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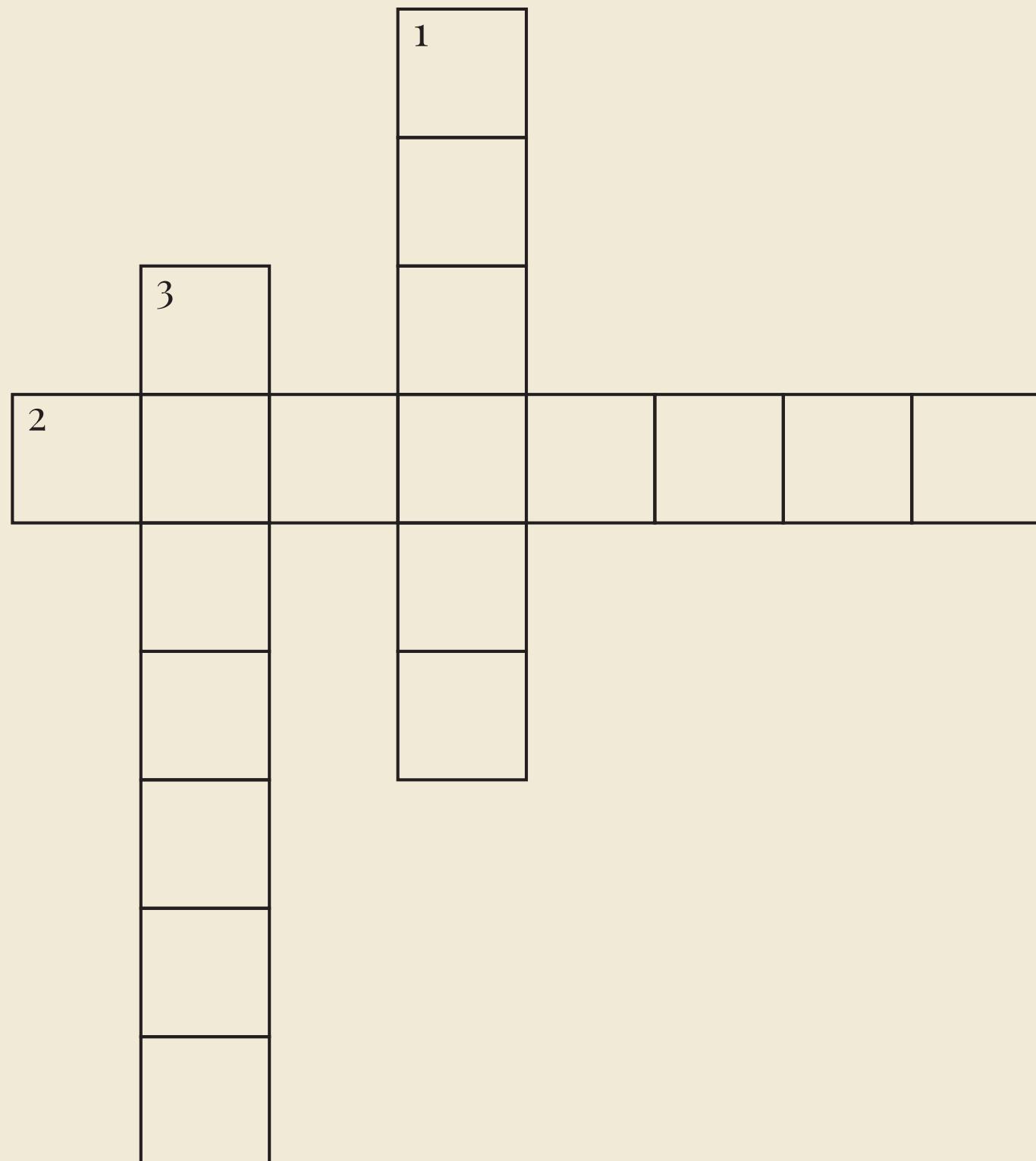
THE HINDU GROUP

Across

2. In or at any place (8)

Down

1. The correct solution (6)
3. Whenever (7)

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THE HINDU



B.S. Yediyurappa goes into quarantine after many staff test positive
page 8



Boeing hands over five AH-64E Apache attack helicopters to IAF
page 10



Turkey's 1,500-year-old Hagia Sophia set to be mosque again
page 12



Brathwaite, Chase and Dowrich shine as West Indies takes lead
page 14

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NEARBY



10-day lockdown in Pune and Pimpri-Chinchwad

PUNE With Pune reporting an average of 1,000 new COVID-19 cases every day for the past one week, the district administration on Friday announced a strict 10-day lockdown from July 13. The decision came as people in the district are not taking the COVID-19 situation seriously, said Deputy CM Ajit Pawar.

WEST ▶ PAGE 5

'Give info on steps to curb COVID-19 in Byculla jail'

MUMBAI The Bombay High Court on Friday sought information from the NIA and State government on the measures being implemented in Byculla women's jail to curb the spread of COVID-19 after hearing a criminal appeal filed by civil rights activist Sudha Bharadwaj, challenging the rejection of her bail plea.

WEST ▶ PAGE 5

Dubey shot dead in 'exchange of fire'

U.P. police, STF claim gangster was killed when trying to flee after a road accident en route to Kanpur

OMAR RASHID

LUCKNOW

Vikas Dubey, the history-sheeter accused of killing eight policemen in Bikru village last week, was gunned down early on Friday while allegedly trying to flee from custody after an accident as he was being taken from Ujjain to Kanpur, the Uttar Pradesh police said.

The police team shot Dubey multiple times after he fired at them from a pistol he managed to snatch from a police officer, who was injured in the accident, the U.P. Special Task Force (STF) said in a statement.

Vehicle turns turtle

The STF said the vehicle carrying Dubey lost control and overturned when the driver, who was tired after a long journey, turned sharply to avoid a herd of cattle that suddenly ran onto the road. The accident happened near a hospital in the Sachendi area on the national highway a few kilometres ahead of



Many questions: Policemen cordoned off the spot where the vehicle overturned, leading to the firing in which gangster Vikas Dubey was killed, on a highway in Uttar Pradesh on Friday. ■ AFP

Kanpur around 6.45 a.m. Dubey was being escorted to Kanpur to be produced in a court, police said.

Dubey is the sixth person to be eliminated by the Uttar Pradesh police following the killing of eight policemen by the gangster and his associates on the night of July 2-3 at Bikru village.

FULL COVERAGE PAGE 9

The police operation came under question after several journalists, who were trailing the convoy from Ujjain, said their cars were suddenly stopped a few kilometres ahead of the spot where Dubey was shot. Several social media users also asked the U.P. police to explain why Dubey, who was earlier seen in a TATA SUV while crossing a toll plaza,

happened to be in another vehicle that met with the "accident".

A journalist, who was trailing the convoy from near Jalaun, said several journalists were stopped at the toll-booth there without proper explanation. "I then asked my friends, who were further ahead, to keep track. However, even they were stopped for security checks," said the journalist on condition of anonymity.

Traffic blocked

Another mediaperson said several private vehicles, including those of journalists, were blocked at the Barra toll plaza some 10-11 km away. The mediaperson also said that along the way the police constantly shifted Dubey from one car to another and even changed the formation of the moving vehicles.

THREE BULLET WOUNDS ▶ PAGE 9

EDITORIAL ▶ PAGE 6

A RAID THAT LEFT A BLOODY TRAIL ▶ PAGE 7

India, China to push for troop pullback

Chinese troops move back

Chinese troops have removed their tents and fully moved back from the base of Finger 4 to Finger 5 at Pangong Tso in eastern Ladakh while they continue to occupy the ridge lines of Finger 4, a defence source said. ▶ PAGE 10

and there remains a substantial build-up of thousands of troops along the border, including in-depth areas.

The Ministry of External Affairs said both sides reaffirmed that they "will ensure complete disengagement of the troops along the LAC and de-escalation from India-China border areas for full restoration of peace and tranquility."

More military-level talks next week

India, China to push for troop pullback

Viral tracker

With 26,620 new COVID-19 cases recorded on Friday, India's tally crossed the 8 lakh mark with 8,21,459 cases as of 10.30 p.m.

NEW CASES AND DEATHS

CASES 26,620

DEATHS 520

7 DAY-CHANGE +11.1%

DEATHS 520

7 DAY-CHANGE -14.9%

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

MAHARASHTRA CASES 7,862

DEATHS 226

CASES 7,862

DEATHS 226

KARNATAKA CASES C

DEATHS 57

CASES C

DEATHS 57

UTTAR PRADESH CASES C

DEATHS 27

CASES C

DEATHS 27

TELANGANA CASES C

DEATHS 8

CASES C

DEATHS 8

WEST BENGAL CASES C

DEATHS 26

CASES C

DEATHS 26

TAMIL NADU CASES C

DEATHS 64

CASES C

DEATHS 64

GUJARAT CASES C

DEATHS 14

CASES C

DEATHS 14

DELHI CASES C

DEATHS 42

CASES C

DEATHS 42



Colour scheme: Even as business has been badly hit because of the COVID-19 induced lockdown, a vendor puts up masks and dresses for sale at a shop in Hyderabad on Friday. ■ NAGARA GOPAL

FIGURES IN THE GRAPHS DEPICT NEW CASES AND DEATHS RECORDED IN THE STATE ON FRIDAY

14% excess rain in India so far this monsoon

40% of districts have benefited from it

JACOB KOSHY

NEW DELHI

Monsoon rainfall since June has been 14% more than what is normal for this time of the year.

So far, India has received 28.7 cm rainfall as opposed to the typical 25.2 cm. Only on nine of the 40 days of monsoon so far has rainfall been less than the daily average, according to data from the India Meteorological Department (IMD).

About 40% of districts received excess rain while 27% others have seen deficient rain, having received at least 20% less rain than usual.

There are 29 districts in Uttar Pradesh, 17 in Gujarat and 16 in Jammu and Kashmir that have received defi-



A man rides on amid rain in Prayagraj on Friday. ■ PTI

Solar energy will play big role in 'Atmanirbhar Bharat': PM

It will be a big energy medium for 21st century'

STAFF REPORTER
BHOPAL

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday said solar energy would play a major role in achieving self-reliance in energy, essential for an 'Atmanirbhar Bharat' (self-reliant India).

Inaugurating a 750 MW solar power project in Rewa district, Madhya Pradesh, he said: "We won't be able to use solar power entirely unless we have within the country improved solar panels, improved batteries and best quality storage. We need to work in this direction now."



Energy field: The 750 MW solar power plant will supply power to Madhya Pradesh as well as the Delhi Metro. ■ PTI

Solar energy, he asserted, would be a big medium for the energy needs of the 21st century.

"This is because solar energy is sure, pure and secure. Sure because other sources of energy can be exhausted, but the sun will

continue to shine. Pure because instead of polluting the environment, it helps in protecting it. And secure because it's a huge symbol, inspiration for Atmanirbhar Bharat," Mr. Modi said.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

CM, Pawar meet again: Thane, Kalyan-Dombivli lockdown extended

State issues fresh transfer orders for Mumbai DCPs; MVA plugs communication gaps

STAFF REPORTER

MUMBAI

An earlier transfer order for the DCPs, issued on July 2, was scrapped three days later ostensibly due to some discontent over the issue between Shiv Sena and NCP, allies in the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) government.

The first meeting between Mr. Pawar and Mr. Thackeray had been held after differences surfaced over the decision to extend the lockdown in the MMR, with Congress and NCP ministers indicating they were kept out of the loop of the decision.

Later, both leaders, and Home Minister Anil Deshmukh, had met after the transfer orders for 10 Mumbai DCPs were put aside, and it was decided that periodic review meetings will be held to avoid scope for communication gaps within the three constituents of the MVA.

On Friday, Mr. Pawar and the CM reviewed ongoing COVID-19 relief work. Apart from extending the lockdown till July 19 in Thane and Kalyan-Dombivli, Mr. Pawar sanctioned nine of the 10

proposed transfers of DCPs. DCP Paramjit Dahiya, who was earlier transferred to Zone I, has now been sent to Zone III, while Sangaramsingh Nishandar will continue as DCP Zone I, according to the fresh order. Mohan Dahiya, who was posted as DCP (Detection), as per the earlier order, has been now sent to Local Arms, Tardeo, while Nandkumar Thakur, who was posted as DCP (HQ I) will now be DCP (Detection).

The charge of DCP (Operations) has been given to DCP Special Branch I, while the Protection and Security Branch will be under the DCP Prevention (Crime). The other transfers first effected on July 2, remain the same.

According to sources, such meetings will now be held at regular intervals. "The rumours spread by the Opposition about a threat to the stability to this government have no basis. We are working fine. These meetings are to ensure no miscommunication takes place," an MVA leader said.

The toll continued to rise in the Mumbai Metropolitan Region (MMR) as well with Thane reporting 17 deaths to 672, Navi Mumbai reporting 12 as its total death count rose to 270, Kalyan-Dombivli reporting 10 to take its cumulative toll to 189, and the Vasai-Virar civic body reporting

Maharashtra reports highest single-day surge of 7,862 cases

226 more fatalities take death toll close to 10,000 mark

SHOUMOJIT BANERJEE

PUNE

With a staggering single-day high of 7,862 new COVID-19 cases on Friday, Maharashtra's total case tally reached 2,38,461. A total of 226 new deaths pushed the total death toll to 9,893.

The State has reported over 7,000 cases in a single day twice in less than a week, with the previous highest single-day spike of 7,074 cases recorded on July 4.

Of the total cases, 95,647 are active, said State Health Department officials. With 5,366 patients being discharged on Friday, the number of recoveries has gone up to 1,32,625.

Mumbai's total cases crossed the 90,000 mark today, with 1,337 cases bringing the tally to 90,461. However, only 23,035 of these are active. With 73 more fatalities, the city's death toll has risen to 5,205. The number of cases in Dharavi rose to 2,359 with 12 new cases.

Pune district reported as many as 37 deaths as its total death toll crossed the 1,000 mark. The State's case fatality is 4.15%.

Cases in MMR surge

REVIEW

An utterly juvenile thriller

Abhishek Bachchan makes his foray into digital space with a series designed for mindless binge-watching

KENNETH ROSARIO

Imagine a writers' room ideating on an elaborate 12-episode series. They are circling a script like a group of witches on a full-moon night, throwing into a boiling pot everything they consider essential for a 'nailing-biting' thriller: ceramic masks, bunkers, kidnappings, torture, blackmail, media frenzy, brooding cop, sidekick constables, mind games, morality, mythology, phobia, psychiatrist, prostitute, lesbian, night shots, and haunting pasts.

But it's still not enough to fill a dozen 45-minute episodes, so they double up the portions, stretch, twist and bring in some bizarre logic. In the end, you are served, *Breathe: Into The Shadows*, an utterly juvenile show, desperately trying to be clever and suspenseful, knocking on the doors of every successful thriller to borrow ingredients that may have worked for them in the past.

Failed argument

One could argue that thrillers by nature are contrived. They are designed to generate adrenaline. But the second season of *Breathe: Into The Shadows* – starring Abhishek Bachchan, Nithya Menen, Amit Sadh, Saiyami Kher – wants to be both realistic and a creepy anomaly.

The story is focused on the kidnapping of a six-year-old single child of a psychiatrist and a chef, yet it's so hard to sympathise with the parents. The show presents a farago of twists and rudimentary cliffhangers, akin to soap operas. You continue to watch because you want to know what happens next; though not because you are emotionally invested



Unimpressed: Despite the story being focused on the kidnapping of a six-year-old child, *Breathe: Into The Shadows* makes it hard to sympathise with the parents. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

in the lives of these characters.

Like most series on streaming platforms, *Breathe: Into The Shadows* is in many ways, the epitome of binge-watching content hijacking streaming platforms. Even though there is tons of melodrama and sentimentality, one is seldom allowed to engage with the characters on an emotional level.

The actors are lost in the constant reveals, action, and reaction. The series is Bachchan's foray into the digital space, and he is given (at least on paper) an enviable role. But his default expression is of stoicism, making you wonder whether he is acting or that's just his resting face. Menen's default mode is of concern, and Sadh is always brooding.

Gimmicks galore

The makers have to resort to all sorts of audiovisual gimmicks to compensate for the flatness in charac-

tters and actors. The series has a grey, smokey texture, which seems to be the de rigueur aesthetic for streaming platform thrillers. Besides manufactured suspense, there is nothing visually arresting in the show. Even the props, the body language of the evil and gory murders are trite and unimaginative. The answers are over-explained and facile. What could have remained haunting questions of the human psyche, are given definitive – almost authoritarian – explanations. Successful psychological thrillers leave you questioning the ordinary, but *Breathe: Into The Shadows* makes even the most complex phenomena seem banal and comical.

No impact

You spend nearly 10 hours of your life, wanting to know what happens next, and leave the experience remembering very little, and walk away with no impact, thought, or rumination. All you have done is killed time in a pandemic.

Airbnb: class is in session

Presenting fitness tips from Deepika Padukone's trainer and sustainable cooking ideas from chef Sandeep Sreedharan, At Home with Airbnb brings seven Indian experts to your digital device

■ PRASAD RAMAMURTHY

"Did you know kaftans were originally worn by men?" asks Narresh Kukreja, of the design label Shivan & Narresh. No, I did not. But I'm too busy attempting to replicate the sketch of a kaftan that Shivan Bhateria has just drawn for us on a *croquis* (that's French for a type of skeletal design). I'm on a Zoom call along with several fashion and design enthusiasts attending the duo's At Home with Airbnb debut. It is an hour-long virtual workshop where they take participants through the basics of fashion illustrations – how to create a swimsuit, something to cover up with, and to slip into for evening drinks. "The underlying idea is to impart our knowledge to a small batch of guests, where we can connect with them freely and take them through the whole process of sketching out a simple thought into a visually appealing representation," says Bhateria, speaking of the experience he co-hosts.

At Home with Airbnb, launched this month as part of the platform's Online Experiences offering, is specific to India. Each session is hosted by cele-

brites and influencers. Among the chosen seven is fitness trainer Nam-Wook Kang, credited with getting actor Deepika Padukone into wedding photos-ready shape. "I will show you exercises that require minimum equipment," he promises, "or that use objects found at home." Kang has honed his set over several months of lockdown while hosting sessions on his own social media handles. Then there's chef Sandeep Sreedharan, of Goa's Mahé restaurant fame, who intends to use "this as an opportunity to demystify the jar-



(Clockwise from left) Shivan & Narresh, Sanjana Chatlani of The Bombay Lettering Company, chef Sandeep Sreedharan, Sarvesh Shashi of yoga studio Sarva, Devika Narain, and Pankaj Balachandran



“The underlying idea is to impart our knowledge to a small batch of guests, where we can connect with them freely and take them through the process of sketching out a simple thought into a visually appealing representation”

SHIVAN BHATIA

gon around sustainable cooking". He'll approach his 60-minute sessions, one ingredient at a time.

Virtual advantage

Airbnb's new marketing campaign hopes to capitalise on the popularity of its Online Experiences programme, where hosts the world over have found innovative ways to showcase their cities, even under lockdown. It saw a three-fold increase in the number of bookings from India in its first month (May) alone.

It is important to note that 51% of Airbnb India's business comes from Indians travelling within the country. So the aim behind the celebrity-driven approach is to boost those numbers. "The idea of Online Experiences was to bring travel to your doorstep at a time when you cannot step out," says Simran Kodesia, Communications Lead at Airbnb India. "With At Home with Airbnb, it is another level of gratification. You get to

say, 'I learnt how to set the table from Devika Narain, the lady who worked on Virat and Anushka's wedding'. It also helps our celebrity hosts to stay relevant and connected with their followers and fans."

True. Right through my session, despite the technical and practical hitches that seem inherent to such conference calls, there was a high degree of personal interactivity. Like a virtual classroom with the tutor calling each student by name, asking to see their work and responding to it.

Real world moves

But Airbnb is not the only player in the online experiences market. There's an abundance of fitness, art, dance and culinary experiences online. There are also companies like Delhi-based MyScoot, and platforms such as Pytm Insider where activities are accessible. Which begs the question: are these virtual experiences – with and without celebrities hosting them – viable in the long run? "In theory, yes," says Divya Thami, Editor, *Condé Nast Traveller*, India. "There's definitely opportunity for some cool activities to emerge with long-term potential. A lot depends on the execution. But it is not an equal substitute. In the long-term, nothing compares to an immersive, first-person experience."

Bhatia agrees. "For many people, life's passion points – be it art, fashion, cuisine, nature, relaxation – are at the heart of travel. And these points [which the virtual experiences reflect] will inspire them to book their next holiday, as and when we have the right global health ecosystem to do so." I'm certain both Airbnb and the travel industry will be saying Amen to that.

Sign up for sessions with Devika Narain (₹2,500++), Sanjana Chatlani (₹2,261++) and Shivan & Narresh (₹2,200++) today. Details: airbnb.co.in

Indian musicians say the lockdown has made way for virtual collaborations with stars such as Ric Fierabracci, LL Cool J and Jenee Fleenor

Music unlocked (Clockwise from far left) Bruce Lee, Ananya Sharma and Brecilla D'Souza, Ric Fierabracci, a snapshot from LL Cool J and Gambhir's Instagram live session, Jenee Fleenor and Lakshya Bhatnagar

him to perform on his Instagram live sessions not once, but thrice. Gambhir, who goes by the stage name D-cypher, was noticed by the hip-hop star in May. "LL Cool J said he picked me when he saw the word 'beatbox' on my profile," says Gambhir, who was part of Zoya Akhtar's 2019 hit film *Gully Boy*'s soundtrack.

Lockdown blues

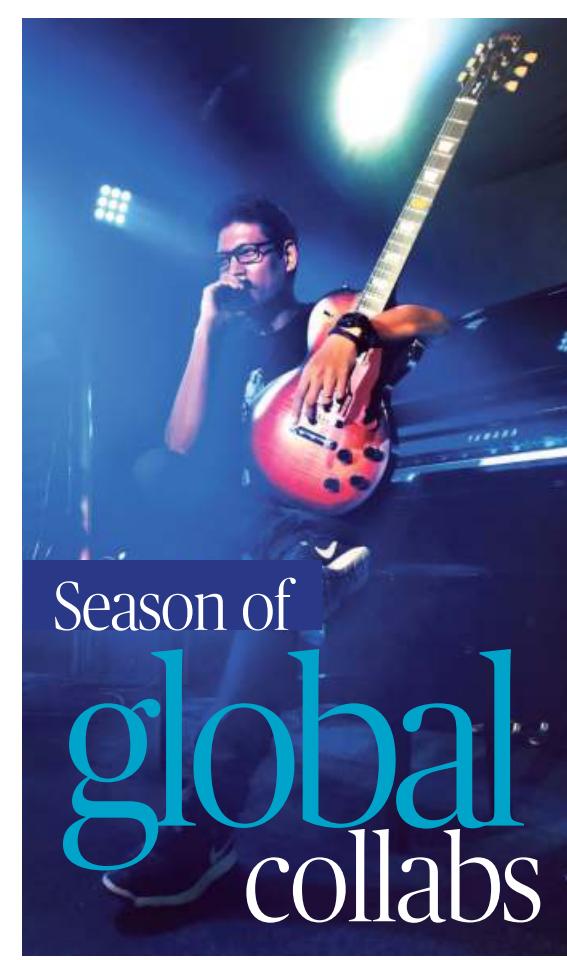
In mid-May bassist and Grammy winner Michael League, who leads the American instrumental group, Snarky Puppy, conducted an online master-class organised by Mumbai vocalists Ananya Sharma and Brecilla D'Souza. "I didn't expect Michael to consider the workshop. I'm not questioning their will, but their schedules would've been packed if not for the lockdown," says Sharma, a student at Mumbai's The True School of Music. League, along with Mark Lettieri and Sirintip, also from Snarky Puppy, were part of the Reboot Sessions organised by Sharma and D'Souza. Proceeds from the workshops (which also included Indian music industry experts), went towards providing 7,500 meals to the underprivileged in Mumbai.

Next month, Pune-based vocalist Lakshya Bhatnagar is gearing up to release his new single 'Zaroori'. It features country superstar and fiddle player, Jenee Fleenor, whom he approached on Instagram. "Fleenor loved the song. She played a morph between a fiddle and a violin which sounded so distinct, so country and yet so relatable to the feel of a Hindi composition," he says.

Surely, there's hope yet for musicians across the world when the pandemic draws to a close. Until then, there's Springsteen's 'Land of Hope and Dreams' that can carry them through with these lines: "Tomorrow there'll be sunshine / And all this darkness past."

The writer is the former editor of Rolling Stone India.

■ JENE FLEENOR ON FACEBOOK



Season of global collabs

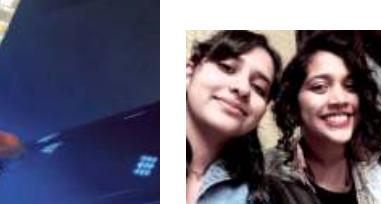
■ LALITHA SUHASINI

Rock icon Bruce Springsteen sounded both hopeful and despondent when he recently talked about how the pandemic was affecting him. "...Let the world open up before you and prepare yourself to accept it in its entirety, on its own terms, with a vengeance," he said on American broadcasting company SiriusXM's E Street Radio in May. Closer home, this is exactly what certain musicians seem to be doing – opening up their art to possibilities.

Jazzing up

As Chennai remains under lockdown, guitarist Bruce Lee has been preparing for one of the biggest musical moments of his career: opening for three-time Grammy nominee and bassist Ric Fierabracci. The opportunity came by rather unexpectedly as Lee was barely active on social media and got on to Facebook because of his friends' groups. He uploaded videos of his guitar covers featuring 90s hit songs by Bon Jovi and bands like Europe that were noticed by the international artiste.

Tonight, Lee opens for Fierabracci (who has performed with celebrated jazzmen like Armando 'Chick' Corea and Dave Weckl) on an



say, 'I learnt how to set the table from Devika Narain, the lady who worked on Virat and Anushka's wedding'. It also helps our celebrity hosts to stay relevant and connected with their followers and fans."

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CMK

Timings	
MUMBAI	
SATURDAY, JUL. 11	
RISE 06:08	SET 19:20
RISE 23:54	SET 11:23
SUNDAY, JUL. 12	
RISE 06:09	SET 19:20
RISE 00:00	SET 12:11
MONDAY, JUL. 13	
RISE 06:09	SET 19:20
RISE 00:28	SET 12:58

Mumbai Weather	max	min
Mumbai Airport	33	26
Pune	29	22
Mumbai City	33	26

Mumbai Today
31°C A warm morning.
Moderate rain will occur over the city. The sky will remain cloudy over the city.

Mumbai Tomorrow
31°C Moderate rain may occur over the city. A humid morning. A mostly cloudy sky is expected over the city.

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Air quality of Delhi-NCR			
Delhi	67	Gurugram	57
Ghaziabad	88	Faridabad	82
Noida	84	Greater Noida	70
Good	Satisfactory	Moderate	101-200
0-50	51-100	101-200	
Poor	Very poor	Severe	
201-300	301-400	>401	
AIR QUALITY INDEX AT 4 P.M. YESTERDAY (AVERAGE OF PAST 24 HOURS)	SOURCE: CPCB		

With 2,089 new COVID-19 cases, total cases in Delhi touch 1,09,140

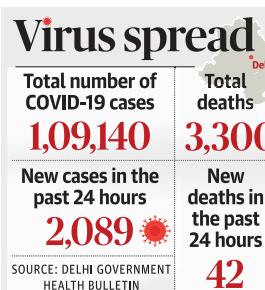
Over 10,500 beds vacant in hospitals; number of containment zones jumps to 633

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

In the past 24 hours, the national capital has witnessed 2,089 new COVID-19 cases, taking the total number to 1,09,140, according to a health bulletin released by the Delhi government on Friday.

With 42 more deaths being reported in the past 24 hours, the death tally climbs to 3,300. Of the total cases, 84,694 people have recovered and there are 21,146 active cases.

Though the total cases in Delhi have been increasing, the active cases have been decreasing since July 1. The number of active cases was 27,007 on July 1 and has decreased by 5,861 to reach 21,146 on Thursday. According to the bulletin, a total of 22,961 tests were done in a day. The number of tests per million stood at 39,321, one of



rate was even higher.

After a modified 'Revised Delhi COVID Response Plan' was released on Wednesday, the south west district started holding camps for testing special surveillance groups (SSGs) including, domestic workers, drivers, daily wage workers, electricians for COVID-19, in areas where they work or stay, according to officials.

the highest in the country.

Of the total positive cases, 12,272 people are in home isolation. Out of the total 15,244 beds in hospitals, 69.7% (10,631) were vacant as on Friday, according to the bulletin. Also, the number of containment zones jumped to 633.

The positivity rate, which is the percentage of people who test positive, has dropped from 12.2% on July 1 to 9.09% on Friday. This is a good sign as it means that fewer people are testing positive.

In June, the positivity

rate was 5.10 people out of 100 are giving wrong details and when they test positive, we are unable to trace them quickly. Then we have to go to the area and find the person and that is eating away into our resources," a Delhi go-

ernment official said.

The official said that people should give correct details. "We don't know whether they are intentionally doing it. There is no need to be afraid of the disease. We have to be just cautious," the official added.

Meanwhile, the Delhi government also said that there were reports of black marketing of COVID-19-related drugs and warned of action.

"There have been some reports regarding black marketing of COVID-19 drugs. In view of the above, you are advised to kindly direct your members to refrain from dealing in these drugs in a manner which is not permitted or unauthorised and should not get indulged in what so ever manner in their black marketing," an advisory by the government to the President of All Chemist Associations of Delhi read.

The survey report being prepared by the National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC), which was supposed to be submitted to the Central government and Delhi government, was not submitted till 9 p.m. on Friday.

"When I hear stories of plasma donors, I feel very proud of my fellow Delhiites. So I decided to call and congratulate some donors.

Do listen to my conversation with plasma donors Srishti and Bhumi," he tweeted.

He said such donations were an inspiration for everyone, adding that young people like them could motivate others to come forward and save lives.

Positivity rate in Gurugram nearly double the national average

Norms on plasma therapy expected next week: CMO

ASHOK KUMAR
GURUGRAM

Though Gurugram has the highest recovery rate of 83% nationwide, the positivity rate, which is the number of samples testing positive per hundred, is almost double the national average, Chief Medical Officer Virender Yadav said here on Friday.

He also announced that guidelines on setting up of plasma bank and plasma therapy

were expected next week.

Mr. Yadav, in a weekly joint press conference with Deputy Commissioner Amit Khatri and Municipal Commissioner Vinay Pratap Singh, said there were only 242 patients under treatment at various hospitals in the district for COVID-19, including 36 critical patients in the ICU or on ventilator support. He added the number of critical patients had come down considerably from around 100 a few days back. He attributed the high recovery rate to the fact that most of the patients in Guru-

gram were asymptomatic.

The CMO said the positivity rate had come down from more than 13% a few days back to around 11% now, but was still above the national average of around 6%. He hoped that it would scale down to 10% by coming Monday.

30,000 samples taken

Mr. Yadav informed that more than 30,000 samples were taken for testing in Gurugram over the past two weeks, probably the highest in the country after the Delhi-NCTC. It included the rapid antigen

tests and the samples taken by the private laboratories as well. "Around 8,000 tests have been conducted in Large Outbreak Regions alone and Patel Nagar area has the highest positivity rate. Around 1,000 tests have been conducted in Sohna, and it too had recorded a positivity rate of 10%," said Mr. Yadav. He added the in-house capacity of Gurugram Civil Hospital for testing samples was now 500 and could be augmented to 700, if needed.

Of the 16,000 rapid antigen tests done over the past two weeks, 475 have their results positive. Mr. Yadav said that success rate of rapid antigen test was around 60-70% and the RT-PCR test was recommended only in case of symptomatic patient tested negative.

Mr. Khatri said the forecasts being made on the number of possible cases in Gurugram proved wrong and the pace of infection slowed down despite an increase in number. He attributed it to the joint efforts of all agencies. Mr. Singh said the strategy of the administration was three T's: Test, Track and Treat.

"Assuming that it is ac-

IN BRIEF



Start-up launches device to sanitise N95 masks

NEW DELHI
An IIT-Delhi incubated start-up 'Chakr Innovation' on Friday launched a device to decontaminate N95 masks for reuse upto 10 times as a sustainable solution to fight COVID-19. Ashwini Kumar Choubey, Minister of State for Health and Family Welfare, launched the device that can decontaminate a mask in 90 minutes.

DDA launches damage assessment scheme

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The Delhi Development Authority (DDA) on Friday launched a self assessment scheme of 23 Nazul estates in the city for damage assessment. Private persons who have occupied government land in an unauthorised manner will be liable to pay damage charges to the urban body.

Areas like Paharganj, Daryaganj North and South, Karol Bagh, Jhandewalan, Sadar Bazar South and North, Aliganj, among others, are part of the said 23 estates.

Officials of the urban body said that stakeholders can access the portal online and complete the self-assessment process for damages to be paid. "Through this Self-Assessment Scheme, all the assessees can fill up the details of their properties on the said portal, that is payment of damage charges, area and date of transfer of occupancy rights and superstructure occupied by them. They can also assess damage charges," the DDA said.

Issue notice to parents of students defaulting on tuition fee payment'

School must not act if they can explain inability to pay: HC

SOIBAM ROCKY SINGH
NEW DELHI
The Delhi High Court has asked a private school here to issue notice to parents of students, who are on default for payment of tuition fee for more than two months, before taking a call on discontinuing their access to ID and password for online education facility.

The court's order came in a petition by Queen Mary's School, Northend, here challenging certain clauses in Delhi government's April 18, 2020 circular directing all schools not to deny ID and password for getting online access of educational facilities to those students who are unable to pay pending fees, the school shall not take any step for the time being.

"Where the parents are unable to satisfy/demonstrate to the petitioner [school] regarding their financial difficulties, the petitioner is free to communicate the same to the parents

and decline to provide them ID and password for online education facility for students," the High Court said.

It also clarified that in case the parents have any grievance against such an order passed by the school, they are free to approach the appropriate authority of the Delhi government.

The court's order came in a petition by Queen Mary's School, Northend, here challenging certain clauses in Delhi government's April 18, 2020 circular directing all schools not to deny ID and password for getting online access of educational facilities to those students who are unable to pay pending fees, the school shall not take any step for the time being.

The High Court has postponed the case for further hearing on August 5.

Look into pregnancy termination, AIIMS told

HC asks institute to form expert panel

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI
The Delhi High Court on Friday directed AIIMS to "immediately" constitute a team of medical experts to look into the plea of a woman seeking termination of her 23-week pregnancy due to certain abnormalities in the foetus.

The counsel for the petitioner stated that the abnormalities in the foetus was detected only after the 20th week of her pregnancy, forcing the woman to approach the court. The counsel said that there is deformation in the skull, also defect in the heart which are co-morbidities attached to the main abnormalities.

The High Court asked the Director of AIIMS to give a report about the situation of

STF told to act on illegal construction

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The Delhi Development Authority (DDA) on Friday said that a Special Task Force constituted for the enforcement of various provisions, including removal of encroachments, was directed to continue taking appropriate action to remove unauthorised construction.

The urban body added that between May 2018 and June 2020, an area of 400 hectares were cleared of encroachment. Between July 6 and July 8, the EDMC and SDMC carried out demolition drives in areas like Subhash Nagar, Lajpat Nagar, Jungpura, Lodhi Road and Mehar Chand Market, the DDA said.

vernment official said.

The official said that people should give correct details. "We don't know whether they are intentionally doing it. There is no need to be afraid of the disease. We have to be just cautious," the official added.

Meanwhile, the Delhi government also said that there were reports of black marketing of COVID-19-related drugs and warned of action.

"There have been some reports regarding black marketing of COVID-19 drugs. In view of the above, you are advised to kindly direct your members to refrain from dealing in these drugs in a manner which is not permitted or unauthorised and should not get indulged in what so ever manner in their black marketing," an advisory by the government to the President of All Chemist Associations of Delhi read.

The survey report being prepared by the National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC), which was supposed to be submitted to the Central government and Delhi government, was not submitted till 9 p.m. on Friday.

"When I hear stories of plasma donors, I feel very proud of my fellow Delhiites. So I decided to call and congratulate some donors.

Do listen to my conversation with plasma donors Srishti and Bhumi," he tweeted.

He said such donations were an inspiration for everyone, adding that young people like them could motivate others to come forward and save lives.



Health workers collecting swab sample of a child in the Capital on Friday. ■ SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

'15-20% tested developed antibodies against virus'

Higher seroprevalence good sign: officials

NIKHIL M BABU
NEW DELHI

At least 15-20% of the over 22,000 people tested randomly across the city as part of a serological survey have developed antibodies against COVID-19, according to officials.

The survey report being prepared by the National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC), which was supposed to be submitted to the Central government and Delhi government, was not submitted till 9 p.m. on Friday.

"The report is yet to be finalised and was not submitted today [Friday]. The seroprevalence could be less or more than 20%.

The northeast district [one of the 11 districts] had shown around 25-30% seroprevalence and three other districts had shown above 15%," an official source told *The Hindu*.

The official said that high-

er seroprevalence is a good sign as it means that a larger part of the population has developed antibodies against the virus and chances of them again contracting the virus are very low. Thus they can break the chain of transmission of the virus and reduce the spread of the disease.

"Mr. Khatri said the forecasts being made on the number of possible cases in Gurugram proved wrong and the pace of infection slowed down despite an increase in number. He attributed it to the joint efforts of all agencies. Mr. Singh said the strategy of the administration was three T's: Test, Track and Treat.

The serological survey was started on June 27 and 22,823 random blood samples were collected from people of different age groups and demographics. The blood samples were then tested in about 15 labs using antibody testing kits to understand whether the person was infected by the virus and developed antibodies against it.

HC suspends action against Manipur MLA

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
IMPHAL

A two-judge Bench of the Manipur High Court on Friday ordered the suspension of proceeding of the Speaker's Tribunal regarding disqualification of All India Trinamool Congress lawmaker T. Robindro for more than a week.

Mr. Robindro was one of nine MLAs, including three of the Bharatiya Janata Party, who had withdrawn support from the Nongtmonbam Biren government on June 17. He switched his loyalty to the Congress and went to court after Assembly Speaker Yumnam Khemchand disqualifed him on June 19, the day of the Rajya Sabha election.

The High Court suspended the disqualification proceeding till July 20.

First bus rolls into Swabhiman Anchal after Independence

Water-bound remote area was a Maoist hub until recently

SATYASUNDAR BARIK
BHUBANESWAR

People in Swabhiman Anchal (formerly known as the cut-off area) in Odisha's Malkangiri district on Friday saw a passenger bus plying for the first time in their region after Independence.

The Swabhiman Anchal, which was covered by water from three sides and another side by inhospitable terrain, lost its remoteness after construction of the Gurupriya Bridge which connected it with the rest of the State. The region had long been a stronghold of left-wing extremists.

Motor launches and boats used to be the only mode of communication to reach ferry points and from there people were taking country

boat to reach villages. People were even using horses to travel in the remote parts of Swabhiman Anchal.

Chitrakonda MLA Purna Chandra Baka on Friday flagged off a bus of the Odisha State Road Transport Corporation from Chitrakonda to Jodambo, where a new police station started functioning recently.

'No roads'

"There was earlier no road communication to Swabhiman Anchal. After the Gurupriya Bridge was built in 2018, the area was connected by a road which is still to be completed. We require to build another 35-km-long road stretch to reach the last village of the region. This is the first passenger bus ser-

vice rolled out in the region after Independence," said Manish Agarwal, District Collector of Malkangiri.

Situated along Odisha-Andhra Pradesh border, Swabhiman Anchal comprising 151 villages was considered as a liberated zone by the Left ultras.

Even State police was afraid of venturing into the cut-off area. Maoists from Odisha, Andhra Pradesh and Chhattisgarh used to slip into Swabhiman Anchal to take refuge. After security forces established their area domination during the past few years, the situation took a turn for the better. Different development initiatives were taken up. At least, nine roads have been laid in the difficult Ghat areas.

AAP slams SAD for 'doublespeak'

Politics hots up in Punjab over Centre's proposed Electricity (Amendment) Bill

VIKAS VASUDEVA
CHANDIGARH

As the BJP's alliance partner, the Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) sought Prime Minister Narendra Modi's intervention not to pursue the proposed Electricity (Amendment) Bill, 2020, and to withdraw it to ensure the federal rights of the States, the Aam Aadmi Party has accused the party of "doublespeak" on the issue.

SAD chief and former Punjab Deputy Chief Minister Sukhbir Singh Badal has written to the Prime Minister, stating that the proposed Bill had become a cause of public concern because it impinges on the right of the States and was against the basic principle of federalism as enshrined in the Constitution.

In his letter to the Prime Minister, Mr. Badal said the



SAD chief Sukhbir Badal

proposed Bill prohibited States from giving subsidies and cross subsidies which was a direct attack on the constitutional rights of the State governments to help vulnerable sections of society.

"...in case the Bill was passed many ongoing welfare schemes which provide subsidised power or free power to different sections of society would be adversely affected. Besides causing ad-

ministrative problems, the Bill also has the propensity to cause social unrest once it divests subsidised and free power from various sections of society, including Scheduled Castes, underprivileged sections and the farmers," he pointed out.

Mr. Badal added that consumers would also face the brunt in case the Bill was passed in its present form.

He pointed out that as per the clauses of the Bill, States would have to deposit payment for purchase of power in advance following which power would be given to the buyer. This, he said, is likely to cause great hardship to the States, which are revenue deficient besides resulting in the burden being passed on to the consumers.

Senior AAP leader and MLA Aman Arora accused

Mr. Badal for remaining silent on the issue when the Bill was being drafted.

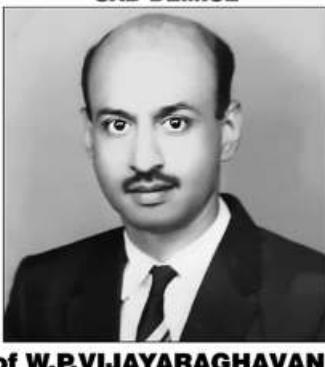
Mr. Arora said had the Badals family really been the sympathisers of Punjab and its people, Harsimrat Kaur Badal, the Union Minister, would have put up stiff resistance and stopped it from getting the Centre's nod.

'Clear your stand'

"Instead of making a fuss over the matter by misleading the people, the Badals should make it clear to the people of Punjab whether they would oppose the proposed Bill inside and outside Parliament and in case the same got the final nod, would they sever ties with their alliance partner at the Centre by sacrificing Harsimrat Kaur Badal's ministerial berth?" quipped Mr. Arora.

OBITUARY & REMEMBRANCE

DEATH



Prof. W.P. VIJAYARAGHAVAN (94)
Former Principal, College of Engineering, Guindy, Chennai
(1971 to 1986)

Passed away on 08.07.2020

When we were naughty, you indulged us
When we were foolhardy, you guided us
Always gentle, Always gracious

Rest in peace, Beloved Sir

Inserted by The Class of 77 CEG
Forever grateful. Forever indebted

DEATH



SAD DEMISE
Mr. M. RANGANATHAN
(Director-Finance & Company Secretary)
On 09.07.2020
May his soul attain eternal peace

NEIL INDUSTRIES
(INDIA) PRIVATE LIMITED,
THE NILGIRIS - 643243

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HOMAGE

Webel

WBELDC Ltd. (A Govt. of West Bengal Undertaking)
Webel Bhavan, Block EP & GP, Sector - V, Salt Lake, Bidhannagar, Kol -700 091

West Bengal Electronics Industry Development Corporation Limited(WBEL) invites item rate e-tenders on two bid systems for the following works:

Name of the work	NIT No	Value put to tender (Including taxes)	Earnest Money Deposit (Rs.)	Time of completion
Supply of Chairs, Sofa, Conference tables for IT Park at BN-9, Sec-V, Salt lake.	WBEL/IT Park/BN-9/07/IDM/20-21/16 Dated 01.07.2020	Rs. 71,19,336.48	0.5% of the estimated cost put to tender rounded off to the next higher Rs.50	45 Days
Supply of Chairs, Sofa, Conference tables for Kalyani IT Park (Phase-II) at Kalyani, Dist. : Nadia	WBEL/IT Park/KALYANI/07/IDM/20-21/17 Dated 01.07.2020	Rs. 59,98,577.29	0.5% of the estimated cost put to tender rounded off to the next higher Rs.50	45 Days

The Tender Documents and other details are available at e-Tender portal, <http://wbtenders.gov.in> and can be viewed by typing the respective NIT Nos., as above in the 'TENDER SEARCH' section of the website.

For any query please dial - 033 - 2357- 6022. KA-T2429(4)/2020

IRRIGATION CUM PUBLIC HEALTH DEPARTMENT

e-Procurement Notice

Online bids on item rate basis are invited by the Executive Engineer Jal Shakti Division Nurpur Distt.Kangra HP on behalf of Governor of H.P.in electronic tendering system in Two Covers for the under mentioned works from the contractors/firms of appropriate class enlisted with HPIPH Department

Sr. No.	Description of work	Estimated Cost
1.	Construction of 21 Nos. Tube-well in Nurpur Constituency (C/O Tube-well Nakkhi) in Tehsil Nurpur Distt. Kangra (HP) (Sub head Providing and installation of Submersible Pumping Machinery with allied accessories, laying, jointing testing of Rising main, Construction of Pump House size 4.50 X 3.00 mtr. Toilet 1.00X1.00 mtr, 1 No. Delivery tank , 7 Nos. Out let Barbed wire fencing around the head works 12X12 Mtr. & laying, jointing, testing of HDPE pipe in Distribution System etc	3068121 52750
2.	Improvement of water supply scheme for providing household connection to village Kharian Khas Janhun, Jara Kadru, Sanjor and Matloli, Mugtilay, Bhamrol, Sutrapur etc. in Nurpur Constituency in Tehsil Nurpur Distt. Kangra HP (SUB Head Construction of RCC Main storage tank of 30000 Ltr capacity with 10 Mtr staging height at Node No.3)	924000 18480

Time Limit 6 Months Coat off from 400-00

Schedule of tendering

- Date of online publication 09.07.2020 at 5:00 P.M.
- Documents Download start and End Date. 09.07.2020 at 5:00 P.M. to 30-7-20 at 11:00 AM
- Bid upload Start and End Date. 09-07-2020 at 5:00 PM to 30-07-2020 at 11:00 AM
- EMD and cost of Tender Document through online mode (e-Payment) 09-07-2020 at 5:00 PM to 30.07.2020 at 11:00 AM
- Opening of Technical Bid. 30-07-2020 at 11:30 A.M
- Opening of Financial Bid After Evaluation of technical bid

The tender forms and other detailed conditions can be obtained from the website htptender.gov.in

Sd/-
Executive Engineer,
Jal Shakti Division Nurpur

INDIAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY KANPUR

INSTITUTE WORKS DEPARTMENT

CENTRAL OFFICE

Notice inviting e-Tenders

The Superintending Engineer, IWD, IIT Kanpur invites on behalf of Board of Governors of IIT Kanpur online percentages rates tender on single bid system from the Registered contractors in CPWD, BSNL, MES & Central PSUs in the same category having experience similar nature of works last 7 Years for the following works:-
1. NIT No. 06/C/D/2020-21/01, Name of work Upkeep of sports fields such as main athletics and cricket ground (SAC ground), hockey & football facility, AGES cricket, athletics ground, lawn tennis court and Kalyana complex at IIT Kanpur, Estimated Cost: Rs. 58,40,748/-, Earnest money Rs. 1,16,815/-, Period of completion 12 months. Last time and date of submission of bid 3:30 PM on 05.08.2020.

The bid forms and other details are available on website www.iitk.ac.in/iwd/tenderform.htm, www.tenderhome.com. But the bids can only be submitted online on www.tenderwizard.com/IIT.

This tender notice is also available on the website <https://eprocure.gov.in/cppp/latestactivevouchers>. Any corrigendum regarding this tender will be published only on above mentioned websites.

No. IWD/CO/2020-21/1147 Date: 09.07.2020 Superintendent Engineer

WESTERN RAILWAY

VARIOUS CIVIL WORKS

Divisional Railway Manager (WA)

Western Railway, Mumbai Central, Mumbai - 400 008 invites E-Tender as per details given as follows: Sr. No. 1.

Tender Notice No.: BCT/ 20-21/169

Date: 10.07.20 Work and location :

Mumbai Central- Improvement of J.R.

Hospital Passage. Approximate cost of

Work: ₹2,34,20,083.72 EMD: ₹2,67,100.00

Sr. No. 2. Tender Notice No.: BCT/ 20-21/170 Date: 10.07.20 Work and location :

Chuchgate-Khar section: Epoxy coating/painting of skywalk and

Road Over Bridge at BDTS station

Approximate cost of Work: ₹ 1,56,91,000.00 EMD: ₹2,28,500.00

Sr. No. 1 & 2. Date & Time of

submission : On 11.08.2020 till 15.00hrs. Date & time of Opening : On

11.08.2020 till 15.30hrs. Regarding

detailed nature of work, containing cost of tender document (non refundable). EMD, eligibility criteria, similar nature of work, detailed tender conditions, please visit

www.ireps.gov.in Manual offers will not be considered.

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NALCO

National Aluminum Company Limited (A Government of India Enterprise)

Captive Power Plant,

Angul 75145, Odisha, India

CIN : L27203OR1981G000920

AN NAVRATNA COMPANY

NOTICE INVITING TENDERS

Digitally signed online tenders are being invited from experienced bidders on OPEN/ Two-part (E-tender) mode through Central Public Procurement Portal for the following jobs at NALCO, CPP Plant at Angul, Odisha:

1-NIT No. MC-4914

Name of the work: General Maintenance and Servicing of Valves in Boiler & Auxiliary Area.

2-NIT No. MC-4927

Name of the work: Repair & Maintenance of Structural Steel, Sheetng & Painting Works for Power House Area, Auxiliary Buildings and other areas inside & outside Plant of CPP.

For details of NITs like contract period,

EMD, Date and time of E-submission,

Part - I Bid Opening , Modification/Amendments (if any) please

log in to www.nalcoindia.com &

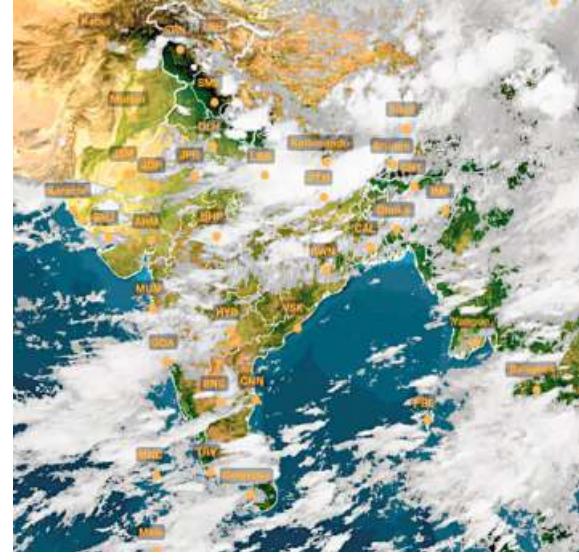
<http://eprocure.gov.in>

AGM (Mech.), Contract Cell

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WEATHER WATCH

RAINFALL, TEMPERATURE & AIR QUALITY IN SELECT METROS YESTERDAY



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

Forecast for Saturday: Heavy/very heavy rainfall likely at isolated places over Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram, Tripura, Bihar, Uttarakhand, west Uttar Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Punjab, Haryana, coastal & south interior Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Puducherry, Karaikal and Kerala

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	25.8	32.0	27.0	Kozhikode	0.4	30.8	24.4
Ahmedabad	9.4	35.0	26.4	Kurnool	6...	31.1...	24.7
Aizawl	37...	22.8...	18.1	Lucknow	...	32.6...	27.7
Allahabad	3.6	32.8	27.4	Madurai	10.4	34.6...	23.6
Bengaluru	29.1	26.9	20.6	Mangaluru	57.9	29.0...	23.1
Bhopal	—	33.3	25.2	Mumbai	5.8	32.6...	26.4
Bhubaneswar	—	35.0	26.5	Mysuru	5.5	27.4...	20.2
Chandigarh	—	36.3	29.0	New Delhi	—	38.3...	28.2
Chennai	115.4	33.8	23.0	Patna	5.4	30.0...	—
Coimbatore	2.8	29.0	21.6	Port Blair	—	31.2...	25.0
Dehradoon	6.7	33.8	25.2	Puducherry	17.2	31.6...	23.8
Gangtok	13.6	20.6	18.6	Pune	0.8	28.8...	23.3
Goa	10.2	31.2	25.6	Raipur	—	33.0...	25.4
Guwahati	11.3	33.5	24.6	Ranchi	—	31.2...	23.7
Hubballi	—	26.0	22.0	Shillong	120.1	21.0...	18.6
Hyderabad	—	29.6	22.7	Shimla	5.4	28.2...	17.9
Imphal	2.2	25.5	22.6	Srinagar	—	32.8...	15.6
Jaipur	—	37.0	28.8	Thiruvananthapuram	1.8	32.6...	24.6
Kochi	5.4	31.4	23.4	Tiruchi	5.9	30.8...	24.4
Kohima	6.4	24.2	17.6	Vijayawada	—	33.2...	26.0
Kolkata	11	35.2	27.9	Visakhapatnam	—	32.0...	27.8

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)

Pollutants in the air you are breathing

CITIES	SO ₂	NO _x	CO	PM2.5	PM10	CODE
Ahmedabad	19	46	32	45	46	■■■■■
Bengaluru	.9	30	45	—	46	■■■■■
Chennai	.5	27	105	63	—	■■■■■
Delhi	.6	34	104	71	50	■■■■■
Hyderabad	.7	49	.22	8	23	■■■■■
Kolkata	.8	.9	14	15	33	■■■■■
Lucknow	.3	.20	.42	70	—	■■■■■
Mumbai	.59	.15	.7	.23	.47	■■■■■
Pune	.31	.12	.68	.30	.32	■■■■■
Visakhapatnam	13	.53	.32	.42	.92	■■■■■

In observation made at 4.00 p.m. Mandvi, Godavari, Mandsaur recorded an overall air quality index (AQI) score of 227 indicating an unhealthy level of pollution. In contrast, Mysuru, Karnataka recorded a healthy AQI score of 20.

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

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

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

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

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

10-day lockdown from Monday in Pune and Pimpri-Chinchwad

Only pharmacies, hospitals can open; milk supply allowed on first five days

SHOUMOJIT BANERJEE

PUNE

With Pune reporting an average of 1,000 new COVID-19 cases every day for the past one week, the district administration on Friday announced a strict 10-day lockdown from July 13 to check the spread of the virus.

Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar declared the decision after a meeting with Ajoy Mehta, principal adviser to Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray, State Health Secretary Dr. Pradeep Vyas, and senior officials of the Pune district administration.

Mr. Pawar said the lockdown is being imposed as people are not taking the COVID-19 situation seriously in the district. "We are forced to take this decision because rules are not being followed. A complete lockdown has been announced for Pune, Pimpri-Chinchwad and 22 villages in the district from July 13 to 23. Only shops providing essential services, medical stores and hospitals will remain open," he said.

The district reported 1,124 new cases till Friday evening, pushing its tally to 35,528, of which 13,132 are active cases. With six more deaths, the toll has risen to 98. On Thursday, the district reported 1,803 new cases.

'Alarming rise in cases' Pune Divisional Commissioner Dr. Deepak Mhaisekar said, "In view of an alarming rise in cases across the district, we have decided to enforce a 10-day lockdown. The first five days of the lockdown [July 13 midnight to July 18 midnight] will be stringent. Only supply of milk will be allowed and medical



Last-minute shopping: A long queue outside a liquor shop in Pune on Friday after authorities declared a lockdown in the district from July 13 to 23. ■ PTI

stores and hospitals can remain open during this time."

Dr. Mhaisekar said a decision on keeping vegetable and grocery shops open will be taken on July 18. "People can stock up on all essential items over the next three days," he said. Specific directives on the functioning of industries, resumption of newspapers and online deliveries, and staff capacity in government offices will be issued on Saturday evening.

The administration, especially the Pune Municipal Corporation, will be ramping up its medical infrastructure and setting up a jumbo COVID-19 facility and increasing the number of COVID-19 care centres. Dr. Mhaisekar said, "While a lockdown may not be the only solution, it is certainly the best way to break the chain of transmission. Uttar Pradesh, which has only 1,200

cases, has imposed a lockdown. Even if Pune's case fatality rate is reducing, the infection is rapidly spreading."

District Collector Naval Kishore Ram said the lockdown would not automatically reduce the number of cases. "The impact will be visible only after a fortnight. We will be utilising this time to streamline hospitals and put bed management systems in place," he said.

'People flouting rules'

Mr. Ram said there was nothing sudden about the lockdown and it was unfortunate that people across the district were not taking precautions. He said the frequent flouting of directives compelled the administration to impose the lockdown.

Pimpri-Chinchwad Municipal Commissioner Shrawan Hardikar said the measure was an "interim alternative"

and isolating, detecting and testing of patients will be intensified during the lockdown period.

'Essential units can open'

Mr. Hardikar said Pimpri-Chinchwad is a vital industrial hub in the State and the functioning of essential manufacturing units would be permitted.

"The pass system will be started again. Besides

essential manufacturing units, nothing else will be allowed to remain open. The impact will start showing by July-end," he said.

Pimpri-Chinchwad has witnessed a staggering surge of 4,500 cases after lockdown measures were gradually relaxed from May 17. "The doubling rate has increased rapidly, rendering the movement of people between Pune and Pimpri-Chinchwad highly unsafe," Mr. Hardikar said.

High Court seeks info on steps taken to curb COVID-19 in Byculla jail

NIA, Maharashtra govt. to file response

SONAM SAIGAL

MUMBAI

The Bombay High Court on Friday sought information from the National Investigation Agency (NIA) and the Maharashtra government on the measures being implemented in the Byculla women's jail to ensure physical distancing and curb the spread of COVID-19.

A Division Bench of Justices S.S. Shinde and Madhav Jamdar was hearing a criminal appeal filed by advocate and activist Sudha Bharadwaj (58), an accused in the Elgaar Parishad case, challenging a special NIA court's order rejecting her bail application.

Ms. Bharadwaj was picked up from her house in Faridabad and arrested on August 28, 2018 under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act in connection with the Elgaar Parishad conclave held in Pune on December 31, 2017. She was lodged at Yerwada jail in Pune before being moved to Byculla women's jail.

Ms. Bharadwaj approached the High Court after the special NIA court rejected her interim bail plea on May 29 this year. She sought bail on health grounds and cited the high risk of the spread of the novel coronavirus in prisons.

Her plea said she had co-morbidities such as diabetes, hypertension and a history of pulmonary tuberculosis, making her vulnerable to contracting COVID-19 in Byculla jail, where an inmate tested positive in May.

The plea also mentioned that she had "extremely painful swelling in her joints



Activist Sudha Bharadwaj is lodged at Byculla jail.

and a frozen shoulder that restricts her movement".

The High Court had earlier rejected her bail plea on October 15, 2019. According to the NIA, Ms. Bharadwaj is a member of the CPI (Maoist), a banned outfit, which has entered into a conspiracy to seize political power and overthrow the State. The NIA said the evidence against her is "typed copies of letters, which are neither dated nor signed, and are unverifiable as they were found on electronic devices of the other accused. Nothing has been seized from her devices".

The NIA said on July 1 that Ms. Bharadwaj was trying to take undue advantage of the COVID-19 pandemic to seek bail. The agency said, "The available evidence on record clearly established that Sudha Bharadwaj, along with the other accused, was involved in selecting and encouraging cadres for recruitment in the banned Maoist organisation to go underground in 'struggle area'."

Special public prosecutor Prakash Shetty had earlier said Ms. Bharadwaj "is being given the requisite medical attention in jail and need not be given bail".

Landslides disrupt traffic on Mumbai-Goa highway

Diversions extend travel time by two-and-a-half hours

RAINA ASSAINAR

NAVI MUMBAI

Traffic on Mumbai-Goa highway was disrupted following landslides at Dhamandevi village near Poladpur in Raigad district.

The first landslide occurred at 9 p.m. on Thursday. While workers were removing the debris, a second landslide occurred at the same spot at 2 a.m. The road would have been cleared by Friday morning if this had not happened," Vijay Patil, Superintendent of Police, Highway Safety Patrol, said.

Fifteen Highway Safety Patrol personnel have been deployed to divert traffic. Vehicles heading from Ratnagiri are being diverted at Ked, while motorists from

Mumbai are being asked to take a diversion at Ambet in Mhasla taluka. From there, the vehicles will have to head to Ked via Mhapral and Mandangad.

Mr. Patil said, "The diversions will extend the travel time of two- and four-wheelers by two-and-a-half hours. Drivers of heavy vehicles have been asked to stop on the roadside as the diversion route is narrow. The vehicles will be allowed to move only after the highway is cleared."

By Friday evening, three more JCBs were pressed into service in addition to the four that had been deployed to remove the debris.

21 arrested for religious event in Gujarat

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

AHMEDABAD

The police have arrested 21 people for organising and taking part in a religious event and procession at a village in Gandhinagar district on Friday despite a ban on gatherings due to the COVID-19 pandemic, an official said.

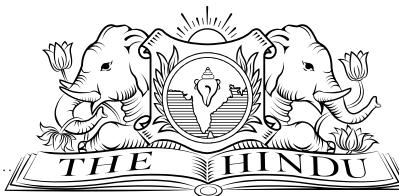
After being alerted about the event, the police reached Paliyad village and stopped the procession midway. An offence was registered against the organisers later, an official said.

Gandhinagar district collector Kuldip Arya said around 2,500 people had gathered for the event.

The accused were also charged under the Disaster Management Act and were sent for testing as per the State guidelines," Deputy Superintendent of Police, Kalol taluka division, V.N. Solanki, said. The organisers were booked under Section 188 of the Indian Penal Code for defying the police order, he said.

TikTok star uploads private video on Snapchat, gets threats

Police trying to locate servers used to upload copies of clip



Crime as punishment

The state must get tough on crime, but the police should not be allowed to break the law

The Uttar Pradesh (U.P.) police's account of the killing of Kanpur gangster Vikas Dubey on Friday, even if taken at face value, is a startling admission of serious ineptitude. But the official narrative, as it stands, stretches the bounds of credulity to an astonishing extent. The possibility that his death is officially sanctioned retribution for the murder of eight policemen who were part of the team that went to arrest him on July 3 is hard to dismiss out of hand. Without a doubt, Dubey's death in an 'exchange of fire' while he was being taken 'met with an accident' is also extremely convenient for many; it puts a lid on the sordid tale of his violent rise to power and influence, which was nourished by a wider network of patrons, including some in the police force. A hardened criminal, who had 62 cases against him before his gang allegedly shot dead eight policemen last week, was supposedly being transported without handcuffs; he snatched weapons from those escorting him, according to the police version of the incident. Indeed, this is no more than a self-indictment of the state police, whose conduct has raised far too many questions in the recent past. There is no good explanation for driving such a suspect through the night across more than 600 km from Ujjain in Madhya Pradesh where he was arrested on Thursday. The brutal last episode of Dubey's serial crimes should be no defence if the shooting turns out to be an extra-judicial killing.

Any demand of probity and accountability in police and military is often contested on the supposed ground that it emerges from a support for criminals, terrorists or enemies of the state by influential political and public figures. There is no question that crimes such as those Dubey was involved in must be met with exemplary punishment. The process of establishing guilt and executing punishment is not an incidental part of justice, but its integral soul. A fair and transparent trial cannot be dispensed with in order to satisfy cries for vengeance. Social sanction of instant justice by state agents might have leached into institutions that are mandated to enforce the rule of law. Last year, when the Cyberabad police shot dead four people accused in a case of gang rape and murder, people celebrated in the streets. The courts and the National Human Rights Commission have also shown a lenient approach in such cases. Goading the police on to deliver instant justice, or even tolerating such behaviour, creates an atmosphere of impunity that could lead to murder of innocent people as happened with the custodial deaths in Tamil Nadu. Support for such killings by the police will not make a society more just. Mob justice is no justice at all. When law enforcers short-circuit due process, the damage to state institutions is severe and long-lasting.

Reform with caution

Criminal law reforms should not be made by quick-fire means or without wide consultations

The formation of a 'Committee for the Reform of Criminal Laws' by the Union Home Ministry with an apparently short time frame and limited scope for public consultation has caused considerable disquiet among jurists, lawyers and those concerned with the state of criminal justice in the country. Few would disagree with the idea that the current laws governing crime, investigation and trial require meaningful reform. There have been several attempts in recent decades to overhaul the body of criminal law, comprising the Indian Penal Code of 1860 vintage, the Code of Criminal Procedure that was rewritten in 1973, and the Indian Evidence Act that dates back to 1872. However, comprehensive legal reform is something that requires careful consideration and a good deal of deliberation. One criticism against the latest Committee is that it has begun its work in the midst of a pandemic. This may not be the ideal time for wide consultations. Activists and lawyers functioning in the hinterland may be at a particular disadvantage in formulating their opinions. The panel's mandate appears quite broad: 'to recommend reforms in the criminal laws of the country in a principled, effective, and efficient manner which ensures the safety and security of the individual, the community and the nation; and which prioritises the constitutional values of justice, dignity and the inherent worth of the individual.' This is vague and open to multiple interpretations. It is also not clear why the Law Commission has not been vested with this task.

The lack of diversity in what is an all-male, Delhi-based committee has also been adversely commented upon. In 2003, the Justice V.S. Malimath Committee on reforms in the criminal justice system had come up with some far-reaching suggestions, some of which became part of changes in criminal law. However, it also attracted criticism over the suggestion that the standard of evidence be reduced from "beyond reasonable doubt" to "clear and convincing". The Justice Verma panel came up with a comprehensive and progressive report on reforms needed in laws concerning crimes against women in 2013 in barely one month, but its speed was probably due to the limited mandate it had. If all criminal law is to be reformed, there should be a genuine attempt to reach a wide consensus on ways to speed up trials, protect witnesses, address the travails of victims, improve investigative mechanisms and, most importantly, eliminate torture. An impression should not gain ground that wide-ranging changes are sought to be made within a short time frame and based on limited inputs from the public. Reform is best achieved through a cautious and inclusive approach.

Do we need a fiscal council?

An institutional behemoth with such a wide job chart will likely add more to the noise than to the signal



DUVVURI SUBBARAO

The government needs to borrow and spend more now in order to support vulnerable households and engineer economic recovery. But that will mean a steep rise in debt which will jeopardise medium-term growth prospects, an issue prominently flagged by all the rating agencies in their recent evaluations. It is possibly the fear of market penalties that is holding the government back from opening the money spigots.

Many economists have faulted the government's fiscal stance, arguing that this is no time for restraint; the government should spend more to stimulate the economy by borrowing as may be necessary, but at the same time come out with a credible plan for fiscal consolidation post-COVID-19 in order to retain market confidence. But will the market be persuaded by the government's assurance of future good conduct? Like St. Augustine who prayed, "god, give me continence, but not yet!" will the markets instead see the government as asking, "god, give me fiscal rectitude, but not yet?" Not necessarily, say the commentators. The government can signal its virtue by establishing some new institutional mechanism for enforcing fiscal discipline, such as for example

a fiscal council. The suggestion of a fiscal council actually predates the current crisis. It was first recommended by the Thirteenth Finance Commission and was subsequently endorsed by the Fourteenth Finance Commission and then by the FRBM (Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management) Review Committee headed by N.K. Singh.

Present in 50 countries

According to the International Monetary Fund (IMF), about 50 countries around the world have established fiscal councils with varying degrees of success. Abstracting from country-level differences, a fiscal council, at its core, is a permanent agency with a mandate to independently assess the government's fiscal plans and projections against parameters of macroeconomic sustainability, and put out its findings in the public domain. The expectation is that such an open scrutiny will keep the government on the straight and narrow path of fiscal virtue and hold it to account for any default.

Do we really need a fiscal council? Sure, we do have a chronic problem of fiscal irresponsibility, but is a fiscal council the answer? Recall that back in 2003 when FRBM was enshrined into law, we thought of that as the magic cure for our fiscal ills. The FRBM enjoins the government to conform to pre-set fiscal targets, and in the event of failure to do so, to explain the reasons for deviation. The government is also required to submit



to Parliament a 'Fiscal Policy Strategy Statement' (FPSS) to demonstrate the credibility of its fiscal stance. Yet, seldom have we heard an in-depth discussion in Parliament on the government's fiscal stance; in fact the submission of the FPSS often passes off without even much notice. If the problem clearly is lack of demand for accountability, how will another instrumentality such as a fiscal council for supply of accountability be a solution? It can be argued that a fiscal council will in fact be a solution because it will give an independent and expert assessment of the government's fiscal stance, and thereby aid an informed debate in Parliament. A fair point, but do we need an elaborate permanent body with an extensive mandate for this task?

The council's mandate

Consider for example the model suggested by the FRBM Review Committee. As per that, the fiscal council's mandate will include, but not be restricted to, making multi-year fiscal projections, preparing fiscal sustainability analy-

sis, providing an independent assessment of the Central government's fiscal performance and compliance with fiscal rules, recommending suitable changes to fiscal strategy to ensure consistency of the annual financial statement and taking steps to improve quality of fiscal data, producing an annual fiscal strategy report which will be released publicly.

Starting it small

Let us, despite my arguments above, grant that a fiscal council will indeed add value. Then the way forward is to start small and scale it up if it proves to be a positive experience. I would suggest the following low cost and reversible start-up.

A week before the scheduled budget presentation, let the CAG, a constitutional authority, appoint a three-member committee for a five-week duration with a limited mandate of scrutinising the budget after it is presented to Parliament for its fiscal stance and the integrity of the numbers, and give out a public report. The CAG's office will provide the secretarial and logistic support to the committee from within its resources. The Finance Ministry, the RBI, the CSO and the Niti Aayog will each depute an officer to serve in the secretariat. The committee will be wound up after submitting its report leaving no scope for any mission creep.

Bureaucratic expansion is a one way street. It is wise to cross the river by feeling the stones.

The writer is a former Governor of the Reserve Bank of India

In the name of 'cooperative federalism'

There is a huge gap between what the 14th Finance Commission promised to States and what they have received



DEREK O'BRIEN

India is in the midst of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)'s decade of governance. The previous time one party dominated for nearly 10 years was four decades ago, when the Congress had brute majorities between 1980 and 1989. In that period, the tussle for the rights of States was focused on Article 356. Using pliant Governors, regional party governments were politically destabilised. There was lip service paid to the report of the Justice R.S. Sarkaria Commission on Centre-State relations, but its spirit was twisted.

History is repeating itself but much more cripplingly. The principal tool of combating State governments is no longer Article 356. Once more a well-meaning report, the report of the 14th Finance Commission, is being cited, but it is also being sabotaged step by step. And all this is being done while supposedly upholding "cooperative federalism". This began well before COVID-19, but the pandemic and its economic disruption have brought things to an edge.

Delayed payments

The 14th Finance Commission report was accepted in 2015 with the promise that it would devolve more finances to the States. As part of the process, States would have new responsibilities, espe-

cially in the social sector. Two years later, the introduction of the Goods and Services Tax (GST) regime was also justified as a grand bargain that would eventually leave all States better off.

In reality, tax devolution to States has been consistently below 14th Finance Commission projections. One reason for this has been the economic slowdown, caused primarily by the Central government, and lower-than-expected GST collections. The shortfall in GST collection for 2018-2019 was 22% when compared to projections. Payments have been delayed as well. For example, Centre owed States about ₹35,000 crore as GST compensation for December 2019 and January 2020, which was only paid in June 2020 after a delay of more than five months.

The Centre has imposed a series of cesses, which are not part of the divisible pool and not shared with the States. There are now rumours of a COVID-19 cess as well. According to a study by the Centre for Policy Research, there is a ₹6.84 lakh crore gap between what the 14th Finance Commission promised to States and what they have received.

The Centre's fiscal deficit exceeds the consolidated State deficit by 14%. India is paying for a profligate Centre.

The COVID-19 situation has deepened the crisis. According to a



State Bank of India report, the collective loss to GSDP due to the pandemic is ₹30.3 lakh crore or 13.5% of GSDP. States are being required to spend more to help common citizens and save livelihoods. The Centre is providing almost negligible support. In West Bengal, as of June 30, the State government had spent ₹1,200 crore in fighting COVID-19. The Centre has given ₹400 crore under the National Health Mission and to the State Disaster Response Mitigation Fund, but absolutely nothing specifically for the pandemic.

Cyclone Amphan, the worst cyclone in Bengal's memory, devastated 2.8 million houses and 1.7 million hectares of farm land. The loss was estimated at ₹1.02 lakh crore. The Mamata Banerjee government in Kolkata immediately released ₹6,250 crore; the Centre has offered just ₹1,000 crore.

Following the pandemic, the Ministry of Finance has asked all Union Ministries to cut expenditure. The immediate impact is being felt by States, and grants-in-aid are drying up. Crucial rural development programmes have come

to a standstill.

The Union Rural Development Ministry is supposed to transfer ₹4,900 crore to West Bengal in 2020-21 for projects to be undertaken by panchayati raj institutions. A quarter of the financial year has passed but not a single paisa has come. Around 70% of this money is meant for gram panchayats and 30% for panchayat samitis and zilla parishads. This formula came after a recommendation from Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, which the Prime Minister accepted. The funds are meant for building roads, culverts and bridges, local drinking water projects and similar schemes that create jobs and help village economies. All this has come to a halt.

Overall if one considers dues for Centrally-supported schemes (₹36,000 crore); the cut in devolution of funds (₹11,000 crore); outstanding GST receipts (₹3,000 crore); and dues for food subsidies and other heads (₹3,000 crore), the Centre owes West Bengal ₹53,000 crore. I can't speak for all States but for West Bengal this is a huge burden, especially in a calamity-hit year such as 2020.

FRBM provisions

As they put more money into people's hands, governments across the world are struggling to meet fiscal deficit targets this year. In India, even States that have maintained fiscal discipline in recent times have had to cope with needs of suffering citizens and spend more under essential, social sector heads. The fiscal deficit for States, collectively, is inevitably going to breach the projection of 2.04%.

States are being set up for failure. This is the true picture of the BJP's "cooperative federalism".

As per provisions of the Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management (FRBM) Act, the Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP) can actually accommodate a fiscal deficit of 3%. The States have respected the limit for years and the projection for 2020-21 reflected this. Now, post-pandemic, this limit will be crossed. The FRBM has an "escape clause" that allows for a one-time relaxation of the fiscal deficit threshold upto 0.5% in a time of exigency. The escape clause has been utilised by the Centre but it has proven woefully insufficient in addressing the current crisis.

Fiscal policymakers and technocrats agree that the rigidity of the FRBM has to be revisited. It should allow for greater flexibility and consultation as to when and how the "escape clause" can be applied. This goes beyond the current COVID-19 situation, but has come to light because of it – and because the Centre has gone in for subjective interpretation, imposing conditions that are outside the scope of the FRBM.

In theory, the Centre has raised the fiscal deficit limit for States, under the FRBM, from 3% to 5%. But only 0.5% of this rise is unconditional. The remaining 1.5% is dependent on fulfilling certain unrealistic and impractical measures – including privatisation of power distribution, and enhancing revenues of urban local bodies.

States are being set up for failure. This is the true picture of the BJP's "cooperative federalism".

Derek O'Brien leads Trinamool Congress in the Rajya Sabha

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.

Extra-judicial killing

The death of gangster Vikas Dubey at the hands of the Uttar Pradesh police is yet another addition to the alarmingly high number of extra-judicial killings over the last few months. The onus is on the State governments and the judiciary to nip this trend in the bud, lest we end up having police forces that see it fit to bypass judicial procedure as and when they please. While there is no doubt that those engaging in crime must be brought to justice, there must be strict adherence to procedure. It is the criminal acts of those responsible for maintaining law and order that have pushed the U.P. into chaos with large and continuous protests even amidst the pandemic. The world's largest democracy must learn from the

mistakes of the oldest democracy.

KANNAN K.,
Chalakudy, Kerala

Utilisation of funds

While responding to a writ petition in the Supreme Court, the Central government rejected outright the plea to utilise the funds, received as voluntary donations by PM CARES, for National Disaster Response Fund to fight the pandemic. It has been further stated that PM CARES is governed by separate provision. Nobody knows what that 'separate provision' is. Inside page, "PM CARES is separate from NDRF: govt," July 10). The funds received as voluntary donations for PM CARES will not attract any violation of Acts like those connected with money laundering, income tax,

and foreign contributions.

But when it comes to NGOs linked to the Congress Party, all these acts will come into play. The government is raising so many questions on the violations of legal provisions by NGOs linked to the Congress. But ironically, it has not spelt anything about how the PM CARES fund is spent and for what purpose, whether it is being audited. What applies to NGOs connected to the Congress must apply to PM CARES also.

D. SETHURAMAN,
Chennai

Crime and winnability

This bears reference to the article "Owning up to the criminalisation of politics" (Editorial page, July 10). While all political parties have been waxing eloquent on the need to rid politics

of criminals, they have no qualms about offering tickets to those whose antecedents leave a lot to be desired.

In most cases it is the winnability factor that remains paramount and all other considerations are cast aside with impunity. The recent decree of the Supreme Court wherein political parties were saddled with the responsibility of furnishing the reasons for selecting candidates with criminal records and also explain why they could not find candidates with clean records should shift the onus on to the parties.

C.V. ARAVIND,
Bengaluru

Scattered across

There is no doubt that the depiction of facts using modern visualisation techniques, like scatterplots

and other kinds of graphical tools, enriches the readers' understanding of the topic, and of course, raises journalistic standards.

I suppose data journalists are probably the only group of journalists who are immune to subjectivity, as they deal only with hard facts. 'Data Point' evidently stands out and offers a quick reprieve from all other text.

BEJOY SEBASTIAN,
Kochi

dominant sections in the newspaper. When it comes to insights derived from the visualised data, it also calls for the readers to maintain a sharper presence of mind, which is totally fine. I hope the newspaper retains this section, without change, forever.

>>In a story titled "Nizamuddin event: 60 Malaysians walk free on fine of ₹7,000 each" (July 10, 2020, some editions) a sentence that read "Mr. Hari Haran told the court that the alleged offences were committed *inadvertently and not without* any mal intention and would not be repeated." should be corrected to read ... committed *inadvertently and without* any mal intention.

>>The photo caption that accompanied the story titled "Supreme Court panel seeks report on Kaziranga animal corridor encroachment" (some editions, July 9, 2020) erroneously referred to Kaziranga National Park in Bokakhat district of Assam. Actually, Bokakhat is a sub-division of Golaghat district. A major chunk of Kaziranga is in Golaghat district. The national park and tiger reserve is spread across Nagaon and Biswanath districts too.

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A raid that left a bloody trail

Only 24 hours after his surrender, Vikas Dubey, a criminal with political connections, was shot dead during an alleged exchange of fire with the police near Kanpur on Friday. **Omar Rashid** pieces together the violent events of the past week beginning with the raid that led to the death of eight policemen near Dubey's residence

Twenty-four hours after his arrest near a temple in Ujjain, Vikas Dubey met an abrupt and dramatic end on Friday at about 6:45 a.m. Dubey, the history-sheeter accused of shooting dead eight policemen in Kanpur's Bikru village last week, had attempted to escape after the car transporting him back to Kanpur from Madhya Pradesh overturned, the police said. Dubey snatched a policeman's pistol and shot at those escorting him, they claimed. As he refused to surrender, the police acted in self-defence and shot him dead, they said. Dubey is the sixth and most significant of the accused in the case to be gunned down, but questions remain over the exact sequence of events of the intervening night of July 2 and 3 in Bikru where eight policemen were killed and where Dubey enjoyed notoriety.

A sudden volley of bullets

On that fateful night, police teams of three stations of Kanpur approached Dubey's house in Bikru, located 40 km from Kanpur, to conduct a raid. Dubey, who already had 60 criminal cases against him, was wanted in a new 'attempt to murder' case. According to police accounts, policemen from Chauharpur, Shivajpur and Bithoor, led by Circle Officer (CO) Devendra Mishra, reached the village around 1 a.m. After parking their vehicles around 200 metres ahead of Dubey's house, they started walking. They hadn't been briefed, said Ajay Kashyap, a constable who survived the encounter.

Bikru's power lines had been snapped, allegedly after a phone call from the Chauharpur police station. "We had never been to the village. We didn't know which lane led where," said Kashyap in a video statement.

Just a few metres in front of Dubey's house, the cops found an earthmover, unusually parked to block the road. They decided to proceed. They crawled under the machine's front portion, one at a time. Once they were on the other side, "somebody from our staff pointed a torch at Dubey's roof and we spotted two people," Kashyap said.

Led by Station House Officer (SHO) Bithoor Kaushalendra Pratap Singh, Kashyap and constable Ajay Sengar went towards the left side of the house. But seconds later, the entire police unit came under sudden and indiscriminate firing, allegedly even from semi-automatic weapons, from at least three sides. The assailants, whose exact number and weapons remain a mystery, enjoyed vantage points on the roofs of adjoining houses. The police called the incident a "well-planned ambush".

The policemen, taken by surprise by the sudden volley of bullets, could not see their targets in the dark. "We started taking cover at different places and then fired back. We could not see the targets but they could see us from above. Every time we moved a little, they fired at us," Kaushalendra said to a news channel from his hospital bed. He and two constables survived bullet injuries. The assailants fired around 20-22 bullets in the first round, injuring most of the cops, he said.

Archana Rajpoot, who lives 40-50 metres ahead of the point where the earthmover was parked, was sleeping on a cot outside her kutchha house that night. She was woken up by the sound of gunshots. She said she did not know what was happening since it was the middle of the night and pitch dark. As Dubey had a reputation for violence and showboating, Archana thought this was yet another episode of the henchmen going berserk or firing to scare someone away. "I could not hear anything except gunshots. So I decided to go back to sleep," she said. Archana claimed she did not see policemen walk past her, but said she did see them when they were trying to retreat after the ambush.

The tip-off and the shootout

After his arrest, Dayashankar Agnihotri, Dubey's domestic help of 25 years, told the police that Dubey had received prior information about the raid through a phone call from the local police station. That had given him enough time to set up the ambush.

On Wednesday, the SHO of Chauharpur, Vinay Tiwari, and beat in-charge K.K. Sharma were arrested on charges of tipping off Dubey. The exact nature of the conspiracy is not known.

After receiving the inputs, Dubey summoned his armed associates, numbering 20-30, over phone. He even fired at the police using a gun registered in his domestic help's name, claimed Agnihotri, who is now in jail for conspiracy, along with his wife.

Locals believe Dubey orchestrated the ambush as he may have thought the police had come to shoot him dead. In the shootout, eight policemen were killed, and six policemen and a civilian injured. SHO Kaushalendra and his two men sought refuge in a trolley and a dilapidated house before escaping



Provincial Armed Constabulary jawans patrol the area of the shootout in Bikru village of Kanpur district of Uttar Pradesh. (Below): PAC jawans eat outside the demolished house of Vikas Dubey. • OMAR RASHID



through a lane. Constable Sengar was shot twice in his abdomen, but the bleeding officer thought it was his priority to save his colleague's life. The other policemen took cover near a dilapidated toilet, which still showcases dark blood stains. Five bodies were reportedly found in its proximity.

CO Mishra, who had previously complained to his senior about SHO Vinay Tiwari for protecting Dubey, met a brutal end. After being shot, Mishra reportedly jumped over a brick wall and took cover in a corner of the inner courtyard of a Pandey family residence. But he was spotted by one of the assailants standing on an adjacent roof. The assailant called out to his accomplices. Soon four men jumped over the wall into the courtyard to kill the CO. Mishra was allegedly shot in the head. There was also an attempt to amputate his leg with an axe, said a policeman now stationed in the village. Dried blood stains on the floor mark the spot where Mishra was killed. The locals said the shootout lasted about 30 minutes.

Remnants of a long night

Locals in Bikru recalled the incident only through the loud sounds of gunshots. The episode has brought grief for Sushma Pandey, whose husband Prem Kumar Pandey was gunned down by the police hours after the policemen were killed in the ambush. The police said Pandey was one of the assailants and Dubey's accomplice. The imperfectly plastered house of the Pandey family is located a few metres from Dubey's mansion, now demolished.

Her husband died because of "bad karma" on her part, Sushma said. "I did not open the door for them [the policemen] that night. I was scared. Now I have lost my husband. I didn't even get to see his ashes," said a bedridden and sobbing Sushma.

At least two injured policemen banged on her door that night, begging to be let in, before they were killed by the assailants. The men were frantically searching for a place to hide outside, she recalled. It was later found that they had tried to hide under a bench and a motorbike parked in the porch. Sushma recounted their desperate pleas with re-

gret. "They cried, 'Amma humko bachalo. Hamare chote chote bacche hai. Hum aapka kuch nahi karenge' (Mother, please save us. We have little kids at home. We won't harm you)," she said. Initially, Sushma hesitated; the firing outside had numbed her. But she gradually mustered courage and tried to crawl towards the door. By then the men had been silenced by a loud burst of firing. An SHO and a constable were later found dead in pools of blood.

Following the bloodbath, Dubey and his men fled the scene. Soon after the incident, the administration exacted small revenge by demolishing Dubey's house and crushing his vehicles in broad daylight. The official reason was that he could have hidden a huge cache of arms and ammunition in bunkers within the compound. Six illegal country-made pistols, two kilos of explosives, 15 crude bombs, 25 cartridges and bomb-making material were shown as recoveries.

Dubey's spacious house earlier boasted of CCTV cameras, big white walls and a large courtyard dotted with neem trees. Dubey, his ailing father, Agnihotri, Agnihotri's wife and their children used to live in the house, which stood out amid the humble, run-down dwellings in the area. On Monday, when this reporter visited the house, Provincial Armed Constabulary personnel were standing on guard at the wreckage. Most locals have fled the village after the incident. Many homes remain locked. Some youths have been picked up for questioning. The power supply in the village has not been restored. The remnants of the terrible night were visible in blood stains on the ground and gunshot holes in the walls.

The Pandey family

Manu Pandey, Sushma Pandey's

daughter-in-law, witnessed some of the firing from the tiny gap of her window, a few yards away. Manu said she had no idea that it was the police who were being attacked. "Unmein se ek aadmi bola, 'encounter' karne aaya tha (One of those assailants told another that the CO had come to kill Dubey and his men in an 'encounter')," said Manu.

In the morning, when they finally opened the door for the police, apart from the bullet marks and blood stains, the Pandey family discovered that a ladder had been put up against their main door, possibly by the assailants to set up positions.

Manu said she was sleeping in her room with her husband Sashikant, who works in a detergent factory, and their two children, aged seven and three, when the firing drew them out. The couple ran out and headed to the adjoining room where Sushma was waiting for her husband Prem Kumar Pandey to return. After retiring from the detergent factory last year, Pandey was supervising the work of the earthmover, often mandated by the Zilla Panchayat member, who is Dubey's wife, Richa. Pandey was Dubey's distant maternal uncle.

Sushma said she asked her son Sashikant to flee the scene as she feared he would be arrested without any reason and his clean record would be tarnished. "For 14 years, she did not let his [Dubey] shadow fall on him when he lived in the factory compounds," Manu said of her husband, as she wept.

Manu and Sushma claimed that Pandey and Sashikant fled the scene out of fear but had nothing to do with the incident. In official records, however, Sashikant is an 'accused absconder' and carries a bounty of ₹50,000 on his head. "Please save my husband. What a curse it has been shifting to this house [a year

ago]," said Manu, clutching her two kids. She fears the police might shoot dead Sashikant.

Sushma claimed her husband had no role in the violence. But on second thought, she also does not rule it out. "You can ask around, nobody will speak a word against him. Such is the fear against him. He would hang people upside down and thrash them," said Sushma. "It's possible that my man was also handed a gun and instructed to shoot at the cops owing to the fear he had of 'Bhaiyaji,'" she surmised.

In a hushed tone, the family said Dubey intimidated everyone, even those who were related to him. He once threatened to get Sashikant transferred to Jharkhand from the local detergent factory if he did not listen to him, claimed Sushma. Manu said she and her husband had been looking to leave the village and shift to a rented flat in Chauharpur town because the atmosphere of fear was too much to bear.

A criminal mentality

Vikas Dubey was named in 60 criminal cases in Kanpur, with several linked to murder, attempt to murder, robbery, and charges under the Uttar Pradesh Gangsters and Anti-Social Activities (Prevention) Act, the police said. After the shootout on July 2-3, the assailants fled with an AK-47, one Insas rifle, a Glock pistol, and two 9mm pistols belonging to the police. The first two are yet to be recovered. So is the CCTV recording of the house.

Dubey's story highlights the typical nexus between errant policemen, criminals and politicians in Uttar Pradesh's hinterland. He knew politicians across parties, which earned him both adversaries and guardians.

The shocking murder in 2001 of Bharatiya Janata Party leader Santosh Shukla, who then held the rank of a Minister of State, in a police station in Shivli was among the highlights of his criminal record. According to the Uttar Pradesh Special Task Force, Dubey's animosity towards Shukla started in the 1990s when Shukla and Harikishan Srivastava became political rivals. Srivastava, Dubey's mentor, was then with the Bahujan Samaj Party. They competed for the Chauharpur Assembly seat.

In 1996, after Srivastava, who was later elected Speaker of the Uttar Pradesh Assembly, defeated Shukla, Dubey participated in a victory parade for his mentor. Both sets of supporters clashed and a case was filed against Dubey. This made him hostile towards Shukla and culminated in the BJP leader's sensational murder. However, Dubey was acquitted in the case after the witnesses, all of them policemen, turned hostile.

Dubey was known to use force and his criminal antecedents to secure votes for candidates, especially in his constituency.

But he also allegedly committed crimes to grab land and indulged in extortion. In 2000, he allegedly murdered Siddheshwar Pandey, the manager of a college of which, incidentally, Dubey had been a student. He was convicted in the case but a higher court granted him bail. His name was then linked to the murder of a cable operator, Dinesh Dubey, in 2004.

Lallan Bajpai, Dubey's long-time political nemesis, said Dubey wanted to grab Pandey's land. Bajpai, who has been chairperson of the Shivli Nagar Panchayat for 22 years, had known Dubey for years. As a young man, Dubey used to watch movies in the cinema hall run by Bajpai, the only one in town then. Bajpai said Dubey had a "criminal mentality" even when he was a teenager. Dubey faced charges of dacoity, assault and intimidation as far back as 1991-92, according to police records. The two of them were in different camps of the Kanpur political tussle. One day, Dubey allegedly shot at Bajpai's brother, who was lucky to survive. The animosity eventually led to the murder of Santosh Shukla, whom Bajpai considered his mentor. Bajpai said Dubey had tremendous influence. He had the power to shift 10,000 votes in nearby villages to any party he wanted, he said. "But mind you, that wasn't because of his popularity, it was because people feared him," said Bajpai.

In 2000, Dubey, while he was lodged in jail, allegedly orchestrated the murder of one Ram Babu Yadav in Shivli, in rural Kanpur, through his associates, the police alleged. Then, in October 2017, Dubey was arrested by the Special Task Force in Lucknow in connection with a murder case. Police had accused him of allegedly applying pressure on the complainant and witnesses to submit affidavits in his favour. During questioning, a video of which was widely shared on social media recently, Dubey, then carrying a reward of ₹25,000, disclosed his political links. He mentioned the names of two sitting MLAs, a block pramukh, a zilla panchayat head and several pradhans. The MLAs, however, distanced themselves from him. One of them even said Dubey's strategy was to show his clout by aligning himself with political leaders of ruling parties.

Recently another attempt to murder case was filed against Dubey. The complaint was filed by one Rahul Tiwari who accused Dubey of assaulting him after he refused to surrender his lands to him. It was then that the police decided to raid Dubey's house.

Tiwari has since gone into hiding. Suman, Tiwari's mother, said her son was married into a family which has three daughters and an adopted son. The son got married into Dubey's family in Bikru. The son, empowered by Dubey, wanted to grab all of their six bigha land, while Tiwari was in favour of distributing the land equally among the four, she said. Days before the Bikru ambush, Tiwari was allegedly assaulted by men linked to Dubey, but the police did not file his FIR, said Suman. Then, under the pretext of an "inquiry", a police team took Tiwari to Bikru village where he was allegedly thrashed, claimed Suman. Dubey had threatened to kill Tiwari if he tilled the land, she said.

He helped the poor

Dubey carried the image of a notorious criminal in Bikru, but locals also recounted tales of how "Panditji", as he was popularly known owing to his caste, helped families. He would give them money to get their daughters married or for medical treatment and even intervened in disputes, they said.

Dubey had been a Pradhan and a Zilla Panchayat member, posts that are now held by his sister-in-law and wife, respectively. Since he enjoyed political power, he was also able to use his clout to get the poor jobs in factories, said locals. There are several plaques in the village bearing the Dubey family name.

Most locals claimed that they had locked themselves up the night of the shootout and had little knowledge about the incident. When asked about Dubey's criminal image, Paras, a caste Hindu, who was holding a Hindi language newspaper carrying news about Dubey, said: "What can I say about big people? I never interacted with him much. He never harassed me, so I can't tell you about what the media is saying."

Questions on death

Dubey, or "Panditji", is dead, but the Uttar Pradesh police have vowed not to rest till they bring the remaining accused to justice. Twelve of the accused are still on the run.

Meanwhile, Opposition parties have questioned the manner in which he was killed. The notorious criminal has been eliminated, but did the U.P. police deliver justice to the families of the slain policemen and dismantle the nexus behind the crime?

The question lingers.



FROM PAGE ONE

More military-level talks next week

The two sides also agreed to "follow the consensus reached by the two Special Representatives (SRs), National Security Adviser Ajit Doval and State Councillor Wang Yi, during their call on July 5".

"As agreed by the two SRs, the Senior Commanders will meet soon to discuss further steps so as to ensure complete disengagement and de-escalation in a timely manner," the MEA said, adding that both sides reviewed the situation "including the progress made in ongoing disengagement."

The fourth meeting at the Corps Commander-level is expected to take place next week, to take forward the next phase of disengagement.

China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) said in a statement that both sides agreed "to continue to maintain dialogue and con-

sultations through military and diplomatic channels, promote further de-escalation of the situation on the ground, strengthen confidence-building measures in the border areas, and properly handle border issues in a timely manner to avoid differences becoming disputes."

The talks were led by Naresh Srivastava, Joint Secretary (East Asia) in the MEA, and Hong Liang, Director General of the Department of Boundary and Ocean Affairs of the MFA.

On Friday, the Chinese Embassy in India released an 18-minute video address by Ambassador Sun Weidong. He said the June 15 clash in Galwan Valley "was a situation neither China nor India would like to see."

He said the two SRs on July 5 "reached a positive consensus on easing the current border situation."

'Commercial vaccine will take at least 12 months'

The meeting was attended by Principal Scientific Advisor to the Prime Minister K. VijayRaghavan. Officials from the Department of Biotechnology, the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research and the CSIR deposed at the meeting. Mr. VijayRaghavan at a press conference held on May 28 had said, "Preclinical studies [for the vaccine] are likely to be completed by October, after which it is likely to move on to human trials."

There are five promising candidate vaccines from India, including Covaxin from Bharat Biotech and Zydovac from Zydus Cadila, which were cleared by the Drug Controller General of India for early human trials.

During the deliberations,

it was pointed out to the committee that India's pharma industry is heavily dependent on imports from China.

Chinese imports

"We were told that our pharma supply chains are dependent on Chinese imports. In the current situation between the two countries, this dependency could prove expensive. Medical security is as important as defence security," another member said.

Patanjali's Coronil, which was briefly marketed as a cure for the SARS-CoV-2, also came up for discussion, but officials refused to comment on the subject saying that it did not come under their purview, sources said.

14% excess rain in India so far this monsoon

The good rains so far have been helped by the monsoon's timely onset, on June 1, as well its coverage of the entire country in record time.

Two weeks ago, the IMD said the southwest monsoon had covered the entire country at a pace not seen since 2013.

The normal date for the monsoon to span the whole country is July 8.

The rain bearing concentration of clouds, called the monsoon trough, oscillates from the east to the west of the country. In its forecast on Wednesday, the IMD said that this trough is likely to shift northwards towards the foothills of Himalayas from July 9 onwards.

In addition to this, moist southwesterly/southerly winds from Bay of Bengal at

lower tropospheric levels were likely to converge over the northeast and the adjoining east India from Friday, July 8, and southwesterly/southerly winds from the Arabian Sea very likely to converge over northwest India, also from Friday.

This would bring heavy rains over the western Himalayan region, the northern parts of Punjab and Haryana, Chandigarh, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, sub-Himalayan West Bengal and Sikkim, and the northeastern States until early next week. Heavy rains were also very likely over Uttarakhand on July 11-12; over east Uttar Pradesh from July 10-12; over Bihar on July 10-11; over sub-Himalayan West Bengal, Sikkim, Assam, Meghalaya and Arunachal Pradesh over July 9-11.

'Solar energy will play big role in Atmanirbhav Bharat'

The Rewa solar project, being touted as Asia's largest, is the first such project in the country to break the grid parity barrier. While the Delhi Metro will use 24% of the electricity produced from it, Madhya Pradesh will use the rest. "The project, along with others, will make Madhya Pradesh a hub of cheap and clean energy," said Mr. Modi.

While the world was in a quandary whether they should focus on environment or economy, he stated that India had shown these two were not in opposition to each other. "They are partners. For us, environmental protection is not limited to some projects, but it's a way of life. When we launch big renewable energy projects, we are also en-

suring our resolve towards clean energy is seen in every aspect of life."

The government's priority was that electricity reached everyone and the environment remained pure. "This is reflected in our policies relating to solar energy. In 2014, the price of solar power was ₹7-8 per unit. Today, it is ₹2.15-2.30 per unit. Not just in the country, all over the world it's being talked about how solar power is so cheap in India," he observed.

In order to achieve self-reliance, the country aimed at ending its dependence on imports. "We have decided that government organisations which buy solar cells and modules should buy only the ones made in India," he added.

Petitioners' counsel Chikku Prabhakar contended

Karnataka adds a record 2,313 cases, Kerala 416

Local transmission dominates Kerala tally; disease kills 57 in Karnataka; A.P. records 1,608 fresh cases and 15 deaths

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

The COVID-19 situation in Kerala appeared to be similar to any major metropolis, with community disease transmission defying containment efforts, the Chief Minister, Pinarayi Vijayan, said on Friday.

The pace at which a 'super spreader' event had transmitted the disease across three urban wards in Thiruvananthapuram showed the speed of transmission in a small and densely populated State, he said here.

Till Friday, the large number of daily cases were imported – people from abroad or other States.

But on Friday, the picture reversed. Of the 416 new cases, 242 were cases of local

transmission, while imported ones stood at 174. The disease was spreading across the camps of para-military forces with 35 personnel of the ITBP in Alappuzha district, two jawans of the BSF in Thrissur and one CISF jawan in Kannur testing positive.

With 112 recoveries, the number of active cases in hospitals was 3,099.

For the second day, the maximum number of fresh cases, 129, was from Thiruvananthapuram district, of which 122 were "contact" cases from local transmission. The number of patients in treatment in the district also shot up to 450.

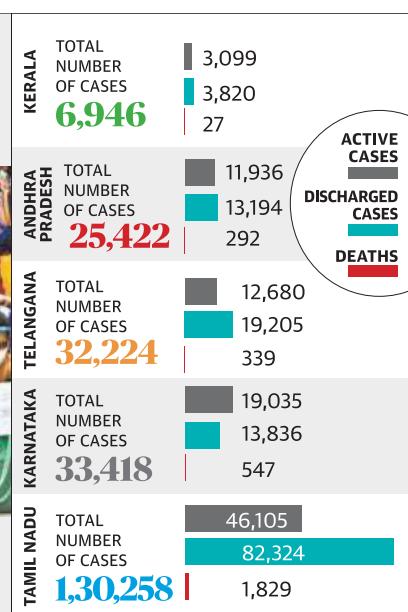
Mr. Vijayan said the government would prefer to focus on increasing testing and expanding the treatment facilities to accommodate a surge. Of the total cases, the proportion of local transmis-

Tough times

Risking their lives, frontline workers are fighting hard to contain the virus. The graph shows the spread of the pandemic in the southern States



Seeking their due: Nurses who were employed in hospitals under the outsourcing policy staging a dharna in Hyderabad on Friday. ■ G. RAMAKRISHNA



ment said. There were 11,936 active cases, and 13,194 recovered cases. Among the fresh cases, 1,576 were locals and 32 people from other States.

Chittoor district reported 208 fresh cases, Anantapur 191 and East Godavari 169 cases. They were followed by Kurnool (144), West Godavari (144), Guntur (136), Prakasam (110), Kadapa (91), Visakhapatnam (86), Vizianagaram (86), Krishna (80), Srikanth (80) and Nellore (51).

Karnataka's death toll touched 543 on Friday with 57 more fatalities. With 2,313 new cases, the highest for a single day, the total stood at 33,418. Among new cases, 1,447 were in Bengaluru Urban and 29 of the 57 deaths were from Bengaluru and eight from Dakshina Kannada.

(With inputs from Vijaya-wada, Bengaluru bureaus)

NIA to probe Kerala gold seizure case

Proceeds from smuggling could be used to finance terror, it says

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) has registered a case in connection with the smuggling of gold at the Thiruvananthapuram airport.

The NIA said in a statement that initial enquiries indicated that the "proceeds of the smuggled gold could be used for financing of terrorism in India".

The 30 kg of gold concealed in imported plumbing material was seized by the Custom officials on July 5 upon inspection of an air cargo consignment addressed to the Consular General of the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

NIA registered the case under Sections 16, 17 and 18 of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967, against four persons – Sarith P.S., Swapna Prabha Suresh,



Political storm: Policemen in action after a march demanding Kerala CM's resignation turned violent on Friday. ■ K. RAGESH

Fazil Fareed and Sandeep Nair.

The aforesaid consignment was found camouflaged in diplomatic baggage from UAE that is exempted from inspection as per the Vienna Convention. The said consignment was to be received by Sarith, who had worked in the UAE Consu-

late earlier as Public Relations Officer. Initial investigation by Customs Department has revealed that Sarith had received multiple such consignments earlier as well," the NIA said.

As the case pertains to smuggling of a large quantity of gold into India from offshore locations, threatening

the economic stability and national security of the country, it amounts to a terrorist act as stated in Section 15 of the UAPA, it said.

One of the suspects, Swapna Prabha Suresh, has moved an anticipatory bail plea claiming she was innocent. She was an employee of the Consulate.

She mentioned in her plea that though she had resigned from the Consulate, she was still working as secretary on "request basis" in view of the COVID-19 situation.

Protest turns violent

Meanwhile, Youth organisations of the Congress, the BJP, and the IUML clashed with the police at many places on Friday as their protest marches demanding Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan's resignation in the gold-smuggling case turned violent.

Yediyurappa goes into quarantine

Some of his staff had tested positive

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
BENGALURU

Karnataka Chief Minister B.S. Yediyurappa has gone into home quarantine for a few days from Friday after some employees of his home-office, Krishna, tested positive for COVID-19.

M. Yediyurappa has cancelled all meetings and decided to stay at his official residence, Cauvery, on Kumara Park Road in the city. He was scheduled to attend a send-off programme of 16 retiring MLAs at 10.30 a.m. on Friday.

'I am healthy'

"As a few personnel at 'Krishna' tested COVID-19 positive, I am discharging duties from home for a few



days, giving instructions and suggestions through video-conference. I am healthy and there is no need to panic," the Chief Minister tweeted.

Sources in the State government said one of the Chief Minister's drivers and a cook at his residence, Dhavalagiri, tested positive.

A new low in man-animal conflict, says SC; sends notice to Kerala and Centre

Bench takes cognisance of death of a pregnant elephant

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

A file photo of elephants and mahouts paying tribute to the pregnant elephant. ■ PTI

shown by villagers desperate to save their crops and livelihood from the animals.

The petition also said the forest service is riddled with a large number of vacancies, making their presence ineffective. They are hardly able to patrol the large swathes of forest land or play a role in wildlife conservation.

The petition also said the forest service is riddled with a large number of vacancies, making their presence ineffective. They are hardly able to patrol the large swathes of forest land or play a role in wildlife conservation.

There is hardly any scientific practices evolved to lessen man-animal conflicts.

The petition sought declaration of the "practice of using barbaric means/snakes/shaved sticks/explosives to ward off wild animals as illegal, unconstitutional, and violative of Articles 14, and 21 of the Constitution."

Besides Kerala, other States which are made party in the petition include Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Odisha, Tamil Nadu, Tripura, Uttarakhand and West Bengal.

Mr. Awasthi said the incident which happened in Kerala and hundreds of incidents like it were waiting to unfold in various parts of the country due to the dubious practice of using snares to scare wild animals.

The committee has also pointed out that a section of the top, middle and shift managers at LG Polymers did not have the required exper-

LG plant staff not qualified to handle styrene leak'

Many are just science graduates: panel

SUMIT BHATTACHARJEE
VIJAKHAPATNAM

The high-power committee which probed the circumstances that led to the leak of styrene monomer vapour at LG Polymers in Visakhapatnam on May 7 has mentioned in its report that the staff of the plant were neither adequately qualified nor experienced to handle such emergency situations.

"Many staff at the plant discharging the duties of engineers were just science graduates or intermediate passouts. They were running the plant which dealt with styrene, which is categorised as a hazardous chemical," suggests the report.

The committee has also pointed out that a section of the top, middle and shift managers at LG Polymers did not have the required exper-

Gas leak from ONGC pipeline arrested

The Oil and Natural Gas Corporation safety wing on Friday arrested a gas leak from an underground pipeline under two wells in East Godavari on Friday. Locals noticed the leakage from the underground pipeline installed in a coconut orchard and alerted the ONGC and Fire staff. The leakage had been arrested and the wells had been closed.

tise and knowledge. The plant management was also not forthcoming in divulging the complete details of the HR strength. The panel has observed that many chemical engineers employed at the plant for the last 20 to 30 years had either retired or left the company.

In a release, Mr. Rao promised that the government would construct more spacious mosque and temple on a larger area at its own expenditure within the complex. Telangana is a secular State committed to maintaining its secular fabric, he said.

the backdrop of it being unclear whether the government prepared a plan and secured permission, prima facie the building demolition was in violation of the rule.

HC puts on hold demolition of Secretariat buildings



Under a cloud: The petitioners told the HC that due procedure had not been followed. ■ G. RAMAKRISHNA

that the State government ought to have complied with rule 4(3) of the Construction and Demolition Waste Management Rules, 2016 while demolishing the Secretariat

buildings. But it did not do so and hence the demolition was illegal, he argued.

On hearing the counsel's contentions, the CJ sought to know from Advocate Gener-

KCR anguished at damage to religious structures

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD

Telangana Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao has expressed anguish and dismay at damage to a mosque and temple during demol

U.P. police had earlier shot dead five associates of Vikas Dubey

Prem Kumar Pandey and Atul Kumar died in an alleged exchange of fire after the ambush; Amar Dubey, Prabhat and Bauwa Pandey were killed a week later

OMAR RASHID
LUCKNOW

Prior to Vikas Dubey's killing in an alleged exchange of fire, the Uttar Pradesh police had shot dead five other accused linked to the ambush of July 2-3, in which eight policemen were killed.

Prem Kumar Pandey and Atul Kumar were killed a few hours after the ambush, in an alleged exchange of fire. A pistol and rifle looted from the police team that had gone to raid Dubey's house in Bikru were recovered from them, said police.

Pandey, who supervised work on an earthmover that was used to block the path of the police team in Bikru on July 2, was a distant maternal

uncle of Dubey. His son Sashikant, who works in a detergent factory, is also an accused with a bounty of ₹50,000. He is still absconding.

Amar Dubey, an aide of Vikas Dubey, who was often seen carrying a gun with the history-sheeter, was shot dead in a village in Hamirpur's Maudaha on Wednesday.

According to police, Amar was spotted in a village after a tip-off by an informant.

He threw his bag on the ground and started firing at police with an "intent to kill". A sub-inspector was shot in his bullet-proof vest.

The special task force then asked Amar to surrender but he abused them and started

firing again, said U.P. police. Then, the police entered into his firing range in a bid to arrest him and a constable was injured after allegedly being shot by Amar. In covering fire, Amar was shot. He died at a community health centre. An illegal semi-automatic .32 bore pistol was recovered from him, said police.

Prabhat, another aide of Vikas Dubey, was arrested in Faridabad on Wednesday. On Thursday, he was being brought to Kanpur under transit remand when one of the U.P. police vehicles had a flat tyre near Panki, said police. Prabhat snatched a pistol from a sub-inspector and tried to flee, while firing in-



Playing with fire: Vikas Dubey, right, with his aide Amar Dubey in an undated photo. ■ PTI

discriminately at the police team, who shot him in self-defence. He was killed.

Bauwa Pandey was shot dead in Etawah the same day. At around 3 a.m. on Thursday, some persons in an SUV were seen escaping after looting a car on a highway near Bakewar, Etawah.

They were intercepted at Kachaura road at 4:30 a.m. and, during the chase, the looted car collided with a tree, following which the criminals started firing, said police. When Bauwa Pandey was intercepted, he fired at the police team and, in return fire, he got seriously injured and was declared dead in the hospital, added police. A pistol and a DBBL gun were recovered from him. His three accomplices managed to flee in the SUV.

Shyamu Bajpai was also shot by police in his leg in a separate incident but he survived. Bajpai and the two others were arrested on July 7 during a vehicle check. On the morning of July 8, Shyam-

mu was taken to a forest area four km near Shivli Road to recover the weapon used in the earlier encounter of July 2. Shyamu dug out a pistol hidden in a pit on the side of the road and fired at the police team with the intent to kill, following which the police shot at him in self-defence, police said. He was arrested.

Family protests

Bajpai's family, however, said he had already been picked up by police on July 3 from his house, where he was sleeping, a few hours after the ambush. Bajpai himself told media after being treated at a hospital that he had been in a police station and

knew nothing about the killing of the cops. A country-made pistol and two live cartridges were recovered from Shyamu, an alleged accomplice of Vikas Dubey, according to police. Shyamu works as a labourer in a detergent factory, his family said.

Dayashankar Agnihotri, Vikas Dubey's cook, was also arrested by police after an alleged exchange of fire in which he was shot in his leg. After his arrest, Agnihotri told media that on the night of the ambush Dubey had received a tip-off about the police raid from a policeman in Chaubeypur station and that he had then summoned around 20-30 armed men to his house.

PIL in SC had flagged possibility of his killing

Maharashtra lawyer filed plea

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

Hours before the death of Vikas Dubey, accused of ambushing a Uttar Pradesh police team and killing eight officers on July 3, a PIL was filed in the Supreme Court seeking an investigation into the "fake encounters" of his alleged associates.

Filed by a Maharashtra-based lawyer, it had ominously said, "There is every possibility" that Dubey, arrested on July 9, will be killed by the police. He was shot dead on July 10. He was being brought back from Ujjain in Madhya Pradesh, where he was apprehended, to Uttar Pradesh.

The petition, filed by advocate Ghanshyam Upadhyay, has made the Uttar Pradesh Police, SP Kanpur and the CBI parties in the case.

The petition recounted that "even the Chief Minister of the State exhorted that sacrifice of policemen will not go in vain and none of the culprits shall be spared".

The police took the "totally unknown to law" step of demolishing Dubey's properties, including his home and vehicles. "This kind of act on the part of administration/police demonstrate complete lawlessness and 'jungle raj' of 'police raj' and by no angle this kind of action on the part of the administration/police is justified and permissible," it said.

It questioned how "five

Lawyer seeks CBI probe into Dubey death

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

MUMBAI

Atalbhai Dubey, an advocate practising at the Bombay High Court, has written to the Chief Justice of India requesting him to take suo motu cognisance of the "fake encounter" of Vikas Dubey and direct the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) to take over the investigation.

accused were arrested/caught and then killed by the police in the name of encounter."

The plea said, "There is every possibility that even Vikas Dubey shall be killed by the Uttar Pradesh police like other co-accused once his custody is obtained by Uttar Pradesh police." It raised questions on the actual circumstances of Dubey's arrest in Ujjain.

"There have been hot debates on various news channels of the country on the issue of escape of Vikas Dubey from Uttar Pradesh and he being found and in fact, he himself having revealed his identity to the security guard of Mahakal temple and thereby getting himself arrested by Madhya Pradesh police," it stated.



Raining bullets: Police inspecting the encounter site where gangster Vikas Dubey was killed near Kanpur on Friday. ■ PTI

Dubey was taken without transit remand: M.P. police

He was not produced before a magistrate in Ujjain'

SIDDHARTH YADAV
BHOPAL

Vikas Dubey, who was killed by the Uttar Pradesh police reportedly in an encounter on Friday, was being taken by them to Kanpur from Ujjain without obtaining a transit remand from a local magistrate, said the Madhya Pradesh police.

Adarsh Katiyar, Madhya Pradesh Additional Director General of Police (ADG), Intelligence, told *The Hindu*, "Transit remand was to be taken by the Uttar Pradesh police as he was wanted by them. That was their call."

Uttar Pradesh ADG, Law and Order, Prashant Kumar, had said on Thursday that

Dubey would be brought to the State on transit remand.

According to a note issued by the Uttar Pradesh police's Special Task Force (STF), Dubey was reportedly being taken to a Kanpur court. "The accused, Vikas Dubey, was being taken by the STF to Kanpur city to be produced before the court of Kanpur city from the Ujjain court according to rules," the STF said.

Confirming that the U.P. police hadn't produced Dubey before a magistrate in Ujjain, Arvind Tomar, in charge of the Mahakal police station under which Dubey was arrested, said, "The Ujjain Superintendent of Poli-

cies received an application from the Kanpur police saying Dubey was absconding and carried a reward. And in order to complete the judicial process, he should be handed over to them. So, we handed him over to them in compliance with that."

Dubey was reportedly arrested on Thursday by the Ujjain police near the Mahakal temple.

Meanwhile, Mr. Tomar rubbished a social media post claiming Dubey had told the Ujjain police after his arrest that he had fired on the police team, out to arrest him on the intervening night of July 2 and 3, fearing an encounter death.

ice

and to the

encounter of main accused Vikas Dubey... A high-level probe is necessary for ensuring justice to eight policemen killed in Kanpur and to identify the nexus between police and criminal political elements."

Ms. Vadra said in a tweet, "There should be an unbiased probe under the supervision of the Supreme Court into the killing of policemen in Kanpur and the encounter of main accused Vikas Dubey... A high-level probe is necessary for ensuring justice to eight policemen killed in Kanpur and to identify the nexus between police and criminal political elements."

Samajwadi Party president and former Chief Minister Akhilesh Yadav made a direct attack on the State government through a cryptic tweet: "Actually, the car did not overturn but the government has been saved from being overturned."

Mr. Vadra said in a video message, "Everyone knows that such protection comes from political sources, such protection comes from

the police's theory."

"Why were the media persons travelling with the Special Task Force motorcade stopped and not permitted to go forward just before the encounter? If the criminal was running away, why was he not shot in the back instead of being shot in his chest?" asked Mr. Surjewala.

National Conference leader Omar Abdullah tweeted, "Dead men tell no tales #Vikas Dubey".

Four other policemen were injured in the car accident, said police.

All are out of danger, doctors said.

According to the police, Dubey took advantage of the accident and tried to flee towards a kutchi road after snatching a pistol from an injured policeman.

The police surrounded him from all four sides and tried to make him surrender, but he fired at the police. In self-defence, police fired two bullets at Dubey, injuring him," said Kanpur SP (West) Anil Kumar.

Soldier dies in Pak. firing along LoC in Rajouri

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

SRINAGAR

A soldier was killed in Pakistan firing along the Line of Control (LoC) in the Pir Panjal Valley's Rajouri district on Friday.

An official said Pakistan troops resorted to unprovoked firing and shelling on the LoC in Rajouri on Friday morning.

"One soldier, identified as

Havildar Sambar Gurung of 33 Rashtriya Rifles (58 Gorkha Rifles), a resident of Manbu in Nepal, died in the shelling," the official said.

The soldier suffered multiple splinter injuries.

Meanwhile, Hakam Bai, a civilian, who was injured in a shelling incident in Poonch on July 8, succumbed to her injuries in a hospital on Friday.

Call to defer Bihar election

People should not be pushed into further danger: LJP

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

PATNA

With the Assembly election just months away, there is a growing demand for its postponement from both the ruling and Opposition parties in view of the surging cases of COVID-19 in the State.

On Friday, Lok Janshakti Party, a constituent of the National Democratic Al-

liance (NDA), requested the Election Commission to take a decision after "looking into all aspects". Leader of Opposition in the State Assembly Tejashwi Yadav also demanded postponement of the election.

"A large section of the population should not be pushed into further danger. Besides, an election in the

midst of the pandemic could result in a very low turnout, which will not be good for democracy," tweeted LJP president Chirag Paswan.

"The common man as well as the Central and State governments are financially strained due to the pandemic. Under the circumstances, polls will be an additional burden," he said.

ICSE, ISC results declared without any merit list

NIOS cancels Class 10, 12 board exams

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS) has cancelled its Class 10 and 12 board examinations due to begin later this month, even as the Council for the Indian School Certificate Examinations declared the final results for its own interrupted examinations.

The NIOS exams had originally been scheduled for March-April, and were then postponed to begin on July 17. Results will now be calculated on the basis of past performances, tutor marked assignments and practical exams, according to a NIOS circular issued on Friday.

As a one-time measure, students will also have the option to write the next public examination or one

of NIOS' on-demand examinations, which will be held whenever the situation is conducive to hold examinations again. Students who choose this option in order to improve their performance will have to accept the marks achieved in that examination as final.

For ICSE (Class 10) and ISC (Class 12) students, there will be no board exam toppers this year. Given the "exceptional circumstances" of papers cancelled due to COVID-19, the CISCE says it has decided not to publish any merit list this year.

The end result was that this year's pass percentage was higher than last year, with 99.3% of ICSE students passing their exams, while the pass percentage for ISC is 96.8%.

NATIONAL BOARD OF EXAMINATIONS

(Autonomous body of the M/o. Health & Family Welfare, Govt. of India)

NAMS Building, Medical Enclave, Ansari Nagar, New Delhi – 110029

No. 21005/RECT/2020

dated 11/7/2020

VACANCY NOTICE

The National Board of Examinations is an Autonomous body of the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, Govt. of India, that conducts Post Graduate Examinations of High standards in the field of Modern Medicine and Allied specialties at National level. The NBE invites applications from eligible candidates for Regular appointment to the following administrative posts, through a Computer Based Test:-

Name of Post	Pay Level	No. of Vacancies*
Senior Assistant	7	18
Junior Assistant	2	57
Junior Accountant	4	7
Stenographer	2	8

* No. of Vacancies are liable to change. Reservation as per G.O.I. norms

For further details on Online Registration, Last Date, Eligibility, Reservation, Syllabus and other terms and conditions, please refer to the detailed Vacancy notice at NBE website www.natboard.edu.in

Joint Director (Admin.)

Helpline No. 022-61087595 | E-mail: vacancy@natboard.edu.in

INDIAN INSTITUTE OF SCIENCE Bangalore - 560012

Ref.: Advertisement R(HR)-3/2020, dated March 13, 2020

CORRIGENDUM

Please refer the notification inviting applications for the post of Registrar. The following note is inserted below the table.

'1st phase of disengagement completed'

PLA retreats from base of Finger 4 to Finger 5: sources

DINAKAR PERI
NEW DELHI

Chinese troops have fully moved back from the base of Finger 4 to Finger 5 at Pangong Tso in Eastern Ladakh while they continue to occupy the ridge lines of Finger 4, a defence source said. They have thinned down but not pulled back from ridge lines of Finger 4, a defence source said. The disengagement from Patrolling Point 17A is fully complete, another source said.

Chinese troops have removed their tents and fully moved their troops and vehicles from the base of Finger 4 to Finger 5, the source said.

Chinese troops have thinned down in terms of numbers on the ridge lines at Finger 4 in the last few days, but they have not pulled back yet, the second source said.

Rajasthan's education guidelines irk NCPNR

They are seen as violating the RTE Act

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPNR) has pulled up the Rajasthan government for its new guidelines on elementary education that "violate" the Right to Education Act, 2009 and deny children from economically weaker sections the right to free education in nursery classes.

"...NCPNR seeks your comments on the matter within 7 days. NCPNR recommends that these Guidelines may be re-examined in light of the RTE Act, 2009 and necessary changes be made," chairperson of the NCPNR, Priyank Kanooan, wrote to the Secretary of the Department of School Education of Rajasthan on July 2020."



In flight: An Indian Air Force C-17 aircraft in Leh on Friday. ■ ANI

the date is not clear yet.

At the next round of talks, the focus would be on the next phase of disengagement from the standoff sites as well as pull back of the thousands of troops from the depth areas along the LAC.

There have been three rounds of Corps Commander-level talks so far on June 6, 22 and 30 in an attempt to resolve the situation along

the LAC. While there is some disengagement at Pangong Tso, there is a long way to go, a second defence source said referring to the ingress by China from Finger 8 to Finger 4 during the current standoff, which began in early May.

As reported by *The Hindu* earlier, Chinese troops pulled back from PP 14 and PP 15 earlier this week.

Rajnath reviews LAC situation

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh carried out a comprehensive review of the situation in eastern Ladakh with top military brass on Friday, in view of the withdrawal of troops from the friction points by China's Peoples Liberation Army, sources said.

Among those who attended the meeting were Chief of Defence Staff Gen. Bipin Rawat, Army Chief Gen. M.M. Naravane, Navy Chief Admiral Karambir Singh and Air Chief Marshal R.K.S. Bhadauria.

Gen. Naravane gave a detailed account of the implementation of the first phase of the mutual disengagement of troops from the Galwan Valley.

Heavy rain triggers landslips in Arunachal Pradesh, 8 dead

The deceased include four minors

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GUWAHATI

Two instances of landslips, nine hours apart, killed eight people, including an eight-month-old girl, in Arunachal Pradesh on Friday morning.

The first incident happened around 2.30 a.m. at Tigdo village in Papum Pare district. The second one occurred around 11.30 a.m. at Modirijo village on the outskirts of State capital Itanagar. Officials said four people were buried alive in each spot after heavy showers.

The deceased included four minors, including the eight-month-old.

The State's disaster management officials said the police and local people retrieved all the bodies from



Washed away: A massive landslide occurred close to the Wai International Hotel in Itanagar on Friday. ■ PTI

the debris at both sites. Rescue workers managed to save three persons at Modirijo. "The Modirijo incident happened when rain washed down earth from the dumping site of a highway and engulfed a kutchha house," Superintendent of Police Tumme Amo said.

Chief Minister Pema Khandu announced an immediate release of ex-gratia of ₹4 lakh to the survivors of the victims. "Incessant rain in the last couple of days that triggered landslips and flood

has left trails of large-scale destruction in the entire State," he said.

Landslips in Arunachal Pradesh have so far killed 12 people in less than two months.

In Assam

Heavy rainfall triggered landslips in Assam also, killing 24 people since May last week. Of these, 21 died in three districts of Barak Valley. Forty people have died in floods in the State since May 22.

IAF gets last of 5 AH-64E Apache attack helicopters from Boeing

They have been deployed at the Leh air base

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Boeing handed over the last of the five AH-64E Apache attack helicopters to the Indian Air Force (IAF), completing the contract for 22 Apaches.

The Apaches were deployed at the Leh air base as part of the forward movement of assets, amid the stand-off with China in Ladakh.

The final five of the 22 Apache attack helicopters were handed over to the IAF at the Air Force Station, Hindan, in June, Boeing said in a statement on Friday.

Earlier, in March, Boeing



Final delivery: An AH-64E Apache helicopter at the induction ceremony in Pathankot on Friday ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

handed over the last five of the 15 CH-47F(I) Chinook heavy-lift helicopters to the IAF.

The IAF inducted the first batch of Apaches in September 2019 and based them at Air Force Station, Pathankot, Punjab. While the last

five Apaches arrived in India early this year, the handover was slightly delayed due to the COVID-19 lockdown.

\$3 billion deal
India contracted 22 Apache helicopters and 15 Chinook helicopters from Boeing

through the Foreign Military Sales programme of the U.S. government in September 2015 under a \$3 billion deal. During the India visit of President Donald Trump in February, India and the U.S. signed a deal for six additional Apaches for the Army.

Boeing's joint venture in Hyderabad, Tata Boeing Aerospace Limited, has been producing aero-structures for the AH-64 Apache helicopter for both the U.S. Army and international customers, the statement said. Boeing's suppliers in India are manufacturing critical systems and components for the Chinooks, including the crown and tailcone assembly by the Tata Advanced Systems and the ramp and aft pylon by Dynamatic Technologies, Boeing added.

parts of the Naga Self-Administered Zone, Sagar Region of Myanmar bordering India," it said in its mouthpiece, *Nagaland Voice*.

The group cited the Eastern Konyak Union as saying that the "army has been deployed in every village of the Naga-inhabited areas of Myanmar. This has instilled fear in the minds of the people who have not been getting rice and other essential commodities since February due to the crackdown, combined with the Corona virus situation".

"We do not want gunfights in the midst of the pandemic. We appeal to the Indian and Myanmar governments to help stop the military activities in the area," union president S.A. Khotai and general secretary K. Honwang said.

After camel back, drones used for cross-border smuggling

Security agencies are exploring options for surveillance and detection

DEVESHE K. PANDEY
NEW DELHI

Not long ago, Pakistan-based criminal syndicates and terrorist outfits smuggled drugs, weapons and other illegal goods on camel back across the vast Thar desert in Rajasthan and through well-trained foot couriers. Now, they are taking to drones.

The increasing use of drones for cross-border smuggling has led the Indian security agencies to look for various ways to put in place reliable systems as part of a smart border management mechanism for deterrence. In terms of border security, drone jammers may not prove to be more effective and, hence, other viable op-

tions for surveillance and detection are being explored.

The latest case of arms dropping through a Pakistani drone was detected when the Border Security Force shot down the UAV near Rathua village in the Hira Nagar sector of Jammu on June 20. It was loaded with a M4 rifle of the U.S. make, two magazines, 60 live rounds and seven grenades.

Recipients unidentified
This was the first time a drone dropping was noticed in the Hira Nagar sector of Jammu. The enforcement agencies are yet to identify the intended recipients of the consignment.



Flying threat: The BSF shot down a UAV on June 20 in the Hira Nagar sector of Jammu. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

No arrests have been made so far.

Another case was reported in the intervening night of June 3 and 4 when a weapon consignment was dropped through three drone sorties on the outskirts of Dharamkot Randhawa village in the Dera Baba Nanak area of

Punjab's Gurdaspur.

According to a security agency official, the consignment included two MP-9 guns, six pistols and ₹4 lakh in counterfeit currency.

Preliminary investigation revealed that it had been sent at the instance of Ranjeet Singh Neeta, chief of Pa-

kistan-based Khalistan Zindabad Force, who was recently designated by the Central government as a terrorist under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act.

Neeta's accomplice was identified as Germany-based Gurmeet Singh Bagga, who has also been designated as a terrorist.

"Such an operation cannot be carried out without the knowledge of Pakistani agencies. Efforts are being made to identify all those involved," said the official.

Terror module busted

On September 21, 2019, the Punjab police busted an alleged pro-Khalistan terror module and seized a cache of weapons, including five AK-47 assault rifles with 16 magazines, four pistols of China make with 8 maga-

zines, nine grenades, 472 cartridges, ₹10 lakh in fake Indian currency and five satellite phones.

The consignment had also been dropped using "Pakistan-controlled" drones at the pre-decided locations in Punjab.

Alleged module leader Akashdeep Singh was arrested along with Balwant Singh, Harbhajan Singh and Balbir Singh. Investigation indicated that the consignment was also sent at the behest of Neeta and Gurmeet Singh Bagga was a co-conspirator, as alleged.

"A drone with payload capability is available in the market for ₹40,000 to ₹2 lakh. Quadcopters are also being deployed by Pakistani agencies for spying activities in the border areas," the official said.

Fresh push for pedal power in smart cities

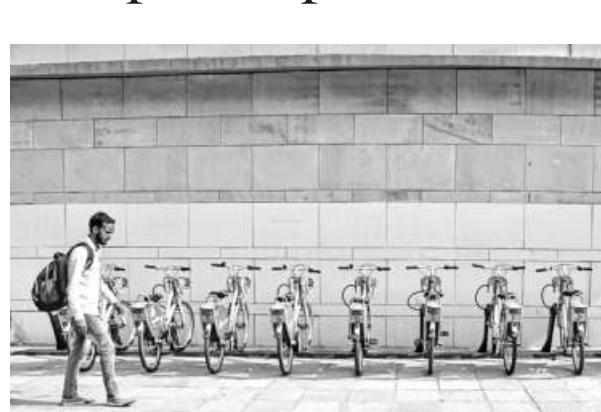
Govt. aims at creating extensive cycling networks

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

With public transport affected due to the spread of COVID-19, the Union Housing and Urban Affairs Ministry on Friday invited cities to come up with quick solutions for promoting cycling.

The 'India Cycles 4 Change Challenge' and an online portal for cities to submit their proposals was launched by the Smart Cities Mission of the Ministry. Apart from the 100 cities implementing the Smart Cities Mission, cities with population of over 5 lakh and capitals of States and Union Territories can apply.

"In October 2020, 11 cities



Cycling challenge: Cities would be encouraged to adopt low-cost methods to promote cycling. ■ FILE PHOTO

will be shortlisted and will receive ₹1 crore award and guidance from national and international experts to further scale-up the initiatives in stage two, which will be held until May 2021," the Ministry said in a statement.

"The challenge aims to help cities connect with their citizens as well as experts to develop a unified vision and initiatives to promote cycling," the online portal stated.

Cities would be encour-

aged to create extensive cycling networks using low-cost methods like pop-up cycle lanes and non-motorised zones and set up community-led cycle rental schemes.

Two stage challenge

After its launch by Smart Cities Mission Director Kunal Kumar in an online event, the mission tweeted that the challenge would be in two stages – implementation of pilot projects for cycling by all cities that register and scaling up the interventions by cities selected based on their proposals.

The programme would be supported by the India Programme of the Institute for Transportation and Development Policy, it said.

The cities shortlisted for the challenge would be announced on October 28.

INDIAN RAILWAYS

RAILWAY ELECTRIFICATION

Tender Notice No. RE/MS/S&T/OT/2020-2021/03 Dated 08.07.2020
For and on behalf of President of India, Deputy Chief Signal and Telecommunication Engineer, Railway Electrification, Egmore, Chennai 600 008 invites E-Tender for the following works.

Bidders will be able to submit their original/revised bids up to closing date and time only. Manual offers are not allowed against this tender and any such manual offer received shall be ignored and summarily rejected.

EMD and Tender Forms Cost (TFC) are to be paid online through IREPS Portal (www.ireps.gov.in) and no manual payments will be accepted for these tenders.

Completion Period : 08 Months

Approximate Cost: Rs.2,88,25,238/-

Cost of Tender Form: Rs.11,200/-

EMD: Rs.2,94,100/-

Closing Date: 13.08.2020

2. Tender No.: RE/MS-SnT-Tele-Gr-275-20-10 dt. 08.07.2020

Telecommunication OUTDOOR work of "Trenching, laying of OFC, 6 Quad/PIJF Cable, splicing & termination of OFC, Jointing & terminating of 6 Quad/PIJF Cable, Installation & commissioning of way station equipment, provision of emergency sockets etc., at SP/SSP/TSS and INDOOR work of System design, supply, installation & commissioning of OFC communication system along with SDH ADD/DROP MUXES (STM-4/16), Digital primary Drop Insert Mixes and other associated equipment in SRR-NIL (Shorapur-Nilambur) section of Southern Railway."

Completion Period : 08 Months

Approximate Cost: Rs.46,11,037/-

Cost of Tender Form: Rs.3,360/-

EMD: Rs.92,200/-

Closing Date : 13.08.2020

Detailed Notice Inviting Tender (NIT) and the tender documents are available in the website www.ireps.gov.in and the tenderers are advised to refer the same.

By. Chief Signal & Telecomm. Engineer, Railway Electrification, Egmore, Chennai 600 008.

Follow us on : [Twitter](https://twitter.com/GMSRailway)

INFORMATION FOR TENDER (IFT)

(Through GOK E-procurement Portal) (Two Cover System)

BRUHAT BENGALURU MAHANAGARA PALIKE
Office of the Executive Engineer
Storm Water drain (RR Nagar Zone), BBMP, 9th Floor,
Shopping Complex, Jayanagar 4th Block, Bengaluru-560011.

No. EE/SWD/RRN/TEND/02/2020-21 Date: 10.07.2020

SHORT TERM TENDER NOTIFICATION

INVITATION FOR TENDER (IFT)

(Through GOK E-procurement Portal

IN BRIEF



Steepest single-day spike in cases in Odisha

BHUBANESWAR
Odisha registered its steepest ever single-day jump in COVID-19 positive cases, reporting 755 new infections on Friday. The State's tally has now shot up to 11,956 while the rise in positivity rate (11.69%) became a cause of concern for the government. Of the 6,456 tests conducted, 755 were found to be positive.

9 minors rescued from Muzaffarnagar ashram

GAZIABAD
Nine minors have been rescued from an ashram in the Shukratala area of Muzaffarnagar, four of them have been found to have been sexually abused. Police said an FIR has been registered and two persons arrested, including a self-styled priest and manager of the ashram.

4 more COVID-19 deaths in Punjab, 3 in Haryana

CHANDIGARH
Punjab saw 217 fresh COVID-19 cases on Friday. It also reported four more deaths, taking the tally to 187, said an official statement. The number of positive cases has reached 7,357. In Haryana, 565 fresh cases surfaced, taking the cumulative tally to 19,993. Haryana also reported three deaths, taking the total to 290.

Kashmir doctors favour continuation of lockdown

SRINAGAR
As the J&K govt. initiated measures to "unlock" normal life in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, doctors have raised alarm bells. "Initially, the majority of infected people were asymptomatic. Of late, many are moderate to severe cases," Dr. Salim Khan, Government Medical College, Srinagar, said. He has appealed to the government to re-impose the lockdown.

Recovery rate is above national average in eighteen States/UTs

Steps also taken to keep fatality rate low, says govt.

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Eighteen States/Union Territories are currently clocking a recovery rate more than the national average of 62.42 %, the Health Ministry said on Friday. Bihar, Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Haryana, Tripura, Rajasthan, Delhi and Ladakh, among others have a recovery rate of over 70 %.

"States/UTs have also taken many steps to keep the fatality rate low with mapping of the communities to focus on the high risk group like the elderly/aged and population with co-morbidities, and providing special care to them," said the Health Ministry.

There was a focus on improving the quality of the medical care for COVID pa-



A health worker interacting with a person after conducting a rapid antigen test for COVID-19, at Guru Gobind Singh Hospital in Delhi on Friday. ■ SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

tients. A strong network of ASHAs and ANMs, along with Ayushman Bharat - Health and Wellness Centres, have helped in effective surveillance and contact tracing of the cases, including lakhs of migrants and returnees, the Ministry said.

Presently, India has 1,218 Dedicated COVID-19 Hospitals, 2,705 Dedicated COVID Healthcare Centres and 10,301 COVID Care Centres.

"The Health and Wellness Centers (HWCS) across India recorded 8.8 crore footfall in the five months since 1st February despite restrictions

Green shoots

A look at the States and UTs with a recovery rate over the national average, as per the Health Ministry

State/UT.	Recovery rate	State/UT.	Recovery rate
Ladakh	86.73%	H.P.	74.21%
Uttarakhand	80.85%	Gujarat	70.72%
Chhattisgarh	78.99%	Bihar	70.40%
Chandigarh	77.06%	Punjab	69.26%
Delhi	76.81%	Jharkhand	68.02%
Rajasthan	75.65%	Mizoram	67.51%
Tripura	75.34%	Odisha	66.13%
Haryana	74.91%	U.P.	65.28%
M.P.	74.85%	West Bengal	64.94%

on movement of people during the intervening lockdown periods this year," noted the Ministry.

The Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) said that the country currently had 1,169 labs, with 835 in the government sector and 334 in the private.

'States are requesting cancellation of trains'

Making adjustments based on requirements, says Railways

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Indian Railways on Friday said it had not been able to announce more special passenger trains as the national transporter is already receiving requests from various State governments to either cancel existing trains or to reduce their frequency in view of the rising number of COVID-19 cases.

"We are in constant touch with State governments on a real-time basis, and depending on the COVID-19 situation, we are getting requests for the cancellation of a few trains, reducing the frequency of trains, and sometimes cancelling the stoppage of the trains in the State. Based on their requirements, we are making these adjustments," Railway Board Chairman V.K. Yadav said.

He added that the Tamil Nadu government had re-

Six bidders for tender

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Six bidders have submitted financial bids for a global tender by the Railways for the semi-high speed Vande Bharat trains, including CRRC Pioneer Electric, in which China's CRRC is a joint partner.

The other five bidders for

the tender for procuring electric traction kits for 44 Vande Bharat trains are Indian PSUs Bharat Heavy Electricals, Hyderabad-based Medha Group, Himachal Pradesh-based Electrowaves Electronic Pvt. Ltd., Powernetics Equipments Pvt Ltd and Bharat Industries.

quested that seven trains running in the State be cancelled for now; the West Bengal government has asked that the frequency of five trains be reduced; Odisha has sought to cancel some of the stoppages; and Jharkhand has requested that two trains be cancelled for the time being.

"We are running the trains so that essential tra-

velling services are met. At the same time, we are monitoring the COVID-19 situation. It is the reason why we have been unable to announce more train services," Mr. Yadav said while addressing a virtual conference.

Of the 230 special passenger trains being run, about 80 trains are running at over 100% capacity as of June 26.

Why remove masks, sanitisers from list of essentials: Cong.

'Govt. colluding with MNCs for profiteering'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Randeep Surjewala

The Congress on Friday slammed the Union government for removing masks and hand sanitizers from the category of essential commodities and accused it of colluding with MNCs for 'profiteering'.

In a series of tweets, Congress chief spokesperson Randeep Surjewala asked what changed between June 16, when the government notified sanitizers and face masks to be treated as essen-

teering at the cost of people stands exposed. Govt has removed face masks & hand sanitizers as 'essential commodities'. Now, masks/hand sanitizers can be sold at any MRP!" tweeted Mr. Surjewala, who tagged the July 1 notification of the Ministry.

The notification said the Ministry had decided not to continue these items as 'essential commodities' under the EC Act beyond June 30 as there were no adverse reports from States and Union Territories (UTs) regarding the price or availability. The Congress leader also tweeted a notification of June 16 to show the change in the government's stance in 15 days.

'U.S.-bound students worried'

Those already in the country also anxious, says former MP

NISTULA HEBBAR
NEW DELHI

The recent U.S. order has caused a lot of uncertainty.

The recent order by the U.S. Immigration and Custom Enforcement (ICE) and Homeland Security that foreign students studying in universities where online classes are being held due to the COVID-19 pandemic will not be allowed to stay in the country has caused a lot of uncertainty in the large Indian student community in the U.S.

Speaking to *The Hindu*, former Lok Sabha MP from Nizamabad and immigration lawyer heading the New York-based law firm Sharma Yashki and Associates LLP, Madhu Goud Yashki, said that while Indian students already studying in universities in the United States were

affected, the situation for those who had received offers from U.S.-based universities but were yet to start their academic year in the fall term was worse.

"Anxiety levels are high and students are very worried. We have received calls from anxious students and parents on the status of new admissions, etc. We have al-

Bengal against govt. advisory on exams

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
KOLKATA

The West Bengal Higher Education Department has objected to an advisory of the Central government asking universities and other academic institutions to compulsorily conduct final year examinations by September-end, and sent a letter to the Ministry of Human Resource and Development to "re-examine the matter in the interest of physical and mental well-being of students".

In the letter addressed to Union Human Resource Development Secretary, Amit Khare, Principal Secretary of the West Bengal Higher Education Department Manish Jain said the State government be allowed to implement its own decision by not making the revised guidelines mandatory for the State. In its July 6 order, the University Grants Commission (UGC) said that final year exams at the university may be postponed until the end of September but must be conducted either online or offline mode.

"Mentioning statement like final term examinations should be compulsorily conducted as per the revised guidelines of UGC, by the Ministry... is only against the spirit of the federal structure," the letter read. It said the "State was never consulted by UGC despite sending a request for consultation with respect to framing of such guidelines".

UGC creating confusion with its guidelines: Rahul Gandhi

Cong. launches online campaign for cancellation of exams

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Former Congress president Rahul Gandhi on Friday accused the University Grants Commission (UGC) of creating "confusion" by issuing guidelines to hold final term examinations in September and asked the body to promote students on the basis of their past performance.

He said it was "unfair" to hold examinations in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic and sought their can-

cellation. "COVID-19 has affected everyone. Our students in schools, colleges and universities have been struggling very much. IITs, colleges have cancelled the examinations and have promoted the students. The UGC is creating confusion. The UGC should also promote students based on past performances," Mr. Gandhi said in a video message.

The message was part of the Congress's online campaign #SpeakUpForStudents

that was meant to highlight the issues faced by the students. "It is extremely unfair to conduct exams during the COVID-19 pandemic. UGC must hear the voice of the students and academics," Mr. Gandhi had tweeted earlier while asking for the cancellation of exams.

The Congress's student wing, the National Students Union of India, that piloted the campaign, claimed that it was the third highest trending topic until 8 p.m.

Approach HC on school fees, says SC

Cannot pass omnibus order when situation varies in States, court tells parents

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Testing times: Parents of school-going children who have moved the top court bail from eight States. ■ N. SRIDHARAN

district." Chief Justice of India S.A. Bobde observed.

He said parties invoke the jurisdiction of the apex court in myriad matters and then go on to express disappointment when the judicial or-

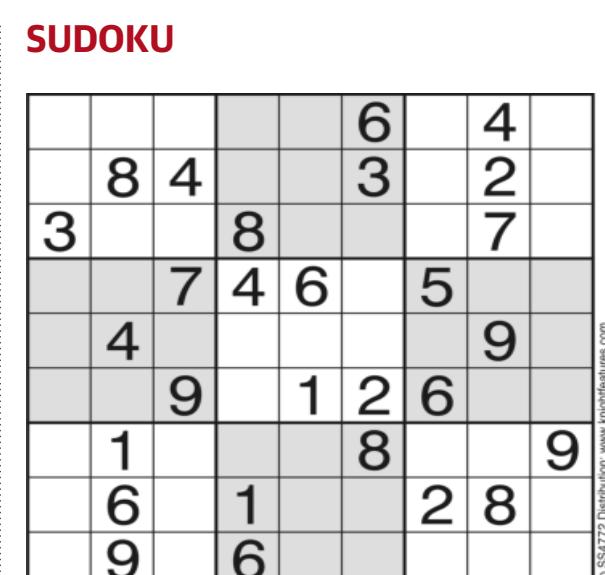
ders do not meet their expectations. Senior advocates Kapil Sibal and Sunil Gupta, representing the schools' interests, said there was a difference of views among the parent community across

the country. Mr. Gupta said the policy should be left to the Executive to decide.

The plea also sought that the Centre and all States be asked to direct the private unaided/aided schools to only charge proportionate fees based on actual expenditure towards the conduct of online virtual classes, and no other fees from April 1 till the commencement of physical classes.

Parents of school-going children who have moved the top court bail from Rajasthan, Odisha, Punjab, Gujarat, Haryana, Uttarakhand, Delhi and Maharashtra.

SUDOKU



DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★★



- 19 Fighter dog (5)
21 Suffer below a green signal (7)
23 French produce fellow in exam – what do you say to the shooter? (9,6)
27 Has P.O. official stifling a joke (5)
28 The Spanish getting money from modern educational method (1-8)
29 Account after account on India's top Ayurvedic tree (6)
30 Banner: "Head of rebels aboard ship" (8)
- DOWN
1 Line to get credit with comfort (6)
2 Two fights over principally private appliance with the TV (3-3,3)
3 A rig ruler set up is abnormal (9)
4 No son to yield frequently (5)
6 Complete mention (5)
7 Shrub in heart of Tamil Nadu city (5)
8 Goes to get winnings (8)
10 Reportedly look at child going in the direction of the main (7)
13 Starts imitating classically elegant jewels (3)
15 Man eats some rice before cheese (7)
16 Tireless labourer with alternative kosher outing (9)
17 I miss more varying quality of glucose and fructose (9)
18 Co-ordinate with a graduate and investigators going over ship (8)
20 Before headwear lost its edges (3)
22 Book right under the shelf (6)
24 A learner's old mantra recanted to fetch money (5)
25 Greek character makes fit civil dress (5)
26 Teetotaller carries small message (5)

ACROSS

- 1 Reliable players at club (4-4)
5 Uh, uh. SP ordered: "Quiet," (4,2)
9 Complaint is sit back after record (9)
11 Flying machine backs old dance (5)
12 Union that may take place in goonda raj (7,8)
14 Hindi speech over good new Australian city (7)
16 Strange women having bumpy ride (5)

FAITH

Maya, mother of ignorance

According to scriptures, ignorance is without a beginning. Then, is it to be presumed that ignorance is also endless? Is there no chance for the jivatma to get liberated? Such doubts about ignorance and its prevalence are raised and argued in the text 'Laghug Vaishadeva Mananam' to show that it is possible to overcome ignorance, pointed out Sri R. Rajagopal Sarma in a discourse.

There are many diseases whose real cause is unknown but they can be cured by proper treatment. In the same way, even though the cause of ignorance is not known, it can be dispelled by the jnana gained by the study of Vedanta. Knowledge of Brahman as the One without a second destroys ignorance even as the illusion of the snake in the rope is gone when the nature of the rope is known. It is accepted that Maya is the mother of ignorance and easily deludes the understanding of things in proper perspective.

Krishna refers to His Maya as something that is difficult to cross. The power of Maya can confuse even the most rational intellects and can make one believe what is not true as true. This is what is happening when beings identify their self with the body and not the atma. Adi Sankara warns people of this avidya that stands as a hurdle in the way of spiritual pursuit.

In a verse in the 'Viveka Chudamani,' the acharya captures the subtle and enigmatic quality of avidya. "If one looks for its form, it cannot be stated; it is neither real nor unreal nor is it a mixture of the two. It is neither separate nor different from the atma. It is not a part of the atma nor is it not a part of it. It is not the body either. On the whole it is something wonderful, 'Maha Adibhuta' and inexplicable, 'anirvachaniyam'."

Turkey turns iconic museum Hagia Sophia into mosque

The 1,500-year-old monument is revered by Christians and Muslims alike

REUTERS
ISTANBUL

President Tayyip Erdogan declared Istanbul's Hagia Sophia open to Muslim prayer as a mosque on Friday after a top court ruled that the building's conversion to a museum by modern Turkey's founding statesman was illegal.

Mr. Erdogan made his announcement just an hour after the court ruling was revealed, brushing aside international warnings not to change the status of the nearly 1,500-year-old monument that is revered by Christians and Muslims alike.

The U.S. and church leaders were among those to express concern about changing the status of the UNESCO World Heritage Site, a focal point of both the Christian Byzantine and Muslim Ottoman empires and now one of the most visited monuments in the world.

Greece's Culture Ministry described the court decision as an "open provocation" to the civilised world.

But Mr. Erdogan has sought to shift Islam into the mainstream of Turkish politics in his 17 years at the helm. He has long proposed restoring the mosque status of the huge sixth-century building, which was converted into a museum in the early days of the modern secular Turkish state under Mustafa Kemal



Historic landmark: Hagia Sophia, a UNESCO World Heritage Site that was a Byzantine cathedral before being converted into a mosque and then a museum, seen in Istanbul in this file photo.

Ataturk. "The decision was taken to hand over the management of the Ayasofya Mosque ... to the Religious Affairs Directorate and open it for worship," the decision signed by Mr. Erdogan said.

The Council of State, Turkey's top administrative court, said in its ruling: "It was concluded that the settlement deed allocated it as a mosque and its use outside this character is not possible legally. The Cabinet decision in 1934 that ended its use as a mosque and defined it as a museum did not comply with laws," it said, referring to an edict signed by Ataturk.

The association which brought the case, the latest

in a 16-year legal battle, said Hagia Sophia was the property of the Ottoman leader who captured the city in 1453 and turned the 900-year-old Greek Orthodox cathedral into a mosque. Mr. Erdogan, a pious Muslim, threw his weight behind the campaign before local elections last year, which dealt a painful blow to his ruling Islamist-rooted AK Party.

In Parliament in Ankara, AK Party members stood and applauded after Mr. Erdogan's decree was read aloud.

The Ottomans built minarets alongside the vast domed structure, while inside they added huge calligraphic panels bearing the

'Greater divisions'

The Russian Orthodox Church said it regretted that the court did not take its concerns into account when making its ruling and said the decision could lead to even greater divisions, the TASS news agency reported. Previously, Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, the spiritual head of some 300 million Orthodox Christians worldwide and based in Istanbul, said converting it into a mosque would disappoint Christians and would "fracture" East and West.

Arabic names of the early Muslim caliphs alongside the monument's ancient Christian iconography.

Bolivian President tests positive

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
LA PAZ

Bolivia's interim President Jeanine Anez announced on Thursday that she has tested positive for coronavirus.

"I've tested positive for COVID-19, I'm fine, I will work from isolation," she tweeted.

The 53-year-old said in a video on Twitter that she would remain in quarantine for 14 days before taking another test.

Ms. Anez becomes the second South American President in a matter of days to contract the virus, after Brazil's Jair Bolsonaro announced his positive result on Tuesday.

Another high-ranking Latin American government official to contract the virus is Venezuela's Constitutional Assembly President Diosdado Cabello, widely considered the second-most powerful person in the country after President Nicolas Maduro.

Four members of Ms. Anez's Cabinet had tested positive in recent days, while Senate President Eva Copa went into self-isolation on Wednesday as a precaution. "Given many of them tested positive over the last week, I took the test and I was also positive," said Ms. Anez.

Her illness comes with Bolivia gearing up for a general election in less than two months, despite being in the middle of the coronavirus pandemic.

China, U.S. in new spat over Uighur crackdown

Beijing vows retaliation following American sanctions

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
BEIJING

China said on Friday it will impose tit-for-tat measures after the U.S. slapped sanctions on Chinese officials for their involvement in a crackdown on Muslim minorities, raising tensions between the superpowers.

The two countries have traded barbs and sanctions on a slew of issues since President Donald Trump took office, from trade to more recent spats over the coronavirus pandemic, a security law in Hong Kong, and Chinese policies in the far west regions of Tibet and Xinjiang.

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Under lock and key: A file photo of a detention facility in the Kunshan Industrial Park in Artux in the Xinjiang region. ■ AP

Zhao said, without providing details about the sanctions.

Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said on Thursday the U.S. was acting against "horrible and systematic abuses" in Xinjiang including forced labour, mass detention and involuntary population control.

Visa restrictions

The back-and-forth over Xinjiang comes just days after the two countries imposed visa restrictions on each other over their disagreement on Tibet.

Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi on Thursday blamed the rising tensions on "McCarthy-style paranoia" in the United States.

Witnesses and human rights groups say China has rounded up more than one million Uighurs and other

Turkic Muslims in Xinjiang in a vast brainwashing campaign aimed at forcibly homogenising minorities into the country's Han majority.

Mr. Pompeo in a conference call with reporters Thursday called the situation "the stain of the century" and has previously drawn parallels with the Holocaust.

China counters that it is providing education and vocational training in a bid to reduce the allure of Islamic radicalism following a spate of deadly violence.

The Uighur Human Rights Project, an advocacy group, hailed the sanctions and urged other countries to follow suit. "At last, real consequences have begun. This comes at the 11th hour for Uighurs," said the US-based group's executive director, Omer Kanat.

Sri Lanka sees surge in infections

With election a month away, authorities warn of community transmission risks

IN BRIEF



Amazon deforestation increases 25% in Brazil

SAO PAULO

Deforestation of the Brazilian Amazon increased by a record 25% year-on-year in the first half of 2020, official data released on Friday showed, increasing pressure on President Jair Bolsonaro to abandon his plans to develop the region. Some 3,069 sq km were affected by deforestation, the highest figure since satellite data has been collected beginning in 2015. ■ AFP

Seoul Mayor takes own life after harassment charge

SEOUL

The Mayor of Seoul, a contender to be South Korea's next President and a former human rights lawyer, took his own life a day after he was accused of sexual harassment, authorities said on Friday. Park Won-soon, whose body was recovered on a mountain in the capital, is by far the most high-profile politician to be implicated in a harassment case in South Korea, a highly patriarchal society where the #MeToo movement has led to the fall of scores of prominent men in multiple fields. ■ AFP

France asks Israel to drop West Bank annexation plans

Macron urges Netanyahu not to contravene international law

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
PARIS

Emmanuel Macron asked Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to refrain from annexing Palestinian territory in the West Bank and elsewhere during a telephone call between the two leaders, the French President's office said on Friday.

Mr. Macron "emphasised that such a move would contravene international law and jeopardise the possibility of a two-state solution as the basis of a fair and lasting peace between Israelis and Palestinians", his office said in a statement after the call on Thursday.

It was the latest move by European leaders pressing

MEERA SRINIVASAN
COLOMBO

Less than a month before Sri Lanka's scheduled general election, the island nation has witnessed a sudden spike in coronavirus cases, with health authorities reporting 283 new patients on Friday and flagging the "risk of community transmission".

According to officials, the latest detection of COVID-19 cases locally – totalling 339 since Thursday – emerged from a drug rehabilitation centre in Kandakadu in Polonnaruwa district, located in Sri Lanka's North Central Province.

"We are still investigating where the source of this infection is, but meanwhile, we are carrying out elaborate contact tracing and testing at the rehabilitation centre," chief epidemiologist Dr. Sudath Samaraweeran told *The Hindu*. Asked if the recent cases pointed to possible community transmission, he said: "At the moment, there is no community transmission, but the risk is there."

In a statement, Army Commander Lt. Gen. Shavendra Silva, who heads the National Operation Centre



Virus alert: A health worker taking a blood sample to test for COVID-19 antibodies in Colombo, Sri Lanka, on Friday. ■ AP

for Prevention of COVID-19 Outbreak, said President Gotabaya Rajapaksa and Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa had instructed them "to take all possible steps" to prevent any community transmission.

From the time Sri Lanka detected its first local case on March 10, health authorities and the Army directed hundreds to quarantine centres, based on their travel history, exposure to patients and symptoms. One person who had been quarantined, said to be a drug addict, and had tested negative before he was shifted from the quarantine centre to the rehabil-

itation centre, health officials said. When he was tested again, after he was recently brought to the Welikada Prison in the capital Colombo, he was positive, prompting authorities conduct more tests at the drug rehabilitation centre he left, they added.

The recent spate of infections constitutes the second live cluster in the country, apart from the 'Navy cluster', in which over 800 have recovered. For the past few weeks, most of the new cases were reported among Sri Lankans who returned from other countries and tested positive on arrival, and few-

er locally. On Friday, 10 such new cases were reported, nine of whom arrived from India, according to local media.

Gearing up for polls

As of Friday evening, Sri Lanka has reported 2,447 cases, 1,980 recoveries and 11 deaths. The figures – relatively low in the region – drew international attention, and praise for the country's strong public health sector. However, the recent spike in cases comes even as the 21 million-strong island nation prepares to go for polls in less than a month.

After two months' near-total lockdown – when police arrested several thousand "violators" – Sri Lanka relaxed its curfew end of May, allowing inter-district travel. After remaining closed for three months, schools reopened last week, in stages, based on guidelines issued by health authorities.

While authorities initially said they would open the country's airports for international visitors on August 1, the local business newspaper *Daily FT* reported the date has been postponed.

U.S. bans Pakistan's PIA over pilot licence scandal

Airline has grounded a third of its pilots

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
KARACHI

The United States has banned Pakistan International Airlines from operating chartered flights to the country after the carrier said nearly 150 of its pilots would be grounded over fake or dubious licences.

It follows a similar move by European Union aviation regulators to bar the state-run carrier for six months.

The U.S. Department of Transportation announced the ban after it was made aware that "nearly one-third of Pakistani pilots are not properly certified in accordance with international standards", it said in a statement dated July 1 and released to the AFP on Friday.

260 fake licences

Pakistan's Aviation Minister revealed in June that a government review had found around 260 of the country's 860 active pilots hold fake licences or cheated in exams.

While authorities initially said they would open the country's airports for international visitors on August 1, the local business newspaper *Daily FT* reported the date has been postponed.

The airline confirmed in a statement that its approval had been revoked due to "recent events identified by the Pakistan Civil Aviation Authority that are of serious concern to aviation safety".

So far 17 pilots have been fired in the first phase of its investigation, a PIA spokesman said.

The airline had suspended its commercial operations to the U.S. in 2017 after booking financial losses.

But in April the U.S. Department of Transportation granted it special permission to operate chartered flights for one year, largely to bring back stranded Pakistanis during the coronavirus lockdown.



European Union aviation regulators have also barred the carrier for six months.

The airline confirmed in a statement that its approval had been revoked due to "recent events identified by the Pakistan Civil Aviation Authority that are of serious concern to aviation safety".

Tests on samples from inside the packaging and the shrimp itself returned negative, however. The customs authority said it was temporarily blocking imports from the three companies whose products had tested positive.

The emergence of a coronavirus cluster in Beijing last month has led to increased scrutiny of imported food, after the virus was found on a cutting board used to prepare imported salmon at the sprawling Xinfadi wholesale market. China has banned imports from a number of overseas food producers that have reported virus outbreaks.

China bans food imports over virus fear

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
BEIJING

China temporarily banned food imports from three Ecuadorian companies after detecting coronavirus on packaging for frozen shrimp, following fresh scrutiny on refrigerated goods after a recent disease outbreak in Beijing.

Samples taken from the packaging of Whiteleg shrimp at the port cities of Dalian and Xiamen tested positive for the virus, General Administration of Customs official Bi Kexin said.

Tests on samples from inside the packaging and the shrimp itself returned negative, however. The customs authority said it was temporarily blocking imports from the three companies whose products had tested positive.

The airline had suspended its commercial operations to the U.S. in 2017 after booking financial losses.

But in April the U.S. Department of Transportation granted it special permission to operate chartered flights for one year, largely to bring back stranded Pakistanis during the coronavirus lockdown.

The precise location of Friday's explosion was unclear, but analysts said there are several military and training facilities in the area that could be the target of sabotage. A cause was not immediately determined.

"There are two underground facilities, a site associated with chemical weapons research and an unidentified military production site," said Fabian Hinze, an Iran military expert and research associate at the James Martin Center for Nonproliferation Studies.

It was the third major explosion to have occurred in Iran between midnight and 3 a.m. over three consecutive weeks. The first two explosions occurred at key military and nuclear bases – in Khojir, home of the country's largest missile production facility; and at the Natanz nuclear base, at a building that housed centrifuge assembly.

Iran described the Khojir episode as a gas tank explosion. "Explosion after explosion? How many security holes do you have?" one Iranian asked on Twitter. ■ NY TIMES

Kim's sister says 'no need' for another U.S. summit

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
SEOUL

The powerful sister of North Korean leader Kim Jong-un said on Friday there was "no need" for another summit with the U.S. unless Washington offered a "decisive change" in approach.

Mr. Kim and U.S. President Donald Trump first met in Singapore two years ago but talks over Pyongyang's nuclear arsenal have been stalled since their Hanoi summit collapsed in 2019. Mr. Trump said this week he would "certainly" meet with Mr. Kim again "if I thought it was going to be helpful", after speculation that he might pursue another summit if it could help his re-election chances.

But Mr. Kim told Mr. Netanyahu that France remained committed to Israel's security and "expressed his attachment to the friendship and confidence that links France and Israel", his office said. But in a statement carried by the Korean Central News Agency, Kim Yo Jong said:



"There is no need for us to sit across with the U.S. right now." If a summit was held, she said, "it

MARKET WATCH

	PRICE	CHANGE
Sensex	36,594	-0.39
US Dollar	75.20	-0.28
Gold	49,959	-0.45
Brent oil	42.80	-1.76

NIFTY 50

	PRICE	CHANGE
Adani Ports	334.95	-8.20
Asian Paints	1703.50	-13.75
Axist Bank	439.60	-14.15
Bajaj Auto	2894.70	-12.70
Bajaj Finserv	6483.80	-85.40
Bajaj Finance	3214.15	-15.85
Bharti Airtel	574.70	-6.05
BPCL	376.35	-0.28
Britannia Ind	3726.65	53.05
Cipla	638.90	-0.15
Coal India	131.20	0.80
Dr Reddys Lab	3905.45	8.85
Eicher Motors	19447.85	-35.40
GAIL (India)	102.40	-3.15
Grasim Ind	611.45	-5.20
HCL Tech	582.25	-6.00
HDFC	1886.00	-55.85
HDFC Bank	1105.10	-19.85
Hero MotoCorp	2681.25	-10.20
Hindalco	163.70	-1.10
Hind Unilever	2223.80	47.95
ICICI Bank	360.35	-10.00
IndusInd Bank	539.25	-17.30
Bharti Infralet	209.05	-5.50
Infosys	781.85	0.15
Indian Oil Corp	86.15	-0.35
ITC	194.35	-1.10
JSW Steel	193.30	-4.15
Kotak Bank	1349.35	-18.80
L&T	932.15	-12.80
M&M	554.85	-5.45
Maruti Suzuki	5955.65	-46.70
Nestle India Ltd.	16833.10	74.00
NTPC	90.40	-0.80
ONGC	78.55	-1.65
PowerGrid Corp	172.60	1.05
Reliance Ind	1878.05	53.80
State Bank	195.60	-3.50
Shree Cement	22295.40	-508.20
Sun Pharma	493.90	-11.95
Tata Motors	107.60	0.65
Tata Steel	338.70	-5.80
TCS	2222.35	18.00
Tech Mahindra	569.00	-8.30
Titan	961.85	-29.75
UltraTech Cement	3798.50	-44.95
UPL	436.50	-6.05
Vedanta	110.35	-1.65
Wipro	222.10	0.50
Zee Entertainment	170.10	-1.80

EXCHANGE RATES

CURRENCY	TT BUY	TT SELL
US Dollar	75.00	75.32
Euro	84.70	85.06
British Pound	94.52	94.96
Japanese Yen (100)	70.26	70.56
Chinese Yuan	10.71	10.76
Swiss Franc	79.67	80.01
Singapore Dollar	53.89	54.13
Canadian Dollar	55.12	55.36
Malaysian Ringgit	17.58	17.66
Australian Dollar	52.16	52.39

Source: Indian Bank

IN BRIEF



Punjab National Bank shares tank by over 5%

NEW DELHI Shares of Punjab National Bank (PNB) tumbled over 5% on Friday after the bank said it was reported a fraud of ₹3,688.58 crore in the non-performing asset account of Dewan Housing Finance (DHFL) to the RBI. The stock closed the day at ₹35.05, down 5.53%, on the BSE. On the NSE, it tanked 5.26% to settle at ₹35.15. "A fraud of ₹3,688.58 crore is being reported by bank to the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) in the accounts of the company (DHFL)," PNB said in an exchange filing. PTI

Govt. holds back full IIP data for second month

NEW DELHI The Centre held back the release of full industrial production data for the second straight month in May in view of the impact of the lockdown. The Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation on Friday released quick estimates of the Index of Industrial Production (IIP). The index value was at 88.4 in May against 53.6 in April, indicating a graded pickup in activity. The index had been at 135.4 in May 2019. The Ministry said it was not appropriate to compare the data with earlier months' due to the lockdown. PTI

People's Bank of China pares stake in HDFC to less than 1%

Central bank cuts holding in the wake of Centre's curbs on Chinese investments

LALATENDU MISHRA

MUMBAI

People's Bank of China (PBOC), the country's central bank, has cut its stake in mortgage lender Housing Development Finance Corp. Ltd. in the quarter ended June 30, according to shareholding data filed by HDFC with the stock exchanges.

The Chinese central bank, which had held a 1.1% stake in the Indian lender at the end of the March, reduced its holding to less than 1% during the April to June quarter, a period which coincided with heightened border tensions between the two countries. Separately, in April, the Centre had also imposed curbs on investments from China to ward off the possibility of takeovers of vulnerable Indian companies during the pandemic.

"We were expecting a backlash after the stand-off



Chinese checkers: PBOC may have lowered its HDFC stake to stay away from public attention, says Mr. Baliga. ■REUTERS

in Ladakh," said Ambareesh Baliga, an independent equity analyst. "It appears PBOC has reduced the stake in HDFC to stay away from public attention," he added.

Under the threshold
As per the latest quarterly shareholding data filed by HDFC, PBOC is not listed as a shareholder since as per Indian regulatory norms companies only need to show

holdings of 1% or more. In the previous filing, PBOC was shown holding 1,74,92,909 shares amounting to 1.1% stake.

People familiar with the shareholding data confirmed that PBOC's holding had fallen just below 1%. A HDFC spokesperson declined to comment.

"Had they wanted to exit, they could have exited completely. But they [may have]

preferred to retain the stake, which is below 1%, so that it will not be reported in the list of shareholders," Mr. Baliga added.

Plans on hold

"The trade and investment relations between India and China have reached a new low and even Indian companies which were to get investments from Chinese auto companies have put their plans on hold or shelved it. And those which had invested in China are looking to shift base," Mr. Baliga said.

"The move by PBOC is in this context," he added.

Other foreign investors in HDFC include the Government of Singapore with 3.14% stake and Vanguard Total International Stock Index Fund with a 1.66% stake.

Shares of HDFC came under selling pressure on Friday, declining 2.9% to close at ₹1,886.25 on the BSE.

'Auto component industry's revenue to fall 14-18% in FY21'

Demand from carmakers, replacement market is weak: ICRA

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

Revenue for the domestic auto component industry is estimated to decline 14-18% this financial year due to weak demand from carmakers as well as from the replacement market amid low consumer sentiment due to the pandemic, rating agency ICRA said on Friday.

"The industry has been affected by the pandemic and continuing lockdowns, directly impacting the economic environment and consumer sentiment," the agency said in a statement.

"Exceptions are mission-critical replacement components like batteries and tyres; [these] will be less impacted. ICRA research expects the recovery to be gradual and slow-paced, with the industry pinning hopes on revival in rural income to support growth in the festive



season and thereafter."

The decline in the current year will follow a sharp 13-15% decline in revenues in FY2020, it said.

As per ICRA, overall automobile volumes are expected to decline 15-16% in FY21, with passenger vehicle demand declining 22-25%.

While the year is predicted to be tough for commercial vehicles, two-wheeler sales are likely to benefit as people prefer personal transport and are wary of public transport. The aftermarket

component demand accounts for about 18% of the industry turnover, Subrata Ray, senior group vice-president, ICRA, said.

Mr. Ray added that though auto and auto component production had partly restarted across India since early May 2020, production levels continue to be sub 30%. Also, lockdown in auto component clusters, such as the current one in Chennai and the ensuing supply chain disruption, will keep the industry's recovery on the slow lane. Shortage of labour and productivity loss because of social distancing will also impact output.

"On a positive note, accommodative commodity prices will buffer the impact of negative operating leverage to an extent. Prices across all commodities are expected to remain soft in FY21," it added.

"In addition to the proposal, we are looking for few large, marque, long-term investors as well. We will share the details as and when proposals materialise," S. Sundar, MD and CEO, LVB told *The Hindu*.

Meanwhile, Lakshmi Vilas Bank posted a standalone net profit of ₹93 crore for the fourth quarter ended March 2020 against a net loss of ₹264 crore recorded in the year-earlier period on account of lower provisioning and reversal of certain charges.

Zomato's revenue doubles to \$394 million

Full-year loss widens to \$293 million

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

Food delivery platform Zomato's revenue doubled to \$394 million in 2019-20 from \$192 million in the previous year, while its EBITDA loss widened to \$293 million during the year from \$277 million in FY19. The company said its revenues in the April-June quarter stood at \$41 million with an EBITDA loss of \$12 million.

Zomato founder and CEO Deepinder Goyal said that while COVID-19 had impacted the size of the company's business, it had accelerated the journey to profitability. "In July 2020, the company



estimates its monthly burn rate to land under \$1 million, while our revenue should last at about 60% of pre-COVID peaks (\$23 million per month). We expect to make complete recovery over the next 3-6 months," Mr. Goyal wrote in a blog.

NCLT rejects Kymal's plea against Siemens Gamesa

Ex-CMD of firm had appealed on dues

SANJAY VIJAYAKUMAR

CHENNAI

The Chennai Bench of National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) has rejected an insolvency petition filed by Ramesh Kymal, former Chairman and Managing Director of Siemens Gamesa Renewable Power Pvt. Ltd. over alleged non-payment of settlement dues.

₹104 crore in claims

Mr. Kymal, who quit on April 30, alleged in his petition that the company had not paid him dues of ₹104.11 crore. Against this, Siemens Gamesa filed a petition against Mr. Kymal. The

NCLT rejected Kymal's plea, citing the insertion of Section 10 A in the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC) through promulgation of ordinance, which provided relief from filing of insolvency proceedings on defaults which happened on or after March 25, 2020.

"The merits of Mr. Kymal's case before the NCLT have not been adjudicated upon, due to this technical issue. Any news reports stating that Mr. Kymal has lost against Siemens Gamesa in his case is therefore blatantly wrong," Fox Mandal & Associates, counsels for Mr. Kymal said.

Plan to aid small trade having little effect

Many businessmen hamstrung by COVID-19 wary of new debt, want GST slashed

REUTERS

MEERUT/MUMBAI

India reopened for business in June after two months of lockdown, but for thousands of small entrepreneurs in the town of Meerut, near Delhi, the blow has been devastating.

Businesses from textiles to sports goods and furniture are shuttered or working at a bare minimum, and cows roam streets that would be normally packed with workers and vehicles.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's programme to help small businesses back on their feet through ₹40 billion



Modi's promise to open up the credit lines, it was not easy convincing bankers to lend because of the death throes their businesses were in. Ashok, whose near ₹10 million annual turnover company based in Meerut made steel furniture for hotels and schools, said he had

fired eight of his 10 workers and was thinking of shutting down operations.

TV PICKS

Premier League: Star Sports 1 & SS Select 1 (SD & HD), 10 p.m. & 12.15 a.m. (Sunday); SS Select 1 (SD & HD), 4.40 p.m. & 7.20 p.m.

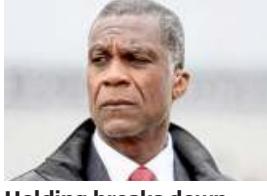
Serie A: Sony Ten 2 (SD & HD), 8.40 p.m., 11 p.m. & 1.10 a.m. (Sunday)

Formula One: Styrian GP qualifying, 6.20 p.m.

England vs West Indies: Sony Six (SD & HD), 3.30 p.m.

PGA Tour: Eurosport (SD & HD), 12.20 a.m. (Sunday)

IN BRIEF



Holding breaks down remembering racism his parents faced

West Indies fast bowling great Michael Holding struggled to hold back tears on a live broadcast while talking about the racism his parents faced. "I know what my parents went through. My mother's family stopped talking to her because her husband was too dark," he told Sky News on Friday. PTI

WTA revises rankings system, adds two events

ST. PETERSBURG (US)
The WTA Tour will allow players to count results from March 2019 through December 2020 under a revised rankings system when tennis resumes next month. Players will count their best 16 results in singles and best 11 in doubles during that window to determine rankings points. The WTA added two events to its provisional schedule — Prague Open in the Czech Republic and Top Seed Open in Lexington, USA, to be played from August 10. AP

English counties agree to reshaped cricket season

LONDON
All 18 First Class counties have agreed to take part in a shortened red-ball tournament during the truncated domestic season, England cricket bosses announced on Friday. The season, drastically shortened by the coronavirus shutdown, will resume on August 1. Teams will compete for the Bob Willis Trophy, to be followed by a Twenty20 competition starting on August 27. AP

Mendonca finishes second in Paracin Open

CHENNAI
India's 14-year-old IM Leon Luke Mendonca finished runner-up at the Paracin Open in Serbia, scoring seven points from nine rounds. Mendonca had won the Balaton Chess Festival in Budapest in June. PTI

Yifan vs Lagno

P.K. AJITH KUMAR
KOZHIKODE
World No. 1 Hou Yifan of China will meet Russia's Katerina Lagno in the final of the third Grand Prix leg of the FIDE Chess.com Women's Speed Chess on Sunday.

In the semifinals on Friday, Yifan made short work of Iran's Saraswat Khademalsharieh 8-2 while Lagno defeated compatriot Alexandra Kosteniuk 6.5-4.5.

The fourth and final leg of the tournament will be played from July 15 before the two players with the highest points — collected from the three legs which all the 22 participants get to compete — will play a Super Final on July 20.

Steady West Indies takes charge

Chase and Dowrich forge a stand after Brathwaite lays the foundation

WI IN ENGLAND

REUTERS
SOUTHAMPTON

West Indies opened up a 31-run lead over England as it reached 235 for five at tea on the third day of the first Test at the Ageas Bowl on Friday.

A 49-run partnership between Roston Chase (27) and Shane Dowrich (30) saw West Indies go past England's total after it had lost two wickets following lunch.

Resuming on 57 for one, Kraigg Brathwaite and Shai Hope made steady progress for the first hour, but Hope was fortunate that a plumb leg-before to Jofra Archer was overturned when the review found that the paceman had no-balled.

Hope departed not long after, however, when he attempted to drive off-spinner Dom Bess, edging straight to England captain Ben Stokes at first slip for 16. Brathwaite's 125-ball, 184-minute innings of 65 ended when he was ruled leg-before to Stokes with the umpire's decision standing after a review, despite the West Indian being struck high on the pads.

Hitting out
Shammar Brooks struck six boundaries in his lively 39 from 71 balls before he edged to keeper Jos Buttler off James Anderson with his review unsuccessful. Jermaine Blackwood made only 12 before his drive off Bess went straight to Anderson at mid-off to leave West Indies at 186 for five, before Dowrich and Chase consolidated.



Holding fort: Kraigg Brathwaite kept the impetus going for the West Indies in the early part of the third day. ■ GETTY IMAGES

Broad 'frustrated, angry, gutted'

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
SOUTHAMPTON

England paceman Stuart Broad said he felt frustrated and angry at having "my shirt" taken away after he was dropped for the first Test against the West Indies at Southampton.

"I found out about 6 p.m. the night before the game," said Broad. "Stokesley told me we were just going with extra pace in these conditions."

"I'm not a particularly emotional person but I've found the last couple of days quite tough. To say I was disappointed would be an understatement.... I'm frustrated, angry, gutted."

My shirt
"It's difficult to understand. I've probably bowled the best I've ever bowled the last couple of years — I felt it was my shirt."

SCOREBOARD

England — 1st innings: 204.

West Indies — 1st innings:

Kraigg Brathwaite lbw b Stokes 65, John Campbell lbw b Anderson 28, Shai Hope c Stokes b Bess 16, Shammar Brooks c Buttler b Anderson 39, Roston Chase (batting) 27, Jermaine Blackwood c Anderson b Bess 12, Shane Dowrich (batting) 30; Extras (lb-17, nb-1): 18; Total (for five wkts. in 80 overs, at tea): 235.

Fall of wickets: 1-43, 2-102, 3-

140, 4-173, 5-186.

England bowling: Anderson 19-

9-42-2, Archer 17-3-47-0,

Wood 16-2-54-0, Stokes 9-4-

24-1, Bess 19-5-51-2.

West Indies 318 all out

■ West Indies was dismissed for 318 in 102 overs in the final session of the third day. Dowrich was the visitors' second-highest scorer with 61 while Chase made 47.

England skipper Stokes finished with four for 49 and Anderson took three for 62.

Stuart Broad. ■ AFP

THE DRAWS

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Quarterfinals: Real Madrid or Manchester City vs Juventus or Lyon; Leipzig vs Atletico Madrid.

■ Barcelona or Napoli vs Bayern Munich or Chelsea; Atalanta vs PSG.

Dates: August 12 to 15

EUROPA LEAGUE

Quarterfinals: Wolfsburg or Shakhtar Donetsk vs Eintracht Frankfurt or Basel; LASK or Manchester United vs Istanbul Basaksehir or FC Copenhagen.

■ Inter Milan or Getafe vs Rangers or Bayer Leverkusen

■ Olympiakos or Wolves vs Sevilla or Roma

Dates: August 10 and 11

Semifinals: Olympiakos/Wolves/Sevilla/Roma vs

Ningombam to head HI

UTHRA GANESAN
NEW DELHI

Under pressure from the Sports Ministry, Hockey India has effected a change at the top with president Mohd. Mushtaq Ahmad resigning and Gyanendra Ningombam being nominated to the post.

Mushtaq had resigned on July 7 citing 'personal and family commitments' which was accepted at an Emergency Executive Board meeting on Friday. Senior vice-president Ningombam was nominated as the officiating president under Rule 4.6 of the Hockey India constitution.

"Due to COVID-19 and travel restrictions imposed across India, HI EB is unable to call a Congress meeting of its Member Units to conduct fresh elections for the post. HI EB has appointed Gyanendra Ningombam as Officiating President with immediate effect... until elections to this post can be called," HI secretary Rajinder Singh wrote to the ministry.

Daruvala to start seventh

India's Jehan Daruvala will line up seventh on the grid for the FIA F2 Championship at Spielberg on Saturday.

In a closely-fought qualifying, the Indian, driving for Carlin Racing, did a best time of 1:15.063s and was just two-tenths off pole-sitter and teammate Yuki Tsunoda, who clocked 1:14.803s.

United eases past Villa

EURO LEAGUES

REUTERS
LONDON

Manchester United kept up its impressive chase for a top-four spot with a comfortable 3-0 win at relegation-threatened Aston Villa in the Premier League on Thursday.

The win means United, unbeaten in 17 matches in all competitions, becomes the first team since the formation of the Premier League to win four consecutive matches by a margin of three or more goals.

Ole Gunnar Solskjaer's side is fifth in the table, one point behind Leicester City and two adrift of Chelsea in third with four games left.

United went ahead in the 27th minute when Bruno

Fernandes converted a penalty after being brought down just inside the box.

There was no dispute about United's second goal — a thundering drive from Mason Greenwood after good work from Anthony Martial — just before the break. Paul Pogba then wrapped up the win with his first league goal since April, 2019.

The results: Premier League: Aston Villa 0 lost to Manchester United 3 (Fernandes 27-pen, Greenwood 45+5, Pogba 58); Bournemouth 0 drew with Tottenham 0; Everton 1 (Richarlison 43) drew with Southampton 1 (Ings 31).

LaLiga: Eibar 0 drew with Leganes 0; Mallorca 2 (Hernandez 40, Kubo 84) bt Levante 0; Athletic Bilbao 1 (Casa 29) lost to Sevilla 2 (Banega 69, Munir 74).

Men's seeding formula dropped

Only rankings will matter; no extra weight for grass results



N. SUDARSHAN

In a significant decision, Wimbledon has done away with its seeding formula for men, used to re-order the top 32 seeds in the main draw by giving extra weight to grass-court performances during a two-year period leading up to the tournament.

Wimbledon, on Friday, announced that the formula, in place since 2002, "had served its time, given the quality of competition, entertainment and modern grass courts". Seeding will now be based solely on ATP

points earned for all grass court tournaments in the past 12 months before that. Of particular concern was the stretching of the window for two years. For example, Stefanos Tsitsipas was ranked No. 7 ahead of Wimbledon 2019 but saw Kevin Anderson, the 2018 finalist, leapfrog him because he was

still a rookie in 2017 and 2018, and had no significant results on grass.

There will be no changes to the women's seeding rule, which broadly follows the WTA ranking, but can be tweaked to produce a "balanced draw".

Prize-money package
Also on Friday, Wimbledon announced prize money to players "whose world ranking would have enabled them to gain entry into The Championships 2020 by direct acceptance into the Main Draw or Qualifying event".

The payout per player — £25,000 for singles main draw, £6,250 for doubles and £12,500 for singles qualifying — will benefit Indians like Ankita Raina and Prajneesh Gunneswaran who would have made the qualifying draw. "They are leading the way with regard to supporting the tennis fraternity. A class act!" Prajneesh told *The Hindu*.

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