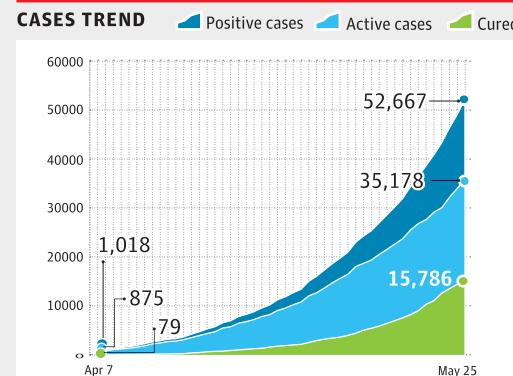
DISTRICTS AFFECTED: 35

DISTRICT	CASES	DEATHS	DISTRICT	CASES	DEATHS
Mumbai	31,972	1,026	Nanded	98	5
Thane	6,958	93	Sangli	83	1
Pune	5,996	274	Latur	82	3
Aurangabad	1,289	48	Ahmednagar	77	5
Nashik	973	46	Jalna	63	0
Raigad	791	17	Gondia	43	0
Palghar	717	18	Buldhana	41	3
Solapur	623	42	Osmanabad	37	0
Nagpur	475	7	Nandurbar	32	2
Akola	420	17	Beed	32	0
Jalgaon	418	41	Parbhani	24	1
Satara	314	5	Chandrapur	24	0
Kolhapur	267	1	Gadchiroli	15	1
Amravati	182	14	Bhandardara	14	0
Ratnagiri	167	4	Sindhudurg	10	0
Hingoli	132	0	Washim	8	0
Dhule	118	9	Wardha	6	1
Yavatmal	115	0			

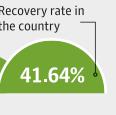
POSITIVE CASES OVER LAST 15 DAYS



1,430 (58.70%) of Monday's cases are from Mumbai



29.06% is the State recovery rate

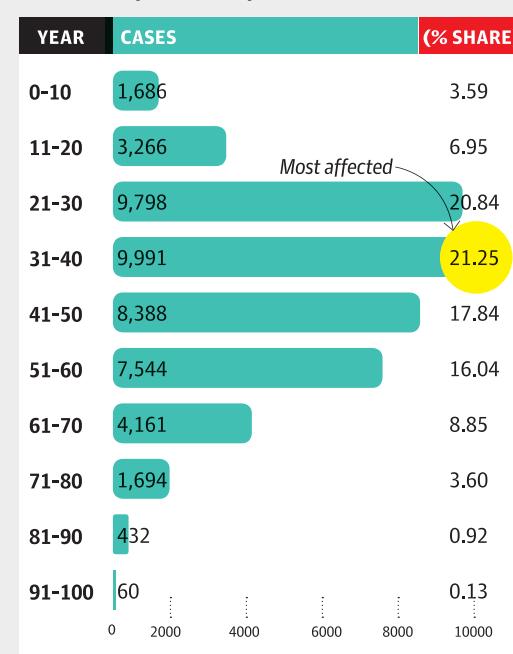


MORTALITY RATE

Maharashtra 3.25%

India 2.90%

AFFECTED (AGE-WISE)



QUARANTINE NUMBERS

5,30,247

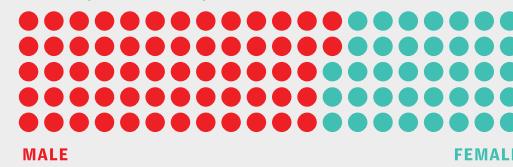


Home quarantine

35,479



Institutional quarantine



71% of deaths due to co-morbidities

HELPLINE NUMBERS

Toll free number: 104/1075

Maharashtra: 020-26127394

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

State helpline email id: ssumaharashtra@gmail.com

CITY-WISE HELPLINE NUMBERS

Mumbai city: 022 22664232



Mumbai suburbs: 022 26556799/26556806



Thane: 022 25301740



Source: Public Health Department, Maharashtra, BMC

Jumbo NSCI Dome facility set to turn into COVID-19 hospital

40-bed ICU to start this week; contactless screening, consultation areas among other facilities

JYOTI SHELAR
MUMBAI

From a diamond merchant gasping for breath, cancer patients from Tata Memorial Hospital with compromised immunity, and policemen with co-morbidities to convicts from Arthur Road jail, the city's first jumbo isolation facility at National Sports Club of India's Dome in Worli has admitted 1,000 COVID-19 patients since it opened on March 21.

This week, the isolation facility is all set to start a 40-bed intensive care unit that will transition it into a full-fledged makeshift COVID-19 hospital. "Once the ICU becomes functional, this will be a super success model for anyone to replicate," said Dr. Muzzafal Lakdawala, the popular weight loss surgeon who has been at the helm of the facility. "This is

the blueprint for all the jumbo facilities that are being opened up now."

Contactless clinics

Set up inside the Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel Indoor Stadium in the NSCI Complex, the air-conditioned facility boasts of contactless screening and consultation areas, four large screens to keep the patients entertained, and access to an open-air passage where patients are brought out for their daily yoga sessions.

The stadium has been divided into four parts: the A, B, C and D wards. There is one nursing station for two wards where patients are constantly queuing up with queries. For their daily consultations, the patients queue up at the contactless clinic, where young medical interns sitting on the other



Cool environs: The air-conditioned facility has been set up at Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel Indoor Stadium. ■ EMMANUEL YOGINI

side of the glass interact with them on a mobile phone. Nursing students, wearing PPE suits, take rounds of the wards, checking on patients who are too unwell to move from beds or are on oxygen support.

There are eight side rooms on the periphery of

the four wards for VIP patients. Among them is a mother with a 15-day-old baby. One of the side rooms currently has four convicts from Arthur Road jail. While other side rooms are open, the one with the convicts remains locked. "Two nurses and a ward boy have to

come together to open the room and take them for consultations. We don't do it alone as a precaution," said Dipti Agiwal, a 22-year-old nursing student who has volunteered to work at the facility. She said some patients are calm, while others get restless. There have been incidents of patients starting to run around and shouting when they get anxious. "We talk to them and calm them down," she said.

Entertainment options

Throughout the day, patients come up with demands to play the channels of their choice on the screen. While some demand the *Ramayana*, others want to watch a new channel. Doctors try to play the requests as well as a good mix of feel-good movies, soaps and specially recorded

songs and videos. "Recently, when singer Roop Kumar Rathod sang (the film song), 'Sandese aate hai' for them, many patients were moved to tears," said Dr. Lakdawala.

As on Monday, the facility had 339 patients including 44 patients who were 60 years old, six pregnant women and 61 cancer patients. At least 130 patients had some kind of co-morbid conditions. "We have learnt to save lives of patients before they get worse. Oxygen therapy and blood thinners are crucial and we immediately start the interventions. We are also relying a lot on X-rays, which helps us predict which patient's condition may turn severe," said gynaecologist Dr. Neeta Warty, another senior doctor who has been working at the facility.

Mumbai death toll crosses 1,000; tally touches 31,972

Diabetes, hypertension most lethal co-morbidities: BMC

JYOTI SHELAR
MUMBAI

Mumbai recorded 1,430 new COVID-19 cases on Monday, pushing its tally to 31,972. The city also recorded 38 more fatalities, taking its death toll to 1,026.

Diabetes and hypertension have emerged as the most lethal co-morbidities. According to the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC), nearly 67% of victims had underlying conditions like diabetes, hypertension, asthma, and heart disease. In the State, nearly 71% of victims had co-morbidities. Of the 988 deaths analysed by the civic body, nearly 26% of victims had diabetes, 24% had hypertension and 32% had both diabetes and hypertension. While 8% of victims had heart disease, 10% had other co-morbidities.

BMC officials said patients above 60 years with co-morbidities were at extremely high risk. Even in patients below 50 years, co-morbidities play a crucial role as nearly 20% of such victims had underlying ailments.

Dr. Avinash Supe, former dean of KEM Hospital and part of the COVID-19 mortality task force, said the health of patients with uncontrolled co-morbidities deteriorates rapidly. He said, "In patients below 50 years, we have found obesity, hypothyroidism along with diabetes and hypertension as

main problems. In many such patients, the underlying conditions were undiagnosed and only detected during treatment." Dr. Supe said the city's case fatality rate has dropped to 3.2%.

At 8.1%, the case fatality rate is highest among patients above 60 years. In patients between 40 and 60 years, the case fatality rate is 4% and among those below 40 years it is 0.5%.

Of the new cases, several have been reported from Matunga Labour Camp and Kumbharwada, which has recorded the maximum cases so far. Cases were also reported from newer parts of Dharavi such as Sita Niwas Chawl, Sethwadi Chawl and Holi Maidan. The death toll in Dharavi is 60. Mahim reported 34 new cases on Monday, pushing its tally to 351. Dadar recorded 20 new cases, taking its tally to 239.

(With inputs from Tanvi Deshpande)



Ready to help: Essential services staff outside an emergency ward in Thane Civil Hospital. ■ VIBHAV BIRWATKAR

tioners. We now need staff for jumbo facilities being developed in the city."

42 new cases in Dharavi

Dharavi reported 42 new cases on Monday, pushing its tally to 1,583. G North ward, which includes Dharavi, reported a case growth rate of 5.1% between May 16 and 22, the highest average growth rate of 13.7% was recorded in N ward (Ghatkopar), which crossed 1,000 cases on Sunday.

G South ward (Worli) recorded the lowest average case growth rate of 3.4%, while E ward (Byculla, Agric平) has reported over 1,000 cases, slowed its infection rate to 4.2%.

The BMC has divided wards into two categories:

case growth rate below 8% and above 8%. There are eight wards with a growth rate above 8%. A BMC official said, "We have asked such wards to place maximum high-risk contacts, especially from slums, in institution-

High-risk wards flatten curve

However, wards with few cases initially record rise in infection

TANVI DESHPANDE
MUMBAI

Data from the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) show that wards that saw a spike in positive cases during the initial days of the outbreak have been able to flatten the COVID-19 curve, while wards that reported cases later continue to record steep infection curves.

Wards such as Worli, Dharavi, Byculla, and Malabar Hill are reporting an average case growth rate of less than 5%, while wards like Parel, Powai, Mulund, and Malad are recording a sharp increase in cases.

Till last month, four BMC wards – T (Mulund), R Central (Borivali), N North (Dahisar) and C (Kalbadevi) – had the least cases, which the civic body attributed to efficient containment measures. According to the BMC data, between May 16 and 22, the highest average growth rate of 13.7% was recorded in N ward (Ghatkopar), which crossed 1,000 cases on Sunday.

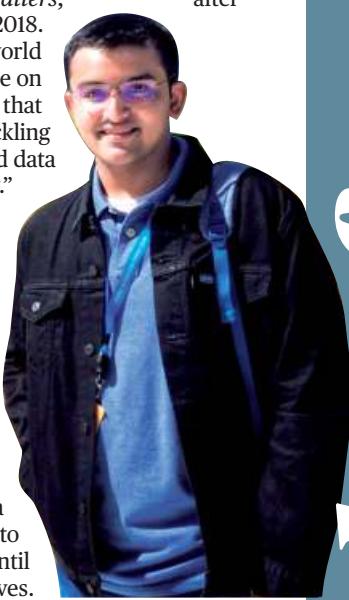
G South ward (Worli) recorded the lowest average case growth rate of 3.4%, while E ward (Byculla, Agric平) has reported over 1,0

Technophobia: a silent reaction

Sudarshan Sreeram is just 17, but he has experience many developers would envy. He developed a simple and interactive version of the classic two-player game, Tic Tac Toe, using Swift Playgrounds, and even penned an opinion paper titled 'Artificial Intelligence and Jobs of the Future: Adaptability Is Key for Human Evolution', which was published in January 2019 in the journal *AI Matters*, after his stint at WWDC 2018.

He says that after the lockdowns lift, "The world would certainly see an increased reliance on technology and online services, and I think that there would be an increased emphasis on tackling problems in the areas of cyber-security and data privacy."

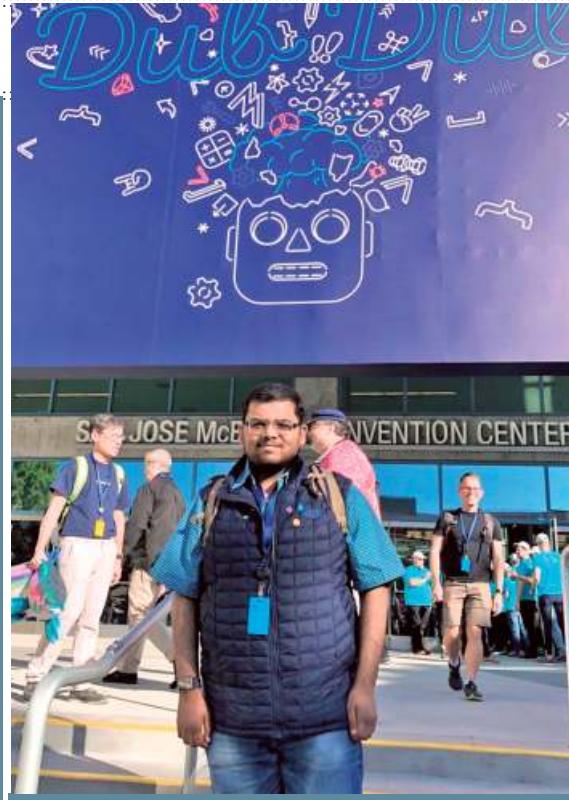
In fact, he predicts a wave of new reactions to technology after the pandemic, explaining, "Technophobia is a silent, natural reaction. Take personal computers for example: when they were first introduced in the early 1980s, computer-phobia was commonplace. Forty years later, our society is technologically dependent; it's hard to think of how life would be without access to the internet or an internet-connected device." He further explains that the key takeaway here is that any radical change would initially be met with a sense of scepticism, but would gradually lead to the creation of a new, widely-adapted norm until the next change arrives.

**A ray of hope**

For Swapnil Dhol, being able to produce something out of thin air and running it on the powerful devices we carry in our pocket is super rewarding. He is the mind behind gradient-adjusting app Neon and comic viewer XKCD. "Human interaction is a big part of WWDC, since developers can interact with Apple Engineers, get their code reviewed, and ask any questions that they might have. Also, WWDC is a place to make new friends, meet like-minded people. I've met some of my closest friends, who continuously push the boundaries of what is possible with technology," he comments.

He believes the lockdown proved that technology does shape human life for the better. "Being able to order essential items from the comfort of one's home and attend meetings on the other side of the planet, is nothing short of amazing and this trend will continue even after the lockdown ends. I think people will finally understand the potential of these technologies. The lockdown has affected nearly all aspects of our daily life, but students are still able to submit assignments and teachers are still able to teach."

"The power of technology is amazing and it is great to see that in a time of crisis, technology turns out to be a ray of hope."

A virtual code of arms

With Apple's WWDC 2020 going digital this June, we speak to some of the past scholarship winners from India about the future of tech once the lockdown lifts

■ DIVYA KALA BHAVANI

As the lockdown powers through, more people have taken on coding as a new passion, with many hoping to integrate this in their careers. It is safe to say that one is never 'done' learning coding; the language keeps changing, as does the adaptability to keep up with the ever-emerging technologies we surround ourselves with. More importantly, the networks of coders and developers have taken on a more abstract shape, many going the virtual route rather than straight out cancelling the event.

So, Apple announced that Worldwide Developers Conference 2020, which is now in its 31st year, would be taking on a new virtual format due to the pandemic. The upcoming conference has more than 23 million registered developers in more than 155 countries and regions. Having hosted thousands of students since its genesis, the conference last year saw more than 75% of the attendee students as first-timers, speaking to the adoption of Swift and the Everyone Can Code curriculum, and its expansion.

MetroPlus caught up with past WWDC scholarship winners who are, in fact, excited about the new format. The young developers chat about the misconceptions as well as their predictions of technology post-lockdown while assuring that coding and development can start right at home.

Immense prominence

Vidit Bhargava, the co-founder of Squircle Apps, is known for his app LookUp, a visual dictionary, which was named Best New App in the App Store in 2014 and 2017.

He explains that people will realise that they can do a whole lot more with technology after the lockdown lift, adding, "The lockdown has forced people to think on their feet and adapt to a new way of doing things, and technology is coming to the rescue in innovative ways. People are spending more time with their gadgets in the lockdown, and that will definitely make them more savvy and comfortable with them than they previously were."

He also says there is a strong future for automation and robotics where many thought it was not necessary. "These two are vital in reducing human contact, and if

it helps people stay safe in the pandemic, they will appreciate it. Similarly their experience in learning online will define how they see that technology in the future. If your online class keeps 'disconnecting' frequently, you are far more likely to want to go back and sit in a traditional environment for learning. The technology that is helping us get through the pandemic, needs to work as intended to be able to win the respect of the people. It is gaining prominence in society because it is the best way to get things done right now, but it will only last long if people have a good experience with it."

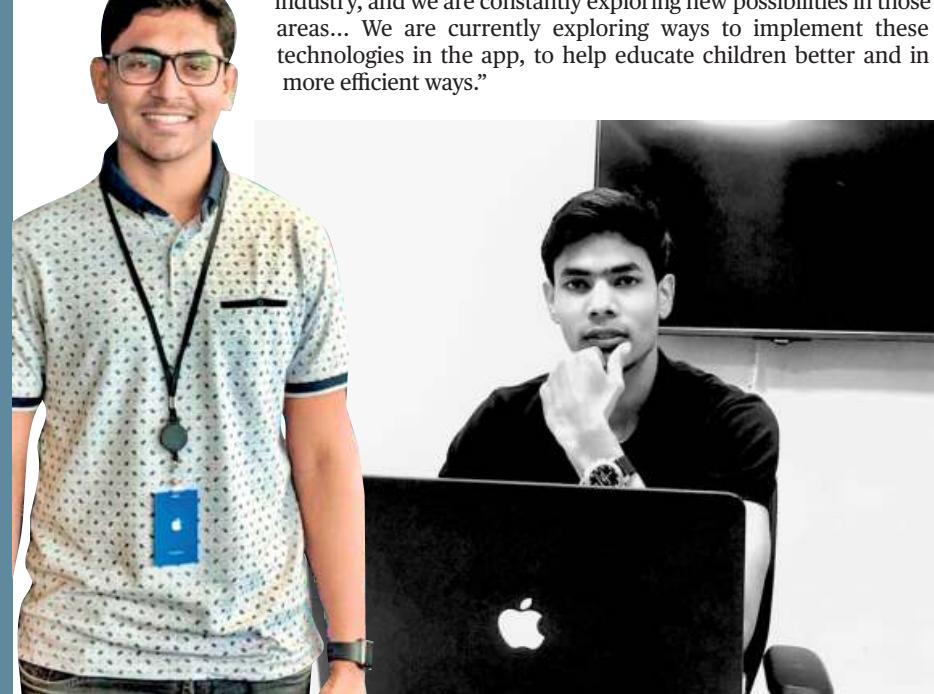
Vidit advises those new to coding not to be intimidated, especially because many tend to look at the complicated syntax, and try to grasp it all at once. He explains, "In its essence, programming is just a set of steps you tell a computer to perform. And if you were to look at it like that, it is not very different from Lego."

New respect

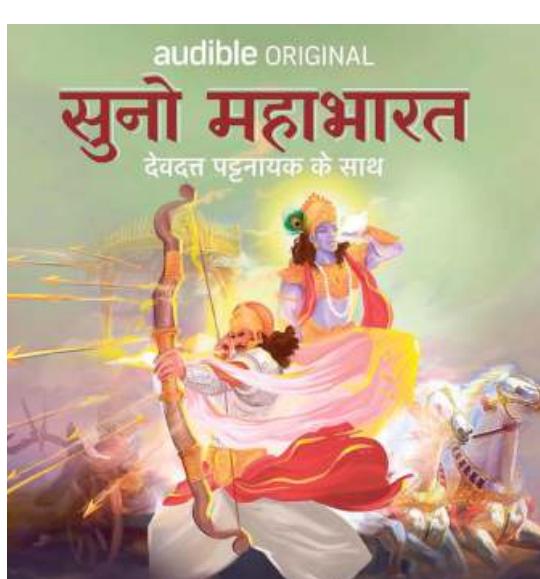
Brothers Tarun and Aman Jain, both WWDC scholars in 2016, put their heads together to run a small games startup called Digital Hole, with the first game released being Ringo. "The relationship between users and technologies around the globe is definitely going to change post lockdown. Online social gaming, e-learning, and OTT content streaming are some of the sectors that have seen a massive jump in usage and people would love to continue all these things post lockdown as well," they explain. After the lockdown, they say people will look at technology with "new respect".

They add, "All the technical advancements and achievements are helping us overcome these challenging days, and people definitely have noticed the significance of technology in their day-to-day life."

Having recently launched an app for children called Storyio - For Kids, they see that Machine Learning and Augmented Reality are, "A few of the technologies that we think are going to change the education industry, and we are constantly exploring new possibilities in those areas... We are currently exploring ways to implement these technologies in the app, to help educate children better and in more efficient ways."

**As spoken for centuries**

Devdutt Pattanaik has once again traded his pen for his voice, creating a six-hour oral narration of *The Mahabharata*



■ MEGHNA MAJUMDAR

"Oral storytelling is much, much better than writing," Devdutt Pattanaik, a man with about a dozen fictional and non-fictional books to his credit, sees no irony in making that statement. As one of the leading names in Indian mythological fiction in English today, Pattanaik's preference for the spoken word is not surprising, once you think about it. He has often spoken in favour of the "original" version of Indian epics, all of which are products of an oral tradition.

And then there is the fact that Pattanaik has partnered with Audible Suno, for a six-hour oral narration of *The Mahabharata*. "You see, when you are telling a story, you can explain things that you cannot while writing a book. Every medium brings something to the table: with Audible Suno, you can imagine the story as you

hear it with your family, and take them on the journey with you, the way people did in the olden days when there would be bards telling stories. You have to cave to the tale," says the author in a conversation over video call. However, this is not his first collaboration with Audible.

People think it is a big thing to compress the vast tale into a six-hour format, "but it's really not," he continues. "*The Mahabharata* is not a complicated story, but people make it complicated. I have always been surprised at how people consider it complicated; it is just long. The things I have left out are just minor details; the larger narrative is about a property dispute... We try to overshare the point, but really it is about families and their refusal to share wealth. I think it is a global story."

Myriad takeaways over the years aside, Pattanaik says he is sticking to the version in the scrip-

tures, for this particular project. His process also involves going back to the Upanishads, "to try and structure the story based on the historical period in which it was written. At that time, it had tried to portray ideas of kinship: that is what is important". The author does not agree with the "line of thinking" followed in versions of the epic available in the market today. "People say there are many interpretations of the story; there are not. It is about *dharma sthapanam*: whether people with privilege and power share that privilege and power with those who don't have it. That's all. The only reason it seems complicated is because we don't want to share and care with our poorer cousins. And therefore, like a lawyer tries to twist his way out of an awkward situation, this is about people finding complicated ways of not doing the simple and right thing."

Penmanship lessons

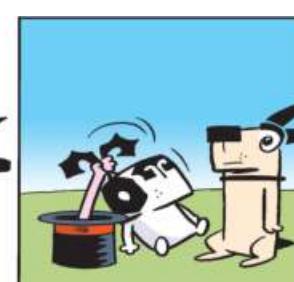
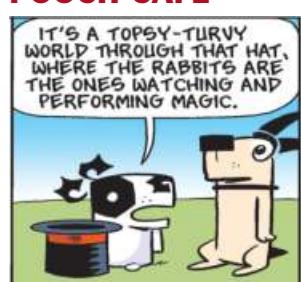
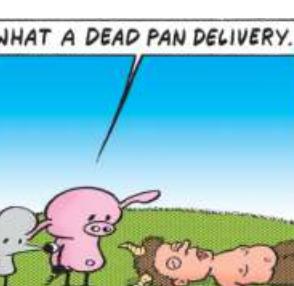
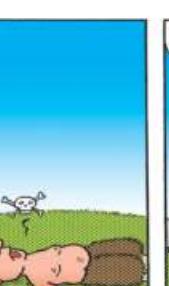
It is not only the ideas and ideals that Pattanaik finds worth noting; *The Ramayana* and *The Mahabharata* have a lot to teach today's budding writers, about classical Indian narrative structures as well. Particularly in terms of character arc.

"In Western storytelling, there is always a central character who goes through transformation. In *The Mahabharata* there is no one central character. This idea of central characters like Rama and Krishna not going through transformation is not there in Western storytelling at all. For them, it is the hero who transforms from Point A to Point B and the Gods who are troublemakers."

In Indian stories, the peripheral characters are the ones who might transform, but not always. Most characters behave according to their personal characteristics, that do not change: "Even

Arjun, who goes through changes, does not experience any major transformation. He is not a noble person at the end of the story." Pattanaik explains this with a contemporary example: in a Rajinikanth film, "Rajini would not go through any change; the people around him will. Similarly, a Salman Khan, in the first and the last scene, is the same."

Suno Mahabharata Devdutt Pattanaik ke Saath can be heard free of cost on the Audible Suno app on Android devices.

**POOCH CAFE****PEANUTS****HAGAR THE HORRIBLE****CALVIN AND HOBBES****TIGER****PEARLS BEFORE SWINE**

FM's package of no use to micro enterprises: ex-CM

'A fresh Budget must be presented in Parliament's next session'

ALOK DESHPANDE
MUMBAI

Former Maharashtra chief minister and senior Congress leader Prithviraj Chavan on Monday said the package announced by the Union government is of no help to micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs), especially micro enterprises. Mr Chavan said a fresh Union budget needs to be presented in the next session of Parliament, considering the impact of successive lockdowns on the economy.

Over 6 cr. MSMEs

"India has 6.34 crore MSMEs, out of which 6.3 crore are micro enterprises. Out of 11.09 crore workers in MSMEs, around 10.76 crore are employed in micro businesses," Mr. Chavan said, addressing the press.

As per the Union Finance Minister's announcement, enterprises with a turnover of around ₹100 crore, and borrower accounts with outstanding credit of up to ₹25 crore on February 29, 2020, will get a loan up to 20% of the outstanding amount. "Which micro enterprise has a turnover of ₹100 crore? The announcement essentially means that these 6.3



Which micro enterprise has a turnover of ₹100 crore... 6.3 crore micro enterprises and 10.76 crore workers are automatically negated

PRITHVIRAJ CHAVAN
Congress leader

crore micro enterprises and 10.76 crore workers are automatically negated from the package," he said.

He said Prime Minister Narendra Modi's announcement of a ₹20 lakh-crore package and subsequent explanations from Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman turned out to be 'hollow.' "Nobody trusts this government's economic pol-

icies anymore. How is it going to raise money for developmental works? How much is it going to spend on health services? Are salary cuts planned? All these questions need to be answered," he said. A new budget has to be presented considering the financial position once Parliament meets in June, a loan will have to be availed of, and currency printing has to be pushed, Mr. Chavan said. "But no bold measures are seen in this package."

The ₹20 lakh cr. mystery
Mr. Chavan referred to Goldman Sachs' recent prediction that the Indian economy may drop to (-)5% in financial year 2020-21. "The government has to come up with new economic equations," he said.

Hitting out at the ₹20 lakh-crore figure, Mr. Chavan said that despite the announcements, it is yet not clear how much money is going to be given.

"Forget us, 12 global financial institutions have also not been able to give us the exact number. On an average, from their numbers, the actual amount is barely 1% of the GDP," he said.

NCP chief meets Governor amid rising tensions in State

Party claims it was courtesy visit, no politics discussed

ALOK DESHPANDE
MUMBAI

Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) chief Sharad Pawar on Monday met with Maharashtra Governor Bhagat Singh Koshyari at Raj Bhavan on an invitation sent by the latter. The NCP claimed that no political issue was discussed and the meeting was a regular courtesy visit.

Speaking to reporters after leaving Raj Bhavan, NCP leader and Rajya Sabha MP Praful Patel said, "It was a routine meeting between them. It was not about any particular political issue."

Call for President's Rule
Later in the day, former chief minister and Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) Rajya Sabha MP Narayan Rane too met the Governor, demanding President's Rule in Maharashtra. "The present government led by Uddhav Thackeray is incapable of handling the COVID-19 crisis and it has failed completely. The Governor must dissolve this government and bring in President's Rule," said Mr. Rane after the meeting.

Meanwhile, the timing of the meeting between the NCP chief and Mr. Koshyari holds significance as it took place against the backdrop of strained relations between the Shiv Sena, which heads the Maha Vikas Aghadi government (of which the NCP is a key constituent), and the Raj Bhavan. Mr. Pawar was the first leader from the State to openly complain about Mr. Koshyari's intervention in the functioning of the State administration. Additionally, BJP leaders have chosen to make frequent visits to Raj Bhavan, complaining about the ruling party.



Crucial meet: Governor Bhagat Singh Koshyari (left) called on Sharad Pawar on Monday. • FILE PHOTO

ere in the country.

Recently, the Governor had taken a strong objection to a letter written by State Higher and Technical Education Minister Uday Samant to the University Grants Commission (UGC), recommending cancellation of final year university exams. In a letter to the CM, Mr. Koshyari said not conducting the examinations amounts to breach of UGC guidelines. He also asked Mr. Thackeray to issue suitable instructions to Mr. Samant for his unwarranted intervention.

Last week, Mr. Thackeray did not attend the scheduled review meeting of measures against COVID-19 held by the Governor. Instead, he asked Chief Secretary Ajoy Mehta to present there as his representative.

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 Tuesday: Thunderstorm accompanied by lightning and gusty winds, with speeds of 30-40 kmph, likely at isolated places over Bihar, south interior Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Puducherry, Kerala, Assam, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram, Tripura, Arunachal Pradesh and Jharkhand

CITY RAIN MAX MIN CITY RAIN MAX MIN

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	—	34.0	27.7	Kozhikode	—	35.8...	28.4
Ahmedabad	—	43.3	28.2	Kurnool	—	43.1...	30.8
Aizawl	—	27.0...	19.2	Lucknow	—	44.1...	27.5
Allahabad	—	47.1...	29.4	Madurai	—	40.4...	26.4
Bengaluru	—	33.6...	21.0	Mangaluru	—	35.5...	27.8
Bhopal	—	44.5...	27.6	Mumbai	—	33.1...	28.8
Bhubaneswar	—	34.5...	28.5	Mysuru	—	34.0...	23.2
Chandigarh	—	43.0...	24.6	New Delhi	—	45.6...	27.6
Chennai	—	37.3...	29.4	Patna	—	40.2...	29.0
Coimbatore	—	37.2...	26.3	Port Blair	—	32.7...	26.8
Dehradun	—	43.3...	28.2	Puducherry	—	35.4...	29.6
Gangtok	54.8	19.6...	16.1	Pune	—	41.0...	24.3
Goa	—	35.5...	28.8	Raipur	—	45.0...	29.5
Guwahati	28.9	29.2...	21.6	Ranchi	—	40.2...	28.4
Hubballi	—	37.0...	22.2	Shillong	13.4...	22.2...	—
Hyderabad	—	42.3...	29.2	Shimla	—	31.8...	22.6
Imphal	3...	26.8...	21.5	Srinagar	—	30.0...	11.3
Jaipur	—	44.7...	32.7	Thiruvananthapuram	—	32.6...	27.7
Kochi	0.4	33.2...	26.8	Tiruchi	5.4...	41.7...	25.8
Kohima	12.4	26.3...	14.6	Vijayawada	—	39.8...	29.0
Kolkata	—	32.1...	29.2	Visakhapatnam	—	34.2...	30.4

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)

Pollutants in the air you are breathing

Yesterday

CITIES	SO ₂	NO ₂	CO	PM2.5	PM10	AQI CODE
Ahmedabad	—	21	32	...44	...74	...
Bengaluru	—	33	37	—	72	...
Chennai	3	17	72	...81	—	...
Delhi	10	28	21	212	—	...
Hyderabad	4	60	23	—	103	...
Kolkata	3	8	12	...30	...51	...
Lucknow	5	15	55	267	—	...
Mumbai	9	6	10	...15	61	...
Pune	36	13	61	45	43	...
Visakhapatnam	10	29	6	32	77	...

In observation made at 4.00 p.m., Shri Raikar, Mysuru Pradeep recorded an overall quality index (AQI) score of 283 indicating an unhealthy level of pollution.

In contrast, Aizawl, Mizoram recorded a healthy AQI score of 17

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.

NO₂: Nitrogen Dioxide. Aggravates respiratory illness, causes haze to form by reacting with other air particles, causes acid rain, pollutes coastal waters.

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

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

No interim relief for HDIL promoters

33-year-old woman from Dahisar, pregnant with twins, had filed petition

SONAM SAIGAL
MUMBAI

A Sessions court has rejected the interim bail plea filed by Rakesh and Sarang Wadhawan, promoters of HDIL and key accused in the Punjab and Maharashtra Cooperative (PMC) Bank scam.

Mr. Wadhawan and his son Sarang have been kept at Arthur Road jail since their arrest in October last year. The former claimed that he suffers from various ailments and was prone to contracting COVID-19.

Special public prosecutor Hiten Venegavkar opposed the bail and said Arthur Road is a containment zone and no person can go in or come out. Thus, in the current situation, it would not be advisable to allow a prisoner to go out into the society and risk the health of all. Mr. Venegavkar informed the court that Mr. Wadhawan was kept in isolation and all medical facilities were provided to him.

The other ground for opposing bail was that the duo has been charged under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act and these charges are not covered by the high powered committee constituted to release prisoners.

On May 8, an additional metropolitan magistrate rejected their pleas.

Raut takes jibe at Goyal over train diversion

NCP leader defends Railway Minister, says efforts should be appreciated

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MUMBAI

In a dig at Railway Minister Piyush Goyal over the diversion of the Vasai Road-Gorakhpur Sharmik Special train via Odisha, Shiv Sena leader Sanjay Raut on Monday said their only request is that train carrying migrants should reach its destination as announced.

The Sena's alliance partner the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP), however, took a different stand, saying Mr. Goyal and his ministry are under pressure and their efforts should be appreciated.

The Vasai Road-Gorakhpur Sharmik Special train via Odisha, which left from Palghar on May 21, was diverted to a different route via Odisha due to heavy congestion. It reached Gorakhpur two-and-a-half days la-

ter, when it should have reached the destination in about 25 hours.



Anxious faces: Migrant workers look out of a Shramik Special train to U.P., at Bhivandi station. • FILE PHOTO

"Since you have said that you have a list ready that is why I am requesting you to please provide all information like from where the train will run, the list of passengers according to the trains, their medical certificate and where the train is to

go, to the General Manager of Central Railway within the next hour, so that we can plan the time of trains," the Railway Minister tweeted.

Replying to it, Mr. Raut on Monday tweeted, "Maharashtra government has given you a list of workers who wish to return home. The only request is that the train should reach the station, as announced earlier."

"The Gorakhpur bound train had reached Odisha," the Sena leader further said.

However, when asked if the Railway Minister was politicising the issue, NCP leader Praful Patel said the Indian Railways and Mr. Goyal are also under pressure. "Their efforts should be respected. We appreciate that they are providing trains so that people can reach home," Mr. Patel said.

which he had created.

However, Mr. Wadekar's claims did not impress the Bench of Justice K.R. Shriram who noted that he did not get convincing answers on how an original story created by Mr. Wadekar had landed in the hands of the writer of *Betaal*.

The judge also noted that the claim came very late as Netflix had announced *Betaal* in July 2019, and several publications, print and online, had written stories to that effect.

The judge also noted that the concept of *Betaal* originates from the mythological story of Vikramaditya and the witty ghost Betaal. But the court allowed Mr. Wadekar to amend his plea and claim damages against the producers of the web series.



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<p



Early take-off

With no consensus on health monitoring of passengers among States, travel remains risky

Even after long negotiations with States, and with a truncated schedule, the Centre has found it difficult to relaunch domestic flights. Several were cancelled on the first day services were resumed after being frozen on March 25. Some Chief Ministers, notably Uddhav Thackeray in Maharashtra and Edappadi Palaniswami in Tamil Nadu expressed apprehension about a premature resumption of civil aviation, as the spread of COVID-19 is unrelenting, and quarantine monitoring has its limits. The experience of flight cancellations, passenger frustration and low capacity among States to track thousands of passengers should prompt a rethink on scheduled flights. Access to emergency air travel in a large country is a legitimate expectation, and a targeted programme run efficiently can meet that need, without induced demand produced by commercial flights. Going back to the drawing board to draft a plan for emergency travel, using documentation and aggregation of such passengers may be the short-term option. The risks associated with domestic aviation have multiplied due to early missteps in several States: mass gatherings, political events and consumer crowding for panic buying have resulted in major transmission clusters. The trajectory of fresh COVID-19 cases shows that this was aggravated by the bungled response to the concerns of migrant labour, exposing thousands of workers and their communities to infection. Understandably, States, which have denied the presence of community transmission, want to reduce the pace at which they must monitor newly arriving individuals.

Enabling scheduled travel through national policy, whether by air or rail, could be seen as a reasonable effort only when State governments are fully prepared, and adopt a uniform code of practice. Within the lockdown, the virus crisis has snowballed only in States such as Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu and Gujarat, and in Delhi, but that picture could change with the operation of daily flights, a couple of hundred scheduled trains from June 1 and the large number of promised Shramik Special trains for migrant workers. It is essential, therefore, for States to adopt a coordinated approach on quarantine and testing. Travel choices, in the present phase, should be designed to discourage optional journeys. Moreover, passengers on all flights, including relief flights, could have a lower risk if airlines and the government keep the middle seats vacant as decided on March 23 by the DGCA. There is no reason to think that the pandemic has begun to wane. The global aviation map shows that even market economies placing great emphasis on individual freedoms have severely limited travel, making exceptions only for returning citizens. Relaxing travel must be preceded by focused containment measures and an agreed protocol for States.

Batting for free speech

Reckless filing of criminal defamation cases against the press must end

A feature of public life in Tamil Nadu in the last three decades has been the indiscriminate institution of criminal defamation proceedings against Opposition leaders and the media. It is no surprise, then, that the most comprehensive judgment on the limits of the State's power to prosecute members of the press for defamation should come from the Madras High Court. The verdict of Justice Abdul Quddhose, quashing a series of defamation complaints filed since 2011-12, is remarkable for applying a set of principles that would firmly deter the hasty and ill-advised resort to State-funded prosecution on behalf of public servants. The first principle is that the State should not impulsively invoke provisions in the CrPC to get its public prosecutor to file defamation complaints in response to every report that contains criticism. The court deems such impulsive actions as amounting to throttling democracy. It advises the government to have a higher threshold for invoking defamation provisions. It notes that each time a public servant feels defamed by a press report, it does not automatically give rise to a cause for asking the public prosecutor to initiate proceedings on her behalf. The statutory distinction between defaming a public servant as a person and as the State itself being defamed has to be maintained.

Justice Quddhose goes on to fault the government for accepting sanction to the initiation of cases through the prosecutors without explaining how the State has been defamed. He cautions prosecutors against acting like a post office, noting that their role is to scrutinise the material independently to see if the offence has been made out, and if so, whether it relates to a public servant's conduct in the course of discharging official functions or not before filing a complaint. So, the court finds that many were cases in which public servants ought to have filed individual cases. An earlier Madras High Court ruling noted that an essential ingredient of criminal defamation must be that an imputation was actuated by malice, or with reckless disregard for the truth. A recent judgment by Justice G.R. Swaminathan enunciated what is known in the United States as the 'Sullivan' rule of 'actual malice'. While quashing a private complaint against a journalist and a newspaper, the judge said two of the exceptions to defamation given in Section 499 pertained to 'public conduct of public servants' and 'conduct of any person on any public question'. This implied that the legislature itself believed that unless it is demonstrated that reporting on a public servant's conduct or on a public question was vitiated by malice, the question of defamation does not arise and that even inaccuracies in reporting need not occasion a prosecution for defamation. Within a matter of days, the HC has struck two blows for free speech and press freedom.

The problem with the liquidity push

Even if partially successful, it will culminate in eventual default; the crisis is only likely to intensify



C.P. CHANDRASEKHAR

The present government's much-hyped, post-COVID-19 relief and recovery package has disappointed many. It provides little by way of additional budgetary resources to halt and reverse the economic and social collapse that the pandemic and the response to it has triggered. Most estimates place the additional fiscal allocation implicit in the proposals at about a tenth of the size of the package, which the government claims amounts to around 10% of GDP.

In its effort to tote up a 10% of GDP relief-cum-stimulus figure, the government has relied heavily on measures aimed at pushing credit to banks, non-banking financial companies (NBFCs) and businesses big and small, which are expected to use borrowed funds to lend to others, make payments falling due, compensate employees even while under lockdown, and otherwise spend even while not earning. The thrust is to get the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) and other public financial institutions to infuse liquidity and increase lending by the financial system, by offering the latter capital for longer periods at a repo or policy interest rate that has been cut by more than a percentage point to 4%.

The fourth 'P'

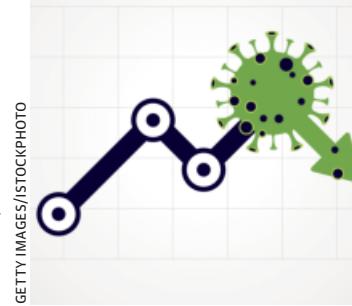
There was a hint that this would be the thrust when the Prime Minister in his speech calling for a "self-reliant India" identified, besides land, labour and laws, "liquidity" as among the areas of focus of the package. In economic and busi-

ness parlance, liquidity refers to ease of access to cash – a liquid asset is one that can be easily sold for or replaced with cash, and a liquid firm or agent is a holder of cash, a line providing access to cash, or assets that can be easily and quickly converted to cash without significant loss of value. In periods of crisis, individuals, small businesses, firms, financial institutions and even governments tend to experience a liquidity crunch. Relaxing that crunch is a focus of the government's crisis-response package. In keeping with that perspective, it gives a much larger role to enhancing liquidity than it does either to direct transfers to the poor and precariously employed workers devastated by the crisis, or to spending to ensure that micro- and small businesses would remain viable and along with medium and big businesses, would ride a demand revival when the lockdown ends.

Focus on NBFCs

The main intermediaries being enlisted for the task of transmitting liquidity are the banks, with NBFCs constituting a second tier. Among the first steps taken by the RBI was the launch of special and 'targeted' long term repo operations (TLTROS), which allowed banks to access liquidity at the repo rate to lend to specified clients. One round of such operations, which was relatively more successful, called for investment of the cheaper capital in higher quality investment grade corporate bonds, commercial paper, and non-convertible debentures. That funding allowed big business, varying from Reliance and L&T to financial major HDFC, to access cheap capital to substitute for past high-cost debt or finance ongoing projects. There is little evidence that this is triggering new investment decisions.

The second round was geared



to saving NBFCs, whose balance sheets were under severe stress even before the COVID-19 strike, because they were finding it difficult to roll over the short-term debt they had incurred to finance longer term projects, including lending to small and medium businesses, housing and real estate. Banks were wary about lending to these NBFCs, because of fears that their clients could default in amounts that would bring the viability of these institutions into question. Those fears were confirmed when Franklin Templeton announced that it was shutting down six of its funds, setting off redemption requests across the NBFC sector, as investors rushed to take back their money, at a time when the ability of these institutions to mobilise funds to meet these demands had been impaired. Not surprisingly, banks were unwilling to respond when liquidity was infused to target lending to the NBFCs.

Building on these initial liquidity infusion efforts, the COVID-19 package identified more intermediaries (such as the Small Industries Development Bank of India, the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development, and the National Housing Bank) that could refinance lending by the banks to different sections, with targeted lending amounts providing figures to fatten the "stimulus". To persuade the banks and other intermediaries to take up these offers when the clients they must lend to

(micro, small and medium enterprises, street vendors, marginal farmers, etc.) are themselves stressed, in some instances the government offered them partial or full credit guarantees in case their clients defaulted. The government also sought to persuade the RBI to lend directly to NBFCs against their paper.

These measures, which are only marginally effective even in the best of times, will not work during this crisis. Consider a bank or NBFC lending to small business. With economic activity either at a complete stop or at a fraction of the normal, those who can access credit would either not borrow or only do so to protect themselves and not use the funds either to pay their workers or buy and stock inputs. Even after the lockdown is lifted, the compression of demand resulting from the loss of employment and incomes would be considerable. It would be aggravated by the fact that spending by a fiscally conservative government would fall sharply because of a collapse in revenue collections. Faced with sluggish demand, firms are unlikely to meet past and current payments commitments and help the revival effort, just because they have access to credit. This would mean that credit flow would actually not revive. This danger is even greater because the government has been mealy with its guarantees, not wanting to accumulate even contingent liabilities that do not immediately affect the fiscal deficit.

On disposable income

Another component of the "liquidity" push is the measures that temporarily increase the disposable income of different sections. Advance access to savings like provident fund contributions, lower tax deduction at source, reduced provident fund contributions and moratoriums on debt service pay-

ments for a few months, are expected to provide access to cash inflows and reduce cash outflows, to induce agents to meet overdue payments or just spend to enhance the incomes of others. These are marginal in scope, if relevant at all. They have been combined with non-measures like adding on pending payments such as income tax refunds to spike "liquidity provision".

Overall, the "transmission" of the supply side push from these monetary policy initiatives for relief and revival is bound to be weak. Given the circumstances, the liquidity push, even if partially successful, would only culminate in eventual default, as borrowers use the debt to just stay afloat in the absence of new revenues. The measures are only likely to intensify the crisis, rather than resolve it.

Think new transfers

What is needed now is government support in the form of new and additional transfers to people in cash and kind, and measures such as wage subsidies, equity support and spending on employment programmes. That, as many have acknowledged, would require debt-financed spending by the government, with borrowing at low interest rates from the central bank or a "monetisation" of the deficit. Unfortunately, obsessed as it is with fiscal conservatism and tax forbearance, the Narendra Modi government is unwilling to take that route. Abjuring that option, the government's "self-reliance package" calls on citizens to rely only on themselves, aided by an uncertain offer of temporary access to credit. That path can only have devastating consequences for lives and livelihoods.

C.P. Chandrasekhar is former Professor at the Centre for Economic Studies and Planning, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi

The Centre's Kashmir policy and a heavy price to pay

India will have to face mounting security threats and the people of Jammu and Kashmir the systematic denial of rights



RADHA KUMAR

While public attention is focused on COVID-19, Jammu and Kashmir suffers twin lockdowns, rising violence and unilateral government actions, all at the same time. In the 12 months since the Narendra Modi administration returned to office, their Kashmir policy has comprised measures that are perceived as disasters in the Valley, garner mixed reactions in Jammu and Ladakh, and are welcomed by some in the rest of India.

A clear bias

The latest of these actions is the new domicile rules, notified on May 18, 2020. Based on the Home Ministry's order of March 31, these rules seek to replace the Jammu and Kashmir State subjects law, recognised under Article 35A of the Indian Constitution, which entitled permanent residents of the State to free education along with reservation of government jobs, and sole rights to land ownership.

The new domicile rules entitle anyone who has worked or lived in the State for 15 years, or studied there for seven years, to receive a domicile certificate and the benefits previously reserved for permanent

residents. Curiously, they also entitle Union government officials who have served in the State for 10 years to domicile, along with their non-resident children, and list the categories of those eligible: members of the Indian Administrative Services (including those working in statutory bodies), public sector units and banks, central universities and 'recognised research institutes of the Central government (sic)'.

The clear bias to favour not only Union government officials but also their children smacks of instating privileges that many State and Union governments began to do away with as civil service salaries rose in the early 2000s, and the demographic pressure on urban spaces mounted. That this bias continues to exist in some parts of the country is shameful for any democracy; that it has been imposed on Jammu and Kashmir without the acquiescence of its elected leaders is an absolute violation.

Ill-founded argument

Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) spokesmen argue that the new domicile rules were necessary since many marginalised groups were denied their rights under the State subject law, such as refugees from west Pakistan. The argument is ill-founded. What prevented the Modi administration from expanding the permanent resident category to include these groups, without doing away with it altogether? How can it possibly be necessary

for 12 million people to reapply for domicile when the groups to benefit number a few lakhs?

Ruling party spokesmen ask what the fuss is about, when their intent was stated in the party manifesto and followed through by the President and Parliament of India. They ignore the fact that the presidential orders and Reorganisation Act of August 2019, including all actions that follow from them, are under constitutional challenge in the Supreme Court. A democratic government that upholds the rule of law would freeze implementation until the court rules, but the Modi administration proceeded to build facts on the ground with astonishing rapidity.

Within months of the August announcements, separate committees were set up to divide Jammu and Kashmir's assets between the two new Union Territories. The State police was put under direct rule by the Union Home Ministry. The Upper House of the Assembly was abolished. Land was requisitioned for sale to industry, national tourist conglomerates

were invited to take over what was a flourishing local industry, and mining rights were sold to non-Kashmiri contractors. All the former State's statutory bodies were dissolved, including the State Human Rights Commission. Power was concentrated in the hands of the Lieutenant-Governor and his advisers, all but one of whom were from outside the former State.

The Jammu and Kashmir Legislature remains dissolved, many of its political leaders remain under detention and forbidden to speak, a ban remains in force on all public gatherings and the media are intimidated. Even so, protest against the new domicile rules has been voiced by all political parties in Jammu and Kashmir, except the BJP. Indications are that their protests will be ignored. BJP General-Secretary Ram Madhav calls the new domicile rules a done deal, implying that the Modi administration will not review them (*Indian Express*, "It is time to allow J&K full-fledged political activity", May 21, 2020).

Fall of the last bastion

Most people in Jammu and Kashmir saw Article 35A and the State subject law as the last remaining bastion of the State's internal autonomy, guaranteed under the instrument of accession signed by Maharaja Hari Singh. Successive Union governments chipped away at the former State's powers, but none touched Article 35A or the

and economic clout, are well known. As responsible rising powers of the world, the leadership in both countries have the onus now to attempt a renewed push at diplomacy and dialogue to resolve the lingering border dispute once and for all ("Aggressive PLA flouts protocols", May 25).

M. JAYARAM,

Sholavandan, Tamil Nadu

Senior American official Alice Wells has done well by terming the Sino-Indian border dispute as an example of provocative behaviour. Perhaps this is what has prompted a Chinese spokesperson to attempt a conciliatory approach. It will be in the mutual interest of both

nations to ensure that the situation at the border does not escalate and is resolved as in established protocols. N.A. JOSEPH, Ettumanoor, Kottayam, Kerala

The present flare-up could well be a part of China's projection of its "sharp power". From the South China Sea to the Mekong river flows, to the Senkaku islands with Japan and the Taiwan Straits, there is

vidence of its quest for hegemony. Does it believe that with the world focused on COVID-19, now is the time to flex its muscles? China should not overlook the fact that in the event of a cold war, or the trade and diplomatic war with the U.S., it would need a helping hand from its Asian neighbours.

H.N. RAMAKRISHNA,

Bengaluru

■ Senior American official Alice Wells has done well by terming the Sino-Indian border dispute as an example of provocative behaviour. Perhaps this is what has prompted a Chinese spokesperson to attempt a conciliatory approach. It will be in the mutual interest of both

CORRECTIONS & CLARIFICATIONS:

In the Sport/Life page anchor story titled "Fresh leaks of personal details detected on dark web" (May 25, 2020), the second deck headline mentioned a figure 18 million job seekers. It should have been 18 lakh residents of Madhya Pradesh. The second paragraph of the text referred to a figure of 18 million. It should have been 18 lakh.

In the last paragraph of "Results on vaccine likely in autumn" (May 25, 2020) there was a reference to Wealth Health Organisation. It should be World Health Organisation.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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

To read more letters online, scan the QR code



With lakhs of migrant workers rushing back to their home States due to the lockdown, MGNREGA appears to be the only scalable programme of rural employment that can come to their rescue (Editorial page, "The need for a million worksites now", May 25). In addition, there is a strong case for increasing the daily wage to at least ₹300 at least for a period of next six months, so that their food and other basic needs are taken care of. With regard to awareness about NREGA works and filling up of work application forms, school teachers may be requisitioned – with extra payment for this work – to visit workers' colonies, educate them about the availability of work and fill up their applications, if necessary. This would be more honourable work for teachers when compared to stationing them as a State did, at liquor shops for crowd control. To expand works under NREGA, seasonal agricultural work may be included in the list of works that can be taken up under NREGA in rural areas. Further, the government should think in terms of launching an urban employment programme on the lines of MGNREGA to provide employment to the urban poor and migrant workers who have not yet returned to their home States.

KOSARAJU CHANDRAMOULI, Hyderabad

CM YK

A BM-BME

A well-balanced stimulus package

It will minimise the human cost of the COVID-19 crisis and also pave the path for structural reforms



RAJIV KUMAR

Cut your coat according to your cloth is a useful dictum to set policy priorities. Not all economies are bestowed with the unlimited resources of the U.S. whose currency, the dollar, still enjoys the enviable status of being the global reserve currency. This affords the U.S. the ultimate luxury to issue debt without any thought of its consequences on its macroeconomic balances. India does not have these many degrees of freedom. Cognisant of its constraints and compulsions, the government adopted a twin mantra for shaping its stimulus package, rolled out in five phases plus one earlier phase.

The first strand has been to first ensure that the human cost of the COVID-19 crisis is minimised, especially for those at the bottom of the pyramid. The second has been to convert this crisis into an opportunity by implementing bold structural reforms, which have been pending for a while. Shaped by these two priorities, the stimulus is a carefully crafted, well-balanced, yet bold package that will, in the coming days, achieve both objectives.

Lifting demand and supply

It is widely recognised that the present crisis has seriously impacted both the supply and demand side of the economy. The stimulus package effectively addresses both these aspects. Several measures have been announced to lift the sagging demand in the economy. It is important to point out that total effective demand is made up of demand for consumption, investment and intermediate goods. This has to be taken note of by those who consider only the cash in hand of consumers as the sole means for reversing the declining demand in the economy. Therefore, additional credit lines provided to micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) or to street vendors or to farmers (additional credit of ₹2 trillion) will also surely contribute to the strengthening of aggregate demand in the economy.



"Indian farmers will get the much-needed freedoms, flexibility and financial strength to propel India's economic recovery in the post-COVID-19 period." A farmer in Darangiri village, west of Guwahati, Assam on April 20, 2020. ■ AP

Measures announced for ramping up consumption demand directly included: ₹1.73 lakh crore for improving the incomes and welfare of the most vulnerable, including the 20 crore female Jan Dhan account holders who will receive monies directly into their bank accounts (announced in the first package); ₹50,000 crore additional incomes in the hands of those whose TDS and TCS were reduced by 25%; ₹40,000 crore additional allocation for MNREGA which will provide jobs and succour to those returning to their villages from metros and cities; ₹30,000 crore for construction workers; ₹7,800 crore transferred to 12 crore farmers; and ₹13,000 crore transferred to States to finance the costs of running quarantine homes and shelters for migrant workers. These measures will trigger demand, which is of course the necessary condition for triggering recovery in economic activity.

On the supply side, the govern-

ment's response has been four-fold. The first was to ensure that the nation's food security as also farmers' incomes were not impaired. The government declared agriculture and all related activities as essential services immediately upon announcing the lockdown. This permitted the successful harvesting and efficient procurement of the critical Rabi crop. Procurement operations pumped in ₹78,000 crore as new purchasing power in the hands of the farmers.

The second was to prevent the pressing cash/liquidity crunch from converting to insolvencies and bankruptcies. A moratorium was announced for all businesses for their debt servicing obligations to commercial banks. MSMEs were given an additional credit line of ₹3 trillion without any fresh collateral to further reinforce their access to credit. MSMEs could also avail of new equity from the ₹50,000 crore fund of

funds. These measures provided some succour to a large number of businesses, especially those in the services sectors like hospitality, entertainment, retail etc. which have suffered a near complete loss of revenues during the lockdown. A whopping ₹90,000 crore credit package has been extended to state electricity utilities to enable them to clear their dues to private sector power producers.

Higher self-reliance

The third set of measures were directed to significantly improve the ecosystem for private producers and investors, both in agriculture and manufacturing. Farmers now have the much-needed freedom to choose their clients. Freed from the age-old tyranny of the Essential Commodities Act, 1955, traders and exporters of agro-products can maintain necessary stocks to meet export obligations. With further liberalisation in the defence production sector, India will achieve higher self-reliance in this strategic sector and also emerge as an exporter. Private businesses can now operate in sectors hitherto monopolised or dominated by the public sector enterprises. Finally, in a measure that touches the lives and livelihoods of more than 50 lakh families, street vendors all over the country have been given a credit of ₹10,000 each for re-stocking. Thus, 'the package' has guaranteed the survival of existing production capacities and laid strong grounds for attracting fresh investment to bolster growth.

The size of the stimulus at ₹20.97 trillion is larger than the promise made by the Prime Minister in his address on May 12. At more than 10% of the GDP, it compares favourably with packages announced by other emerging economies. Indian farmers will get the much-needed freedoms, flexibility and financial strength to propel India's economic recovery in the post-COVID-19 period. And buoyed by the stimulus, Indian firms will operate in an ecosystem that will help them become 'Glocal', thereby helping Indian brands command a larger share in to global markets and participate successfully in global value chains.

Rajiv Kumar is Vice Chairman, NITI Aayog. Views are personal

Battling a virus with masks

Mask use, mask etiquette, and mask maintenance can go a long way in our fight against COVID-19

NIKITA MEHRA

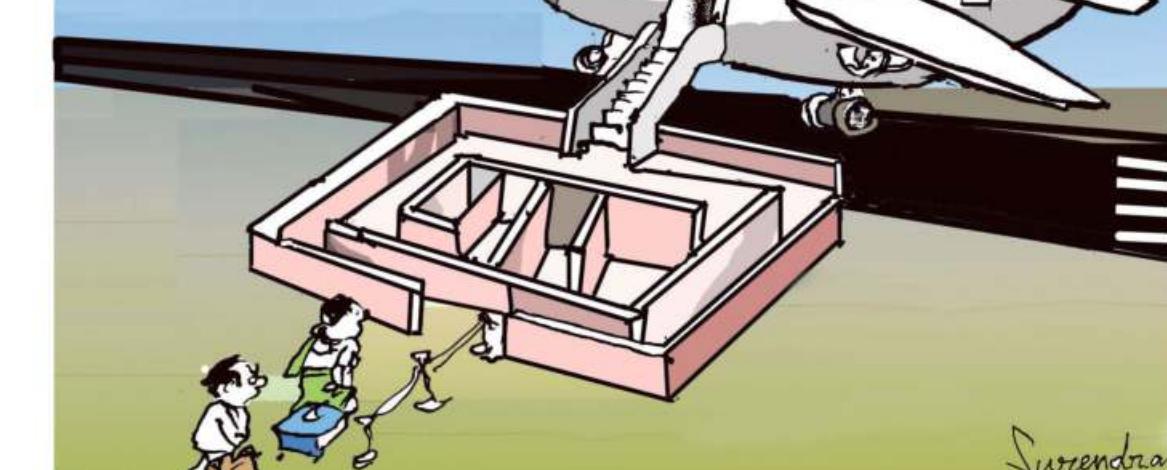
Information about SARS-CoV-2 is now being disseminated widely, if somewhat haphazardly. Concerns over the impact on our health, and the health of our loved ones, continue to dominate our thoughts and headlines. These concerns are of course justified; at the time of publishing this, India has recorded 1,39,868 confirmed cases of COVID-19.

The importance of using masks
The fact that the disease is spread by respiratory droplets and contact is now well understood. While mask use has been made a priority, there is insufficient information in the public domain about the role masks play in the containment of this disease, specifically about mask maintenance and mask etiquette. The maximum transmission distance of the virus aerosol – particles generated in the air during breathing, talking, coughing and sneezing – is about 4 metres. In a study conducted by the National Institute of Health, even after speaking, salivary particles were found to remain floating in the air for eight minutes. These points further emphasise the importance of mask usage.

With the rise in the number of infected individuals, many of whom remain asymptomatic, it is essential not just to wear a face mask but also to choose the right one. Disposable surgical masks are now more readily available in the market. It is crucial to avoid reuse of these masks due to the extreme drop in efficacy after even a single-use; additionally, surgical masks can't be washed. Cloth masks bring with them the advantages of easy production and easy availability. Most importantly, cloth masks can be washed and reused. It is important to note that a study published in the *Annals of Internal Medicine* did not find a difference in the effectiveness of blocking SARS-CoV-2 between cloth and surgical masks.

To obtain the best protection from your mask, ensure that it covers the mouth and nose and as much as possible, avoiding gaps between the face and the mask. Avoid touching your mask once you have worn it. While removing your mask, do not touch the front of it; the mask must be untied from behind. Before and after removing your mask, clean your hands with an alcohol-based hand rub or wash with soap and water. During use, if the mask becomes damp/moist, change it immediately. Mask use, mask etiquette, and mask maintenance can go a long way in our fight against COVID-19. As responsible citizens we should help our government in this battle against the virus.

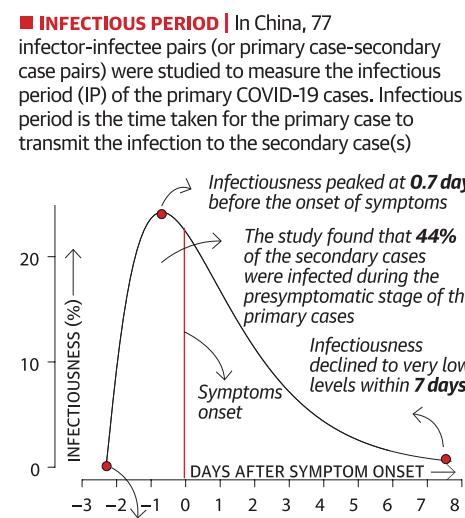
Nikita Mehra is an Assistant Professor of Medical Oncology & Researcher in Molecular Oncology at Adyar Cancer Institute. Views are personal



DATA POINT

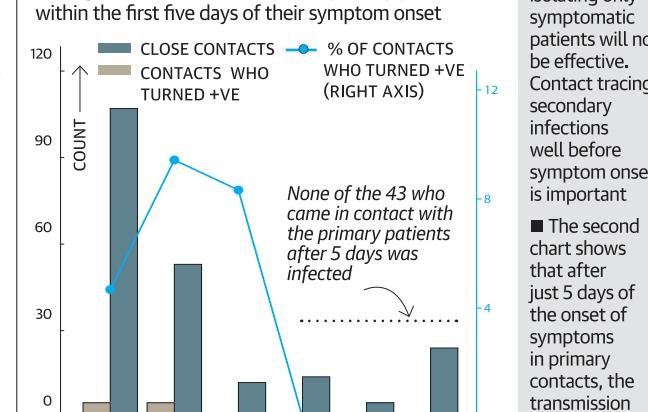
About symptoms and the ability to infect

Patient data from southeast Asian nations show that a significant share of COVID-19 patients passed on the infection to others when they were not showing any symptoms (during the pre-symptomatic period). Also, the ability of a symptomatic patient to transmit the infection drops to very low levels just a week after the onset of symptoms. However, they may continue to test positive for the disease. By The Hindu Data Team



■ NEGATIVE RESULT | Analysis of 766 COVID-19 patients in Singapore shows that 30% tested negative (by nasopharyngeal swab) by day 15, 68% by day 21, 88% by day 28 and 95% by day 33. Thus, some patients may continue to test positive even after a month of illness. However, the above graphs show that their ability to transmit the infection drops to low levels a week after the onset of symptoms.

■ CONTACT HISTORY | In Taiwan, 100 primary patients and their 219 family contacts were studied. Only 11 contacts turned positive. All the 11 were among the 176 who contacted the primary patients within the first five days of their symptom onset.



LAST WORD | As the patients' ability to transmit the virus drops to low levels after a week of the onset of symptoms, they may be discharged early. This will significantly distress the hospital sector.

■ Testing and isolating pre-symptomatic patients sooner may significantly reduce the disease spread

Sources: "Period of Infectivity...COVID-19 Patients", Academy of Singapore; "Temporal dynamics...of COVID-19", Xi He et al.; "Contact Tracing...After Symptom Onset", Hao-Yuan Cheng et al.

Moving beyond geopolitics

In the post-COVID world, countries and tech giants should be obligated to share data in the larger interest of mankind



ANIL TANEJA & GULSHAN RAI

Why due to geopolitical reasons? It is the right of every human being to benefit from the collective data to which he or she contributes.

The current data system is one where the incentives align with the creation and spread of technological innovations but not their governance (think of Cambridge Analytica). Restrictions on the flow of data have increased significantly in the last 7-8 years. Across the world, data protection laws, requirements of data localisation, laws related to weakening of encryption keys and data retention requirements are by and large patchwork. These frameworks are not interoperable. They focus on protection of personal data and privacy and give little thought to the broader impact of data on mobility and social aspects. Data protection frameworks such as the General Data Protection Regulation of the EU and the CLOUD Act of the U.S. are aimed at putting users in control of their data. But they have issues relating to data localisation and cross-border flow of information. These frameworks have not solved the issues of data sharing. Even the UN has not succeeded in bringing consensus in the preparation of a framework on the norms of behaviour in cyberspace. With data flow set to become more important over time, we need government regulations and standard and inter-operable frameworks to govern issues and address risks emerging from these technological innovations.

Data in the post-COVID world

The post-COVID world is expected to be different. Digital equity will require frameworks relating to governance of technology and data that look beyond geopolitical considerations. We need to distinguish individual data from large global data sets. We cannot extrapolate the current human rights framework to human rights in the digital and biological domain. The current concept of privacy and cross-border flow of information may require significant change. There is a dire need to impose obligations for data flow on countries and tech giants in the larger interest of mankind. We need to establish a baseline of global norms of data governance that go beyond privacy and geopolitical considerations. These norms must focus on mechanisms to leverage data to solve problems and ensure consistency, interoperability, privacy and security. It is the right time for a Parliament select committee to look at the data protection framework. At the same time we need to identify an international body to evolve global norms on data governance.

Anil Taneja is an MBA candidate at the Harvard Business School and Gulshan Rai is former National Cyber Security Coordinator, PMO India

The Hindu

FROM THE ARCHIVES

FIFTY YEARS AGO MAY 26, 1970

Unrest in Pakistan
(From an editorial)

As always, there was strong criticism in Pakistan of the recent communal rioting in Maharashtra and an attempt was made to take the matter to the United Nations. No notice is taken of the steady flow of Hindu refugees to West Bengal under pressure of the Muslim majority in East Pakistan. However, the most significant development inside Pakistan has been the spurt in labour disputes, strikes and demonstrations. It is reported that during the past half-year the loss suffered by textile mills in Karachi amounted to over Rs. 3 crores. Several mills are still paralysed by labour disputes. This is, of course, a consequence of the liberal attitude adopted by the Yahya Khan regime towards organised labour, which now has the freedom to demand better wages and living conditions. Politicians of all types have been complaining about high prices and the scarcity of some commodities like edible oil, pulses, sugar, kerosene, etc.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO MAY 26, 1920.

Silently gagging the media.
(From an editorial)

We note from the Lahore Tribune that the reprehensible practice of high Government officials sending for newspaper editors for the purpose of samjaoing and humiliating them on the pretext of their having published anything which had in some way, however remote or insignificant, to do with Government or individual officers and which turned out to be exaggerated, unauthorised or inaccurate in part, is still continued by the Punjab. This practice of silently and contemptuously gagging the Press, it is well-known, was a detested characteristic of the O'Dwyer regime and we shall be very much surprised indeed if it has the approval of an administrator so different in outlook and ideals from Sir Michael O'Dwyer as Sir Edward MacLagan. The Tribune states that an incident, in the nature of a revival of this practice, took place a few days ago. The matter was a very simple one, and the Government had already issued its contradiction which the papers, or most of them, published on that very day. In the circumstances, as the Tribune says, unless the administration only wanted to display its authority which none disputed, it was absolutely unnecessary to adopt a procedure which could be justified, if at all, only in the worst of circumstances.

FROM PAGE ONE

Air travel resumes but many seats go empty

The travellers' misery was compounded as airlines issued credit shells instead of refunding money for the flights cancelled.

"I just received a message of cancellation of my flight which is from Mumbai to Dehradun (25-May-2020). Please process my full refund and don't offer credit shell to me," tweeted Rajdeep Singh Negi to a private airline.

"My e-ticket has been cancelled as flights from

Kolkata are not starting on 26. Please reschedule the flight on 28 with the same charges," a passenger identifying himself as Amit requested another airline.

The number of flights on Day 1 were half of what the Ministry of Civil Aviation had sanctioned. While airlines were given the nod to restart upto 30% of regular flights, 532 flights are a mere 15% of pre-COVID-19 days of nearly 3,300 arrivals and departures.

Testing up in States seeing massive return of migrants

The States have been working with the National Tuberculosis Elimination Programme (NTEP) to deploy TrueNAT machines for COVID-19 testing, he stated. Through this machine, testing is done in such areas/districts where a modern virological laboratory in private or public doesn't exist.

The Ministry also admitted that India doesn't have a medical college or private laboratory with capacity to test such a virus in every district.

So far no State had been overwhelmed with significant backlog of samples to be tested, he noted.

"The use of 375 TrueNAT machine is under way for the States seeing a surge of migrants' return and supplies of 608 additional TrueNAT machines are being mobilised in remote areas. The new machines, though procured for supplementing the needs for TB testing, have been allocated to the States with the flexibility for their deployment based on possible need for enhanced testing," he added.

The daily testing capacity of a TrueNAT machine is 10-12 tests. "Keeping in mind the burden of cases and existing RT-PCR testing capacities, allocation has been done to different States/UTs. With supply of these machines, it would be possi-



A medical team in Andhra Pradesh testing a person for COVID-19. ■ S. RAMBABU

ble to have COVID-19 testing capacities in districts with no RT-PCR testing capacity," said the ICMR.

TrueNAT platform also came with an inbuilt sample collection in viral-lysis buffer, the virus was inactivated and the biosafety requirements were minimal while handling the sample.

Alternate platforms working on GeneXpert and Abbott machines engaged in testing TB and HIV viral load testing respectively have also been mapped and operationalised.

The country now has 609 total labs (431 public and 178 private). It was now testing about 1.1 lakh samples a day and had the capacity to test 1.4 lakh samples, which is being raised to 2 lakh samples, noted the Health Ministry, adding that India developed an - Intelligent Testing Strategy - to remain 'ahead of the virus'.

Deliberations on to end tensions on the LAC

It violated all existing agreements between India and China, the sources noted.

In October last, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh inaugurated a strategically important bridge in this general area on the Shyok river to boost connectivity from Drabuk to the strategically important Daulat-Beg-Oldie (DBO) in eastern Ladakh.

Sandwiched between the strategic Karakoram and Chang Chenmo ranges, the 'Col Chewang Rinchen Setu' is a 430-metre bridge built at an altitude of 14,650 feet built by the Border Roads Organisation (BRO) within 15 months.

The BRO is gearing up to resume work full-time post the COVID-19 lockdown restrictions. It is also building 61 strategic Indo-China Border Roads (ICBRs), measur-

ing 3323.57 km in length, under the direction of the China Study Group (CSG).

The official sources said the work was completely effected in the aftermath of the lockdown briefly and partially resumed after getting special permissions. With restrictions being significantly reduced, the BRO was making efforts to move construction labour in large numbers to forward locations, including by special trains.

The working season was very limited and there was need to catch up on the lockdown delays as well.

In March last, the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Defence expressed satisfaction that the BRO has completed work on 75% of the construction work on the 61 ICBRs, measur-

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INTERVIEW | DHARMENDRA PRADHAN

'India has become more resilient to disruptions in crude supplies'

Government is taking a 'cautious and conscious approach of a balance in fuel price' to use the savings for welfare, says Petroleum Minister

NISTULA HEBBAR

Union Minister for Petroleum and Natural Gas Dharmendra Pradhan speaks on the lockdown due to COVID-19, oil prices and global oil politics set to heat up the world over.

Do you think a harsh lockdown, the kind we have had in India, is justified?

■ A decision was needed in the interest of saving lives. It was made. That gave us precious time to prepare as a society to fight the virus, prevented our systems from being overwhelmed and allowed us the space and opportunity to calibrate our response. We are still in the fight and there might be more benefits that we are not immediately appreciative of.

With lakhs of inter-State workers hitting the highways to go to their native places, do you think they could have been given time to do so before the lockdown was announced?

The economic package announced is a mix of supply-side and demand-side measures



always maintained that the next wave of growth must come from the eastern part of the country and has worked towards that. Our government has also worked towards greater formalisation of the economy and providing social security to workers which will, in the long term, benefit our workers and empower them.

Globally the price of petroleum has tanked, but India is charging its citizens more than three times the price. Even accounting for the fact that revenue needs to be generated, are you

mand dried up. There were no takers for the crude being produced, the world literally ran out of storage space for the crude and petroleum products. The reduction of demand has led to a peculiar situation where the product prices are less than the price of the crude. These negative margins and low crude prices do not reflect the real economics of oil refining and pricing of end products. Our government's view is to take a cautious and conscious approach of a balance in price, save it and use it for welfare.

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman's economic stimulus package has been termed stingy by the Opposition. What is your view on the direct income support they have been asking for instead?

■ The Prime Minister's faith is in empowering people. In order to prove the resolve of

Atma Nirbhar Bharat, the four parameters – land, labour, liquidity and laws – have all been emphasised in the Atma Nirbhar Bharat package of ₹20 lakh crore – equivalent to 10% of the GDP. Learnings from the experiences of 2009-13 have prompted the government to be responsible and not splurge. The economic package announced is a mix of supply-side and demand-side measures, including putting money directly into people's hands by increasing the allocation towards the rural employment guarantee scheme. Strictly supply-side measures also have a demand-side component. If the Micro Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) get greater liquidity, a significant part of it will go in paying wages. It is a sound philosophy because ultimately the dignity of a human is more when he thinks he is contributing, earning honest money and

taking care of his family.

Oil politics is heating up in West Asia and Russia. How do you see India placed in this scenario especially looking at our import basket?

■ India has over the years significantly diversified its sources of crude oil to improve its resilience to disruptions in crude supplies due to geopolitical factors. During the last year, we managed to secure steady supplies of crude oil despite challenges to security in West Asia, particularly attacks on Saudi oil facilities and also due to flare-up in U.S.-Iran tensions. The problem we are facing now is a combination of serious effects on the demand side due to the pandemic and the efforts of OPEC and OPEC-Plus countries to moderate the supply-side factors to address the demand contraction.

So far, the Indian oil marketing companies have not had any problems in securing their supplies as the market is well-supplied despite the production cuts beginning this month (May). In my discussions with the Energy Ministers of top producing countries and in the G20 Extraordinary Energy Ministers' meeting in April, I have stressed the need for addressing the crude oil price volatility while allowing consuming countries such as India to source crude at affordable prices. I think, in the coming months, we are going to see more efforts to balance the supply-demand factors as a majority of countries are trying to resume economic activities with gradual lifting of lockdowns. I am confident that the revival of our domestic demand will surely help improve the global supply-demand equilibrium, thus bringing greater energy market stability.

Opposition mulls strategy to corner govt.

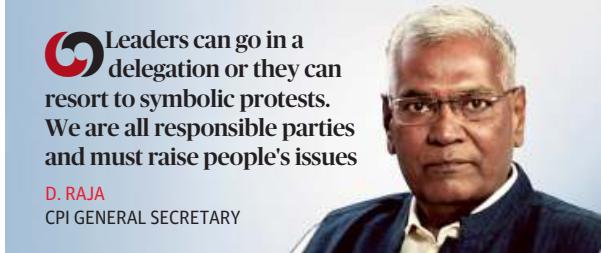
Several leaders have called for more aggressive protests against the Centre's unilateral policies

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

As the nationwide lockdown to prevent the spread of COVID-19 has stretched to more than two months, a section of Opposition leaders are now advocating a more aggressive approach towards the Union government over its handling of the pandemic.

Congress leaders are supposed to form a small group/committee of Opposition leaders to chalk out an common action plan against the Modi government and effectively hit the streets over "centralisation of powers by usurping powers of the



States, dilution of the labour laws, handling the movement of migrant workers and Centre's refusal to go for direct cash transfers" among other issues.

The idea to form a coordination group was suggested by Congress chief Sonia Gandhi last Friday when

committee and an action plan since we discussed in the meeting," Mr. Raja said.

At the start of the lockdown, faced with an unprecedented health crisis, Opposition parties, including Opposition-run State governments, backed the Narendra Modi government completely.

But Opposition leaders do face a tricky situation: how do they organise protests without risking the spread of the virus. "Leaders can go in a delegation or they can resort to symbolic protests.

"Union Government has unabashedly usurped powers vested in the States un-

dermining the constitutionally guaranteed federal democracy," a joint statement issued by 22 Opposition parties last Friday had stated.

On May 22, leaders of the Central trade unions had also held a symbolic protest against the unilateral changes to labour laws.

But Opposition leaders do face a tricky situation: how do they organise protests without risking the spread of the virus. "Leaders can go in a delegation or they can resort to symbolic protests.

"Union Government has unabashedly usurped powers vested in the States un-

Cong. to hold online drive to push for direct cash transfer

'Government insensitive and aloof to plight of citizens'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The Congress will hold on Thursday an online campaign to put pressure on the government to make direct cash transfer of ₹10,000 to all the families outside the income tax bracket to tide over the financial crisis that the extended lockdown has brought upon them.

The party is expecting at least 50 lakh of its workers, office-bearers and sympathisers to participate.

"Lakhs of migrant workers, farmers, workers in unorganised sectors, MSMEs

and other daily wage earners are in grave distress...The government remains insensitive and aloof," he told *The Hindu*.

While the party had been taking relief measures at its end, an institutional intervention was essential to ameliorate the pain of all those suffering because of the extended lockdown.

"Instead of providing support, the Central government continues to ignore the plight of these people and has failed to take any meaningful measures," he said.

Two militants gunned down in Kulgam

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

SRINAGAR

Two unidentified militants were gunned down in an operation in south Kashmir's Kulgam, the police said on Monday.

In the intervening night of May 24 and 25, the police, the Army's 34 Rashtriya Rifles and the CRPF's 18 Battalion at Khud Hanjipora launched an operation on a specific input, a police spokesman said.

"During the search operation, terrorists fired on the search party. In the ensuing encounter, two terrorists were killed. Their identification and affiliation are being ascertained," the spokesperson said.

'Allow online meetings of House panels'

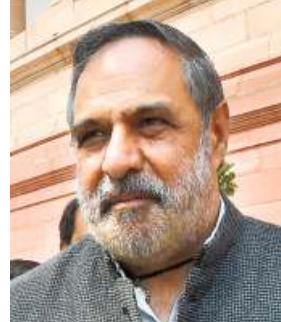
You can't shut a democracy due to the lockdown, says Congress leader Anand Sharma

SOBHA K. NAIR

NEW DELHI

Resumption of domestic flights is not enough to hold meetings of the parliamentary standing committees till Parliament, as an alternative, also arranges for members to join these meetings virtually, Congress leader and Chairman of the Standing Committee on Home Affairs Anand Sharma said.

His comments came even as Parliament is preparing to resume parliamentary panel meetings, which abruptly halted during the extended COVID-19 lockdown. Two presiding officers of Parliament, Rajya Sabha Chairman M. Venkaiah Naidu and Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla, met on Saturday to review



Anand Sharma

the facilities available at the Parliament House to hold meetings while adhering to strict social distancing norms. Parliamentary Affairs Minister Prahpal Joshi, too, was present. Nine rooms in the Parliament House and Annexe building have been identified for the purpose.

Varied rules

Mr. Sharma said you can't shut the democracy because of the lockdown. "Since the flights have started, we will convene the meeting at the earliest. The point is that there is lack of clarity on the quarantine and other measures for flyers. Therefore I see no reason that we have both the provisions, that

sengers. Asymptomatic passengers arriving in Delhi will not require quarantine or isolation.

23 countries

Overall, Mr. Sharma said, there was still a lot of confusion about air travel due to which a virtual mode is essential. If Parliament of 34 nations can use the virtual method to connect, then why not the Indian Parliament, he asked.

He has, meanwhile, written a fresh letter to the Rajya Sabha Secretariat to convene the meeting of the panel on home affairs at the earliest since the Ministry of Home Affairs is at the nub of regulating the lockdown, movement of migrant workers

and other associated issues.

Chairman of the IT committee, Shashi Tharoor, who was one of the earliest to demand a virtual meeting, told *The Hindu* that he is still awaiting the Speaker's consent.

Chairman of the labour committee B. Mahtab, who has written twice to the Speaker on the issue, said he would be writing again on Tuesday seeking to convene the meeting of the panel at the earliest.

Informed sources said, the effort to explore a safe medium to hold meetings virtually was being explored simultaneously. Secretary Generals of the two Houses have been directed to submit a report at the earliest.

Gen. Naravane has hurt Gurkha sentiments, says Nepal Minister

Pokhrel condemns comments on Kalapani dispute

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The Indian Army chief's comments on the Kalapani dispute had hurt the sentiments of Nepali Gurkhas who have a long tradition of sacrifice for India, Nepal's Deputy Prime Minister and Defence Minister Ishwor Pokhrel said on Monday.

In an interview to an online news outlet *The Rising Nepal*, he said General Manoj Naravane's indirect reference to alleged Chinese hand behind the diplomatic spat was "condemnable" and the Nepal Army would fight if necessary.

"With this, the Indian Chief of the Army Staff has also hurt the sentiments of the Nepali Gurkha Army personnel who lay down their lives to protect India. It must now be difficult for them to



stand tall in front of the Gurkha forces," he said.

Mr. Pokhrel termed Gen. Naravane's comments a "political stunt". Such opinions were not expected from the head of the Army, he said.

Gen. Manoj Naravane had said the link road was built on the Indian territory and that there was no cause for

Nepal to agitate. "There is reason to believe that they might have raised this issue at the behest of someone else and that is very much a possibility", he stated during an online seminar on May 15.

Political domain' The Nepal Army has, however, maintained silence on this issue and declined to be drawn into the territorial dispute.

Spokesperson of the Nepal army, Brig. General Bishnu Dev Pandey earlier refused to respond to General Naravane's comments, saying the matter fell in the "political" domain.

On Monday too, he maintained the same position, saying he was "not entitled" to comment on the the opinion of the Defence Minister.

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Ph.:0824-2986321

Email id: smartcitymangaluru@gmail.com Website: www.mangalurusmartcity.net

E-tender Notification on Mangaluru Smart City Limited, Project.

Adv No. 67/2020-21 Date: 22-05-2020

Mangaluru Smart City Ltd invites the Tenders for "Development of Integrated Bus Terminal and Commercial Complex at Pumpwell, Mangaluru, Karnataka through Public Private Partnership (PPP) on Design, Build, Finance, Operate and Transfer (DBFOT) Basis" Interested bidders may

obtain required details from the e-procurement website of Karnataka (www.eproc.karnataka.gov.in)

The Bid details will be available on E-Procurement, Karnataka by 28-05-2020. Pre Bid meeting is

scheduled on 10-06-2020 at 11.00 AM at MSCL Office, Lalbagh, Mangaluru. The bidders have to

participate through online procurement only; the website for "online bidding" is

<http://www.eproc.karnataka.gov.in> Any modification in the tender will be notified through

e-procurement portal only. For Further details regarding the tender please contact Executive Engineer, MSCL, Mangaluru during office hours or over Phone 0824-2986321 and also from website

www.mangalurusmartcity.net or <https://smartnet.niua.org>

Sd/-, Managing Director

Mangaluru Smart City Limited, Mangaluru

SI. No. Indent No. Name of Work Tender amount (Rs. in Cr) Bid Security amount (in Rs.) Construction period Last date for Submission of Tender

1 PPP/08/MSCL/2020-21 "Development of Integrated Bus Terminal and Commercial Complex at Pumpwell, Mangaluru, Karnataka through Public Private Partnership (PPP) on Design, Build, Finance, Operate and Transfer (DBFOT) Basis"

445.00 4.45 CR 3 Years 27-07-2020 17:30

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NIT No.TTD-102022(31)/37/2019-SVAYH-SEC

e-PROCUREMENT TENDER NOTICE

e-tenders are invited for supply of Para Surgical and Laboratory items to S.V.Ayurveda Hospital, TTD, Tirupati for the year 2020-21.

● Bid Document Downloading Start Date : 25-05-2020 from 10.30 a.m.

● Bid Document Downloading End Date : 08-06-2020 up to 12.00 Noon

● Last Date and Time for Receipt of Bids : 08-06-2020 up to 05.00 p.m.

● Date of Opening of Technical Bid : 09-06-2020 11.00 a.m.

● Date of Opening of Financial Bid : 10-06-2020 11.00 a.m.

For work details log in <https://tender.apeprocurement.gov.in> or <http://www.apeprocurement.gov.in>. For details contact phone 0877-2264411/2264666/9908977762. Roc.No.PRA/13918/Adv.2020/PRO/2020; Dated:25-05-2020

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Migrants must get MNS nod, says Raj Thackeray

Party chief says they should also take govt. permission

STAFF REPORTER
MUMBAI

A day after Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath said that States will have to take permission from his government before hiring workers, Maharashtra Navnirman Sena (MNS) chief Raj Thackeray has said that any migrant entering Maharashtra would, in that case, need to take permission from his party, police and the State government.

Mr. Thackeray said on Monday that the Maharashtra government must look into the matter seriously. "In future, migrants desiring to enter our State will need to



Raj Thackeray

above needs to be followed by Maharashtra," he said.

Mr. Adityanath came up with his permission requirement on Sunday, claiming that migrant workers from Uttar Pradesh were not treated well by the States they went to work in. The MNS retort is seen as an aggressive push by the party of its sons of the soil agenda.

Political leaders, including Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray, have said that the exodus of workers from Maharashtra had opened up vacancies in factories and businesses and appealed to the local youth to come forward and take them.



All aboard: Migrants at the Wadala ground in Mumbai boarding buses to catch special trains. ■ EMMANUEL YOGINI

Route congestion issue sorted out: Railways

Issue due to convergence of routes'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Following concerns over several instances of diversion of Shramik Special trains bound for Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, the Railways on Monday said the issue of congestion on these routes had been sorted out.

On Saturday, replying to queries on a Gorakhpur (Uttar Pradesh)-bound Shramik Special train from Maharashtra reaching Odisha, the Railways had said that with 80% of Shramik Special trains going to Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, there was network congestion on the routes, hence, some trains were diverted to alternative routes. "The rail route congestion which was being witnessed on May 23-24, is over. The congestion had occurred due to the convergence of more than two-third rail traffic on routes to Bihar and Uttar Pradesh and late clearance of the terminals due to health protocols

etc., that needed to be completed by State authorities," the Railways said on Monday.

It said the matter had been resolved through "active consultation" with the State governments and also finding other feasible routes for the journey.

It added that as on May 25, till 10 a.m., 3,060 Shramik Special trains had been operated from various States, carrying more than 40 lakh passengers. "Out of the 3,060 Shramik Special trains, 2,608 have been terminated, 453 trains are running," it said.

As per data shared, the top five States from where maximum trains originated are Gujarat (853), Maharashtra (550), Punjab (333), Uttar Pradesh (221) and Delhi (181). Maximum trains terminated at Uttar Pradesh (1,245), followed by Bihar (846), Jharkhand (123), Madhya Pradesh (112) and Odisha (73).

AI can assign middle seats on rescue flights for now: SC

'After June 6, it must comply with interim orders by HC'

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court convened urgently on a public holiday to allow Air India to assign middle seats to passengers on non-scheduled flights to rescue citizens stranded abroad amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

A three-judge Bench led by Chief Justice of India Sharad A. Bobde, on Monday, said the public carrier can fill up its middle seats up to June 6. After that, Air India (AI) would operate in compliance with any interim orders passed by the High Court, which has already scheduled a hearing on June 2.

"In these circumstances, we propose to remand the matter to the Bombay High Court with a request to the High Court to pass an effective interim order after hearing all concerned on the date fixed, June 2," the Supreme Court directed in its six-page order.

The court also made it clear that the Director General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) was free to alter any norms



Wings clipped: A pilot petitioned that the airline was flouting a government order by not keeping the middle seats vacant.

considered necessary during the pendency of the matter in the interest of public health and safety of the passengers rather than commercial considerations.

AI and the government had appealed to the apex court against an interim order on May 22 of the Bombay High Court, which asked the national carrier to operate the flights keeping the middle seats vacant. The High Court order was based on a petition filed by an AI pilot, Deven Yogesh Kanani, who showed photographs of a full capacity flight between San Francisco and Mumbai.

Mr. Kanani said AI was flouting a condition imposed in a government circular to keep the middle seats vacant. The High Court had sought a response from AI and the DGCA on this petition by June 2.

In a virtual court hearing through videoconferencing, the Supreme Court Bench made its displeasure clear about AI's full capacity flights without following social distancing norms. "You should be worried about the health of citizens, not about the health of the airline," Chief Justice Bobde addressed Solicitor General Tushar Mehta.

Several migrant workers have only small thatched

Priyanka questions Yogi's claim

75% of workers who returned from Maharashtra were infected, he had said

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
LUCKNOW

Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra on Monday asked Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath to explain on what basis he had claimed that 75% of the migrant workers who returned to the State from Maharashtra and 50% from Delhi were infected with the novel coronavirus.

While interacting with presspersons on Sunday through video-conferencing, Mr. Adityanath had given these figures, and said the high number of migrant workers having COVID-19 was posing a challenge to Uttar Pradesh.

As many as 75% of migrant workers who returned from Maharashtra, 50% who re-



Where did he derive the figures about his claim... If so [true], then why is the testing so low?
PRIYANKA GANDHI
CONGRESS GENERAL SECRETARY

turned from Delhi and 25-30% of migrants who came from other States were "infected," the Chief Minister said.

"This is a challenge for us. But our teams are working strongly," he said. Mr. Adityanath, however, did not provide any data to back up his numbers.

Maharashtra and Delhi are ruled by non-BJP governments.

Taking to Twitter, Ms. Vadra asked Mr. Adityanath from where did he derive the figures about his claim, dubbing it unverified and irresponsible.

"If so [true], then why is the testing so low," she asked.

Given that over 23 lakh

migrant workers have officially returned to Uttar Pradesh during the lockdown, Ms. Vadra asked whether over 10 lakh people were really infected. However, the government claimed that only 6,228 positive cases had been recorded, she observed.

The Congress leader demanded that the government reveal to the public the testing data and other preparations against COVID-19.

6,497 cases

As per the State government on Monday, the total positive cases are now 6,497, while the active cases stand at 2,668. So far, 1,663 migrant workers who returned from other States have tested positive.

U.P. releases skill map of migrants

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
LUCKNOW

The Uttar Pradesh government on Monday released its first skill map of migrant workers who returned to the State during the lockdown.

The government has said it will provide them employment in the State as per their skills and experience and will constitute a Migrant Commission for the purpose.

So far, 23-24 lakh migrant workers have returned to Uttar Pradesh during the lockdown, the government said.

Construction sector

The largest set of these migrant workers are related to the construction sector, with over 1.52 lakh engaged in work in real estate or construction agencies.

The list also includes painters (26,041), carpenters (16,064), drivers (9,052), electricians and persons associated with electronics (4,980), security guards (3,364), furniture and fitting workers (2,234) and auto-repair mechanics (1,557), said a senior official.

'List to expand'

Awanish Awasthi, Additional Chief Secretary, Home Department, said the list was expected to expand.

Pointing out that around 12,103 migrant workers were linked to the garment and tailoring sector, the official said Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath felt that "if garment hubs can be built in Bangladesh and Vietnam, then why not here in Uttar Pradesh."

Maharashtra issues guidelines for air travel

Passengers to be stamped on left hand for home isolation of 14 days and self-monitoring of health

ADITYA ANAND
MUMBAI

Hours after domestic flight operations resumed in the State, the Maharashtra government on Monday evening issued standard operating procedure (SOP) guidelines for passengers arriving and departing from the State.

According to the guidelines, each arriving passenger will be subject to a temperature check and stamped on the left hand for home isolation of 14 days and self-monitoring of health.

Officials on the ground will be allowed to decide exemptions for those coming to Mumbai for less than seven days



New rules: A passenger at the Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar International Airport in Nagpur. ■ S. SUDARSHAN

ven days or those who have to leave (their place of stay) for office-related or other urgent work. Those passengers whose stay in the city of arrival is less than seven days

and have planned for onward or return journey will have to share the details of the same to be exempted from isolation. They will not be allowed in containment

zones of hotspot areas.

Chief Secretary Ajoy Mehta, in the order, said the guidelines for airports and travel issued by the Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MOHFW) on May 24 would be applicable to all inbound and outbound air travel.

As per the guidelines, nodal officers will be appointed.

Detailed passenger list

The officer will have to be provided with a detailed passenger list at least six hours in advance of a flight. Passengers will be advised to download the Aarogya Setu app and have to fill a self-de-

claration form. Passengers will be subject to thermal screening upon arrival by health officers of the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation or other civic bodies or district administration, as applicable.

A 24/7 reception-cum-helpline desk will be activated. This desk will, in coordination with the police and transport commissioners, have all details of flight information, movement plans and details of arriving passengers.

Those passengers moving outside the red zone will only be on specific reason and if requisite permission has been taken in advance.

ILO urges PM not to dilute labour laws

It responds to unions' plea for action

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The International Labour Organisation (ILO) has informed trade unions of India that its Director-General has expressed concern and urged Prime Minister Narendra Modi to "send a clear message" to the Central and State governments to uphold international labour laws after the recent dilution of laws by some States.

A group of 10 Central trade unions wrote to the ILO in Geneva on May 14, seeking its intervention to protect workers' rights and international labour standards.

'Expressed concern'

In a response to the unions on May 22, the chief of the Freedom Of Association Branch of the ILO's International Labour Standards Department, Karen Curtis, wrote: "Please allow me to assure you that the ILO Director-General has immediately intervened, expressing his deep concern at these recent events and appealing to the Prime Minister."

ter to send a clear message to Central and State governments to uphold the country's international commitments and encourage engagement in effective social dialogue".

Wide representation

The unions that sent the representation to the ILO were the Indian National Trade Union Congress, the All-India Trade Union Congress, the Hind Mazdoor Sabha, the Centre of Indian Trade Unions, the All-India United Trade Union Centre, the Trade Union Coordination Committee, the Self Employed Women's Association, the All-India Central Council of Trade Unions, the Labour Progressive Federation and the United Trade Union Congress.

They sent the representation to the ILO after Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat and some other States either suspended a large number of labour laws for two-three years or diluted them in an attempt to woo industry in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In Ganjam's poorer households, home quarantine is difficult

Around 70,000 migrants have returned to the district

SIB KUMAR DAS
BERHAMPUR

After 21 days of institutional quarantine, Maheswar Swain and Bangali Swain of Bharasa village of Khallikote block in Odisha's Ganjam district, a couple who have returned from Surat, are spending their mandatory home quarantine period in a makeshift hut to check the possible spread of COVID-19.

Akhyana Pahana, another returnee from Surat to the Bharasa village, spends his home quarantine period on the verandah of his Phailin Cyclone-damaged house or under a nearby tree.

Nine members of Jhadia Gouda's family from the same village are spending their days of home quarantine in their single room house.

In a virtual court hearing through videoconferencing, the Supreme Court Bench made its displeasure clear about AI's full capacity flights without following social distancing norms. "You should be worried about the health of citizens, not about the health of the airline," Chief Justice Bobde addressed Solicitor General Tushar Mehta.



Home at last: Maheswar and Bangali Swain in their makeshift quarantine hut. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

houses that have been damaged by past cyclones.

Inherent hardships

But despite the hardships inherent in their home quarantine, most are only too happy to reunite with family members after a long period of anxiety.

Such experiences are playing out in most villages of Ganjam district, which has already welcomed around 70,000 migrant workers returning from outside Odisha due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Those who had returned to the district in the last week of April or the beginning of May have completed their institutional quarantine to spend a mandatory seven days in home quarantine. But the lack of adequate rooms and infrastructure at homes has created problems in the mandatory home quarantine period.

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Inherent hardships

But the lack of adequate rooms and infrastructure at homes has created problems in the mandatory home quarantine period.

The Odisha government had in the past increased the institutional quarantine period to 21 days, followed by seven days of mandatory home quarantine for the returnees. This has now been reduced to seven days institutional quarantine followed by seven days home quarantine for persons not having any symptoms of COVID-19.

They were sent to police custody on Sunday in an alleged murder case linked to the riots.

"Our Constitution allows every citizen to show dissent and stage democratic, non-violent protests. The two students had like many others across the country resorted to peaceful protests against the unconstitutional Citizenship Amendment Act," Mr. Gogoi said.

"Their arrest is vindictive and undermines the Bharatiya Janata Party's bid to curb the freedom of expression," he said, appealing to the Mr. Shah to instruct the Delhi police for their release.

CM
YK

A-BM-BME

China warns U.S. of retaliation if punished for Hong Kong law

Washington has said the law could cost the city its preferential U.S. trading status

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
HONG KONG

China on Monday threatened counter-measures against the U.S. if it was punished for plans to impose a sedition law on Hong Kong, that the business hub's security chief hailed as a new tool that would defeat "terrorism".

Beijing plans to pass a new security law for Hong Kong that bans treason, subversion and sedition after months of massive, often-violent pro-democracy protests last year.

But many Hong Kongers, business groups and Western nations fear the proposal could be a death blow to the city's treasured freedoms and thousands took to the streets on Sunday despite a ban on mass gatherings introduced to combat coronavirus.

As police dispersed the crowds with tear gas and water cannon, Washington's National Security Advisor Robert O'Brien warned the new law could cost the city its preferential U.S. trading status.

But China's Foreign Ministry said Beijing would react to any sanctions from Washington. "If the U.S. insists on hurting China's interests, China will have to take every necessary measure to counter and oppose this," Foreign Ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian told reporters on Monday.

Hong Kong has become the latest flashpoint in soaring tensions between the world's two super powers which China has likened to "the brink of a new Cold War".

The refusal to grant Hong



Call for rollback: Pro-democracy protesters gathering in Causeway Bay, Hong Kong, on Sunday to protest against China's new security law. ■ AFP

Kongers democracy has sparked rare bipartisan support in an otherwise bitterly divided Washington during the Donald Trump administration.

Foreign-backed plot

Beijing portrays the city's protests as a foreign-backed plot to destabilise the motherland and says other nations have no right to interfere in how the international business hub is run.

Protesters, who have hit the streets in their millions, say they are motivated by years of Beijing chipping away at the city's freedoms since it was handed back to China by Britain in 1997.

Hong Kong enjoys liberties unseen on the mainland, as well as its own legal system and trade status.

Campaigners view the security law proposal as the most brazen move yet by Beijing to end free speech and the city's ability to make

its own laws. Of particular concern is a provision allowing Chinese security agents to operate in Hong Kong, with fears it could spark a crackdown on those voicing dissent against China's communist rulers.

The proposed law, which China's rubber-stamp legislature is expected to act on quickly, will also bypass Hong Kong's own legislature. The city's influential Bar Association on Monday described the proposed motion as "worrying and problematic" – and warned it may even breach the territory's mini-constitution. The proposal has spooked investors with Hong Kong's stock exchange suffering its largest drop in five years on Friday.

Hong Kong's government has welcomed the law. "Terrorism is growing in the city and activities which harm national security, such as 'Hong Kong independence', become more rampant," Security Minister John Lee said in a statement.

U.S. sanctions

Meanwhile, in a separate development that signals rising tensions between China and the U.S., Beijing vowed to shield a Chinese government institute and eight companies sanctioned by the U.S. over alleged human rights violations in the restive Xinjiang region, where China is accused of mass repression of mostly Muslim minorities.

The U.S. Department of Commerce announced the sanctions on Friday, saying they were triggered by human rights abuses against Uighurs and other minority groups in Xinjiang in China's far northwest. Beijing urged Washington to reverse the decision, saying the Commerce Department had "stretched the concept of national security" to "meddle in China's affairs and harm China's interests".

U.S. limits travel from Brazil due to virus

Most non-U.S. citizens, who had visited in the last two weeks, face restrictions

REUTERS
WASHINGTON/BRASILIA

The White House on Sunday said it was restricting travel from Brazil to the United States, two days after the South American nation became the world's No. 2 hot-spot for COVID-19 cases.

The travel ban was a blow to right-wing Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro, who has followed the example of U.S. President Donald Trump in addressing the pandemic, fighting calls for social distancing and touting unproven drugs. The Brazilian President's office did not respond to a request for comment.

"The U.S. maintains a strong partnership with Brazil and we work closely to mitigate the socio-economic and health impacts of COVID-19 in Brazil," the U.S. Embassy in Brasilia said in a statement.

The new restrictions come into force on May 28, the Embassy said, prohibiting most non-U.S. citizens from travelling to the United

States if they have been in Brazil in the last two weeks. Green card holders, close relatives of U.S. citizens and flight crew members, among select others, would be exempt.

Brazil's Foreign Ministry called it a technical decision in the context of "important bilateral collaboration" to fight the COVID-19 pandemic, highlighting U.S. donations of \$6.5 million and a new White House promise of 1,000 respirators.

White House Press Secretary Kayleigh McEnany said the new restrictions would help ensure foreign nationals do not bring additional infections to the United States, but would not apply to the flow of commerce between the two countries.

Temporary move

National Security Adviser Robert O'Brien earlier on Sunday told CBS's "Face the Nation" he hoped the move could be reconsidered at some point.

"We hope that'll be tem-



A pro-Bolsonaro demonstration in Brasilia, Brazil, on Sunday. ■ REUTERS

porary, but because of the situation in Brazil, we're going to take every step necessary to protect the American people," Mr. O'Brien said.

An adviser to Brazil's President played down Mr. Trump's move, highlighting shared views on fighting the virus with unproven antimalarial drugs such as hydroxychloroquine. "There is nothing specific against Brazil," tweeted Filipe Martins.

Two hours earlier, he

wrote that Mr. Trump had "opened a direct line for the exchange of information about the protocol for using hydroxychloroquine and other treatments for the virus."

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration warned last month about using the drug to treat the COVID-19 respiratory disease caused by the novel coronavirus, citing "reports of serious heart rhythm problems" in patients receiving the medicine.

Mr. Bolsonaro's insistence on the drug's potential and defiance of state isolation orders pushed out two Health Ministers in a month, both trained doctors. The acting head of the Health Ministry, an Army General, issued guidelines this week to expand use of the drug in coronavirus cases.

Brazil's Health Ministry raised its tally of confirmed cases by 15,813 on Sunday to 3,63,211 cases, second in the world behind the U.S., with more than 1.6 million cases.

Johnson defends aide

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
LONDON

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson on Monday failed to draw a line under a scandal over his top aide Dominic Cummings allegedly breaching coronavirus rules. Mr. Johnson told the nation on Sunday that Mr. Cummings was following his paternal instincts by dropping off his baby son at his grandparents' house while he and his wife were sick. "I think he followed the instincts of every father and every parent," said Mr. Johnson.

Shinzo Abe lifts state of emergency

Restrictions have been eased for the whole country now

REUTERS
TOKYO

Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe lifted a state of emergency for Tokyo and four remaining areas on Monday after the number of infections fell across the country, but warned that it could be reimposed if the virus started spreading again.

The move meant that the whole country would now have the social distancing curbs loosened, after an initial lifting of restrictions for most areas on May 14.

Mr. Abe said that the total

amount of stimulus from two economic packages would exceed 200 trillion yen (\$1.86 trillion) but it would still take considerable time to get back to normal life while controlling infection risks. "Today we are taking a firm step towards the next stage following the removal of the state of emergency," the visibly relaxed Prime Minister told reporters gathered in Tokyo.

Japan has escaped an explosive outbreak with more than 16,600 infections and 839 deaths so far, according to NHK public broadcaster.

Afghan government frees 100 Taliban prisoners

Peace prevails on day 2 of ceasefire

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
KABUL

Afghan authorities released 100 Taliban prisoners on Monday as part of the government's response to a surprise, three-day ceasefire the insurgents called to mark the Id al-Fitr festival.

The pause in fighting, on the second of its kind in Afghanistan's nearly 19-year-old war, appeared to be holding on day two after the government welcomed the truce by announcing plans to release up to 2,000 Taliban inmates.

President Ashraf Ghani said his administration was also ready to hold peace talks with the Taliban, seen as key to ending the war in the impoverished country.

"The government of Afghanistan has today released 100 Taliban prisoners from Bagram prison," said National Security Coun-



Taliban prisoners after their release from Bagram prison on Monday. ■ AFP

cil spokesman Javid Faisal. He said the prisoner release was to "help the peace process" and will continue until 2,000 prisoners are freed.

The Taliban insists Kabul must release all 5,000 members as agreed in the deal with the U.S. "This process should be completed in order to remove hurdles in the way of commencement of intra-Afghan negotiations," Taliban spokesman Suhail Shaheen said on Twitter.

Wuhan uses sample pooling to conduct 6.57 million tests in 10 days

This includes a record 1.47 million tests on Saturday

ANANTH KRISHNAN

Wuhan, the city at the centre of China's COVID-19 outbreak, has conducted 6.5 million tests for COVID-19 in the past 10 days, officials said on Monday following a massive citywide campaign launched on May 14.

The city launched the unprecedented 10-day campaign to test all of its 11 million residents after a cluster of asymptomatic infections was reported on May 9.

Target of 11 million

Between May 14 and May 23, 6.57 million tests were conducted, the health authority said, falling a little short of the ambitious 11 million target, which is expected to be reached this week. The city still managed to carry out a record 1.47 million nucleic acid tests in a single day, on Saturday, which marked a



A swab sample being taken from a child in Wuhan on May 16. ■ AFP

15-fold jump in the daily testing prior to the campaign.

The tests, which were free, were carried out by throat swabs in designated locations around the city. Each of the city's 13 administrative districts was tasked with coming up with a plan, which would first prioritise residential areas where cases had been reported. Children under six were not tested.

The city managed to carry out such a large number by a method called sample pooling. *The Wall Street Journal* reported. After individual samples are collected, five to ten are bundled and processed in a single nucleic acid test. The entire group is cleared if the test comes out negative. The technique goes back to the Second World War when the U.S. military pooled samples for syphilis screening, *The Journal* said.

The tests so far have not thrown up a high number of asymptomatic cases. On Monday, 38 new asymptomatic cases were reported and Wuhan now has a total of 326 asymptomatic cases under observation.

Wuhan had completed three million tests in total before the campaign was launched on May 14.

Ardern continues with TV show despite quake

No damage reported due to temblor

REUTERS
WELLINGTON

An earthquake struck near New Zealand's capital on Monday morning, shaking many residents, including Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern who continued with a live TV interview at the Parliament building. The 5.8 magnitude earthquake was 37 km deep and the epicentre was 30 km northwest of Levin, a city in New Zealand's North Island close to the capital Wellington, according to Geonet.

Although no damages were reported, it lasted for more than 30 seconds and caused panic in Wellington with several people in offices and homes getting under their tables for cover.

The tremors started as Ms. Ardern was on TV from the Parliament building, called the beehive. "Quite a decent shake here... if you



New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern. ■ AP

see things moving behind me. The beehive moves a little more than most," she joked on the AM Show on Newshub. Ms. Ardern assured the host that she was safe and the interview resumed. "I'm not under any hanging lights and I look like I am in a structurally strong place," she added.

When updated later, she said it was "not an unreasonable shake".

INTERVIEW | JEFF SMITH

'U.S. is now more clear in support for India on China border issues'

Academic Jeff Smith points out that Washington is more forthcoming in recognising the McMahon Line and supporting Indian sovereignty over Arunachal Pradesh

ANANTH KRISHNAN

you think both are linked?

Amid heightened tensions on the India-China border, the outgoing top U.S. diplomat for South and Central Asia, Alice Wells, on May 20 hit out at China, saying the tensions reminded the world of the "threat" posed by Beijing. China slammed the remarks as "nonsense". Jeff Smith, Research Fellow at The Heritage Foundation in Washington, explains why her comments are significant, with the U.S. in the past not forthcoming about expressing support on the boundary issue. Excerpts:

Ambassador Alice Wells has said the border incidents have reflected a pattern of China's behaviour, also seen in the South China Sea. Do

you think both are linked?

■ Ambassador Wells made a series of fairly robust assertions in her remarks, including underscoring U.S. recognition of the McMahon Line and Indian sovereignty over Arunachal Pradesh. These are in fact long-standing positions of the U.S. government, but positions it has not always been forthcoming about. In 2012, I recall asking State Department officials, when was the last time the U.S. government reiterated support for the McMahon Line and Indian sovereignty over Arunachal Pradesh? They replied they couldn't find any comments on the matter in a search of archives stretching back to 2000. Having Ambassador Wells reiterate the position at a time

of crisis is noteworthy. I'm hesitant to draw connections among the different fronts, because I do think China calibrates each policy individually.

Do you expect to see a different approach from the U.S. towards the region as concerns about China rise?

■ I think the U.S. government wants to ensure that we're in a position to facilitate stronger security ties with any of these countries that are interested. I think that, frankly, we've done a good job in the last few years with the Quad [U.S.-India-Japan-Australia], with not only reviving it, but with upgrading it to the ministerial level and adding new aspects to the quad like counterterrorism exercises.

Over the years, the U.S. has developed an understanding of India's complex ties with China

There hasn't been a wave of regional balancing activity the way some realist theorists might have predicted, in part because China has done a very effective job winning

over elites in neighbouring capitals, and convincing them of the economic benefits of engagement with China.

Is the China factor driving the deepening security cooperation between India and the U.S.?

■ The amount of progress the [Narendra] Modi and [Donald] Trump administrations have made over the last three years or so is remarkable. If you just look at the revival and upgrading of the Quad, the establishment of a 2+2 Foreign and Defence Ministers dialogue, the signing of COMCASA [Communications Compatibility and Security Agreement], the likely signing of the BECA [Basic Exchange and Cooperation

Agreement] this year, the stationing of an Indian officer at CENTCOM [Central Command], our first tri-service military exercise. We had a joint sail through the South China Sea that was joined by Japan and the Philippines. If I had a wish list of items to strengthen the U.S.-India strategic partnership before the Trump administration, I'd say they've already accomplished 90% of them.

In the past, U.S. administrations have been sensitive to India's own considerations vis-à-vis China. Has that changed? Is the Trump administration pushing countries to choose?

■ I don't think that has changed. It's been 15 years

since the civil nuclear deal was announced.

In that time I think Washington has developed an understanding of India's unique sensitivities, and its complex relationship with China. And if you look at the record, to my knowledge the Trump administration has not really pushed for India to assume any positions on China it is uncomfortable with.

It's certainly been encouraged when India has supported things like upgrading the Quad or engaging in a joint sail through the South China Sea. Where there has been some friction, it has been over sanctions related to Iran and Russia. On China, the Trump administration hasn't made any attempt to force India to choose.</

April pharma exports witness uptick

N. RAVI KUMAR
HYDERABAD

Pharma exports from India grew by a small, less than 1% in April, amid the lockdown for COVID-19 that impacted production as well as movement of the products.

It is something to cheer about, said Pharmaceuticals Export Promotion Council of India Director General Udaya Bhaskar about the April 2020 export of \$1,531.06 million.

What made this uptick special, as per a quick estimate of Pharmexcil, is that exports fared better than the domestic market where revenues reportedly fell in the same month, he said. A good part of the push in exports could be attributed to the shipment of the piled-up stocks of March, he said, pointing out how export performance in the last month of 2019-20 was a minus 23.24% year-on-year. It also dragged pharma exports in the last quarter down - a negative growth of 2.97% and impacted the annual performance as well.

Domestic market hit
While challenges remained the same for pharmaceutical manufacturers, exports were better on account of the easing in logistics, whereas domestic revenues were impacted as lockdown curbs impacted movement of professionals and people, and hospitals were only attending to emergencies. An industry leader recently said primary demand was likely to be impacted as patients did not get to meet their doctors during the lockdown.

The domestic pharma market as well the pharma export revenues are around \$20 billion each, Mr. Bhaskar said.

On how raw material availability was an issue for the industry, he said usually 3-4 months of inventory of APIs (active pharmaceutical ingredients) and packaging material was maintained by the companies. Since the shipments that arrived in December were in use and supplies from China were yet to come back full steam, a clear picture will emerge by this month end, he said.

Bharti Airtel parent eyes \$1 bn from stake sale to pay off loans

Move to help telco clean up debt overhang as promoter debt also impacts ratings

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

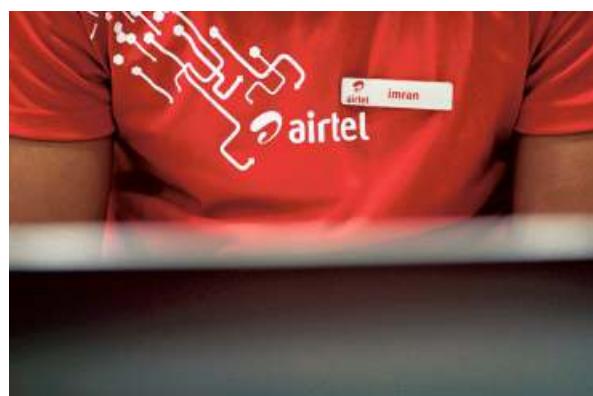
Bharti Telecom, the promoter firm of Bharti Airtel, plans to raise \$1 billion by selling a 2.75% stake in the mobile services provider, *The Hindu* has learnt.

The block deal, which is likely to take place on Tuesday, will be conducted at a floor price of ₹558 per equity share through secondary placement, according to a person aware of the development.

This is a discount of 6% to the last closing price of ₹593.20 on May 22 (Friday) on the National Stock Exchange.

The stock exchange was closed on Monday (May 25) on account of Eid-Ul-Fitr.

Another source said the move will help make Bharti Telecom debt free. "Post the deal, there will be zero debt at promoter level," the source said. Bharti Tele-



Ringing in money: The block deal, involving about 150 million shares, will be conducted by J.P. Morgan India. ■REUTERS

com's shareholding in Bharti Airtel stands at about 38.79%, as per information available on the BSE.

The source added that this will help Bharti Airtel by cleaning up debt overhang as many rating agencies take into account the promoter company's debt as well.

"The move will also create capacity at Bharti Telecom

for any further capital or shareholder support requirement at Bharti Airtel."

The block deal, involving about 150 million shares, will be conducted by J.P. Morgan India Pvt. Ltd.

Shares at record highs

Interestingly, the move comes at time when Bharti Airtel shares have been trad-

ing at near record highs since it announced its financial results last week.

The company had posted a loss of ₹5,237 crore for the January-March 2020 quarter due to an exceptional charge on account of reassessment of statutory dues.

Without the exceptional item, the net loss for the quarter was ₹471 crore, the company had said.

Bharti Airtel's revenue for the quarter, however, grew 15% to ₹23,723 crore year-on-year.

Higher ARPU

Following the hike in tariffs last December and an increase in 4G customer base, Bharti Airtel also saw its ARPU (average revenue per user) going up to ₹154 in the re-

ported quarter.

This is against an ARPU of ₹135 in the October-December 2019 period, and ₹123 in the year-ago quarter.



The lockdown since March 25 has forced people to stay indoors, cutting fuel demand by 45.8% in April.

this month.

Indian refiners operated at about 72% of their overall capacity of about 5 million bpd, the data showed.

Indian Oil Corp, the country's top refiner, operated its plant at about 53% capacity, while use at the refineries owned by its subsidiary Chennai Petroleum plunged to about 33% of capacity, the data showed. Reliance Industries Ltd. operated its export-focused 700,000 bpd Jamnagar refinery at about 87% capacity.

Lockdown extensions will be disastrous'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

Mahindra Group chairman Anand Mahindra on Monday said lockdown extensions are not just economically disastrous, but would also create another medical crisis. While acknowledging that choices are not easy for policymakers, he said a lockdown extension will not help.

"Lockdown extensions aren't just economically disastrous, as I had tweeted earlier, but also create another medical crisis," Mr. Mahindra said in a tweet. He was referring to an article that highlighted "the dangerous psychological effects of lockdowns and the huge risk of neglecting non-COVID-19 patients."

He said, "The numbers will continue to rise and the focus must be on rapid expansion of field hospital beds with oxygen lines."

He further said, "The army has enormous expertise in this."

ONGC may buy IL&FS' 26% stake in Tripura power arm

IL&FS invites expressions of interest for share acquisition

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI

State-owned energy major ONGC, along with partners, is likely to buy IL&FS's 26% stake in ONGC Tripura Power Company Ltd. (OTPL), which owns and operates a 726.6 MW gas-based power plant in Tripura supplying power to the northeast region.

IL&FS has invited expressions of interest (EoI) for acquisition of 26% of the issued and outstanding shares of OTPC.

"ONGC will have the right of first refusal for IL&FS's 26% stake and the company will exercise its right," a person in the know of the development told *The Hindu*.

OTPC operates one of India's largest gas-based power project, and has load-centre advantage, with access to the energy deficit northeastern region of India as well as Bangladesh.

The plant also has potential for expansion through the addition of two 363.3 MW units for which majority

approvals are already in place, so as to reach the total of 1,453 MW capacity.

OTPC holds 26% stake in North East Transmission Company Ltd., which has developed a 1,325.6 ckt. km, 400 KV interstate transmission line in Assam, Meghalaya and Tripura, from the project site to the substation of Power Grid Corporation.

ONGC holds 50% in OTPC while 23.5% is held by India Infrastructure Fund-II (managed by Global Infrastructure Partners) and Government of Tripura holds 0.5%.

"Any additional stake by ONGC will make OTPC a government-owned company," said another source in the know of the development, adding that IL&FS's existing 26% stake may be divided among existing promoters on a proportionate basis.

ONGC chairman Sashi Shankar did not respond to calls from *The Hindu*.

HDFC profit drops as virus provision surges

Lender piles up ₹30,000-crore cash chest: 26% loans under moratorium

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI**Wrong timing**

KEKI MISTRY,
VICE-CHAIRMAN & CEO HDFC

METRICS	Q4 FY20	Q4 FY19	Growth %
Dividend Income (₹Cr.)	₹2.00	₹537.00	(99.63)
Net Profit (₹ Cr)	2,232.53	2,861.58	(21.98)
Earning per share (Basic, ₹)	12.86	16.68	

ment, we have kept a huge amount of liquidity on our balance sheet. We have been slowly building up the level of liquidity.

"With the dividend distribution tax being abolished, some of the subsidiary companies of the Corporation did not pay interim dividend," HDFC said. Profit on investment was only ₹2 crore (₹321 crore).

The lender made a special provision of ₹1,274 crore during the quarter, including COVID-related provisions, compared with the ₹398 crore of the year-earlier period.

"Given the external invest-

lakh. "Till March 15 [FY20], we had a very robust growth. Then, because of the lockdown in the second half of March, which is highest, we had very tepid growth and hardly did any disbursement.

The 14% growth on AUM basis for the individual loans

have to be considered in that light. The growth would have been higher if that had not happened," he said.

The gross non-performing loans as at March 31, 2020

stood at ₹8,908 crore, or 1.99% of the loan portfolio. The non-performing loans of the individual portfolio stood at 0.95% and that of the non-individual portfolio at 4.71%.

Mr. Mistry said there was an increase in bad loans compared with the October-December quarter.

"Over 95% of our borrowers pay money electronically. [For] a little over 4% of our borrowers, we have to physically contact, speak to them and collect money. Because of the lockdown in the second half of March, it was not possible to do that. Therefore, individual NPAs increased. Once normalcy returns, we will get back to the levels which we used to see," he said.

"As of date, approximately 26% of the Corporation's loans under management have opted for the moratorium. Individual loans under moratorium account for 21% of the individual loan portfolio," HDFC said.

Higher wheat procurement this year

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

The government's wheat procurement in the 2020-21 marketing year has surpassed last year's 34.13 million tonnes (MT), surmounting impediments in the wake of COVID-19.

Wheat procurement target has been set at 40.7 MT for the 2020-21 marketing year. The food ministry said the overall wheat procurement had touched 34.15 MT as on May 24 in the current marketing year, surpassing last year's figure of 34.13 MT.

IDFC First Bank top brass takes pay cut

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI

IDFC First Bank on Monday said that its senior management had volunteered to take a 10% cut in compensation in the current financial year 2020-21.

V. Vaidyanathan, MD & CEO, had offered to take a pay cut of 30%.

"The bank also paid 100% of the variable pay to 78.2% of employees for the period pertaining to FY19-20 despite the pandemic. Variable pay for FY20 was cut more, progressively, for employees with greater seniority, and bonus for senior management was cut by 65%," the bank said.

Crude processing sees biggest drop since 2003

Slumps 29% in Apr. on lockdown effect

REUTERS

India's crude oil processing in April slumped by 28.8% from a year earlier, its biggest drop since at least 2003, as a nationwide lockdown weighed on fuel demand and forced refiners to cut production.

Refiners processed about 14.75 million tonnes, or 3.6 million barrels per day (bpd) of oil last month, government data showed.

Without the exceptional item, the net loss for the quarter was ₹471 crore, the company had said.

Bharti Airtel's revenue for the quarter, however, grew 15% to ₹23,723 crore year-on-year.

INTERVIEW | LAV CHATURVEDI

'An opportune time to invest in markets'

Clarity on economic recovery to unfold over 2 quarters: Reliance Securities CEO

ASHISH RUKHAIYAR
Markets are likely to remain volatile with a downward bias as COVID-19 will continue to impact companies; the current fiscal is set to be a washout in terms of earnings, said Lav Chaturvedi, ED and CEO, Reliance Securities. Interview excerpts:

Do you think the stock markets have reached their bottom?

Given the current economic scenario and ambiguity over corporate earnings, market momentum will remain volatile with a downward bias.

From a valuation perspective, Nifty currently trades at 21.5x of earnings and 2.7x of book value, which looks to be fairly valued. However, given the about 17% contraction in IIP for March 2020 and expectation of a persistent decline in subsequent months, earnings growth visibility looks cloudy.

Hence, a contraction in markets cannot be ruled out. Other than earnings, the market, in the short term, would be driven by foreign flows and execution of the stimulus package.

What factors will dictate market direction? In the near-term, how effectively the government executes its hefty economic package, progress of the ongoing lockdown – especially in red zones which contribute over 50% to India's GDP – the RBI's likely reactions to

Financial year 2021 is going to be a 'washout' from a corporate earnings perspective



corporate earnings in the June quarter?

[The] June quarter may be the worst [for] corporate earnings [going] by management commentaries for several corporates and the channel checks done by our research teams. While we are seeing partial resumption of economic activity, which may be further eased, it may take a couple of months to bring economic activity to the pre-lockdown level. We should also not forget we are still seeing a steady rise in new COVID cases, especially in red zones where a significant easing of restrictions is doubtful.

After record outflows in March, FPI selling slowed in April though they still remained net sellers...

The government's recent move to increase the FPI limit in domestic firms and recent dialogues for attracting more FDI after sensing an opportunity from shifting of base from China to other countries by several global companies bode well for FPI participation in the long run.

However, we are skeptical about FPIs turning net buyers in the near term, given the deterioration at the macro level and possible repercussions on sovereign ratings. FPIs would wait for clarity on the Centre's financing and on corporate earnings' prospects. Given the current scenario, what avenues can a retail investor look at to invest?

For retail investors, direct equity and mutual funds / ETFs (especially SIPs) are always the preferred mode of investment. The market is still down by 25% from its 52-week high seen in January 2020, which made valuations attractive for a number of mid-cap companies that maintain strong corporate governance, healthy balance sheets and which generate strong cash flows. One should look at value stocks that have a high margin of sa-

fe and can generate higher delta in the next 1-2 years.

In the current context, asset allocation should be made for gold too, anywhere from 5% to 15%, based on overall risk appetite.

Undoubtedly, FY21 is going to be a washout fiscal from a corporate earnings perspective. Even for FY22, there is ambiguity over the quantum of potential earnings recovery. Clarity will emerge over the next couple of quarters as to whether we are looking at a V-, U- or L-shaped recovery both for the economy and the market. In any of the scenarios, it's an opportune time now to begin investing in markets.

IN BRIEF



Woods-Manning duo prevails in charity match

MIAMI Tiger Woods and partner NFL quarterback legend Peyton Manning beat Phil Mickelson and his partner, another NFL quarterback legend Tom Brady in an entertaining made-for-television charity golf event on Sunday that raised \$20 million for coronavirus relief efforts. The 18-hole match included nine holes of four-ball and nine holes of modified alternate shot, with on-course challenges for charitable funds. Woods and Manning held off a back-nine rally from Mickelson and Brady for a one-up victory in the 18-hole match play format. **AFP**

Wait at NIS gets longer

UTHRA GANESAN

NEW DELHI

After more than two months of staying away from the actual field and mats, the elite Indian athletes and weightlifters were expected to finally step out and take their first steps on resumption of training at the National Institute of Sports, Patiala starting Monday. That, however, hasn't happened.

Despite assurances from the administration and Sports Authority of India on Saturday, no training was possible on Monday for anyone. The athletes too remain in the dark about any resumption.

Shot-putter Tajinder Pal Singh Toor said he had no idea when things would start. "As of now we have no information about anything. We are still restricted to our rooms and the hostel," he said.

Carlsen and Dubov cruise

RAKESH RAO

NEW DELHI

Taking the shortest possible route, Magnus Carlsen stopped Wesley So 2.5-0.5 and Daniil Dubov blanked Sergey Karjakin 3-0 in the first of their best-of-three mini-matches for a place in the semifinals of the \$150,000 Lindores Abbey Rapid Challenge.

Sunday proved an off-day for Karjakin in the four-game mini-match.

So lost two games to Carlsen and opted to draw the third in just 18 moves.

The results: Quarterfinals (first mini-match): Magnus Carlsen (Nor) bt Wesley So (USA) 2.5-0.5.

Daniil Dubov (Rus) bt Sergey Karjakin (Rus) 3-0.

Hockey legend Balbir Singh Sr. passes away

Three-time Olympic gold winner and manager of only World Cup-winning side succumbs to prolonged illness

UTHRA GANESAN

NEW DELHI

Three-time Olympic champion and one of the greatest ever hockey players, Balbir Singh Dosanjh passed away after prolonged illness on Monday morning.

Known as Balbir Singh Senior to all, the 95-year-old was hospitalised on May 8 after complaining of high fever and breathing problems. He suffered three cardiac arrests but had been stable since May 13.

Ventilator support

However, his condition worsened after a fresh blood clot was detected in his brain and pneumonia patches in his lungs on May 18. He had been semi-comatose and on ventilator support since then.

"He died at around 6:30 this morning," affirmed Abhijit Singh, Director Fortis Hospital, Mohali. Balbir Singh lived with his daughter Sushbir Bhomia and grandson Kabir in Chandigarh. Kabir confirmed the news.

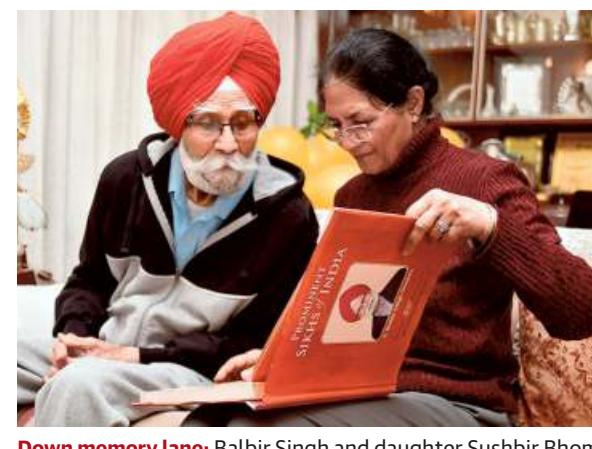
Balbir Singh had been un-



Hat-trick achieved: Balbir Singh leads the Indian team on the podium after defeating Pakistan in the 1956 Olympic hockey final to make it three gold medals in a row. ■ THE HINDU ARCHIVES

well for the last few years, requiring repeated hospitalisation. "I met him last in

February, along with Ajitpal Singh, in Chandigarh. He was weak, both with his recent



Down memory lane: Balbir Singh and daughter Sushbir Bhomia leaf through a book in February. ■ FILE PHOTO: AKHILESH KUMAR

illness and age, but that smile of his, which always had so much love and meaning, was intact.

A relationship going back more than 40 years has come to an end," said an emotional Ashok Kumar, a member of the 1975 World Cup-winning team when Balbir Singh was manager.

"I will always remember him as a soft-spoken person who never ever raised his voice.

"For someone from Pun-

jab, and Punjab Police, a centre-forward, there was never a trace of aggression in his personality.

Team & country, always

"And at a time when sports in India was often about where you came from, his first concern was always the team and country," Ashok added.

Hockey India expressed its grief; so did members of the current Indian team.

A member of India's Olympic teams from 1948-1956,

■ Balbir's world record for most goals scored by an individual in the men's hockey final of the Olympics still remains unbeaten. He scored five goals in India's 6-1 victory over the Netherlands in the gold medal match of the 1952 Helsinki Games

Balbir Singh also captained the side and is considered one of the best centre-forwards of all time.

He was also the manager of the only World Cup-winning Indian side (1975), the first sportsperson to be awarded the Padma Shri (1957) and the lone Indian and hockey player to be included in the IOC's "Olympic Icons", a select group of 16 all-time Olympic greats honoured during the London Olympics.

"Then I got to play against him in a semifinal in 1955. I got to know him better in 1959 when he became the camp in-charge of the Indian team for the pre-Olympics," Gurbux, who bagged a bronze in the 1968 Olympics and gold in the 1966 Asian Games, told *The Hindu* on Monday.

Last rites

Balbir Singh was on Monday cremated at Chandigarh with full State honours. Kabir performed the last rites.

Remembering a gentle and formidable giant

Warm and friendly off the field, Balbir was a serial winner on it



Rare honour: Balbir Singh Sr. leading the Indian contingent at the 1956 Melbourne Olympics. ■ FILE PHOTO: AKHILESH KUMAR

UTHRA GANESAN

NEW DELHI

Back in 2009, this reporter took the first steps into a virtual museum of hockey brilliance from a time when India was the unquestioned ruler on the turf. The trophies, pictures and memorabilia, though, were dwarfed by the aura of the man in their midst – Balbir Singh Senior.

He was a stick wizard, but it was the warmth of his persona that drew people.

Balbir Singh had already made a lasting impression on someone learning the ropes years earlier, during his several visits to Delhi, his aura felt every time he smiled and enquired, "How are you, beta?"

That smile and warmth were always available for anyone who wanted to seek his guidance or simply have a chat on hockey. Especially the days of 1948, when a former colony overwhelmed and outplayed its former

masters on their soil.

"With every raise of the Tricolour at the Old Wembley that day, the heart beat a little faster, the pride rose a notch higher, the eyes became moist. It wasn't just a medal – it was India claiming its place on the world stage. And it had chosen us as a means to do that. What honour! That feeling can only be experienced, never expressed," Balbir Singh told this reporter.

The Tricolour mounted on the wall in his living room was a testimony to what that victory meant.

No one wins alone

"The team won. Hockey is a team game. No one wins alone," was his firm belief. At a rare public display of Dhyan Chand's stick used in the 8-1 demolition of Germany in the 1936 Olympic final, during the Punjab Gold Cup in 2009, Balbir Singh held it and said, "What bigger honour can there be for any

hockey player". His own stature never got in the way.

His record is impeccable – India has never returned without a medal from a tournament that had Balbir Singh as player, coach or manager.

For someone so proud, India missing out on the 2008 Olympics was a catastrophe. He didn't eat or sleep properly for days. In some ways, it broke him from within. He was also broken by the disregard for history from SAI, which borrowed his medals and memorabilia but lost them.

The last time this reporter met him, Balbir Singh had become frail. But the mind was as sharp as ever.

"Excellence is not an art, it is a habit. We have to do what we do best, not copy anyone. We did that when we played, never blamed conditions. Hard work can make anything possible," he said. But it was all said with a smile – as ever, there was no trace of rancour.

He leaves behind a rich legacy that cuts across all sport

'Guiding light'

Hockey India on Monday condoned the demise of Balbir Singh Sr, saying the sport has lost its "guiding light" and his life will remain an example for generations to come.

"Today, we have not only lost our greatest hockey legend but we have also lost 'our guiding light,'" Hockey India president Mohd. Mushtaque Ahmad said.

International Hockey Federation (FIH): Balbir Singh will be remembered not only as a highly talented and outstanding international player who represented India in three Olympics, but also as a man greatly dedicated to our sport.

Asian Hockey Federation (AHF): Balbir Singh left behind a legacy which will always be cherished and serve as a beacon for many budding talents.

A great player and manager departs

V. Baskaran (captain of Indian team which won gold in 1980 Moscow Olympics): A soft-spoken person who knew how to get the best out of every player. Indian hockey, nay world hockey, has lost a great player and manager.

B.P. Govinda (member of 1975 World Cup-winning team): For the coaching camp prior to the 1975 World Cup, Balbir Singh kept the spirits of all the players up. A great human being, he was a father figure to us and looked after us as his own child. We lived like a well-knit family when we won the World Cup in Malaysia.

Joaquim Carvalho (World Cupper): Balbir Senior's man-management skills were superb. He knew how to handle players and officials, and took on people high up in the administra-

tion in support of his players. I feel his loss deeply.

Mervyn Fernandes (three-time Olympian): I played under his charge at the 1982 Asian Games and other tournaments. He was a calm, composed person and a thorough gentleman.

Dhanraj Pillay (four-time Olympian): No words can express the sadness in my heart. His simplicity touched many hearts in the hockey world.

(compiled by Nandakumar Marar and K. Keerthivasan)

try. Don't let the country down. Keep the Indian flag flying high. He was always a positive man.

Virat Kohli: Saddened to hear about the passing of the legend, Balbir Singh Sr. My thoughts and prayers go out to his family in this time of sorrow.

Suresh Raina: Legends never truly leave, they live

on in the hearts of people. Thank you for the decades of great hockey and for inspiring us.

Devinder Walmiki: No one could ever take your place in my heart. Today I am crying because I have lost a person who occupied a very special place in my heart.

Sharath Kamal: A true sporting icon, Balbir Singh Sr. Sir's achievements will continue to be a guiding light for athletes!

Saina Nehwal: Inspiration to many and great sportsperson... we will miss our three-time Olympic gold medal winner.

Geeta Phogat: Sir, you will be remembered forever!

Producers Guild of India suggests stringent rules for film production

Exhaustive SOPs provided for every department from casting and costumes to editing and voice overs

NAMRATA JOSHI

MUMBAI

The Producers Guild of India has come up with a 'Back to Action report' recommending standard operating procedures (SOPs) to be instituted whenever the permission to resume production activities is granted by the government.

The exhaustive report touches upon and offers guidelines for almost every department and professional at film and TV shoots.

The new practices include temperature checks, sanitisation, social distancing, work-from-home where possible, downloading of the Argya Setu app on phones, limiting the number of cast and crew, avoiding outdoor shoots, and the presence of a medical team – in two different shifts – on sets for the initial three months when shoots begin.



Lights, camera, action: A file photo of television crew working in a studio. ■ GETTY IMAGES

on entry, exit and during the shoot. Each crew member to be provided with a triple layer medical mask and gloves, which will be mandatory to wear during the entire shoot. The masks must not be left unattended and would need to be disposed off in the bin provided on location. Only designated people should be allowed to open doors, if any.

Minimum two meters distance between colleagues should be maintained, and people have been advised to avoid handshakes, hugs and kisses, and other physical greetings and sharing of cigarettes. Every crew and cast member should undergo temperature measurement with a contact-less thermometer before entering the set, the advisory states.

A fitness or declaration form should be signed and submitted by all talent and

crew, informing the production team about their health status at the time of booking/ signing-up for a project, and again on arrival on set.

"Carry out a drill every day with entire staff regarding precautions so that it becomes a habit," the statement advises.

Crew, artists and participants should be called at least 45 minutes prior to the shoot to ensure thorough implementation of safety precautions, it says.

Hired staff

All in-house office house-keeping staff hired directly or through third party vendors should have mandatory COVID-19 sanitising. The complete studio should be sanitised daily before the shoot. Rest rooms should be kept clean and sanitised at all times, and portable washbasins be strategically placed.

The PGI document advises the setting up of an isolation zone or holding area, away from the main filming area. Two junior-level doctors and a certified nurse must be present on set for an initial three months in two different shifts, the statement suggests.

Work-from-home

The guild has encouraged a work-from-home strategy where possible. "Anyone who can work remotely must be allowed to do so, on rotational basis. People over the age of 60, or with co-morbidities and health issues, will have to work from home," it states. The advisory says that crew above the age of 60 years should not be considered at least for three months after shoots begin, and cast of those above the age of 60 years should be judicially employed.

Kerala team nets silver fish in Velankanni

The new freshwater species, *Puntius sanctus*, grows to only 7 cm

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Velankanni in Tamil Nadu has thrown up a new species of small freshwater fish of the family Cyprinidae. The silver-hued fish has been christened *Puntius sanctus* – 'sanctus' is Latin for holy – after the popular pilgrimage town.

The fish has been identified and named by Mathews Plamoottil, head of the Department of Zoology, BJM Government College, Chavara, in Kollam.

Encountered in a small waterbody in Velankanni, *Puntius sanctus* grows to a length of 7 cm. It is used both as food and as an aquarium draw, Dr. Plamoottil said.

"The *Puntius* species are



Puntius sanctus.

known locally as 'Paral' in Kerala and 'Kende' in Tamil Nadu. They are purely freshwater fishes," he said.

While the genus shows great species richness in Kerala and Tamil Nadu, the specimen from Velankanni bears "distinct differences" from its *Puntius* cousins, he said.

Its physical characteristics included a protractile mouth, a pair of maxillary barbels (a sensory organ near the snout), 24-25 lateral line scales and 10 pre-dorsal scales.

A BM-BME