

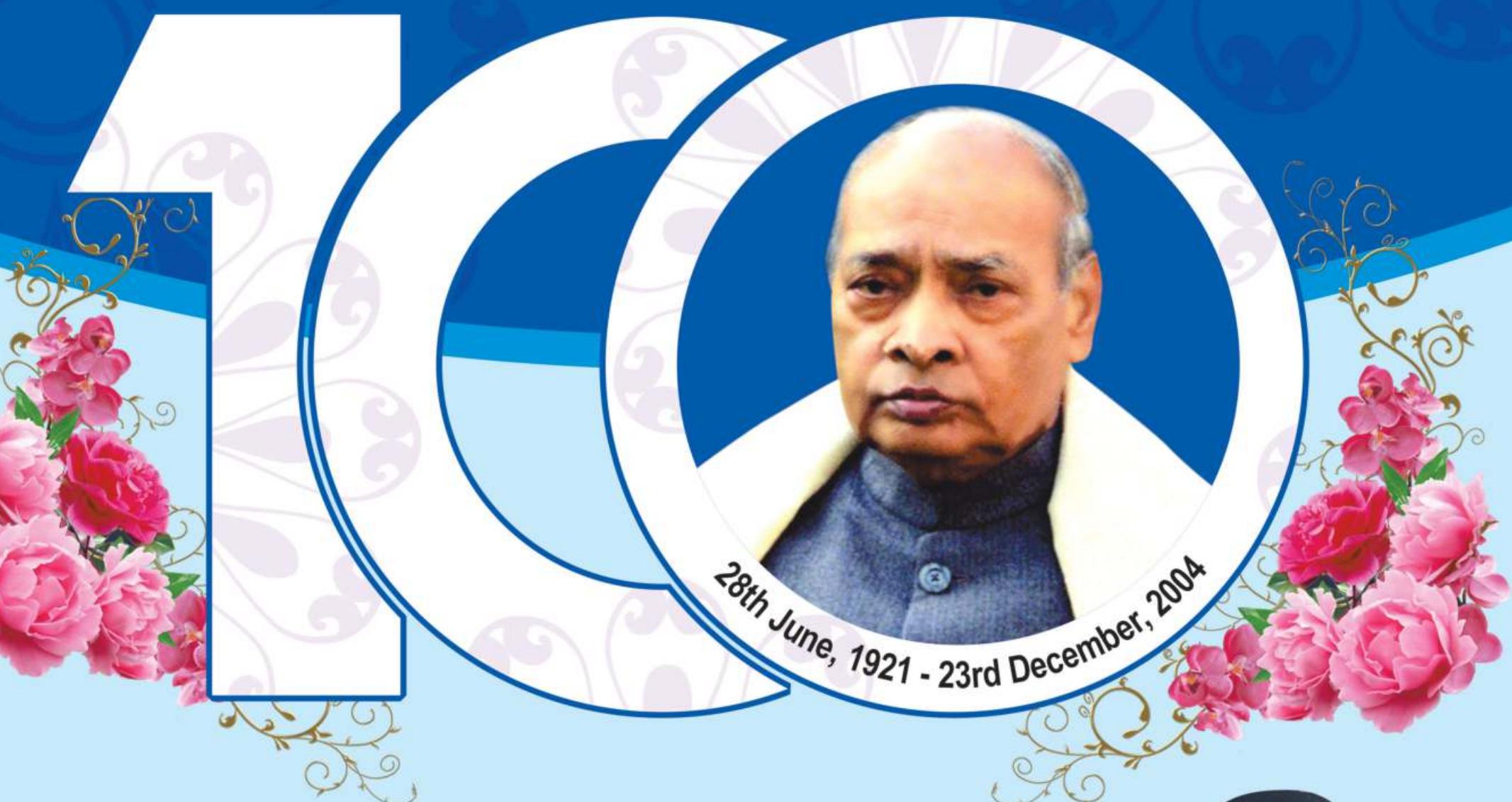
Telangana's Son.. India's Pride Birth Centenary Celebrations of Shri P.V. Narasimha Rao

Former Prime Minister of India

Shri P.V. Narasimha Rao
BIRTH CENTENARY CELEBRATIONS
28.06.2020 - 28.06.2021

100

"Rich Tributes to the Beloved Son of India"



Under the leadership of Honourable Chief Minister

Shri K Chandrashekhar Rao

Telangana State Government Celebrates
the Birth Centenary Celebrations

28.6.2020 to 28.6.2021

Year long Programmes and activities acknowledging the contributions of

Shri P. V. Narasimha Rao



Shri K. Chandrashekhar Rao
Chief Minister of Telangana

Inaugural Programme

Date : 28-06-2020 (Sunday) Time : 10.30 am

Venue : P.V. Gnana Bhoomi, Necklace Road, Hyderabad.

Grand Tribute to India's Beloved Son



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EXAMS



Two students taking SSLC exams test positive in Karnataka
page 6



BJP steps up attack on Congress over China funds
page 7



Azim Premji, wife move SC over 'mischievous' complaint
page 10



Donald Trump signs order 'protecting' monuments as crowds topple statues
page 9

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From June 29, the Mumbai edition of *The Hindu* will be a national edition with a focus on stories of national importance from across the country, including Maharashtra and Mumbai.
— Editor

NEARBY

ED opposes closure of probe against Goyal

MUMBAI
The Enforcement Directorate has objected to the Mumbai Police filing a closure report in a cheating case registered earlier against now-defunct Jet Airways, its promoter Naresh Goyal, and his wife.

REGION ▶ PAGE 2

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CLASSIFIEDS ▶ PAGE 4
MAGAZINE ▶ 8 PAGES

Colombo plea for debt freeze hangs fire

No decision four months on despite a personal request to Modi from Mahinda

SUHASINI HAIDAR
MEERA SRINIVASAN
NEW DELHI / COLOMBO

Sri Lanka's request to India for a postponement of its debt repayment amid the current economic crisis is "under consideration", say officials, though no decision has been taken, more than four months after the request was made personally by Sri Lankan Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa to Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

On Saturday, Mr. Rajapaksa "renewed calls for international monetary organisations to provide debt relief for developing countries" during an interaction with United Nations officials, the Prime Minister's office said, repeating earlier appeals to all its debt partners, including India.

\$960 million debt
According to officials in Delhi and Colombo, the two sides have been discussing holding the loan repayment

8 States account for over 85% active COVID-19 cases in India

87% deaths too occurred in these States; 15 Central teams deployed to help them

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Eight States, including Delhi, Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu, account for 85.5% of active COVID-19 cases across the country, the Health Ministry said on Saturday.

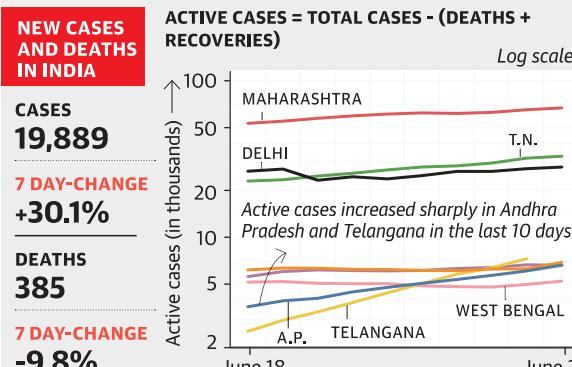
The spread of the pandemic was reviewed at the 17th meeting of the high-level Group of Ministers (GoM) on COVID-19 held under the chairmanship of Health Minister Harsh Vardhan.

The GOM was briefed about the recovery, mortality and doubling rates, the increased testing capacity and the strengthened healthcare infrastructure. "It was mentioned that Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Delhi, Telangana, Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh and West Bengal contribute 85.5% of active caseload and 87% of total deaths in India," the Ministry said in a statement.

Fifteen Central teams of public health experts, epidemiologists, clinicians and an officer of the rank of Joint Se-

Recurring highs

As many as, 19,889 new COVID-19 cases were recorded on Saturday, in the highest single-day spike in India. The graph looks at the progression of active cases across eight States: Delhi —, Maharashtra —, Tamil Nadu —, W.B. —, Telangana —, Andhra Pradesh —, Gujarat — and U.P. —.



cretary have been deployed to provide support to the States. Another team was visiting Gujarat, Maharashtra and Telangana to strengthen the efforts to manage the disease.

In his presentation, K. Shivaaji, chairman of the Empo-

wered Group-10, said the stipulated redress time for COVID-19 grievances was brought down from the usual 60 days for normal public grievances to three days. The national dashboard for COVID-19 was launched on April 1. From March 30 to



Testing on wheels: Parents help their child give a swab test on a mobile COVID-19 testing van in Vijayawada on Saturday ■ V.RAJU

June 24, the Empowered Group disposed of 93.84% of the 77,307 grievances received by the Central Ministries and 63.11% of the 53,130 grievances pertaining to the State governments, he said.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 6

Three calls that cut short the dreams of three families

Kin of soldiers bereft in Punjab, Bihar and West Bengal

VIKAS VASUDEVA
AMARNATH TEWARY
ANUJ KUMAR
TOLAWAL / CHAKFATEH / MEERUT

Sepoy Gurbinder Singh was engaged a few months ago, Sepoy Jai Kishor Singh's parents were looking for a match for him and Havildar Bipul Roy had been married for nine years. The three men died in the clashes in the Galwan Valley on June 15 — and with them, the dreams of three families across India.



Stunned silence: Sepoy Gurbinder Singh's father Labh Singh, third from right, with other family members. ■ VIKAS VASUDEVA

jointly owned piece of land.

The State government has promised a job for one member of the family, besides monetary compensation of ₹50 lakh. It's our only hope

62, with folded hands and moist eyes, was accepting condolences from visitors.

"Our father has been in a state of shock, he has hardly spoken. No one ever thought that Gurbinder would not return. But we are all proud of him," said Mr. Gurpreet.

"A few days before his death we spoke to Gurbinder; he told us he would be moving to another area and will not be able to call as connectivity would not be available," he added.

That was his last call.

SPECIAL

for us now to live a dignified life," said Mr. Gurpreet.

"The money from Gurbinder's salary helped us to start construction of our house, which is yet to be completed," he added.

Sitting on the floor of their unfinished house, Gurbinder's father, Labh Singh,

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 6

Maharashtra records its highest spike with 5,318 COVID-19 cases

Surge of 3,479 cases in MMR; Mumbai reports 1,402 new cases

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MUMBAI

Maharashtra reported 5,318 new COVID-19 cases on Saturday, its highest single-day figure yet, taking its tally to 1,59,133. The State also recorded 167 more fatalities, pushing its death toll to 7,273. The figure surpassed the record 5,024 cases reported on Friday, a State health official said.

Out of 167 deaths reported on Saturday, 86 occurred in the last 48 hours and the remaining had taken place earlier, the official said. Mumbai accounted for 1,402 new cases, and 64 more deaths. As many as 4,430 patients were discharged from hospitals in the State, taking the total number of recoveries to 84,245. So far, 8,96,874 people have been tested for the virus in Maharashtra. The recovery rate in the

State is 52.94%, while the case fatality rate is 4.57%. As many as 5,65,161 people are in home quarantine and 36,925 are in institutional quarantine.

The Mumbai Metropolitan Region, accounted for the highest new cases, 3,479, on Saturday, taking the total in the region to 1,15,385.

Thane city reported 410 new cases, while Kalyan-Dombivli recorded 514 more cases.

996 cases in Pune
Pune district reported the highest single-day increase of 996 cases on Saturday, taking its COVID-19 tally to 20,023, a health official said. The death toll in the district due to the pandemic reached 693, with 19 persons succumbing to the infection since Friday evening.

Of 996 new cases, 814 were found in the Pune

Municipal Corporation limits, where the case tally has risen to 15,740," the official said. On the other hand, 486 patients were discharged from the hospitals in the district. With 128 new cases, the tally in Pimpri-Chinchwad stands at 2,678.

The number of cases in Nashik reached 3,717 as 224 people tested positive for the novel coronavirus on Saturday, while the death toll increased by two to touch 215, an official said. The number of people who have been discharged stands at 2,003 so far, he added.

The number of cases in Amravati reached 502 as 16 people tested positive, while the deaths of two people during the day took the toll so far to 23, an official said.

Of the 16 new COVID-19 cases, nine are from the rural areas of the district.

Bombay High Court directs Somaiya hospital to deposit ₹10 lakh

SONAM SAIGAL
MUMBAI

The Bombay High Court recently directed KJ Somaiya Hospital to deposit ₹10 lakhs in court in a case pertaining to charges levied for treatment of VID-19. On April 28, the hospital charged them a total of over ₹10 lakh, which they paid after taking loans from family and friends.

In their petition, filed through advocate Vivek

Shukla, they have challenged the bills raised by the hospital and sought a direction to the State government and Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation for regulating the fees charged by private

and corporate hospitals for treatment of COVID-19.

Giving relief to the petitioners — seven residents of slums in Bharat Nagar in Bandra East — a Division Bench of Justice R.D. Dhanuka and Justice Madhav Jammadar said, "prima facie a person who is suffering from COVID-19 is not expected to produce a certificate before seeking admission in the hospital for benefits."

The court was hearing a plea filed by Abdul Shobh Shaikh and six others who were admitted to the public charitable trust hospital on April 11 for treatment of CO

VID-19. On April 28, the hospital charged them a total of over ₹10 lakh, which they paid after taking loans from family and friends.

In their petition, filed through advocate Vivek Shukla, they have challenged the bills raised by the hospital and sought a direction to the State government and Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation for regulating the fees charged by private and corporate hospitals for treatment of COVID-19.

One of the contentions in the petition is that though the hospital was required to reserve 10% beds for weaker sections, and 10% for indigent persons, no such beds are provided.

Senior counsel Janak Dwarkadas, appearing for the hospital, said it was for the family to produce an income certificate from the telsildar or social welfare officer. Mr. Shukla countered that the patients required immediate medical help, and did not need to produce



under the Maharashtra Public Trust Act.

The court took note of the affidavit filed by the Charity Commissioner also which clearly indicated that only three patients had been treated under the scheme till the end of May 2020.

The court said, "In our prima facie view a person who is suffering from a disease like COVID-19 is not expected to produce a telsildar certificate or certificate from Social Welfare Officer before seeking admission in the hospital for seeking benefits under the Act."

The judges also said, "We are not inclined to accept the submission that unless such certificate is produced by the family, the hospital is not liable to admit any such patient." The court also alleged that those raising questions against the Central government over the stand-off with China were being labelled as Chinese agents by the BJP. The Congress had said that the RGF issue raised by the BJP government was a "manufactured charge" and "diversionary tactic" to deflect attention from the Line of Actual Control crisis.

Sena slams BJP over RGF donations allegation

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MUMBAI

The Shiv Sena on Saturday hit out at the BJP over its charge that the Rajiv Gandhi Foundation (RGF) had accepted donations from the Chinese embassy, and asked it whether the issue had any connection with intrusion by the neighbouring country in Ladakh and the martyrdom of 20 Indian soldiers.

The Sena also alleged that those raising questions against the Central government over the stand-off with China were being labelled as Chinese agents by the BJP. The Congress had said that the RGF issue raised by the BJP government was a "manufactured charge" and "diversionary tactic" to deflect attention from the Line of Actual Control crisis.

Can't expect patients to submit proof of income

We are not inclined to accept the submission that unless such certificate is produced by the family, the hospital is not liable to admit any such patient.

BOMBAY HIGH COURT

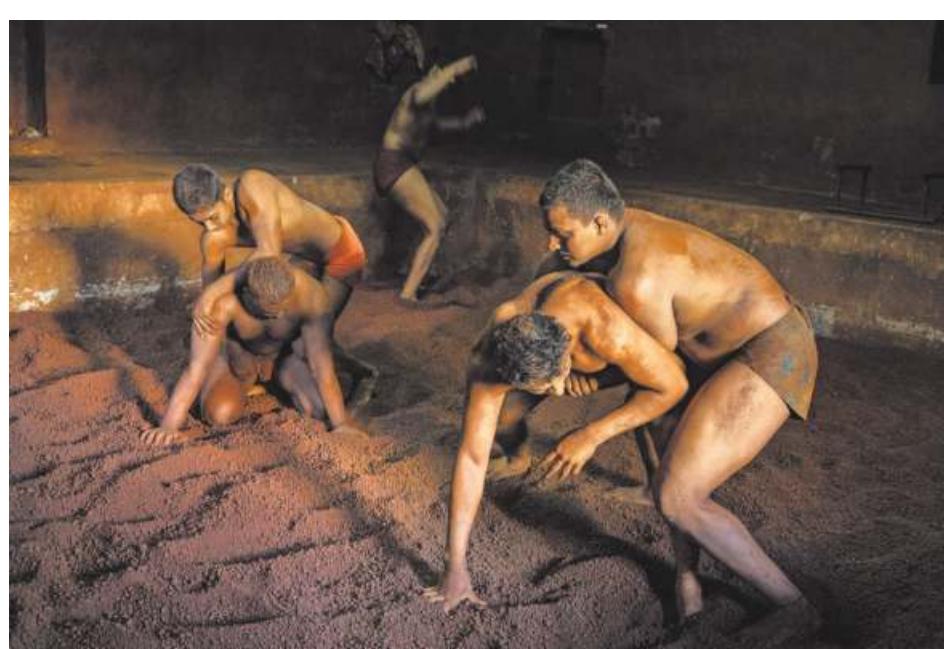
such a certificate at the time of admission.

The court was informed that only three patients were admitted in March for the 90 beds earmarked for indigent persons, and persons belonging to weaker sections, and did not need to produce



THE WEEK IN FOCUS

The stories that mattered over the last seven days



1 2

3

4 5

1 JUNE 21 | MALABAR HILL :: Devotees take a ritual dip in the Banganga tank during the solar eclipse. According to Hindu mythology, eclipses are inauspicious, and people spend their time in prayer and austerities.

■ VIVEK BENDRE

2 JUNE 25 | PUNE :: Volunteers of social organisation, Ummat, clean and disinfect the walls of the Dagduseth Halwai Ganpati temple. The organisation has been providing the service to around 50 religious temples, mosques, gurdwaras and churches during the lockdown.

■ JIGNESH MISTRY

3 JUNE 24 | MALAD :: Health workers clad in personal protective equipment arrive for a COVID-19 health camp at Appapadai in Malad East. COVID-19 cases have been steadily rising in the densely-populated slum pocket, making it a hotspot for the disease.

■ VIJAY BATE

4 JUNE 23 | KOLHAPUR :: Wrestlers from the Shahu Vijayi Gangavesh Talim keep up their practice in the midst of the pandemic, even though all the other talims or wrestling clubs in the city have shut shop during the period.

■ ABHIJEET GURJAR

5 JUNE 22 | BANDRA :: A few boys step out for some fun on the coast during high tide. As lockdown restrictions are gradually lifting, more people in the city are venturing out of their homes.

■ EMMANUEL YOGINI

Timings	
MUMBAI	
SUNDAY, JUN. 28	
RISE 06:04	SET 19:20
RISE 12:41	SET 00:05
MONDAY, JUN. 29	
RISE 06:05	SET 19:20
RISE 13:39	SET 01:07
TUESDAY, JUN. 30	
RISE 06:05	SET 19:20
RISE 14:38	SET 01:48

Mumbai Weather	
max	min
Mumbai Airport	33 27
Pune	33 22
Mumbai City	33 27

Mumbai Today	
33°C	A warm morning. Light rain and thunder shower will effect. The sky will remain cloudy.

Mumbai Tomorrow	
33°C	Light rain and thunder shower may occur. A warm morning. A mainly cloudy sky is likely over the city.

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ED opposes closure of probe against Goyal

'Police failed to consider crucial facts in case against Jet Airways promoter'

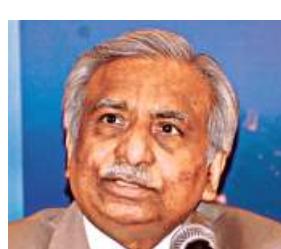
PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MUMBAI

complaint filed by city-based Akbar Travels India Private Limited, who alleged that they were cheated of ₹46 crore by the Goyals.

In its closure report filed before a court a month later, the police said there was no evidence to probe the case further. In its application, the ED has said that the police failed to consider the facts that were crucial in establishing the case against the Goyals.

Stating that the police didn't consider crucial facts of the case, the ED has filed an intervention application before a court.

Jet Airways, Mr. Goyal and his wife Anita were booked on charges of cheating and a criminal breach of trust in February this year by the MRA Marg police. The charges were framed based on a



Naresh Goyal

with the police earlier, Jet Airways had done business worth ₹900 crore with Akbar Travels between 2018-19. It alleged that the airline and its promoter have failed to pay ₹46,05,68,036 to the travel company.

Despite knowing the financial crisis at Jet Airways, which was in position of no return, Mr. Goyal made false promises. He willfully induced the travel company to take booking on behalf of the airline, the complaint said.

The ED is conducting a probe against the Goyals and the defunct airline under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act and Foreign Exchange Management Act.

As per the complaint filed

Police question YRF casting director in Sushant Singh Rajput death probe

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MUMBAI

The police are questioning a casting director with Yash Raj Films (YRF) at Bandra police station in connection with the death of actor Sushant Singh Rajput, an official said on Saturday.

They are probing whether professional rivalry, if any, was responsible for the depression of the actor, who was found dead at his apartment in Bandra on June 14.

The casting director, Shanoor Sharma, reached the police station in afternoon after she was sum-

moned by the police. "Ms. Sharma is being questioned at Bandra police station," Abhishek Trimukhe, Deputy Commissioner of Police (Zone IX).

Representatives of some more production houses are likely to be called by the police for questioning in the next few days, another official said.

Ms. Sharma is one of the popular casting directors in Bollywood who had reportedly spotted talents like Ranveer Singh, Arjun Kapoor and Vani Kapoor, to name a few, for Yash Raj Films, sources said.



Students in Prayagraj celebrate after the results of Class X and XII U.P. Board exams were declared on Saturday. • PTI

Girls outperform boys in U.P. school board exams

OMAR RASHID

LUCKNOW

Girls once again outperformed boys in Uttar Pradesh's school board exams, results for which were declared on Saturday.

While 79.88% boys cleared the Class X board exams, the percentage for girls was much higher at 87.29, according to the U.P. Madhyamik Shiksha Parishad.

In the Intermediate section too, in the Class XII results, girls fared better with a pass percentage of 81.96 compared with 68.88 for boys.

Overall, 83.31% students

passed the Class X board exams while 74.63% cleared at the Intermediate level.

Over 52 lakh students appeared in both the exams. In Class X, 23.09 lakh students out of 27.72 lakh students who appeared for the exam were declared pass.

For Class XII, 24.84 lakh students appeared while 18.54 lakh cleared the exam, said the State MSP.

Riya Jain of Sri Ram S.M. Inter College of Baghpat topped Class X with 96.67%.

In the Intermediate exam, Anurag Malik, also from the same school in Baghpat, topped with 97%.

Parliament kitchens, dining spaces set for a revamp

CPWD invites bids for consultant for renovation project

DAMINI NATH

NEW DELHI

The kitchens and dining halls in Parliament are set for a revamp, complete with the latest gadgets, as the Central Public Works Department invited bids for a consultant for the renovation project this week.

This comes at a time when the government's plan to construct a new Parliament building, at an estimated cost of ₹922 crore adjacent to the existing one, is being finalised as a part of the larger redevelopment of the Central Vista.

The CPWD floated a tender on Friday for a consultant for kitchen design for food preparation, service and distribution areas in the Parliament House, the Parliament Library and Parliament Annex buildings.

Consultancy cost

The estimated cost for the consultancy is ₹6.27 lakh and



A view of Parliament House. • FILE PHOTO

the project would have to be completed in five months, according to the tender document. Separate tenders for kitchen equipment would be issued later based on the plan given by the consultant.

The project includes redoing all food preparation spaces after taking into account the work-flow and the space available; adding latest gadgets and technology to the kitchens; planning waste disposal, cold storage, dish-washing areas etc.; providing lockers and washrooms for the staff.

The layouts of the renovated kitchens would be decided

in consultation with the Lok Sabha secretariat officials, the document said.

Meanwhile, the CPWD has been working on getting clearances for the new Parliament construction project. The project has received environmental clearance, approval of the Central Vista Committee and has been considered by the Delhi Urban Art Commission. The CPWD's consultant for the whole Central Vista redevelopment project, HCP Design, Planning and Management, has said the tender would be floated "after the lockdown".

Farm ordinances would ruin Punjab, warns CM

Amarinder asks SAD to stand with farmers

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHANDIGARH

Punjab Chief Minister Amarinder Singh on Saturday said the Shiromani Akali Dal was not realising the implications of farm sector ordinances of the Central government and was putting its political interests before the interests of the State.

He urged the SAD to set aside their political compulsions and follow their heart in the interest of the State and its farmers on these ordinances. Capt. Amarinder said he had made similar plea to them during the recently held all-party meeting. He said if SAD continues to put its political interests above those of the State, it would end up ruining Punjab.

Talking at a Facebook Live programme, Capt. Amarinder said the three ordinances in question are based on the recommendations of the Shanta Kumar committee, which had advocated end of Minimum Sup-

port Price and dismantling of FCI. He said if the ordinances are allowed to be passed and enacted, the Centre will get the green signal to interfere in the State subject of agriculture for all times. "While the ordinances may not have explicitly mentioned the MSP regime, it was clear that they would pave the way for its abolition," he said.

Full capacity
On the spiralling increase in fuel prices, the Chief Minister announced lifting of the restrictions on the passenger capacity in all buses, including mini-buses.

Odisha goes for shutdown in some areas

SATYASUNDAR BARIK
BHUBANESWAR

A panchayat in Odisha's Ganjam district was declared as a containment zone after three villagers, including a block vice-chairman, died in past three days.

The Jahada panchayat has closed its boundaries till July 2. As per an order issued by Jahada Sarpanch Sulata Behera, people have been advised to stay indoors. Dharakot block vice-chairman Bhagaban Swain was found to be infected when a test was conducted after his death.

COVID-19 pandemic has become challenging for administration in isolated pockets of Odisha, forcing the administration to go for shutdown locally. A four-day-long shutdown has begun in Behrampur Municipal Corporation from Saturday and a three-day-long shutdown in some areas in Kashinagar block begins from Sunday.

port Price and dismantling of FCI. He said if the ordinances are allowed to be passed and enacted, the Centre will get the green signal to interfere in the State subject of agriculture for all times. "While the ordinances may not have explicitly mentioned the MSP regime, it was clear that they would pave the way for its abolition," he said.

Full capacity
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CLASSIFIEDS

thehinduads.com

MATRIMONIAL

BRIDEROOMS WANTED

INDEX OF MATRIMONIAL

BRIDEROOMS WANTED

BRIDES WANTED

BRIDES & GROOMS WANTED

Classification common for Brides, Bridegrooms, Brides & Grooms

Assamese

Awadhi

Bengali

Bhojpuri

Bihari

Chhattisgarhi

English

Gujarati

Haryanvi

Hindi

Kannada

Kashmiri

Konkani

Malayalam

Manipuri

Marathi

Marwari

Nepali

Oriya

Parsi

Punjabi

Saurashtra

Sindhi

Tamil

Telugu

Tulu

Urdu

Advocate

Business

Defence

Doctor

Engineer

Finance/ Banking

Government/ Quasi-Govt.

IAS/ Allied Services

Information Technology

MBA/ CA/ ICWA

NRI

Cosmopolitan

Divorcee

Physically Challenged

MARRIAGE BUREAUS

WEDDING ARRANGEMENTS

DOCTOR

TAMIL MUSLIM: MBBS, PG Groom wanted for MBBS MD bride, 29 yrs, working in TN Govt, from well settled family. Phone: 9486240388; bsysmohd@gmail.com

HINDU: DVK, 27/175, MBBS MD/IIrd yr, MMC, seeks Doctor Groom from decent family. Phone no. 9653942893

EZHAVA GIRL / 30, Post Graduate Engineer from Bangalore, Employed in Singapore, seeks Alliance from eligible Boys working in Singapore / UK. Contact: 9845380136/ 9900047711.

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

HINDU: DVK daughter of Teacher-Advocate Thiruvaharai Mithunam clear horoscope 25/150 BE, MBA, ME Final Coimbatore seeks suitable groom for First marriage below 30 years must be a Govt Servant Hindu Devendra Kumar. Contact with details vnrangarajan26@gmail.com, 9626215601.

For a Beautiful Nair Girl from an Aristocratic Business Family in Thiruvananthapuram. 22/54" doing MBA. Hardworking Nair Boys Preferably from the Chettiar community. Contact 7708434512. Contact: 7306053225.

HINDU: SC DVK daughter of Teacher-Advocate Thiruvaharai Mithunam clear horoscope 25/150 BE, MBA, ME Final Coimbatore seeks suitable groom for First marriage below 30 years must be a Govt Servant Hindu Devendra Kumar. Contact with details vnrangarajan26@gmail.com, 9626215601.

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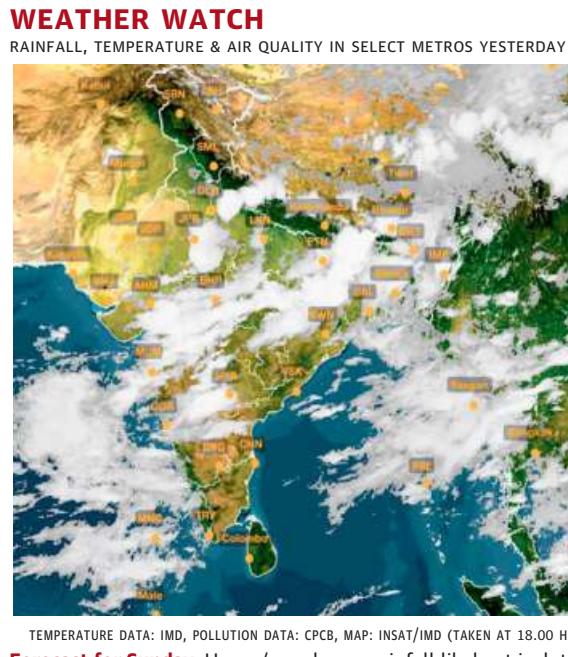
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TEMPERATURE DATA: IMD, POLLUTION DATA: CPCB, MAP: INSAT/IMD (TAKEN AT 18.00 HRS)

Forecast for Sunday: Heavy/very heavy rainfall likely at isolated places over West Bengal, Sikkim, Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand, Odisha, Madhya Pradesh, coastal Andhra Pradesh, Rayalaseema, coastal Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Puducherry, Kerala and Andaman & Nicobar Islands

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	... 33.4	27.7	22.0	Kozhikode	68.8 ... 24.2	28.6 ... 22.4	22.0
Ahmedabad	... 38.2	29.0	22.0	Kurnool	0.3 ... 36.0	26.5	22.0
Aizawl	8 ... 24.6	18.7	12.0	Lucknow	0.2 ... 33.1	25.6	22.0
Allahabad	... 34.6	25.9	22.0	Madurai	... 38.2	26.1	22.0
Bengaluru	... 29.0	21.0	16.0	Mangaluru	17.2 ... 31.1	24.0	22.0
Bhopal	... 34.1	23.0	18.0	Mumbai	1.6 ... 33.4	26.8	22.0
Bhubaneswar	1 ... 37.2	26.4	22.0	Mysuru	... 30.9	22.0	22.0
Chandigarh	... 37.4	28.2	22.0	New Delhi	... 39.8 ... 28.2	28.2 ... 22.0	22.0
Chennai	... 36.1	28.7	22.0	Patna	33.6 ... 35.0	25.6	22.0
Coimbatore	... 33.2	24.0	22.0	Port Blair	0.4 ... 31.3	25.6	22.0
Dehradun	... 34.5	25.9	22.0	Puducherry	... 37.5 ... 27.0	26.9	22.0
Gangtok	15.7 ... 20.6	18.2	12.0	Pune	... 33.3 ... 23.6	26.9	22.0
Goa	... 31.8	25.8	22.0	Raipur	... 33.8 ... 27.0	26.9	22.0
Guwahati	36 ... 27.5	23.2	22.0	Ranchi	20.6 ... 31.0	23.6	22.0
Hubballi	... 29.0	22.0	22.0	Shillong	167.6 ... 18.9 ... 17.5	22.0	22.0
Hyderabad	... 36.3	26.5	22.0	Shimla	... 29.4 ... 20.1	22.0	22.0
Imphal	1.2 ... 30.5	22.6	22.0	Srinagar	... 29.9 ... 15.8	22.0	22.0
Jaipur	... 40.1	28.3	22.0	Thiruvananthapuram	16.4 ... 30.4 ... 23.1	22.0	22.0
Kochi	52.4 ... 29.0	23.4	22.0	Tiruchi	13.6 ... 37.9 ... 25.1	22.0	22.0
Kohima	9.4 ... 25.2	17.2	22.0	Vijayawada	2 ... 37.2 ... 26.9	22.0	22.0
Kolkata	... 34.4	28.2	22.0	Visakhapatnam	0.2 ... 33.7 ... 28.4	22.0	22.0

(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	... 1.0	2.3	... 1.0	... 1.0	... 1.0	... 1.0
Bengaluru	14 ... 18	36 ... 18	... 25	... 25	... 25	... 25
Chennai	10 ... 35	103 ... 62	... 25	... 25	... 25	... 25
Delhi	10 ... 22	19 ... 66	191	... 25	... 25	... 25
Hyderabad	6 ... 17	13 ... 44	59	... 25	... 25	... 25
Kolkata	5 ... 14	15 ... 15	31	... 25	... 25	... 25
Lucknow	3 ... 2	28 ... 85	85	... 25	... 25	... 25
Lucknow	3 ... 2	28 ... 85	85	... 25	... 25	... 25
Mumbai	4 ... 19	52 ... 113	113	... 25	... 25	... 25
Pune	16 ... 30	78 ... 17	16	... 25	... 25	... 25
Visakhapatnam	11 ... 20	21 ... 45	45	... 25	... 25	... 25

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

Yesterday

In observation made at 4.00 p.m., Ballabgarh, Haryana recorded overall air quality index (AQI) score of 217 indicating an unhealthy level of pollution. In contrast, Kozhikode, Kerala recorded a healthy AQI score of 24

Person should be mindful of his worth: Ajit on Padalkar

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
SATARA

Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar on Saturday took a swipe at BJP legislator Gopichand Padalkar over his controversial comment that Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) chief Sharad Pawar "was a corona that has infected Maharashtra".

"Every person should speak keeping in mind his own worth. People should respect each other. This is our culture. This is what the late Yashwantrao Chavan [first chief minister of Maharashtra] taught us and we should adhere to it," Mr. Pawar said after reviewing the COVID-19 situation in Satara district.

Referring to Mr. Padalkar's alleged statements when he was not with the BJP, he said, "You can check what he had said about [Prime Minister Narendra] Modi in the past."

Mr. Padalkar had lost his deposit from Baramati during the Assembly elections last year and faced defeat at the hands of Mr. Pawar.

The senior NCP leader also recalled the late BJP leader Arun Jaitley's comment that the whole country will be developed if it has 100 towns like Baramati, a bastion of the Pawar family. "He [Jaitley] was seen as second-in-command after Modi. All respect [Sharrad] Pawar saheb. Some cheap people think they will become famous by talking against big people," Mr. Pawar said.

Mr. Pawar, who holds the finance portfolio, said he has instructed the authorities to set up a COVID-19 testing laboratory in Satara district hospital in the next three to four days.

Real estate industry may take up to a year to recover, says study

'Buyers will go in for smart homes and integrated townships in post-COVID-19 world'

REDUCING GAP

In the last four to five years, the difference between market value and ready reckoner/circle rates has reduced significantly in top cities. In 2015, the gap was more than 100% in some areas.

Despite the gloom, about one-fifth of buyers (21%) may return to the market in six to 12 months, as per the sentiment witnessed in May. "Though a minor segment, this could still be a reason for light at the end of the tunnel," the report said.

However, a significant 70% do not plan to purchase a home within 12 months. Similarly, most investors prefer to wait and watch, with almost 94% planning to take a decision after 12 months.

Analysing the residential market in the past decade to fully understand the decline, recovery and growth patterns, the report said the lockdown struck just when the residential market was growing for the second consecutive year in 2019. "COVID-19 has brought it [residential real estate] to a standstill in 2020," it said.

Homes with work areas

According to the findings, 80% end-users and 90% investors would prefer homes that are smart and come with carved-out work areas as work from home will be the norm. Integrated townships too will be in demand.

At least 30% end-users and investors showed willingness to pay a premium for homes that would incorporate a wellness concept. This indicates the design trend in the post-COVID-19 world. "Homes with carved out office-like workplaces would be attractive to nearly 24% of end-users," it said.

There is also interest in second homes, and nearly 30% of such buyers said they would be interested in locations in Goa. About the same number showed interest in properties in the hills.

On the recovery, the report said end-users in the country's top six cities are likely to return to the market quickly after the COVID-19 pandemic, as compared to those in tier-II and tier-III cities.

The way ahead

The future will depend on continuing policy support and economic stabilisation, and it may take until the second half of 2021 for the markets to be steady, it said. Shweta Jain, managing director, residential services, Savills India, said housing demand remained muted during the lockdown but with restrictions gradually being lifted, queries on new purchases started to return.

"What we have also ob-

served is that actual users

are leaving their offer prices

with sellers hoping to close their deals on new benchmarks.

On the supply side, both developers and sellers are in a wait-and-watch mode, evaluating the situation to take informed decisions on their way forward," Ms. Jain said.



Reducing RR rates would reduce stamp duty on property purchase, thereby boosting buyer demand and also providing relief to developers as the multiple premiums they pay to the State governments are linked to the RR rates.

ANUJ PURI
Chairman, ANAROCK Property Consultants

What it means

- Ready reckoner (RR) rates are the minimum values set by a State government below which a property cannot be registered
- Each area within a city has its own RR rate on which stamp duty is calculated
- To align RR rates with the actual market prices, most governments used to regularly review and increase the RR rates every year or two years. However, market values increased only marginally in the same period
- The main advantage of a reduced gap between RR rates and market value is that it discourages black money transactions

MUMBAI

Micro Markets	Avg. RRR FY 2020 (₹ Per Sq. Ft.)	Avg. Market Value Q1 2020	% Difference in 2020	% Difference back in 2015
Noida Expressway	4,366	5,075	16%	10%
Central Noida	3,685	4,920	34%	47%
Sector-150	3,716	5,100	37%	26%

NOIDA

GURUGRAM

Micro Markets	Avg. RRR FY 2020 (₹ Per Sq. Ft.)	Avg. Market Value Q1 2020	% Difference in 2020	% Difference back in 2015
Dwarka Expressway	4,133	5,340	29%	66%
Sohna Road	4,969	6,710	35%	38%
Golf Course Road	7,530	13,150	75%	104%

BENGALURU

Micro Markets	Avg. RRR FY 2020 (₹ Per Sq. Ft.)	Avg. Market Value Q1 2020	% Difference in 2020	% Difference back in 20
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FROM PAGE ONE

8 States account for 85% active COVID-19 cases

Balram Bhragava, Director-General, Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), gave a detailed presentation on the testing strategy. The samples tested in the past 24 hours had increased to 2,20,479, taking the total number of samples tested so far to 79,96,707.

1,026 diagnostic labs
India now has 1,026 diagnostic laboratories, including 741 in the government sector and 285 in the private sector. "The GoM was also informed about the medical infrastructure in the country, and currently there is an

availability of 1,039 dedicated COVID hospitals with 16,275 isolation beds, 22,940 ICU beds and 77,268 oxygen-supported beds; 2,398 dedicated COVID health centres with 1,39,483 isolation beds, 11,539 ICU beds and 51,321 oxygen-supported beds have also been operationalised. Moreover, 8,958 COVID care centres with 8,10,621 beds are now available... The Centre has also provided 185.18 lakh N95 masks and 116.74 lakh personal protective equipment to the States/Union Territories/Central institutions," the Ministry said.

3 calls that cut short the dreams of three families

In Chakfateh village of Bihar's Vaishali district, Rajkapoor Singh, father of Sepoy Jai Kishor Singh, said he received the news of his son's death from someone named "Pandeyji".

"First, he told me Jai Kishor was injured in a fight with the enemy but after an hour, his second call broke the news that my son had become a martyr," Rajkapoor Singh, a marginal farmer, said.

Raj Kapoor has four sons. Jai Kishor's older brother, Nand Kishor, too, is in the Army and currently posted in Sikkim. His two younger brothers – Kaushal and Shiva Kumar – are still in school but both want to join the Army.

"He [Jai Kishor] used to tell me that he would take care of all my hardships. Now, he himself has gone," his mother Manju Devi says, but follows it with a cry of "Jai Hind! Jai Bharat!"

On June 22, Deputy Chief Minister Sushil Modi visited the family and gave them a cheque of ₹36 lakh but Jai Kishor's parents also want his status to be installed in the village school playground and near their home beside a pond. "The pond, too, should be named after my son," demanded Manju Devi.

Fond father
Rumpa Roy, Havildar Bipul Roy's wife, knew something was amiss on the night of June 16 when a call came from Ladakh and an officer asked her to give the phone to somebody around her. She gave the phone to Nikhil Arora, her landlord's son.

Nikhil and his mother Renu Arora deflected Ms Roy's queries and told her it was a call to check their address. "We wanted the night to pass," recalled Ms Arora. "My abiding image of Bipulji is of him taking his daughter to school on his motorcy- cle," she told *The Hindu*.

"It was his simplicity and helpful nature that pulled me towards him," said Ms. Roy as she talked over the phone about their seven-year courtship before they tied the knot in 2011.

It was the same helpful nature that made him the



Rumpa Roy, wife of Havildar Bipul Roy, and daughter Tamanna.

darling of Bindpara village, a tiny hamlet on the foothills of the Himalayas in the Alipurduar district of West Bengal. When the Havildar's body reached home, the villagers decided to keep their kitchens shut for a day as a mark of respect.

After spending two years in Meerut, when the Havildar with the Corps of Signals was posted to Ladakh in 2019, he shifted his wife and seven-year-old daughter Tamanna to rented premises in Kundan Kunj colony on Rohta Road in Meerut.

"He wanted a good education for her daughter," said Rumpa. "With only one gate, he felt the society would be safe for us," she recalled. The last time they talked over the phone was on June 9. "It was a usual conversation about our well-being during the lockdown. He was asking about the preparations for Tamanna's birthday on June 27."

Army personnel, she said, were always ready for the supreme sacrifice. "Family members are prepared for long periods of separation, but not like this," she said, with a catch in her voice.

Though Havildar's Roy's father has some land and his younger brother has a job, Ms Roy said it was the older son who was the main breadwinner. "The State government has given ₹15 lakhs to the family and a job for a family member, for which I have submitted my bio-data," said Ms Roy.

A post-graduate in Bangla, she is keen on taking up a job. "His dream was to have a house in the city and a good education for Tamanna. I would like to fulfill it," she said.

It was the same helpful nature that made him the

Variyamkunnam scriptwriter steps down

Ramees had drawn ire over his old FB posts of extremist, misogynistic nature

STAFF REPORTER

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM
One of the scriptwriters of Aashiq Abu's film *Variyamkunnam* has temporarily withdrawn from the film following a raging controversy over his old Facebook posts of an extremist and misogynistic nature. The film on freedom fighter Variyamkunnam Kunhahamed Haji, who was shot dead by the British police during the Malabar Rebellion of 1921, was announced last week, and Prithviraj in the titular role.

In a Facebook post on Saturday morning, Mr. Abu said the scriptwriter, Ramees, had a responsibility to explain himself to the public and the team behind the



Aashiq Abu

film. Mr. Ramees has made it clear that he is temporarily withdrawing from the project.

"I personally do not agree with Ramees's political stand. Probably, he will disagree with mine too. Discussions on *Variyamkunnam*

have been progressing with another director for some years. I came to know about Ramees hardly three-four months ago as someone who has been part of the research and discussions from an earlier stage. Following the allegations levelled against him, an explanation was sought, and he had publicly apologised on Facebook over some of these allegations," said Mr. Abu in his Facebook post.

Mr. Ramees's Face-

book posts from five to six years ago became viral soon after the film was announced. While some of these revealed extreme Islamic views, some others

were misogynistic. He later deleted most of these old posts and posted an apology for his misogynistic posts.

On Saturday, in another

Facebook post, he said he had already apologised for some of the allegations in which he felt he was wrong. The rest of the allegations are either posts taken out of context or misinterpretations.

"I am capable of

proving that these allegations are wrong. However, these allegations, which concerns only me, have affected the entire film crew. Hence, I am temporarily withdrawing from the project until I prove my innocence," he said.

Likewise, public celebra-

tions used to have a host of cultural programmes involv-

ing the rich traditions of the region and the State. CO-

VID-19 has changed the en-

tire gamut of Ganeshotsav celebra-

tions, said Jagadish

Shenava, one of the organisa-

ers of Ganeshotsav Public celebra-

tions would be limited to

installation of idols not more than 5 ft-tall and per-

forming poojas. There would

be neither cultural pro-

grammes nor distribution of

prasads, he said.

Going with the tide, idol

makers too have restricted the height of the idols. Ra-

machandra Rao, a retired

bank manager who has

joined his brother Prabhakar

Rao in the family tradition of

making idols, said they have

orders for around 230 idols this time. Mr. Rao said the

maximum height this time

would be 4.5 ft.

Another idol maker in the

city, Vinayak Shet, said the

height of idols he is making

varies from 6 inches to 4.5 ft.

About 5-6 idol makers in

Mangaluru prepare around

600 idols and this time eve-

ryone has reduced the size,

he said.

CM YK

Community spread is on, says Karnataka official

No let-up in mortality; Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka both report 11 deaths, spike in cases; Kerala tracking 15 community cases

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
BENGALURU

Dr. Manjunath said. Premier healthcare institutions had been hit including Kidwai Hospital, NIMHANS and Victoria Hospital. Even in Jayadeva Institute 16 staffers including three doctors had tested positive, he said.

Karnataka saw another major spike in positive cases, with 918 on Saturday. Over 50% of these cases were from Bengaluru Urban, with 596 testing positive. Total cases touched 11,923. Of these, 7,287 patients had been discharged. Bengaluru Urban had been recording the highest number of cases since June 19.

With Saturday's cases, the total in Bengaluru Urban touched 2,531.

The 11 deaths were apart from four non-COVID deaths. Three each were reported from Bengaluru Urban and Bidar, Kalaburagi reported two. Gadag, Ballari and Dharwad one each.

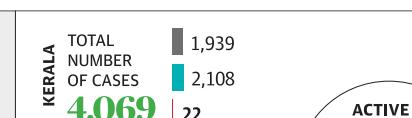
There were 11 deaths and 796 fresh cases in Andhra Pradesh, also a highest single-day spike. During the same period, 24,458 samples were tested, the Health de-

Policing amid pandemic

Police personnel are facing the risk of infection as they are aggressively involved in fighting COVID-19. The graphs show the spread of the pandemic in the southern States



Frontline warrior: Police personnel being sanitised after taking out a route march to spread awareness among traders in Bengaluru. V. SREENIVASA MURTHY



from other countries.

With the arrival of more flights bringing expatriates home, the COVID-19 cases in Kerala showed a steady increase.

On Saturday new cases touched 195. Total number of patients under treatment in districts was close to 2,000 and with 102 more recoveries, active cases were 1,939.

Over 90% cases were imported but the rise in case numbers through local transmission in the community was worrying. Of 195 new cases, all except 15 cases were imported.

The 15 community-acquired cases had no apparent epidemiological link. Malappuram accounted for 10 of these, Kollam two, Ernakulam, Thrissur and Kannur the remaining three cases.

(With inputs from Vijayawada and Thiruvananthapuram bureaus)

2 students test COVID-19 positive amid SSLC exam

Infection worries students in Karnataka

KARNATAKA BUREAU

Around 39 Class X students in the middle of their board exams are worried not just about their academic performance but also over contracting the coronavirus infection.



Temperature check: A student being examined before entering the exam centre in Bengaluru. V. SREENIVASA MURTHY

of the infection. "Thermal screening was done as he reached the examination centre. His body temperature was normal. However, he got to know about his test result later," he said.

When asked why he was not asked to sit in a separate room at the outset, as his throat swab was collected for

a laboratory test after he had suffered from dengue, Hassan Deputy Commissioner only repeated that he had no symptoms. However, he added that he would look into it to see if there is a case of negligence.

While the student from Hassan, who tested positive on Saturday, will not write

the examinations that are to follow, the health of 18 other students in the same classroom is being monitored and their swabs have been sent for testing.

Decision awaited

Primary and Secondary Education Minister S. Suresh Kumar said that a decision on whether the other students will be allowed to write the remaining exams will be taken after health experts submit a report. The entire examination centre has been sanitised.

However, students in Laxmeshwar, Gadag district, who wrote the classmate who tested positive on June 25, have been asked to appear for the supplementary examination, said Mr. Suresh Kumar. This, even though it is not known if they

have contracted COVID-19. All these students stay together in a residential facility. Two students who are primary contacts and 19 students who are secondary contacts have been quarantined.

In another incident, an official who was on SSLC examination duty in Pavagada, Tumakuru, tested positive on Thursday.

Following this, all the invigilators at the centre have been asked to undergo quarantine.

Sources in the examination centre said that the official did not come in contact with the students and had only visited the designated school on Thursday. However, he attended examination duty on June 22 even though his sample was sent for testing on June 22.

Former A.P. Minister grilled for the third day

GUNTUR
The three-day police custody of former Andhra Pradesh Minister K. Atchanna Reddy, who is facing charges in the ESI scandal, ended on Saturday. For the third consecutive day, ACB sleuths grilled him in the presence of advocates on the purchases made for hospitals.

Kingpin of blackmailing racket arrested: police

KOCHI
The Special Investigation Team (SIT) arrested the kingpin of blackmailing racket that duped young women and blackmailed them in Kerala. Shereef, on Saturday. The police said that he was the 'mastermind'. With this, seven persons have been arrested in the case, which came to light following a complaint from actor Shama Kasim.

Andhra Pradesh HC work suspended up to June 30

VIJAYAWADA
The judicial and administrative work of the High Court, the A.P. State Legal Services Authority, the High Court Legal Services Committee and the

Metropolitan Sessions Judge Court in Vijayawada has been suspended till June 30 due to the outbreak of COVID-19. It was earlier said that the work was suspended up to June 28.

VSSC employee tests COVID-19 positive

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM
A few locations at the Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre (VSSC) here were disinfected on Saturday after an employee tested positive for COVID-19 on Friday. VSSC officials cordoned off the areas frequented by the 41-year-old employee, a technician. In all, 13 personnel, suspected of having come into contact with him, were advised to go into quarantine on Friday.

Constitution is the guiding light, says Modi

Open to varied spiritual influences: PM

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
THIRUVALLA

The Union government does

Will contest
CWC election,
says Sanjay Jha

SANDEEP PHUKAN
NEW DELHI

In a sign of taking on the Congress establishment, Sanjay Jha, who was removed as a Congress spokesperson last week, on Saturday declared himself as a candidate for a position in the Congress Working Committee (CWC), the party's highest decision-making body, if elections were held to the CWC.

Mr. Jha, who changed his Twitter bio to "sacked as National Spokesperson for writing India needs a reawakened and revitalized Congress", has once again stirred the leadership debate within the party.

"As and when there are elections (hopefully soon) to the Congress Working Committee (CWC), I am throwing my hat in the ring," he tweeted. "As a hard-core Nehruvian, am committed to rebuilding the party to take on the formidable machine and efficient might of the BJP," he added.

India snubs Pak. offer to reopen Kartarpur

'It is creating a mirage of goodwill'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

India on Saturday said Pakistan's proposal for reopening the Kartarpur Corridor to mark the death anniversary of Ranjit Singh was a "mirage of goodwill".

India's ambiguous response came after Pakistan Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi offered access to the Kartarpur gurdwara for Indian pilgrims on the death anniversary of the early 19th century ruler of Punjab.

COVID-19 curbs

"Cross-border travel has been temporarily suspended as part of measures to prevent and contain the spread of coronavirus. Further view would be taken in consultation with health authorities and other stakeholders concerned," said an informed source, who said Pakistan was "trying to create a mirage of goodwill by proposing to resume Kartarpur corridor".

Earlier, Mr. Qureshi had announced on social media that Pakistan proposed to open the religious corridor on June 29 on the occasion of the death anniversary of the founder of the 19th century Sikh empire. Ranjit Singh passed away on June 27, 1839, in Lahore and events are organised in Pakistan as well as India in his memory on this day.

The Kartarpur Corridor was inaugurated by Prime Minister Imran Khan in the presence of Indian dignitaries on November 9 last year to mark the 550th birth anniversary of Guru Nanak, the founder of the Sikh faith. The gurdwara at Kartarpur is sacred to pilgrims as it is believed that the guru spent a considerable part of his life at this place.

BJP steps up attack on Cong. over China funds

The Gandhi family should answer for their sins, says Nadda

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The BJP on Saturday continued its attack on the Congress and the Gandhi family over the alleged links between the Rajiv Gandhi Foundation (RGF) and China, with party president J.P. Nadda saying they had sacrificed the national interest by accepting donations from the foreign power.

At a press conference here, Mr. Nadda posed 10 questions to Congress president Sonia Gandhi about the foundation's working. "The Gandhi family should answer for their sins," he said.

Mr. Nadda had this week raised the issue of the RGF accepting donations from the Chinese Embassy, to which former Finance Minister P. Chidambaram responded by asking would Prime Minister Narendra Modi assure the country that China would vacate Indian territory if the RGF returned



J.P. Nadda

the ₹20-lakh donation.

Mr. Nadda said China had donated to the foundation every year from 2005 to 2009 and donations from the "tax haven" of Luxembourg were made from 2006 to 2009. "Why did the Rajiv Gandhi Foundation, headed by Sonia Gandhi, accept money from the Chinese government and Chinese Embassy? Isn't it a shame, sacrificing national interest by accepting money from foreign powers for personal trusts," he asked. He raised concern over the UPA government's "haste" with regard to the East Asia Free Trade Agree-

ment. "India's trade deficit with China was allowed to increase from an almost negligible \$1 billion in 2003-04 to as much as \$36.2 billion in 2013-14. Why did the Congress weaken the economic position?"

He alleged that funds had been 'diverted' from the Prime Minister's National Relief Fund to the RGF from 2005 to 2008, and the company founded by Congress leader Rameshwar Thakur had been appointed the auditor of the PMNRF. Mr. Nadda also hit out at former PM Manmohan Singh, saying he had allocated ₹100 crore to the private charitable trust when he was Finance Minister in 1991. "Since then, it has regularly received donations from the government of India. Ministries. Yet, the RGF refuses to be audited by the Comptroller and Auditor-General or even come under the Right to Information Act. Why," he asked.

Cong. releases travel list of BJP leaders

Party says many ruling party leaders had been to China on invitation

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Congress on Saturday said the BJP president has made making sensational claims his favourite pastime after J.P. Nadda launched a fresh offensive against the Congress and the Gandhi family.

In a statement, Congress chief spokesperson Randeep Surjewala gave a detailed account of the visit of BJP leaders to China at the invitation of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) when the BJP was in the opposition.

"Why did the then BJP president Nitin Gadkari go to China on a five-day visit on January 19, 2011, at the invitation of the CCP? Why did former BJP president Amit Shah send a delegation of MPs/MLAs in November 2014 to China for a week-long study in the Party School of the CCP? Why did Narendra Modi visit China on four occasions as Gujarat Chief Minister and on five occasions as Prime Minister, besides hosting the Chinese Premier on three occasions

in India? Isn't he the only Prime Minister to have had 18 meetings with the Chinese Premier in six years," Mr. Surjewala asked.

He also dared the RSS and the Vivekananda Foundation to make public the list of all their donors, including foreign sources. "Will the BJP disclose the source of funding, amounts received, the names of donors (including of Chinese origin) for Overseas Friends of BJP (OF-BJP)? How much amount has been received by OF-BJP from Overseas Friends of BJP-China and Hong Kong and when? What is the connection of Shri Rajkumar Naraindas Sabnani alias Raju Sabnani to OF-BJP," he asked.

Fund in 2005 was for tsunami relief work in Andaman & Nicobar? And that every rupee was spent for the purpose and accounted for?" Mr. Chidambaram wrote on Twitter.

"Suppose RGF returns the Rs. 20 lakh, will PM Modi assure the country that China will vacate its transgression and restore status quo ante? Mr. Nadda, come to terms with reality, don't live in the past that is distorted by your half-truths," he said.

'Diplomatic failure'

Prime Minister Narendra Modi should publicly condemn China for brazen intrusions into Indian territory and his government should take "strong and quick action" to resolve the LAC issue, the Congress said on Saturday.

At a virtual press conference, former Law Minister Kapil Sibal said the last six years of the Modi government had seen the biggest diplomatic failure and no major global power was standing with India now.

Locusts swarm parts of capital

They flew towards Delhi from Kherki Daula toll plaza in two groups

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GURUGRAM/DELHI

Swarms of locusts hit the Millennium City on Saturday around noon while headed to Delhi in two separate groups. The State Agriculture Department on Friday asked the residents to keep the windows and doors of their houses shut.

Atmaram Godara, Deputy Director, Agriculture, Gurugram, told *The Hindu* that the locusts flew towards Delhi from over the Kherki Daula toll plaza in two groups.

The large number of locusts had flown from Mahendragarh on Friday evening and settled in a couple of villages in Rewari, 50 km from here.

Mr. Godara said the swarm was around five km long and eight km wide and divided into four groups before it hit Gurugram. While two groups flew towards Delhi from over Gurugram, one each went to Nuh and Jhajjar. However, the swarms that flew towards Delhi and Jhajjar went to Faridabad and Nuh due to a change in



Looming large: A swarm of locusts in Gurugram on Sunday. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

wind direction.

Jitender Kumar, Deputy Commissioner, Jhajjar, said officials had taken steps to prevent any damage to the crops.

Origin in Rajasthan

The Union Agriculture Ministry said the locust swarms hitting Delhi, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh had originated from Jhunjhunu in Rajasthan. Control teams were deployed to eliminate the lo-

custs in Jhunjhunu on Friday morning, but by evening, the remaining locusts had regrouped and reached Rewari in Haryana, said an official statement.

Despite overnight control operations, the swarm then divided into three groups on Saturday, "one of which moved towards Gurugram, and from there to Faridabad and onwards to Uttar Pradesh. Another swarm moved towards Dwarka in Delhi,

Yashwant Sinha's front to contest Bihar election

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
PATNA

Former Union Minister Yashwant Sinha on Saturday announced that his upcoming political front would be contesting the Bihar Assembly election "strongly for a better Bihar".

"We want to become an epicentre of power in Bihar and future will decide whether we will be a third front or first front, but we will strongly contest the upcoming Assembly elections in the State," Mr. Sinha said, while addressing pressper-

sons at a hotel in Patna.

Former MPs Arun Kumar, Devendra Yadav and former Bihar Ministers and leaders such as Nagmani, Narendra Singh and Renu Kushwaha, along with others, were present with Mr. Sinha.

"At present, we all are here but many more leaders are in touch and will come with us with a 'Better Bihar' motto," Mr. Sinha added, while promising that he would meet media persons every week with a fact-sheet of the Nitish Kumar government.

3 Khalistan supporters arrested in Delhi

They were planning targeted killings'

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The Delhi Police, on Saturday, arrested three alleged supporters of the Khalistan separatist movement, and said the accused were planning to execute targeted killings in various northern States.

Deputy Commissioner of Police (Special Cell) Sanjeev Kumar Yadav said the accused have been identified as Mohinder Pal Singh, 29, a

resident of Delhi, Gurjeet Singh, 41 from Punjab and Lovepreet, 21, from Haryana.

Three pistols and seven live cartridges were recovered from the men. The police claimed the accused disclosed their links with Khalistan Liberation Force leaders and revealed plans to commit target killings on instructions from Khalistani militants sponsored by Pakistan ISI.

OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR GENERAL, MEDICAL EDUCATION & TRAINING, UTTAR PRADESH, 6th FLOOR, JAWAHAR BHAWAN, LUCKNOW.

No.: ME-3/2020/1050 Lucknow: Dated: 27 June, 2020

The Time Schedule of Second Round of Online Counseling of UP NEET PG-2020

The Time Schedule for the Admission through Online counseling in the State of Uttar Pradesh for Government/ Private Medical/ Dental Colleges/ Institutions/ Universities for Postgraduate (MD/MS/Diploma/MDS Courses) is as follows:-

Date of Online Registration 29th June 2020 (From 2:00 PM) To 02nd July 2020

Online Security Fee Payment 29th June 2020 (From 2:00 PM) To 04th July 2020

Expected date of declaration of merit list 06th July 2020

Date of online choice filling & locking 07th July 2020 (From 4:00 PM) To 10th July 2020 till (11AM)

Declaration of result of seat allotment 11th/12th July 2020

Date for downloading allotment letters & admission 13th July 2020 to 17th July 2020

• Registration & Security Money will be deposited through Debit Card / Credit Card / Net Banking/ E-Challan.

• For further important and detailed information kindly visit the website regularly <https://upneet.gov.in & www.updgm.in>.

Director General

GOVERNMENT OF HIMACHAL PRADESH HIMACHAL PRADESH STATE ROADS TRANSFORMATION PROJECT (HPSRTP)

Request for Expression of Interest-cum-Request for Proposal/ Request for Expression of Interest Proposal

Name of Project: Himachal Pradesh State Roads Transformation Project (HPSRTP)

Loan No./Credit No. 90664N

Date: June 26, 2020

The Chief Engineer-cum-Project Director, State Roads Project, HPRIDC, Nirman Bhawan, Nigam Vihar Shimla-171201, Himachal Pradesh India invites the Request for Expression of Interest-cum-Request for Proposals/Request for Expression of Interest Proposal from national consultants for the consultancy services as detailed in the table below-

Sr. No.	Description of the Consultancy Services	Date of availability of Detailed Request for Expression of Interest-cum-Request for Proposals/ Request for Expression of Interest Proposal Document on HPRIDC web site	Last date/ time for submission of Proposals
1.	Selection of Consultant (NGO) for support to implementation of Resettlement Action Plan (RAP) for Tranche-I Roads under HPSRTP (Approx. 90 km.)	June 27, 2020 (Request for Expression of Interest Proposal document)	July 14, 2020
2.	Selection of Biologist/Wildlife Expert for World Bank Funded Himachal Pradesh State Roads Transformation Program (HPSRTP)	June 27, 2020 (Request for Expression of Interest-cum-Request for Proposal document)	July 25, 2020

Note:- Any further addendum/Corrigendum to this Request for Expression of Interest-cum-Request for Proposals/Request for Expression of Interest Proposal Documents shall be available to all interesting firms on official web site of HPRIDC under <http://himachalservices.nic.in/hpridc/HPSRTP.html> link.

Chief Engineer-cum-Project Director, State Roads Project, HPRIDC, Nirman Bhawan, Nigam Vihar, Facsimile: +91-177-2626063; Tel: +91-177-2627602; E-mail: pdscrhp@nic.in

JALANDHAR SMART CITY LIMITED

Sco-47, Near PUDA Complex, Jalandhar, 144001, Punjab

Tel: 0181-4154686-91 62843-91570

E-mail: smartcityjalandhar@gmail.com

NOTICE INVITING TENDER (NIT), NATIONAL COMPETITIVE BID (NCB)

BID REFERENCE NO: 35 A/JSCL/2020-21

REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL (RFP)

"Selection Of Agency For Development Customization, Implementation And Support For Digital Library Solution At Guru Nanak Dev Library, Jalandhar Under Smart City Mission-2nd Call"

Jalandhar Smart City Limited (JSCL) invites online unconditional bids through e-procurement portal <http://eproc.punjab.gov.in> from eligible bidders under National Competitive Bidding (NCB) with Single Stage-two envelopes bidding procedure for the following works:

Availability of Tender Online For Bidding	Last Date & Time for Online Submission of Bids	Date & Time of Opening of Tender
From 29.06.2020 1000 hrs	To 13.07.2020 1700 hrs	Technical Bid
13.07.2020 13.07.2020 1700 hrs	14.07.2020 1100 hrs	Financial Bid
1. In case of any queries, the bidders can submit the queries online on smartcityjalandhar@gmail.com before 5		

3 get plasma therapy in Jaipur

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
JAIPUR

As the COVID-19 recovery rate nears 79% in Rajasthan, three patients received convalescent plasma therapy at Sawai Man Singh Government Hospital here.

SMS Medical College Principal Sudhir Bhandari said here on Saturday that the treatment was used as an "adjunct therapy" to improve the rate of survival of patients whose condition was deteriorating. The plasma therapy was administered after obtaining permission from the Drugs Controller-General of India.

The plasma donors were the patients who had recovered from COVID-19 after 21-28 days of illness. Dr. Bhandari said they were found to be suitable donors following their repeated reverse transcription polymerase chain reaction (RT-PCR) tests as well as the antibody detection rapid tests.

The plasma obtained from the donors was infused into the blood group-matched recipients. The therapy was applied as per the protocol of the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR).

Govt. approves use of dexamethasone

It benefited critically ill patients during a trial in U.K.

BINDU SHAJAN PERAPPADAN
NEW DELHI

The Union Health Ministry on Saturday released an updated clinical management protocol for COVID-19 cases. This includes the advice to use dexamethasone as an alternative to methylprednisolone for managing moderate to severe cases.

"The change has been made after considering the latest available evidence and expert consultation," said a senior official of the Ministry.

Dexamethasone is a corticosteroid drug used in a wide range of conditions for its anti-inflammatory and immunosuppressant effects.

The drug was tested in hospitalised patients with COVID-19 in the 'RECOVERY' clinical trial in the United Kingdom and was found to have benefits for critically ill patients and reduce mortality by one-third for patients on ventilators and one-fifth for patients on oxygen therapy. The drug is also a part of the National List of Essential Medicines (NLEM) and is widely available.

Union Health Secretary Preeti Sudan has forwarded



States have been told to ensure the availability of dexamethasone. ■REUTERS

the updated protocol to all States and Union Territories for making arrangements for the availability and use of dexamethasone at the institutional level too.

Call for transparency

Meanwhile, the All India Drug Action Network, comprising several non-governmental organisations working to increase access to, and improve, the rational use of essential medicines, has written to the Centre on the lack of transparency about the COVID-19 Subject Expert Committee and approval of COVID-19 drugs.

"We are writing in reference to the lack of transparency about the Subject Expert Committee (SEC) that we understand has been formed to evaluate COVID-19 drugs and health products and the approval process. The COVID-19 SEC has been involved in reviewing the applications for regulatory approval of drugs to treat COVID-19. In particular, the COVID-19 SEC had made recommendations in respect of remdesivir and favipiravir, which subsequently were granted marketing approval by the Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSO). We are deeply concerned that other than selective information through the media, there is no information in the public domain regarding the SEC's deliberations, recommendations or any reservations the committee may have had about large-scale sale of these drugs in absence of relevant data," notes the letter.

"This violates basic requirements of transparency and the right to information from India's drug regulator and is contrary to the CDSO's own practices regarding the functioning of SECs," the group has said.

"Covid19 is spreading rapidly into new parts of the

country. The Government Of India has no plan to defeat it," Mr. Gandhi tweeted.

Targeting Prime Minister Modi, he said, "PM is silent. He has surrendered and is refusing to fight the pandemic."

Mr. Gandhi tagged a news report that claimed the Union government had "surrendered" to Chinese aggression. If the land was Chinese:1. Why were our soldiers killed?2. Where were they killed?"



Boost for sector: Farmers readying fields in Keonjhar district of Odisha as monsoon picks up. ■BISWARANJAN ROUT

Panel to push farm reforms in States

Finance Commission tweaks incentive mechanism after Centre's ordinances

PRISCILLA JEBARAJ
NEW DELHI

With the Centre deciding to take the ordinance route to push through reforms in agricultural marketing and contract farming, the 15th Finance Commission is considering the promotion of an expanded farm reform agenda for States over the next five years.

At a meeting with its Economic Advisory Council on Friday, the Finance Commission set up a panel "to devise a mechanism for incentivisation of States in areas of agricultural reforms agenda for the purpose of inclusion in the Commission's recommendations in its final report", according to a statement.

The group includes agricultural economist and FC member Ramesh Chand, as well as Union Agriculture Secretary Sanjay Agarwal.

Three indicators

"In the framework for the FC's interim report for 2020-21, we had recommended

ral Land Leasing Act, 2016, prepared by NITI Aayog, they would be eligible for financial incentives from the Commission from 2021-22.

However, the Centre issued central ordinances on both agricultural reforms and contract farming earlier this month, as part of the Atmanirbhar Bharat package, bypassing the need for States to enact the Model Acts.

"Now that the Centre has issued ordinances for two out of three, we need to select a new set of measurable indicators of agricultural reforms," Dr. Chand told *The Hindu*. If State Legislatures enacted the Centre's Model Acts on agricultural marketing and contract farming, as well as the Model Agricultu-

26.9 crore people used drugs in 2018: UN report

Opioid use jumps fivefold; youth account for major share

DEVESH K. PANDEY
NEW DELHI

About 26.9 crore people used drugs in 2018, which was 30% more than the 2009 figure, with adolescents and young adults accounting for the largest share of users, according to the latest United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) World Drug Report.

Compared with earlier estimates from a survey done in 2004, overall opioid use in India is estimated to have increased fivefold.

Seizures of amphetamines across the world quadrupled between 2009 and 2018. The stimulant scene is dominated by cocaine and methamphetamine, and use of both the substances is rising in their main markets. Production of heroin and cocaine remains among the highest levels recorded in modern times.

While about 19 million people used cocaine in 2018, fuelled by the drug's popularity in North America and Western Europe, close to 27 million people used amphetamines the same year, the latter being the most used amphetamine-type stimu-



An awareness march held in Bikaner on Friday ■PTI

lants in Southeast Asia, it said. "Use of methamphetamine in these two subregions has been expanding for two decades, according to most available indicators. Cocaine and methamphetamine can coexist in some markets by acting as substitutes for each other, so that use of one drug rises when the other goes down."

Expanding markets A number of indicators suggest that the global market of ATS, particularly meth, is expanding. "Quantities of seized methamphetamine... reached a new record high, at 228 tonne-equivalents, in 2018," says the report.

Observing that rapid market changes were being not-

iced, the report said synthetics were replacing opiates in Central Asia and the Russian Federation.

Crystalline meth market has grown in Afghanistan and Iraq. In Afghanistan, meth seizures have steadily risen since 2014. The amount seized in the first six months of 2019 - 657 kg - signalled a huge leap over the previous year.

The study found that traffickers and manufacturers were using "designer chemicals" as an alternative to synthesise methamphetamine, meth and ecstasy.

The report expressed concern about fewer countries taking part in joint drug operations, apparently due to budgetary problems.

ED records Ahmed Patel's statement

The agency had questioned his kin earlier in the Sterling Biotech case

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Enforcement Directorate on Saturday recorded the statement of senior Congress leader Ahmed Patel in connection with a case involving the Vadodara-based Sterling Biotech Ltd.

"As Mr. Patel is above 65 years of age, under the COVID-19 guideline, his statement is being recorded under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act at his residence," said a senior agency official. In August 2019, the ED recorded the statements of Mr. Patel's son in the case.

It had also quizzed his son-in-law Irfan Siddique. Their names had come up follow-

ing the questioning of one Sunil Yadav, who earlier worked for Chetan Sandesara of the Sterling Biotech group, in 2017.

The ED investigation is based on one of the FIRs registered by the Central Bureau of Investigation against

Sterling Biotech and others in October 2017. One case is related to alleged routing of undeclared funds belonging to unknown Income-Tax Department officials and the other pertains to bank loan defaults of ₹8,100-crore.

The promoters of Sterling Biotech, including Chetan and Nitin Sandesara, had fled India along with their family members and till recently, were suspected to be in Albania, where their brother-in-law Hitesh Patel was detained in March last year.

Assets worth over ₹14,500 crore have been attached by the ED in the bank loan case so far. The properties in-

clude four Nigeria-based oil rigs and an oil field, several ships listed with Panama authorities, an aircraft registered in the United States and one flat in London.

It is alleged that the Sandesara had taken loans from an Andhra Bank-led consortium and diverted the funds for financing the Nigerian oil business operations and personal use.

In a statement, Mr. Patel said: "Every time there is Rajya Sabha, Lok Sabha, Vidhan Sabha election or the government is facing a crisis, one or more investigative agencies become active on the instructions of one individual."

Five former Gujarat Cong. MLAs join BJP

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
AHMEDABAD

Five of the eight MLAs of the Congress who had resigned from the Assembly ahead of the Rajya Sabha elections in Gujarat joined the BJP on Saturday.

They are J.V. Kakadia, Jitu Chaudhary, Pradyuman Singh Jadeja, Akshay Patel and Brijesh Mehta. Except Jitu Chaudhary, the others are the first-time legislators, having won in the December, 2017 election.

Asked whether the BJP would field all of them in their constituencies in the by-elections, BJP State president Jitu Waghani said it was yet to be decided.

In debt crisis, Sri Lanka turns to China

Beijing nod for \$500 million loan as pandemic hits tourism revenue

SUHASINI HAIDAR
MEERA SRINIVASAN
NEW DELHI/ COLOMBO

The Sri Lankan government is likely to once again turn to China for help with debt repayment, as it did in 2014, even as its request to India for a postponement of its debt repayment has been hanging fire for the last four months.

The situation could get more difficult for Colombo, as Japan's International Cooperation Agency (JICA)

has put on hold funding for a proposed light rail transit system, local media reported, because of concerns over the island nation's rising debt. Sri Lanka's total foreign debt is approximately \$55 billion, which accounts for nearly 80% of its GDP, according to last year's official figures.

Of that, China and the Asian Development Bank each hold about 14%, Japan accounts for 12%, the World Bank holds 11%, while India holds about 2%.

Even prior to the coronavirus pandemic, Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa had asked India for a debt deferment during a visit to Delhi in February, as he had confirmed in an interview to *The Hindu*. In April, the Central Bank of Sri Lanka sought

a \$400 million currency swap with the RBI under the SAARC facility and again in May, President Gotabaya Rajapaksa sought a "special" \$1.1 billion currency swap facility from Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who had called him to discuss the responses to the pandemic and bilateral cooperation.

The situation could get more difficult for Colombo, as Japan's International Cooperation Agency (JICA)

has put on hold funding for a proposed light rail transit system, local media reported, because of concerns over the island nation's rising debt. Sri Lanka's total foreign debt is approximately \$55 billion, which accounts for nearly 80% of its GDP, according to last year's official figures.

countries are working together on the financial cooperation "via different channels and mechanisms".

"More practical progress will be drawn in coming weeks," spokesperson at the Chinese Embassy Luo Chong told *The Hindu*.

When asked about talks on the moratorium, Chinese Embassy officials in Colombo confirmed that the two

press release from the Pakistani High Commission in Colombo said.

In the Maldives, President Solih's government is talking to all its bilateral partners and international agencies. "We would also be seeking help from India, one of our closest friends," Presidential spokesperson Ibrahim Hood told *The Hindu*.

According to government sources, Maldives has very "small loans" from India, which prefers a more project-driven, development aid programme. In comparison the Maldives owes China a sum of nearly \$1.5 billion, including \$600 million from government-to-government, which could necessitate a shift from the Solih government's earlier tough stand on what it called the Chinese "debt trap" due to the Belt and Road Initiative projects. Reports suggest that China has now agreed to a partial repayment, to reduce the dues this year from \$100 million to \$75 million, a development New Delhi will watch closely.

Release anti-CAA activists, say UN experts

Jamia student's case is most alarming'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

A group of United Nations experts (UN) on Friday issued a statement in Geneva, urging India to release the "human rights defenders who have been arrested for protesting against changes to the nation's citizenship laws".

"These defenders, many of them students, appear to have been arrested simply because they exercised their right to denounce and protest against the CAA [the Citizenship (Amendment) Act], and their arrest seems clearly designed to send a chilling message to India's vibrant civil society that criticism of government policies will not be tolerated," the experts said.

'Denied medical help' They cited the arrest of Jamia Millia Islamia student Safoora Zargar as one of the "most alarming cases". Ms.

Zargar, six months pregnant, was detained for over two months and allegedly not given adequate medical attention. She was granted bail earlier this week on humanitarian grounds.

Cites lack of evidence "Authorities should immediately release all human rights defenders who are currently being held in pre-trial detention without sufficient evidence, often simply on the basis of speeches they made criticising the discriminatory nature of the CAA," they said.

The statement mentions allegations of human rights violations and failure of due process in the cases of many of the 11 people named - Meenar Haider, Gulfsa Fatima, Ms. Zargar, Asif Iqbal Tanha, Devangana Kalita, Natasha Narwal, Khalid Saifi, Shifa Ur Rehman, Dr. Kafeel Khan, Sharjeel Imam and Akhil Gogoi.

SUDOKU



Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

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

'Russia secretly helped Afghan militants kill coalition troops'

U.S. intel agencies say a Russian spy unit offered bounties to Islamist militants

CHARLIE SAVAGE
ERIC SCHMITT
WASHINGTON

American intelligence officials have concluded that a Russian military intelligence unit secretly offered bounties to Taliban-linked militants for killing coalition forces in Afghanistan – including targeting American troops – amid the peace talks to end the long-running war there, according to officials briefed on the matter.

The U.S. concluded months ago that the Russian unit, which has been linked to assassination attempts and other covert operations in Europe intended to destabilise the West or take revenge on turncoats, had covertly offered rewards for successful attacks last year.

Islamist militants, or armed criminal elements closely associated with them, are believed to have collected some bounty money, the officials said. Twenty Americans were killed in combat in Afghanistan in 2019, but it was not clear which killings were under suspicion.

The intelligence finding was briefed to President Donald Trump, and the White House's National Security Council discussed the problem at an inter-agency meeting in late March, the officials said. Officials developed a menu of potential options – starting with making a diplomatic complaint to Moscow and a demand that it stop, along with an escalating series of sanctions and other possible responses, but the White House has yet to authorise any step, the officials said.

An operation to incentiv-



Shrinking footprint: American troops at Camp Shorabak in Helmand province, Afghanistan, last year. ■ NYT

ise the killing of American and other NATO troops would be a significant and provocative escalation of what American and Afghan officials have said is Russian support for the Taliban, and it would be the first time the Russian spy unit was known to have orchestrated attacks on Western troops.

Hybrid war

Any involvement with the Taliban that resulted in the deaths of American troops would also be a huge escalation of Russia's so-called hybrid war against the U.S., a strategy of destabilising adversaries through a combination of such tactics as cyberattacks, the spread of fake news, and covert and deniable military operations.

The Kremlin had not been made aware of the accusations, said Dmitry Peskov, press secretary for President Vladimir Putin of Russia. "If someone makes them, we'll

respond," Mr. Peskov said. A Taliban spokesman did not respond to messages seeking comment. Spokespeople at the National Security Council, the Pentagon, the State Department and the CIA declined to comment.

The officials familiar with the intelligence did not explain the White House delay in deciding how to respond to the intelligence about Russia. While some of his closest advisers, like Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, have counselled more hawkish policies toward Russia, Mr. Trump has adopted an accommodating stance toward Moscow.

At a summit in Helsinki in 2018, Mr. Trump strongly suggested that he believed Mr. Putin's denial that the Kremlin interfered in the 2016 presidential election, despite broad agreement within the U.S. intelligence establishment that it did. Mr. Trump criticised a bill im-

posing sanctions on Russia when he signed it into law after Congress passed it by veto-proof majorities. And he has repeatedly made statements that undermined the NATO alliance as a bulwark against Russian aggression in Europe.

The officials spoke on the condition of anonymity to describe the delicate intelligence and internal deliberations. They said the intelligence has been treated as a closely held secret, but the administration expanded briefings about it this week – including sharing information about it with the British government, whose forces are among those said to have been targeted.

The intelligence assessment is said to be based at least in part on interrogations of captured Afghan militants and criminals. The officials did not describe the mechanics of the Russian operation, such as how targets were picked or how money changed hands.

It is also not clear whether Russian operatives had deployed inside Afghanistan or met with their Taliban counterparts elsewhere. The revelations came into focus inside the Trump administration at a delicate time. Although officials collected the intelligence earlier in the year, the inter-agency meeting at the White House took place as the COVID-19 pandemic was becoming a crisis and parts of the country were shutting down. Moreover, as Mr. Trump seeks reelection in November, he wants to strike a peace deal with the Taliban to end the Afghanistan war. ■ NY TIMES

S. China Sea rights should be rooted in UN treaty: ASEAN

Bloc strengthens assertions vis-a-vis China's claims

ASSOCIATED PRESS
MANILA

Southeast Asian leaders said a 1982 UN oceans treaty should be the basis of sovereign rights and entitlements in the South China Sea, in one of their strongest remarks opposing China's claim to virtually the entire disputed waters on historical grounds.

The leaders of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations took the position in a statement issued by Vietnam on Saturday on behalf of the 10-nation bloc. ASEAN leaders held their annual summit by video on Friday, with the COVID-19 pandemic and the long-raging territorial disputes high on the agenda. "We reaffirmed that



Vietnamese Prime Minister Nguyen Xuan Phuc speaking at the summit on Friday. ■ AP

the 1982 UNCLOS is the basis for determining maritime entitlements, sovereign rights, jurisdiction and legitimate interests over maritime zones," the ASEAN statement said.

The leaders were referring to the United Nations Convention on the Law of

the Sea, a 1982 international agreement that defines the rights of nations to the world's oceans.

Three Southeast Asian diplomats told that it marked a significant strengthening of the regional bloc's assertion of the rule of law in a disputed region that has long been regarded as an Asian flashpoint. While it has criticised aggressive behaviour in the disputed waters, ASEAN has never castigated China by name in its post-summit communiques.

As ASEAN's leader this year, Vietnam oversaw the drafting of the "chairman's statement". Vietnam has been one of the most vocal critics of China's actions in the disputed waters.

The leaders were referring to the United Nations Convention on the Law of

U.S. imposes visa curbs on Chinese officials

However, it does not name them

REUTERS
WASHINGTON/HONG KONG

U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said on Friday Washington was imposing visa restrictions on Chinese officials responsible for restricting freedoms in Hong Kong, but he did not name any of those targeted. The move comes ahead of a three-day meeting of China's Parliament from Sunday expected to enact new national security legislation for Hong Kong that has alarmed foreign governments and democracy activists.

The U.S. visa restrictions apply to "current and former" Chinese Communist Party officials "believed to be responsible for, or complicit in, undermining Hong Kong's high degree of autonomy," Mr. Pompeo said, without naming them.

Also, on Saturday, the Hong Kong police department on Saturday denied permission for an annual march in the former British colony on July 1 to mark the anniversary of the city's 1997 return to China, the organiser and the police said in separate statements.



A protest outside the U.S. Consulate in Hong Kong on Friday. ■ AFP

on its site, even as Twitter has attached fact checks and warnings to the same content on its service.

Mark Zuckerberg, Facebook's chief executive, has said that he believes in supporting free speech and that posts from political leaders should not be policed because they are in the public's interests to view and read. But critics have said Mr. Zuckerberg is simply allowing inaccurate or inflammatory posts from Mr. Trump to remain unaltered.

Facebook said it would attach labels to all posts across its network that discuss the subject of voting, in a move intended to hamper any disenfranchisement of voters in the November election. The labels will direct users to accurate voting information, the company said.

ELSEWHERE

Facebook to add labels to contextualise some posts

This comes after the company faced pull-out by advertisers over its hate speech policies

MIKE ISAAC
SHEERA FRENKEL
SAN FRANCISCO

Facebook rolled out measures on Friday to add more context to problematic political posts on its site, as the social network grappled with a growing outcry from some of its largest advertisers over the issue of hateful speech.

Facebook said it would attach labels to all posts across its network that discuss the subject of voting, in a move intended to hamper any disenfranchisement of voters in the November election. The labels will direct users to accurate voting information, the company said.

Widening category

In addition, Facebook said it would expand its policies around hate speech and prohibit a wider category of hateful language in ads on the site. A post that violates Facebook's rules but is from



The Facebook campus in Menlo Park, California, U.S. ■ NYT

an important political figure, such as President Donald Trump, will get a label saying it was deemed "newsworthy" enough to remain, the company said. Facebook has been trying to deal with its role in spreading disinformation and divisive content. The Silicon Valley company has been under fire for allowing inaccurate or inflammatory posts from Mr. Trump to remain unaltered.

on its site, even as Twitter has attached fact checks and warnings to the same content on its service.

Mark Zuckerberg, Facebook's chief executive, has

said that he believes in supporting free speech and that posts from political leaders should not be policed because they are in the public's interests to view and read. But critics have said Mr. Zuckerberg is simply allowing inaccurate or inflammatory posts from Mr. Trump to remain unaltered.

Facebook has faced increasing opposition to its position on hateful speech from one of its most important constituents: advertisers, which generate the bulk of its \$70.7 billion in annual revenue. Brands like Eddie Bauer, Ben & Jerry's and Magnolia Pictures have announced that they will cease buying advertising on Facebook until it reconsiders its stance.

On Friday, more companies said they would pull back from advertising on Facebook because of hateful speech remaining on the site. They included Unilever, the British-Dutch maker of consumer goods and one of Facebook's largest advertisers; Coca-Cola, which is another big advertiser on social media; and Levi Strauss,

the maker of Levi's and Dockers clothing. On Thursday, Verizon also said it was pausing its advertising on Facebook.

Facebook has also been grappling with an internal uproar over Mr. Trump's inflammatory posts. Employees staged a virtual walkout this month in protest of Mr. Zuckerberg's position of allowing the posts to remain. On Friday, Mr. Zuckerberg said in a livestreamed address to his employees, "I'm committed to making sure Facebook remains a place where people can use their voice to discuss important issues, because I believe we can make more progress when we hear each other."

For posts on voting, the company said it would attach links to what Facebook calls its "voter information center," an initiative it has pushed in recent weeks to provide users with more data on elections. ■ NY TIMES

'U.K. must accept weaker economic ties with EU'

Merkel hardens tone on future relations

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
FRANKFURT AM MAIN

Britain will have to "accept the consequences" of having weaker economic ties with the European Union (EU) because of Brexit, German Chancellor Angela Merkel said on Saturday. Ms. Merkel hardened the tone from Berlin as Germany and its EU partners strive to draw up an agreement on future relations between Brussels and London after Britain's departure.

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson wants to be able to define the scope of those relations but "thereafter he will have to face the consequences – that is, an economy less tightly linked" with its neighbours, Ms. Merkel said in an interview with the *Euro* newspaper alliance.

After leaving the EU, Britain and Brussels have been

'TikTok grandma' to work for Biden

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
NEW YORK

An American woman who helped turn a Donald Trump rally into a fiasco has been hired by a grassroots organisation campaigning for the election of presidential challenger Joe Biden. Mary Jo Laupp has been dubbed "TikTok grandma" since earning fame for her impassioned social media call for opponents of Mr. Trump to book out his campaign appearance in Tulsa, Oklahoma.

The result was a poorly-attended speech in a stadium filled to less than a third of its capacity.

The Iowa resident works in the music department of a high school and earlier participated in the unsuccessful Democratic campaign of Pete Buttigieg, a former Indiana Mayor.

Confederate general Albert Pike, while others this week were unsuccessful in their attack on a statue of President Andrew Jackson, a slave owner, near the White House.

Those who have pulled down or defaced monuments "seek nothing more than to destroy anything that honours our past and to erase from the public mind any suggestion that our past may be worth honoring," the White House said.

The order calls for "enforcement of laws that carry firm penalties of incarceration for those found guilty of desecrating public monuments" – without announcing any new regulations.

U.S. court orders release of 124 migrant children from detention

2 of the 3 prisons have confirmed COVID-19 cases: Judge

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
LOS ANGELES

A court in Los Angeles has ordered the release of more than 100 children held in U.S. family immigration detention because of the risk they could catch COVID-19 in the facilities.

Two of the country's three family detention centres have confirmed cases of the infection, district judge Dolly Gee said in her Friday ruling.

The facilities risked spilling into a massive health crisis despite efforts by the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agency to lower the number of migrants in its custody, she added. "The (Family Residential Centres) are 'on fire' and there is no more time for half measures," Judge Gee

down on illegal migration, and has pressured Mexico into deploying troops along its southern border to stop the migrants.

A Trump administration "zero tolerance" policy launched in 2018 saw thousands of children separated from their parents at the border, a tactic apparently meant to frighten the families, before the government backed down.

Last week the U.S. Supreme Court rejected the Trump administration's cancellation of a programme protecting 7,000 "Dreamers" – undocumented migrants brought to the United States as children.

President Donald Trump campaigned on cracking

Trump signs order to protect monuments

It calls for strict penalties for those found guilty of desecrating such places



Asylum seeker children at a shelter in Tijuana, near the U.S.-Mexico border. ■ AFP

"I just had the privilege of signing a very strong Executive Order protecting American Monuments, Memorials, and Statues – and combating recent Criminal Violence,"

tweeted Mr. Trump. "Long prison terms for these lawless acts against our Great Country!"

In Washington, protesters have pulled down a statue of

U.S. records 45,242 new cases

Texas, Florida close bars, reimpose curbs after record surge

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
REUTERS

America's top infectious diseases expert has warned the United States is facing a "serious problem" from a resurgent COVID-19 as the illness puts the brakes on reopening two of the country's largest states. Texas and Florida closed bars and reimposed other curbs on Friday as the number of infections in the U.S. hit a single-day record with increases in 16 states, mostly in the south and west.

The United States recorded 45,242 new cases of COVID-19 on Friday, according to a Reuters tally, bringing the total number of Americans who have tested positive to at least 2.48 million.

The contagion also continued its march through Latin America, where Brazil re-



A parking lot in Los Angeles, California, near a COVID-19 testing centre. ■ AFP

corded another 1,140 deaths and Argentina toughened a lockdown in the capital Buenos Aires.

Reopening EU border

In Europe countries wrangled over plans to partially reopen the EU border.

"We are facing a serious problem in certain areas," leading U.S. immunologist Anthony Fauci said at the first briefing in two months by the White House's Co-

oronavirus Task Force. "The only way we're going to end it is by ending it together," he said of the outbreak.

European diplomats said they planned to exclude the U.S. from travel to the continent when the bloc's external frontier reopens on July 1. EU envoys have argued on drawing up criteria and sources said a meeting on Friday ended with a tentative list of about 18 countries free to travel. With nations around the world at different stages on the outbreak curve, agreeing on "travel corridors" has proved tricky.

The WHO on Friday called for another \$27.9 billion in donations to speed up the development and production of tests, vaccines and other treatments, part of its ACT accelerator plan to pool resources.

'U.K. must accept weaker economic ties with EU'

Merkel hardens tone on future relations

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

FRANKFURT AM MAIN

BRITAIN

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British Prime Minister Boris Johnson wants to be able to define the scope of those relations but "thereafter he will have to face the consequences – that is, an economy less tightly linked" with its neighbours, Ms. Merkel said in an interview with the *Euro* newspaper alliance.

After leaving the EU, Britain and Brussels have been

working on establishing new trade links to come into force once a post-exit transition period expires at year's end. Germany is meanwhile to take over the EU's rotating presidency for six months from July 1. "We must get away from the idea that it is we who define

Ashok Leyland to focus on exports, e-buses

Commercial vehicle major to unveil next generation light truck platform Phoenix in September

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

CHENNAI

Ashok Leyland Ltd. (ALL), the Hindu Group's flagship company, will give more thrust to exports and electric buses, expanding its light commercial vehicle (LCV) portfolio and introducing its next generation light truck platform Phoenix in September, a top official said.

"We have an unshakable vision of being one among the top global commercial vehicle players through differentiated products and solutions," said Vipin Sondhi, MD and CEO. "That vision remains unchanged. Therefore, we have to expand beyond the geographies of the country. We have a presence in the Middle East and some parts of Africa. We are going to intensify it," Mr. Sondhi added.

"Over a five-year period, international operations will be a focus area. This, we will enable through left-hand drive (LHD) and right-hand drive (RHD). Phoenix is



Ashok Leyland's electric buses are plying in Chennai and Ahmedabad, said Vipin Sondhi. ■ M. KARUNAKARAN

both. The AVTR, a modular truck platform, is also design-protected to do LHD as well. We are preparing ourselves to gear up for an empathetic assessment of international operations. We had virtual meetings with major dealerships in SAARC, Middle East and African countries. We will strengthen our operations as we go," Mr. Sondhi said.

On the electric bus, he said it was plying in Ahmedabad and Chennai. ALL would keep the e-bus programme

alive by working on technologies. Over a five-year period, it would bolster its expansion into international markets.

While predicting that the forthcoming quarters would augur well for ALL, he said: "We have the right products and an engaged and motivated dealership network with a strong supplier base. What we have to ensure is that we come out strongly in quarter four so that we spring forward in FY22."

Mr. Sondhi expects demand for trucks to rise once the government relaxes lockdown restrictions.

Private family matter

Asked about the litigation between the Hinduja brothers and its potential impact on ALL's operations, he said: "As far as businesses are concerned, these are managed professionally. At Ashok Leyland, we have seven independent directors on our board. The matter is a private family matter, which is

being addressed by the family."

On the import of components or spares from China, he said ALL was not really dependent on China.

Gopal Mahadevan, chief financial officer, said that while the company had planned a capital expenditure of ₹1,317 crore last year, actual spending was scaled down to ₹1,227 crore.

During the current fiscal, ALL had almost completed its major capital expenditure, which included the Phoenix and BS VI initiatives. Some amount would be invested in residual capacity this year. The exact numbers would be divulged in the second quarter, Mr. Mahadevan said.

ALL also expects more defence business from the government, he added.

Mr. Mahadevan said that ALL had net debt of ₹2,050 crore as of March 31, 2020. The company had no plans for raising fresh capital, the CFO added.



Nandan Nilekani

of employee experience "to accelerate recovery and resilience".

The Board recommended a final dividend of ₹9.5 per share, Mr. Nilekani said.

Some negative impact

In the near term, Infosys expects "some overall negative impact" from the disruptions caused by the pandemic, CEO and MD Salil Parekh told shareholders. "But in the medium to long term, we see opportunities for clients as they fast-track their digital transformation journey and consolidation of vendors."

He also allayed fears over the Trump administration's visa curbs. "We have over 60% of our employees who are independent of any visa situation," Mr. Parekh said.

The IT firm said that it had enabled 93% of its more than 2.4 lakh employees, across 46 countries, to work from home in just a few weeks.

Infosys's resilience will help it tide over pandemic: Nilekani

No big hit as 60% of U.S. workforce visa-independent: CEO

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

BENGALURU

Infosys is confident that the significant investments made to make the company more resilient and agile would help it overcome the fallout from the global economic crisis triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic, Chairman Nandan Nilekani told shareholders on Saturday.

"These investments have positioned us very well and this is demonstrated in the way we are responding to the COVID-19 pandemic. Combining the scale, brand, and relationships of a large company with the speed, responsiveness, and agility of a start-up, we are confident of tiding through this global crisis," asserted Mr. Nilekani.

During the current fiscal, ALL had almost completed its major capital expenditure, which included the Phoenix and BS VI initiatives. Some amount would be invested in residual capacity this year. The exact numbers would be divulged in the second quarter, Mr. Mahadevan said.

ALL also expects more defence business from the government, he added.

"We have already pivoted our resources to the new needs of our clients and strengthened our expertise in cloud, workplace transformation and smart auto-

More than 90% of sellers back: Flipkart

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI

Walmart-owned Flipkart on Saturday said it has enabled more than 90% of its sellers to resume business on the platform since April. The e-commerce major noted that it had seen a 125% increase in new sellers signing up on the platform in comparison to its existing seller base for a period of April-June 2020.

"The impact of the pandemic has urged businesses across the country to rethink their usual mode of operating and identify newer ways to function. Local MSMEs across the nation have realised the true value of e-commerce that enables them to stay connected with millions of customers," Flipkart said in a statement.

U.P., Maharashtra, West Bengal and Tamil Nadu were the top states where local MSMEs had shown maximum interest in taking their businesses online.

Azim Premji, wife move SC over 'mischievous' complaint

Plaint alleges corruption in 3 firms' merger with Group entity



Azim Premji

the companies were interlocked after 1980.

Mr. Premji said the three companies were united in accordance with the Companies Act.

The High Court had sanctioned the Scheme of Amalgamation after all procedures were followed, including notice to the Regional Director of the Ministry of Corporate Affairs and the Official Liquidator. Neither the trial court nor the High Court conducted any inquiry or asked for the Scheme of Amalgamation to be placed on record.

The petition, filed through advocate Mahesh Agarwal, said Napean, Regal and Vidya are private companies and have been promoted, owned and controlled by the Azim Premji Group since their inception in 1974. It submitted that Hasham, the company with which the three were merged in 2015, is also part of the Azim Premji Group.

"The only assets of each of these companies are the shares held in other two

companies and the shareholding in Wipro Ltd. (an Azim Premji Group company) – even these assets were transferred by the Azim Premji Group to the company from time to time. No other investment has been made by any other third person in the said companies," the petitioners said.

The petitioners were directors in the three companies until the date of merger. The control and management of Napean, Regal and Vidya remained with Mr. Premji, though the shares of

the companies were interlocked after 1980.

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The "malafide" criminal complaints filed by India Awake for Transparency in 2017 said the three companies "belonged to nobody and therefore belonged to the government". Mr. Premji said the accusation was mischievous.

Mr. Premji said the complaints were motivated by personal vendetta.

Carlyle to buy 20% Piramal Pharma stake

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

MUMBAI

The Carlyle Group's CA Clover Intermediate II Investments has agreed to buy a 20% stake in Piramal Pharma Ltd., a wholly owned subsidiary of Piramal Enterprises Ltd. (PEL), for \$490 million (₹3,700 crore).

Based on milestone achievements, Piramal Pharma will be paid an additional \$70 million. The transaction is expected to close in 2020.

The transaction values PEL's pharma business at an enterprise value of \$2,775 million with an upside component of up to \$360 million depending on the company's FY21 performance.

The pharma business would be hived off as a separate company and listed.

The funds infusion would provide a "war chest" for the next phase of strategy, PEL Chairman Ajay Piramal said.

IRDAI frames COVID-19 health cover norms

Sets July 10 for insurers to unveil policy

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

HYDERABAD

A standard, indemnity-based health insurance cover for COVID-19 or a policy reimbursing the cost of the treatment, up to the sum insured, including on home-care and AYUSH treatment, will be offered by all health insurers on or before July 10. The product, to be called Corona Kavach Policy, followed by the name of the insurance company, will be an individual health policy, with an option to cover the family members. The minimum sum insured will be ₹50,000 and the maximum limit ₹5 lakh.

Healthcare workers will get 5% discount on the premium. The tenure will be three-and-a-half months, six-and-a-half months, and nine-and-a-half months, including the waiting period. The mode of premium payment is single and no geographic location/zone-

based pricing is allowed. The cost of treatment towards any co-morbid condition, including pre-existing comorbid conditions, along with the treatment for COVID-19, will have to be covered by the policy, according to IRDAI.

Under the base cover, COVID-19 hospitalisation expenses will be covered, including PPE kit. Expenses on hospitalisation for a minimum of 24 hours as also those related to ICU/ICCU expenses will be admissible. IRDAI also urged all insurers, including life insurers, to offer by July 10, an individual COVID-19-specific standard benefit-based health policy under which a lump-sum benefit equal to 100% of the sum insured will be payable on "positive diagnosis of COVID, requiring hospitalisation for a minimum continuous period of 72 hours." On payment of 100% sum insured, the policy will get terminated.

"On a review, it has now been decided to extend this enhanced limit till September 30, 2020," the RBI said in a circular.

RBI extends borrowing time for banks

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

MUMBAI

Amid the ongoing economic woes created by the coronavirus pandemic, the RBI has decided to extend the enhanced borrowing facility provided to banks to meet liquidity shortages, till September 30.

The RBI, as a temporary measure, had increased the borrowing limit of scheduled banks under the marginal standing facility (MSF) scheme from 2% to 3% of their Net Demand and Time Liabilities (NDTL) with effect from March 27, 2020. Under the MSF, banks can borrow overnight funds at their discretion by dipping into the Statutory Liquidity Ratio (SLR). This relaxation, which was granted till June 30, 2020, has now been extended till September 30.

"On a review, it has now been decided to extend this enhanced limit till September 30, 2020," the RBI said in a circular.

naturally led to deferment plans as well as investments. We have a certain revision of strategies that we plan to put into action slowly and steadily to regain the momentum we are anticipating for our brand in this year, as much as possible.

Any pay cuts or layoffs in the offing?

Every business has its own cyclical ups and down and we are proud to sail through; the situation is very tricky and beyond anyone's control at this moment in time. Our team is our backbone and we have always supported them whatever may be the scenario and thus things like layoffs have not been on the cards. However, we have revised the number of working hours of our staff corresponding to the work load. As that picks up in line with the governmental policies, things will start coming back to normal.

How about your expansion plans?

Over the years, Woodland has been consistent in steadily expanding its footprint in the domestic as well as international markets though things suddenly changed with COVID-19. While lockdown is being re-

lived and a few markets are opening, we intend to gain momentum in due course. This year will be more to consolidate and to regain momentum before we realign our expansion plans.

What has been the revenue for FY20 and what is expected in FY21?

We closed FY20 with almost ₹1,300 crore against ₹1,250 crore for FY19 when all of a sudden COVID-19 struck, halting the entire world. We are confident that the businesses will regain momentum in the next 2-3 months (of course depending on how early we are able to control/eradicate COVID-19) and we can probably expect a growth journey of 10-15%. About 60% of FY19's turnover came from footwear and the remaining from apparel and accessories.

How long do you expect it will take for the market to rebound?

It is difficult to clearly state this. As sentiments become more positive, we are all expecting it to regain momentum soon. As you already know, online sales have begun and certain retail outlets have started operations, so hopefully soon we should start seeing a good response amid the new normal era.

INTERVIEW | HARKIRAT SINGH

'Online is the future though India is still a touch-and-feel market'

With COVID-19, markets will be less crowded, says Aero Club's MD

N. ANAND

CHENNAI

Tube Investments of India Ltd., the flagship company of Murugappa Group, is planning to reduce its dependency on the auto sector as it affects topline growth due to its cyclical nature, said a top executive.

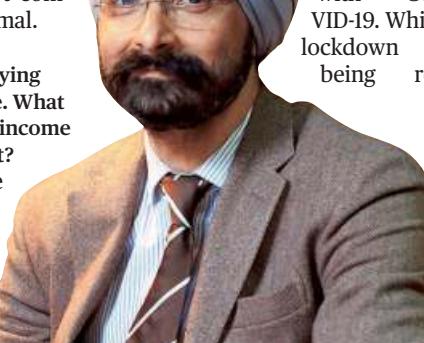
"Over a three-to-five-year time-frame, there is a lot of opportunity for TII in the present mix of business and some of the businesses that we intend to get TII into in the future," managing director A. Vellayan Subbiah said. "Growth will have to come from both organic and potentially inorganic means over that time period," he added.

In a communication to shareholders, he said: "We are focusing on the set of businesses that should hopefully reduce our dependence on the auto sector as its cyclical nature affects performance year-to-year in terms of topline growth," he added.

TII is a leading manufacturer of products for major industries such as automotive, railway, construction, mining and agriculture. Mr. Subbiah said TII would focus on three streams of opportunities – growth in existing product portfolio driven by new opportunities in scooters and the shift to BS-VI norms, innovative product lines for new markets, and growth from large diameter tubular products.

Is there a change in your capex plan for the current year?

I wouldn't necessarily call it a 'change'; it is more of a reallocation. Needless to say, owing to the pandemic, a lot of operations worldwide were put on hold and that



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SNAPSHOTS



Dolphin peers

Dolphins are known to use a technique called shelling to capture prey. In this process, they trap small fish into empty shells. A new study published in *Current Biology* shows that they learn such tool-use from their peers - members of their own generation - and not just from their mothers as was believed earlier. The finding has implications for how dolphins adapt to changing environments.



Warm beginning

A new study published in *Nature Geoscience* suggests that dwarf planet Pluto and other large objects in the Kuiper belt may have started off with liquid oceans which slowly froze over time. The plate tectonics of Pluto and hence its surface features would be different if it initially had a "cold start" or a "hot start". Images of Pluto's surface will help decide between these scenarios.

Novel coronavirus infection might trigger type-1 diabetes

In type-1 diabetes, the body's immune system destroys the beta cells that produce insulin

R. PRASAD

Diabetes poses one of the key risk factors for developing severe COVID-19, and chances of dying are elevated in people with diabetes. Now, there is growing evidence that novel coronavirus might actually be triggering diabetes in some people who have so far remained free of it. These patients typically develop type-1 diabetes. The virus seems to be causing diabetes spontaneously in people.

These patients typically develop type-1 diabetes, which is caused when the body's immune system plays rogue and begins to attack and destroy the beta cells, which produce the hormone insulin in the pancreas. With the destruction of beta cells, the amount of insulin produced is reduced, and hence, the ability of the body to control blood sugar is compromised leading to type-1 diabetes.

The 2002 SARS coronavirus, too, caused acute-onset diabetes in patients. Like the 2002 SARS coronavirus, the SARS-CoV-2 virus, too, binds to ACE2 receptors that are found on many organs involved in controlling blood sugar, including the liver and pancreatic beta cells, and subsequently infects the cells in the organs.

Two-way relationship

In a letter published in *The New England Journal of Medicine*, the researchers write: "There is a bidirectional relationship between COVID-19



Growing evidence: The novel coronavirus might actually be triggering diabetes in some people who have so far remained free of it. ■ GETTY IMAGES

and diabetes. On the one hand, diabetes is associated with an increased risk of severe COVID-19. On the other hand, new-onset diabetes and severe metabolic complications of preexisting diabetes... have been observed in patients with COVID-19."

Permanent or transient

However, more evidence is needed to conclusively prove that COVID-19 indeed causes type-1 diabetes. It is also not clear if the acute-onset diabetes in COVID-19 patients will be permanent or transient. The is no clarity whether people who are borderline type-2 develop the disease.

The COVID-19 patients who develop

diabetes have extremely high levels of blood sugar and ketones. When there is insufficient insulin produced, breaking down the sugar present in the blood is compromised leading to high levels of sugar. At the same time, the body begins to turn to alternative sources of fuel, which in this case are ketones. A study found 42 of 658 patients presented with ketosis on admission. Patients with ketosis were younger (median age 47). Ketosis increased the length of hospital stay and mortality, the researchers found.

Using human pluripotent stem cells, researchers grew miniature liver and pancreas and found that both the organs were permissive to SARS-CoV-2

infection. In particular, they found the pancreatic beta cells were infected by coronavirus. ACE2 is expressed in human adult alpha and beta cells. While the beta cells produce insulin which reduces the sugar level in the blood, the alpha cells produce glucagon, which increases the blood sugar. A fine balance between the two helps maintain the blood sugar level.

Tested in mice

The researchers transplanted the miniature pancreatic endocrine cells produced using human stem cells into mice. Two months later, they examined the xenografted pancreas and found ACE2 receptors on beta and alpha cells. When the mice were infected with coronavirus, they found the beta cells were infected by the virus. Thus the virus is capable of damaging the cells that control blood sugar thus triggering acute-onset of type-1 diabetes.

According to *Nature News*, a global database to collect information on people with COVID-19 and high blood-sugar levels who previously do not have a history of elevated blood sugar levels has been initiated. "The researchers hope to use the cases to understand whether SARS-CoV-2 can induce type 1 diabetes or a new form of the disease," *Nature News* says. Researchers want to use the database to understand if the acute-onset diabetes is permanent and people who are borderline type-2 develop the disease.



Digital resource: A digital chest x-ray could be deployed along with AI-based tools for both TB and COVID-19 detection. ■ GETTY IMAGES

TB during COVID-19

Public TB services must be resumed to find missed patients

SHIBU VIJAYAN & MADHUKAR PAI

India has the highest burden of tuberculosis (TB) in the world. Even as the government was pushing to end TB by 2025, the COVID-19 pandemic has caused a massive disruption in TB services. TB case notifications across India have dropped by over 50% since March, with an estimated 3,00,000 missed case notifications (until May 30). This is worrisome, since undiagnosed TB can worsen patient outcomes and increase transmission in the community.

As the lockdown ends, we will see a big surge in people seeking care with TB and COVID-19 symptoms. However, people will struggle to get care because the public sector is still dealing with the pandemic, while the private sector is not functioning at normal capacity or is reluctant to manage people with fever and cough.

To find the missed TB patients, we will need to find ways to rapidly resume public TB services, integrate TB and Covid-19 testing and be creative about engaging the private health sector to augment public TB services.

It is critical for the National TB Elimination Programme to resume routine TB services, which include diagnostic services, such as microscopy and rapid molecular testing, as well as drug-susceptibility testing.

Dual testing

Since fever and cough are symptoms of both TB and COVID-19, simultaneous screening and testing can be encouraged. Thankfully, India has access to three existing technologies that permit dual testing for both infections.

The first is the digital chest x-ray (CXR), which could be deployed along with artificial intelligence (AI) based tools for both TB and COVID-19. AI-based algorithms are now available that obviate the need for trained radiologists to read the x-rays. If a CXR is suggestive for TB on the AI algorithm, then a confirmatory test such as GeneXpert can be done to confirm TB and also detect drug-resistance. One such AI-enabled screening tool is called qXR, developed by Qure.ai, an Indian company. Several studies show accuracy that is comparable or better than human radiologists.

The screening tool, qXR, has now added the capability of detecting signs of COVID-19 from the x-rays images. It is being deployed in some sites in Mumbai with promising preliminary results. It is important to validate the use of qXR for simultaneous screening for both diseases for wider use.

Based on an estimated 3,00,000 missed cases during the national lockdown, around 10,50,000 CXR (assuming 70% of these are pulmonary TB cases and 5 CXRs are needed to detect one patient with pulmonary TB) will be required for detecting TB cases. This is an overwhelming figure for any health system especially during a pandemic. However, a dynamic partnership with 80,000 licensed diagnostic radiology facilities will help combat this.

CXR screening will require confirmatory testing for both diseases, and molecular testing is the most accurate and rapid option. There are two technologies already in use in India that could be leveraged for simultaneous testing of sputum samples for both infections.

One is called GeneXpert. India has over 1,100 of these systems in use. A large number of private labs, too, have this technology. On this platform, TB can be detected using a cartridge called Xpert MTB/RIF and COVID-19 by using the Xpress SARS-CoV2 cartridge.

The second molecular platform is called TrueLab, developed by an Indian company - Molbio Diagnostics. This technology is already being used in some states and in private labs to test for TB using a chip called Truenat MTB. Molbio now has a chip called Truenat Beta CoV that can be used for COVID-19. This chip, along with Xpress SARS-CoV2 cartridge, has been approved by ICMR for emergency use for COVID-19 testing.

Typically, TB testing requires sputum sample. Now, SARS-CoV-2 testing is done using nasopharyngeal swabs, but there is no reason why sputum samples cannot be used, since sputum is generated deeper in the lungs. However, it is important to validate both test molecular platforms for simultaneous testing using the same sputum sample.

All hands on the deck

To detect the missed thousands of TB patients, we need to leverage our best technologies and find ways to integrate testing for both respiratory infections. We need to integrate our public and private health sectors. India needs all hands on the deck, to battle an existing as well as a new killer disease.

With most TB patients seeking diagnosis and treatment in the private sector, the integration of the private sector in the TB care cascade has shown good results. This is evident in the success of the Private Provider Interface Agency (PPIA) model launched in Mumbai by the Government of India, WHO and PATH and the subsequent large scale, pan-India version of it called the JEET (Joint Effort for Elimination of Tuberculosis) project. We need to use the lessons from public-private partnerships in TB to address the growing challenge of providing adequate care for COVID-19.

Shibu Vijayan is a physician and Global TB Technical Director at PATH, Mumbai, India.

Madhukar Pai is a physician and Director of the McGill International TB Centre, Montreal, Canada.

Black hole merges with unusual compact object

This could be the lightest black hole or heaviest neutron star

SHUBASHREE DESIKAN

The LIGO Scientific and VIRGO Collaborations (LSC) have detected an unusual compact object whose mass falls in between that of a typical black hole and a neutron star. The absence of accompanying electromagnetic signatures such as flashes of light are compatible with both. This puzzling event was registered by the LIGO and VIRGO detectors on August 14, 2019. The work has been published in *The Astrophysical Journal Letters*.

Since the first detection of gravitational wave signals emerging from the coalescing of binary black holes in 2015, the LIGO and VIRGO detectors have detected mergers of pairs of black holes, pairs of neutron stars and black-hole-neutron star duo. From this experience and from the predictions of theory, the present merger detected on August 14, 2019, only posed a puzzle.

Inference from signal

Looking at the signal waveform, it appeared that the primary object in this merger had a mass of about 23.2 times that of the Sun and the smaller, secondary object had a mass of about 2.6 times the solar mass. The pair joined to form a large black hole of mass 25.6 times the



Puzzling merger: The mass of the primary was about 23.2 solar mass and the secondary was about 2.6 solar mass. ■ ALEX ANDRIS

Sun's mass, having radiated away 0.2 solar masses.

This is unusual on many counts. For one thing, the mass ratio was approximately 1:9. This is the largest disparity in masses that has been observed till now between members of the coalescing pair. While at 23.2 solar masses, the primary is clearly a black hole, the calculated mass of the secondary object puts it in a dubious spot. It is too light to be a black hole and too heavy to be a neutron star, as far as observations go.

Theoretically, both the maximum mass of neutron star and minimum mass of a black hole will depend on the complex physics at the core of a neutron star, details of supernova explosion a star undergoes at the end of its stellar evolution and so on," says K. G. Arun from

Topic of discussion

There is not much information about the lighter object except for the mass. "Due to the mass asymmetry, it becomes very difficult to detect any signatures of neutron star 'tides' which could have given us insights about the star. So one may be able to invoke exotic possibilities," says Prof. Arun. "It is going to be a very active topic of discussion in the astrophysics community in the coming days," he adds.

When the Indian Ocean's ancient climate patterns return

Formations like the El Niño of the Pacific Ocean could emerge

ASWATHI PACHA

About 19,000-21,000 years ago, ice-sheets covered North America and Eurasia, and sea-levels were much lower. This period, the peak of ice age conditions, is called the Last Glacial Maximum. Researchers analysed simulations of this past climate and predicted that the ongoing climate change could reawaken an ancient climate pattern of the Indian Ocean.

They find that this could be similar to the El Niño phenomenon of the Pacific Ocean bringing more frequent and devastating floods and drought to several densely populated countries around the Indian Ocean region. If current warming trends continue, this new Indian Ocean El Niño could emerge as early as 2050. The results were published in *Science Advances*.

Study on shells

By studying microscopic zooplankton called foraminifera, the team had published a paper in 2019 which first found evidence from the past of an Indian Ocean El Niño. Foraminifera build a calcium carbonate shell, and studying these can tell us about the properties of the water. The team measured multiple individual shells of foraminifera from ocean sediment cores and reconstructed the sea

surface temperature conditions of the past. "In the previous paper, we argued for the existence of an 'Indian Ocean El Niño' during the Last Glacial Maximum. We suggest that the Indian Ocean has the capacity to harbour much larger climate variability than observed during the last few decades or a century," writes co-author Kaustubh Thirumalai, from the Department of Geosciences at the University of Arizona in an email to *The Hindu*. "In this paper, we argue that this climate variability in the Indian Ocean can arise under increased greenhouse gas forcing of global climate change."

Lessons to learn

He explains that there are many lessons to be learnt from this cooler period about our warmer future, "even though the Last Glacial Maximum consisted of vastly different conditions compared to where the world is headed."

Prof. Thirumalai adds: "As it is, under present-day conditions, changes in the Indian Ocean Dipole and the El Niño-Southern Oscillation strongly affect Indian Monsoon variability from year to year. If the hypothesised 'equatorial mode' emerges in the near future, it will pose another source of uncertainty in rainfall prediction and will likely amplify swings in monsoon rainfall."

The paper adds that it could bring more frequent droughts to East Africa and southern India and increased rainfall over Indonesia. The team warns that further work is needed to accurately assess this new mode, particularly under lower-emission scenarios and taking into account past climatic states other than the Last Glacial Maximum.

ten to the journal demanding the paper to be retracted.

The study had supposedly analysed the effects of mitigation measures in Wuhan, Italy and New York City. Besides a few factually wrong data and assumptions used to support their work, the paper has "serious methodological errors". From the fact that Italy made face-mask compulsory on April 6 and New York City on April 17, the authors conclude that it reduced the number of cases by over 78,000 between April 6 and May 9 in Italy and over 66,000 in New York City from April 17 to May 9.

Call for retraction

The scientists calling for the retraction say that the authors have not factored in the "lag between changes in disease transmission and changes in reported case counts". With the incubation period lasting



Global warming: If current trends continue, the new Indian Ocean El Niño could emerge as early as 2050, the study says. ■

To wear or not to wear a mask: a public health message disaster

R. PRASAD

If there is a single message delivered by leading institutions that can be considered as a disaster in public health messaging especially during a pandemic, then it is the advice to people not to wear a face mask. Especially during a pandemic, any non-pharmaceutical measure that cuts the transmission risk even by only a small percentage should have still been encouraged.

If acute shortage of masks for healthcare workers was the reason why the U.S. Surgeon General did not want the public to use a mask, the lack of community spread in the U.S. prompted the Centre for Disease Control (CDC) to discourage people from wearing it. For the World Health Organization, it was the lack of scientific evidence that masks can prevent coronavirus

spread which prompted it to dissuade people from wearing a mask. Messages urging people not to wear a mask started in early February when the CDC Director Robert R. Redfield in a tweet on February 5 said: "CDC does not currently recommend the use of face-masks to help prevent novel coronavirus. 2019nCoV is not spreading in communities in the US..."

In its interim guidelines, the WHO had on January 29 stated that in community settings, a "medical mask is not required by individuals without respiratory symptoms as no evidence is available on its usefulness to protect non-sick persons".

In the guidelines updated on April 6, the WHO continued to discourage people from wearing a face mask. It was only as recently as June 5 that the WHO reversed its position saying masks protect individuals from coronavirus infection. Now, 35 scientists have written

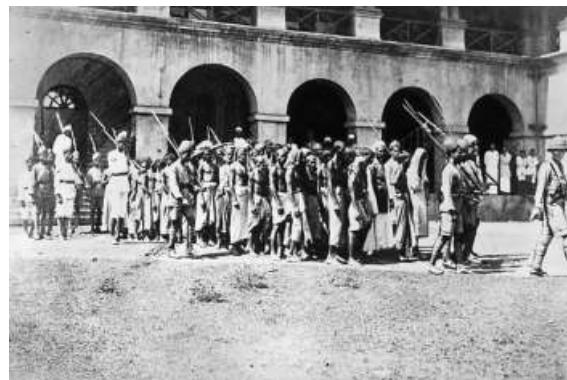
an open letter to the journal demanding the paper to be retracted. The scientists calling for the retraction say that the authors have not factored in the "lag between changes in disease transmission and changes in reported case counts". With the incubation period lasting



Vital: Measures to cut the spread even minimally should have been encouraged. ■ GETTY IMAGES

for five-seven days, and at times up to 14 days, and another five to 10 days for symptoms to show up and testing to be carried out, the effect of mask in reducing the cases can be discerned only after a couple of weeks, thus completely weakening the study results.

The authors have wrongly used the dates of policy implementation as a proxy for actual mask use. Also, the policy mandating mask use was accompanied by other changes across the society, thus making it extremely difficult to tease out the effect of mask alone in reducing cases. The scientists also say only simple linear regression models have been used and no "measures of statistical uncertainty are measured or presented". This becomes particularly egregious as the analysis is based on only three regions.



A picture by Topical Press Agency/Getty Images, captioned September 26, 1925: "Moplah prisoners go to trial at Calicut on the Malabar Coast in India's south-western state of Kerala, charged with agitation against British rule in India." ■ GETTY IMAGES/WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

1921 and the Malabar Rebellion

Why is there a controversy in Kerala over a new film project on the protagonist of an uprising against the British?

MOHAMED NAZEEF

The story so far: Malayalam film director Aashiq Abu, on June 22, announced a new film project, 'Varyamkunnam', on Varyamkunnam Kunhamed Haji, the main protagonist of the Malabar Rebellion of 1921 who was executed by the British. Soon, three more directors, Ibrahim Vengara, P.T. Kunju Muhammed and Ali Akbar, announced their own films on the same historic figure. The announcement of Abu, a Left supporter, sparked a controversy, with Sangh Parivar outfits calling on actor Prithviraj Sukumaran, who is playing the role of Haji, not to accept the role in the film, 'Varyamkunnam'. Akbar, a supporter of the Sangh Parivar, has declared that he will portray the 'real face' of the rebellion. A historical event that occurred a century ago suddenly seems to have acquired contemporary relevance.

Why has Aashiq Abu's film project announcement led to protests?

Unlike in 1988 when the late I.V. Sasi directed '1921', a Malayalam movie based on the rebellion, political and communal polarisation in Kerala today has led to protests on social media. Amid criticism of Sangh Parivar leaders and attacks in the social media, Prithviraj wrote on his Facebook page that Haji "stood up against an empire that ruled a quarter of the world". The Hindu Aikya Vedi announced a year-long campaign to counter attempts to "glorify" Haji and other leaders who it said were responsible for atrocities against Hindus in southern parts of the erstwhile Malabar district of Kerala.

Why does the rebellion still stoke passions?

The Malabar Rebellion (also called the Mappila or Moplah Rebellion by the British) broke out in the southern taluks of Malabar in August 1921. By the time the government troops captured Haji in January 1922, the rebellion had fizzled out. It largely took the shape of guerrilla-type attacks on *janmis* (feudal landlords, who were mostly upper caste Hindus) and the police and troops.

Mappilas had been among the victims of oppressive agrarian relations protected by the British. But the political mobilisation of Muslims in the region in the aftermath of the launch of the Khilafat agitation and Gandhi's non-cooperation struggle served as an opportunity for an extremist section to invoke a religious

idiom to express their suffering, while working for a change in the oppressive system of administration. There were excesses on both sides – rebels and government troops. Incidents of murder, looting and forced conversion led many to discredit the uprising as a manifestation of religious bigotry. Moderate Khilafat leaders lamented that the rebellion had alienated the Hindu sympathy.

How did Kunhamed Haji emerge as the leader? Haji, who was one of the three most important rebel leaders, was the face of the rebellion. British officers viewed him as the "most murderous". Born in 1866 in a family with relatives involved in one of the Mappila "outbreaks" or "outrages" in the 19th century, he was familiar with the commemoration of *shaheeds* (martyrs) who fought against the tyranny of landlords and their helpers, mostly upper caste Hindus in the region. There were several such outbreaks in the region during the 19th and early 20th centuries. The main actors of the outbreaks were individuals on suicide missions. The Khilafat movement launched in 1919 provided a fresh stimulus to the grievances of Mappilas. Now their sense of local injustice was sought to be linked with the pan-Islamic sentiments created in the aftermath of the collapse of the Ottoman Empire that rendered the Ottoman caliphate irrelevant. Haji was among those in the Malabar region inspired by the zeal of the agitation. During the rebellion, he led many attacks on individuals, including Muslims, who had been loyal to the British. Some contemporary accounts, however, deny that he favoured conversion of Hindus.

What was the impact of the protests? The rebellion of Mappilas inspired by religious ideology and a conception of an alternative system of administration – a Khilafat government – dealt a blow to the nationalist movement in Malabar. The fanaticism of rebels, foregrounded by the British, fostered communal rift and enmity towards the Congress.

The exaggerated accounts of the rebellion engendered a counter campaign in other parts of the country against 'fanaticism' of Muslims. That said, the traumatic experience of the uprising also persuaded educated sections of the Muslim community in Malabar to chalk out ways to save the community from what they saw as a pathetic situation. The community's stagnation was attributed to religious orthodoxy and ignorance. The thrust of the post-rebellion Muslim reform movement in Malabar was a rigorous campaign against orthodoxy.

How will the U.S. visa ban impact India?

Why was the White House proclamation made? Will the Trump administration's move affect the IT services industry adversely?

NARAYAN LAKSHMAN

The story so far: On June 22, the White House made a proclamation halting the processing and issuance of non-immigrant work visas of several types, with the stated aim of this sweeping policy to stop foreign workers snagging American jobs, especially at a time of deep economic distress brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic. The order by the Donald Trump administration includes the H-1B visa for skilled workers, a large proportion of which goes to Indian nationals, dependents of the H-1B who are seeking the H4 visa, the H-2B visa issued to seasonal workers in the landscaping and hospitality industries, the L-1 visa for intra-company transfers and their dependents on the L-2 visa, and the J-1 visa for students on work-study summer programmes and related occupations. The important questions on this latest policy shift by Mr. Trump on immigration relate to whether it will muddy the waters of the U.S.-India relationship by adversely impacting Indian IT services exported to the U.S., and whether it has the potential to shore up the flagging U.S. economy and open up more jobs for U.S. persons, or whether it will fail in that goal and yet yield dividends in terms of campaign strategy for the U.S. presidential election on November 3, 2020.

Why is the Trump administration tightening the screws on its immigration policy?

It had earlier instituted a ban on visitors from certain Muslim-majority countries and periodically engaged in rhetoric on building a wall to stop undocumented workers from entering the U.S. from across its southern border. On April 21, the White House announced a 60-day halt in legal migration – effectively a ban on "green card" issuance. The gaping hole in this policy was the fact that the number of jobs purportedly saved from immigrants for U.S. persons was relatively small compared to the number of jobs going to foreign nationals who enter the U.S. on non-immigrant visas. Unemployment claims filed since the novel coronavirus pandemic hit the U.S. economy in March have crossed 40 million. Analysts argued that out of the million or so green cards that the U.S. issues annually, approximately only 358,000 would likely be impacted by the pause in immigration processing.

It appears that the Trump administration has been seized of this fallacy in its immigration policy in this regard, and the proclamation of June 22 is likely to have been a remedial measure to bring non-immigrant work visas under the purview of the ban. The reasoning offered by the White House is that the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has "significantly disrupted Americans' livelihoods", to the extent that the overall unemployment rate in the country nearly quadrupled between February and May 2020 to a little over 13%.

To what extent is the motive behind the visa ban political?

Despite the stated reasoning for the work visa ban, which is to protect U.S. persons from loss of livelihoods to foreign nationals, it is still unclear that tangible economic benefits of this sort can be achieved at this juncture. The reason is that the latest restrictions do not apply to visa-holders who are already within the U.S., or those who are outside the country and have already been issued valid visas. Given that the ban will remain in force until the end of the 2020 calendar year, this implies that U.S. firms or others with U.S. operations who rely on skilled foreign nationals working in the U.S. will be unable to make new hires as long as the ban stands. How many firms are likely to do any hiring at this economically depressed time? How many will do so before the end of the calendar year?



If we assume, as we safely can, that the answer is "negligibly few", then it is hard to see the Trump White House's policy as anything other than a campaign tactic.

What further policies do we expect on the visa ban?

If indeed these moves have been made keeping in mind the imperatives of the 2020 Republican presidential campaign, then that would be signalled by Mr. Trump seeking, in the months ahead, to build political capital in the name of the "America First" mantra – a foregone conclusion given his outspokenness on the subject to date.

The proclamation supplies hints on the likely tenor of this policy plank of Mr. Trump's administration. It noted that between February and April of 2020, "more than 20 million U.S. workers lost their jobs in key industries where employers are currently requesting H-1B and L workers to fill positions", noting that similar or higher numbers could be found in the other visa categories included in the proclamation.

Yet, in the first instance, it is not his Democratic rival in the election, former Vice-President Joe Biden, who will play spoiler to Mr. Trump's visa ban plans. It is the backlash from America Inc., the employers of likely millions of non-immigrant foreign workers, from Wall Street to Silicon Valley, that could bring his dreams crashing to the ground, and fast.

Google CEO Sundar Pichai wasted little time in responding to Mr. Trump's latest visa proclamation tweeting, "Immigration has contributed immensely to America's economic success, making it a global leader in tech, and also Google the company it is today.

Disappointed by today's proclamation – we'll continue to stand with immigrants and work to expand opportunity for all."

Elon Musk, SpaceX founder and Tesla CEO, and Apple CEO Tim Cook, posted similar messages on social media.

As more captains of industry chime in, the momentum of lobbying behind closed doors, and lawsuits filed by civil liberties groups, to either get the ban revoked or to

strengthen Mr. Biden's hand will likely build up fast. Corporate America, already hit by the economic downturn since the pandemic struck, can hardly afford to accept even more losses as the President undermines the base of their work force.

Will Indian corporations be hit?

The prospects of Indian IT majors building up their order books as they limp back through an economic recovery in India are, in the interim, likely to be seriously undermined by this move. What is more, this may come at a crucial inflection point for the Indian economy, even as restrictions on the movement of people and goods slowly lift after India passes its peak viral case numbers, thus leading to a knock-on effect from IT to other sectors.

India's IT services exports to the U.S., which depend significantly on the H-1B visa, have been an important constituent element of bilateral economic trade. U.S. imports of services from India were an estimated \$29.6 billion in 2018, 4.9% more than in 2017, and 134% greater than 2008 levels, according to the U.S. Trade Representative. The major services exports from India to the U.S. are in the telecommunications, computer and information services, research and development, and travel sectors.

Until now, the U.S. issued 85,000 H-1B visas annually, of which 20,000 went to graduate students and 65,000 to private sector applicants, and Indian nationals would garner approximately 70% of these. Now the Migration Policy Institute has been cited predicting that up to 219,000 workers would be blocked as a result of Mr. Trump's proclamation.

What is the Indian government saying?

Its response has so far been muted, limited to highlighting the importance of highly-skilled Indian professionals to imparting a competitive edge to the U.S. economy.

Nevertheless, that the high-skilled non-immigrant visa ban is a double-edged sword is amply demonstrated by the fact that the unemployment rate in the "Professional and Business Services" super-sector, which includes IT services, unemployment actually dropped between April and May 2020, and there remained almost 950,000 job openings in this sector nationwide despite the sharp hike in overall unemployment filings.

If there is one assumption of the Trump administration's immigration policies that is most likely to fail, it is that there are sufficient numbers of U.S. persons with the requisite skill set to perform the jobs that Mr. Trump is "protecting" for them.

Why is there a stress on randomised controlled trials?

What due process must be followed in the appraisal of any drug, especially those for COVID-19?

RAMYA KANNAN

The story so far: On June 23, the claim by Patanjali Ayurved [Haridwar, Uttarakhand] that its preparations, 'Coronil' and 'Swasari', would cure COVID-19 in only seven days, was met with robust disbelief in some quarters, even as it hogged media space soon after the announcement. Ramdev, the yoga guru, and who is associated with the company, claimed that a randomised controlled trial (RCT) among COVID-19 positive patients had proved favourable results. The government, through the Ministry of AYUSH (Ayurveda, Yoga & Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha and Homoeopathy) responding a short while later, told the company to stop advertising the drug as a cure for COVID-19, pointing out that it would attract provisions of Drugs and Magic Remedies (Objectionable Advertisements) Act, 1954.

What has the government said?

The Ministry, in a statement (<https://bit.ly/2Zgbfco>), said the details of the study were not known to it and it has asked Patanjali Ayurved "to provide at the earliest details of the name and composition of the medicines being claimed for COVID treatment; site(s)/hospital(s), where the research study was conducted for COVID-19; protocol, sample size, Institutional Ethics Committee clearance, CTRI registration and results data of the study (ies) and stop advertising/publicizing such claims till the issue is duly examined". The Ministry has also "requested the State Licensing Authority of the Uttarakhand government to provide copies of the licence and product approval details of the Ayurvedic medicines being claimed for the treatment of COVID-19".

It is learnt from media reports on the yet-to-be published RCT conducted on behalf of the company, that 100 patients who had tested positive were given the medicine (five dropped out midway). The clinical trial tested the drug on 45 people and another 50 were given a placebo. The claim was that 69% (31 persons) of those on the drug tested negative on the third day, and 25 of those on the placebo arm of the trial had also tested negative.

What is the place of RCTs place in clinical trials? As per definition, a randomised controlled trial, or RCT, is a study in which people are allocated at random, entirely by chance, to receive one of several clinical interventions. One of these interventions is the standard of comparison or control. The control may be standard practice/treatment options, a placebo (a drug without an active substance, or a 'sugar pill'), or no intervention at all. The idea is to measure and compare the outcomes against the



control after the participants receive the treatment.

Prof. Madhukar Pai, director, McGill Global Health Programs, McGill University, Canada, teaching an online course on epidemiology for journalists with Suno India

portal, explains that RCTs are based on multiple factors, including type of interventions being evaluated, and number of participants. In single-blind trials, the participants, or the investigators do not know who is assigned what; in double-blind trials, both participants and investigators do not know; and triple and quadruple-blind trials, where three or four of the relevant groups are not aware of the treatment assignment.

Is an RCT a good tool to employ during the throes of an epidemic? Why do we need RCTs?

"No other design can get us close to the 'counterfactual' comparison we need to see if an intervention is causally linked to a particular outcome," says Prof. Pai.

Nancy Cartwright, writing in one of the Springer journals, in October 2009 (<https://rdcu.be/b5hb>), argues that RCTs are widely taken as the gold standard for establishing causal conclusions.

S.P. Kalantri, professor of medicine, Mahatma Gandhi Institute of Medical Sciences, Sevagram, Maharashtra, answers this question with a resounding yes. He says, "We need studies that get data that we can trust." This means, clear and robust evidence about benefits and

risks. A good RCT (for COVID-19) should enrol enough numbers, define clinical endpoints, including mortality and morbidity, also whether intubation was needed and days of stay in hospital. He adds: The hurry, hype and marketing for drugs (Ayurveda and Favipiravir) even before results were published were 'just not science'.

"The priority is to have safe, efficacious drugs that can be used in the real world setting," he explains. "We get the best evidence from an RCT, while other strategies have huge limitations. The problem with simple descriptive studies, for instance, is that there are no comparisons."

In well-designed RCTs, researchers, after random assignment of participants, assess whether randomisation was done sufficiently to eliminate the influence of confounding factors, and avoid selection bias. Researchers follow the groups over days, weeks, years and observe major clinical end points. In the end, all other things being equal, it will be possible to measure what benefit a particular group X got, in comparison to Y group. It is possible to estimate if there were any differences between the two groups, say, in mortality, and if this was because of strategic effect of the cause, or due to pure chance. RCTs remove the impact of chance in cause and effect relationships, says Dr. Kalantri.

But ethically, an RCT can only be employed when researchers think/hope that the interventions will offer benefits. Participants can be enrolled in a randomised controlled trial that is expected to leave them better off. The Dexamethasone study where mortality was reduced by a third, is a classic example here.

The Solidarity and RECOVERY (or Randomised Evaluation of COVid-19 thReapY) trials are examples of large-scale RCTs done with multiple partners at many locations, bang in the middle of an epidemic. They have already been instrumental in setting the standard of care – for instance, hydroxychloroquine was hyped up as a drug but studies conclusively proved no ameliorative effect in using it. The Remdesivir study, on the other hand, showed some improvement in reducing intensive care unit stay, while there was no great impact on mortality, says Dr. Kalantri.

What is the future?

Strident science should be the basis of any interventions in therapeutics or vaccination, experts emphasise. The over 200 projects in the pipeline, listed in the Clinical Trials Registry of India, might produce results over time, but as in the case of Patanjali Ayurved, the regulator's immediate and scientific response to unpublished claims will be essential, they urge.



FATF

On the warpath against terror financing

The Paris-based organisation, with 39 member-countries, regularly reviews the conduct of nations in stopping terror-related transactions worldwide

SUHASINI HAIDAR

In Focus

■ FATF reviews countries and either clears them or places them on its 'grey' or 'black' list

■ At present, only Iran and North Korea are on the blacklist

■ Eighteen countries, including Pakistan, Syria, Yemen, Iceland, Jamaica and Mauritius, are on the grey list

In October 2001, in the wake of the 9/11 terror attacks in the U.S., the plenary session of a little-known global organisation based in Paris working on money laundering and white collar crimes, the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), met in Washington DC to discuss a radical shift in its goals. It was already very clear to U.S. investigators that the attacks pointed to a terror network around the world from Germany to Karachi, Dubai to London and Kabul, and each thread had to be tracked down through a financial transaction made. More importantly, if the world were to actually fight "global terror", it would need to not only "follow the money" trail but also hold countries that allowed

terrorists safe haven and financial assistance to account.

"The FATF, the leading international body in the global fight against money laundering, will provide its expertise and energy to the related battle against the financing of terrorism," said Ms. Clarie Lo, then President of FATF, announcing the shift. The FATF plenary then adopted an eight-point amendment to its charter that added Combating the Financing of Terrorism (CFT) to its tasks on Anti-Money Laundering (AML/CFT).

On September 28, 2001, the UN Security Council had also passed a new resolution (UNSC 1373), which added to a previous 1999 resolution (UNSC 1267), which barred links to any group or individual connected to the Taliban or al-Qaeda. The lists that the UNSC

then approved, of hundreds of designated terrorists, soon became one of the important tasks for the FATF, and the reason it is frequently in the news, including most recently this week, when it held its quarterly plenary session to discuss the listings of several countries on its radar, including Pakistan.

Technical prism

The FATF is not a part of the UN system, but it functions out of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development headquarters in Paris, since it was started in 1989 after a decision by members of the G-7 and the European Commission. The FATF runs differently from other multilateral agencies, as its primary focus is on reviewing all actions through a "technical" not a

political prism, and frowns upon countries bringing bilateral issues to the forum.

It is not an enforcement agency itself, but a task force composed of 39 member governments who fund the FATF and agree on its mandate. This means that FATF depends on voluntary implementation of its reports by member countries. Also, meetings of the group are carried out behind closed doors, and deliberations are not publicised. In the past, the FATF has penalised countries that have disclosed the contents of its meetings.

Decisions are made by the grouping on a consensus basis, as they conduct reviews of countries on AML/CFT parameters (called "Mutual evaluations"), and then either clear them, or use a "colour coded" reference for them, placing countries in the "increased monitoring" category or the "grey list", or the "high risk jurisdictions" or "call for action" category, as the "blacklist" is formally known.

At present, only Iran and North Korea are on the blacklist, while 18 countries, including Pakistan, Syria, Yemen, Iceland, Jamaica and Mauritius, are on the grey list.

India became an observer in the grouping in 2006, and was inducted as a full member in 2010. It has faced three rounds

of mutual evaluations and cleared them, and faces the fourth round next year. However, it is Pakistan's performance at the FATF that most often makes news, as Pakistan has been kept on the group's radar since 2008, with one stint on the grey list from 2012-2015, and another beginning June 2018. Presently, it has until October 2019 to show that it is making progress on the FATF's report, that gave it a gruelling

Pakistan has been kept on the group's radar since 2008, with one stint on the 'grey list', or the high-risk jurisdictions category, from 2012 to 2015, and another beginning June 2018

27-point action plan to fulfil, or face a blacklisting, which means severe financial restrictions, a downgrading by credit agencies, and most significantly, possible loan cuts by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. Although the Pakistani government, which has sent ministerial-level delegations to each meeting of the FATF to

ensure it is let off penalties, says it has now cleared 14 of the 27 points on the list, and has "partially" fulfilled

11 of the remainder, it is still being held strongly to account by the FATF statements, including

one particularly stern statement in 2019 that said, "All deadlines given to Pakistan to check terror-funding ended; it failed to complete its action plan in line with agreed timeline."

What is significant is that while Pakistan has clearly disregarded warnings from India, the U.S. and other countries to crack down on a number of cross-border terror groups that exist on its soil (such as Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM), Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), the Taliban, al-Qaeda, Haqqani network, etc), it remains eager to avoid the FATF strictures. Government officials in Delhi say the difference is heartening, given India's long and sometimes lone battle over the past few decades in holding Pakistan to account for cross-border terror activities, including in Jammu and Kashmir, the IC-814 hijacking, 2008 Mumbai attacks, the Pathankot airbase attack in 2015, Uri Army base in 2016, and many others.

As a result, in the last few years, while Pakistan has been on the FATF's watch list, governments in Islamabad have gone to some length to demonstrate their compliance with the FATF demands: changing terror laws to include all UN Security Council-designated individuals and organisations, to show progress in the prosecution of leaders of LeT and JeM, including the re-arrest of Mumbai attacks mastermind Hafiz Saeed last year, as well as tightening all banking mechanisms to show that it has frozen funding to all these groups.

India's persistence

Clearly much of it is lip-service, and much more remains to be done, but New Delhi, which sends a team comprising offi-

cials from the Ministry of External Affairs, the Ministry of Home Affairs and the Finance Ministry to assist with the Indian delegation in Paris during FATF sessions, has some reason to persist with its efforts in bringing evidence it has on Pakistan's terror links to the world body.

"Unlike others, the FATF follows a principle of ostracism against members who don't comply with its strictures. The impact is amplified if the global banking system then scales up its diligence of each transaction flowing in and out of the jurisdiction named," explained an official aware of the FATF's workings. "It works despite the fact that none of this is based on any law or covenant."

Decision making

Officials say the fact that decisions are taken by consensus in the 39-member group, where any three members can exercise a "veto" on an action, has ensured that the FATF doesn't at present suffer from the same polarisation that has virtually paralysed the UNSC. While there are differences between the two main blocs at the UNSC – the U.S., the U.K., France, and Russia, China – at the FATF as well, the entire group's view is made to count.

This is not to mean the organisation isn't affected by geopolitical trends.

The U.S. and other countries have been able to ensure that Iran and North Korea remain on the FATF blacklist, while others are able to avoid the tag as they are able to enlist the political support of enough other countries like China, Russia and Turkey.

With the U.S. striking a deal with the Taliban this year, and efforts to take it off the UN listing, the global body may change the focus of its reviews in jurisdictions that have engaged with the Taliban in the past. It also remains to be seen how the FATF responds to new-age challenges to the global counter-terror and anti-money laundering regime: including bitcoins and cyber currencies, illegal trafficking of wildlife as a source of funding, use of artificial intelligence in terror attacks and biowarfare as part of the wider challenge of the coronavirus pandemic.

For India, however, its focus at the FATF on countering cross-border terror will be a priority for the foreseeable future.

NPP

At the centre of a political storm

The party rocked the BJP-led govt. in Manipur, only to return to the front later

RAHUL KARMAKAR

The rise of many regional parties in northeast India, mostly sired by agitations or insurgency, has been quite meteoric. The Assam Gana Parishad won 67 of Assam's 126 Assembly seats in the State election two months after its birth on October 14, 1985, and four months after some of its founders – as student leaders – signed the Assam Accord to end a violent six-year agitation seeking to throw "illegal immigrants" out. Less than a year later, the Mizo National Front metamorphosed from a 25-year-old extremist group into a political party to hold the reins of Mizoram without contesting any election. The All India United Democratic Front headed by perfume baron Maulana Badrudin Ajmal had no real chances of forming a government, but it changed the narrative around "minority politics" by winning 10 seats in the 2006 Assam assembly election, less than six months after its formation.

The 'national' party
The National People's Party (NPP), which rocked the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)-led Manipur government by briefly withdrawing its support, took its time to make a mark in politics. One of the reasons could be its 'national' outlook. Unlike the others, the NPP did not want to be bound by geography with former Lok Sabha Speaker



Purno Agitok Sangma, a leader familiar to the country beyond the northeast, at the helm. Besides, the NPP under him had no regional trigger. It had at its core a national issue – opposition to Sonia Gandhi's stewardship of the Congress – relayed from his days in the Nationalist Congress Party and the Trinamool Congress.

But the NPP, in its original form, had a very local ambition when it was registered by L. Ibomcha in Manipur a decade before Meghalaya-based Sangma had officially launched the party in January 2013. The party got a new lease of life by winning three out of five seats it contested for the 60-member Manipur Assembly in 2007, but it had limited clout in areas dominated by the Kuki-Zomi ethnic group. Its candidates bit the dust in the 2012 State election.

The NPP was reborn when Sangma took the reins and helped the party win

four seats in the 2013 election in the faraway Rajashtan. He had it fairly easy in his backyard, winning Meghalaya's Tura Lok Sabha seat in 2014. His younger son Conrad Kongkal Sangma took over the party after his death two years later – as the MP from Tura and as the wellspring of a party on an expansion drive.

The rise

Conrad Sangma, now the Chief Minister of Meghalaya, had the advantage of having the BJP, whose friendship his father cultivated, by his side. Under his leadership, the NPP won four seats in the 2017 Manipur election, and two seats in the Meghalaya and Nagaland polls in 2018 and five seats in the 2019 Arunachal Pradesh election. In 2018, seven MLAs of the People's Party of Arunachal Pradesh had merged with the NPP.

The NPP reached a milestone in June 2019 when the Election Commission of In-

dia recognised it as a national party. The recognition was based on the condition that it was registered in at least four States, all in the northeast.

Manipur's was the first of alliance governments the NPP formed with the BJP in the northeast. Differences soon cropped up between Chief Minister Nongthombam Biren, the BJP's catch from the Congress, and the four NPP legislators, particularly former Director-General of Police Yunnan Joykumar. It culminated with their pulling out of the government on June 17 along with five others, including three of the BJP. The NPP also had issues in Nagaland, where its two MLAs withdrew support from the BJP-Nationalist Democratic Progressive Party (NDPP) alliance in 2018 only to merge with the NDPP in 2019. It was the other way round in Meghalaya; the two BJP legislators there temporarily had issues with alliance leader NPP.

The return of its four MLAs to the alliance government in Manipur has made both the NPP and the BJP heave a sigh of relief, although the latter has run into problems with the Naga People's Front, another regional ally. Both parties know they need each other as well as 11 regional members of the BJP-led North East Democratic Alliance to keep the only other national party and common enemy – the Congress – out of the northeast.

KAUSALYA

The woman who lived

The anti-caste activist vows to continue the legal battle against her parents

P.V. SRIVIDYA

March 13, 2016. It was a lazy Sunday afternoon, until a CCTV footage of an unknown couple hacked by mercenaries in broad daylight in the town of Udumalpet in Tirupur district started to make the rounds. Soon, it would emerge as a spine-chilling case of "honour" killing carried out by the family of a Caste Hindu girl for marrying a Dalit man. The victims Shankar, and his wife of 10 months, Kausalya, were in a pool of blood. While Shankar died on the spot, Ms. Kausalya survived. Udumalpet killing would become the first case from Tamil Nadu to make it to the National Crime Records Bureau's crime listed as an 'honour' killing that year.

In December 2017, a Tirupur sessions Court handed down a landmark judgement that came down on the blight of murder in the name of honour by sentencing the main accused Chinna Samay, father of Ms. Kausalya, along with five others to death. Two others were given double life terms and a five-year term, respectively. Ms. Kausalya's mother Annalakshmi and three others were acquitted.

However, on June 22, the Madras High Court overturned the sessions court verdict and acquitted Chinna Samay and two others. The death sentences of the hired killers was commuted to 25 years in jail. The High Court had faulted the Prosecution



for failing to prove conspiracy.

Ms. Kausalya, from the Thevar community, had met Shankar when they were in college. Their friendship blossomed into love by the time Shankar was in final year. When her family got wind of their friendship, they prepared to marry her off, forcing the couple to elope in 2015. The tranquillity of her 10-month-long marriage to Shankar was punctuated by kidnap attempts, threats, unsolicited visits by her family members and culminating in the killing of Shankar in March 2016. That summer Sunday afternoon, Ms. Kausalya had taken Shankar to the store to buy him a shirt for his college annual day the following day.

In the earliest testimony in 2016, Ms. Kausalya recorded the rabid caste pride that ran in her family. Her mother's first query was, "what was his caste?" and "how it was blasphemous to

Appa (father), and sobbed over the phone over the High Court's acquittal of her father Chinna Samay. The verdict also increased her resolve to make it her life's mission to secure justice for Shankar.

After Monday's verdict that exonerated the family's role in the killing, A. Kathir, executive director at Evidence, an organisation that works with victims of caste-hate crimes, who had led Ms. Kausalya's legal fight, remembers late Justice Krishna Iyer's observations on the guiding principle of courts in rendering justice. "Krishna Iyer said court has a conscience and it will always know the facts. In some cases, victims will have a disadvantage, and the accused an advantage. But the courts will have to prod through that advantage enjoyed by the accused and walk that extra mile to mitigate the disadvantage of the victim to consciously render justice."

"I haven't fought for any case like this. There are Thevar Facebook pages that crowdsourced funds for the accused," said Mr. Kathir, who had a bounty on his head in Usilampatti after the sessions court verdict in 2017. While the High Court said the prosecution could not prove conspiracy, the question flagged by Ms. Kausalya and Mr. Kathir was what was the motive for the hired killers to kill. "I will continue to fight till Shankar gets justice," Ms. Kausalya said after the verdict.

Vile criticism
This last act of hers subjected her to vile criticism. Of this, she would ask, "how was this patriarchy different from the caste Hindu patriarchy that dictated who I should marry?" It was something as basic as wanting someone to care for you, when you're sick." On June 22 morning, Ms. Kausalya had called Shankar's father Velusamy, whom she calls

TV PICKS

Premier League: SS Select 1 (SD & HD), 8.45 p.m.
FA Cup: Sony Ten 2 (SD & HD), 5.30 p.m., 8.30 p.m. & 11 p.m.
Serie A: Sony Ten 1 & 3 (SD & HD), 11 p.m.; Sony Six (SD & HD), 8.40 p.m., 11 p.m.; Sony Ten 2 (SD & HD), 1.15 a.m. (Monday)
PGA Tour: Eurosport (SD & HD), 12.30 a.m. (Monday)

IN BRIEF



Reds fans slammed for 'unacceptable' behaviour

LONDON Liverpool, on Saturday, criticised some of its own fans for "wholly unacceptable" behaviour after they crowded parts of the city, ignoring coronavirus social distance guidelines, to celebrate the team's first championship in 30 years. In a statement with Merseyside Police and Liverpool City Council, the club said: "Our city is still in a public health crisis and this behaviour is wholly unacceptable," read the statement. AFP

Six of the 10 players test negative again: PCB

KARACHI Pakistan will leave for its tour of England on Sunday with 20 players and 11 support staff, the PCB said on Saturday, even as six out of the 10 COVID-19-infected cricketers returned negative when tested a second time. Out of the 10 players and one official, who had earlier tested positive, Fakhar Zaman, Mohammad Hasnain, Mohammad Hafeez, Mohammad Rizwan, Shadab Khan and Wahab Riaz have tested negative. Players who have again tested positive are Haider Ali, Haris Rauf, Kashif Bhatti and Imran Khan, along with masseur Malang Ali.



Travelers: Mickelson leads; two more pull out

CROMWELL (US) Five-time Major champion Phil Mickelson, playing his first tournament since turning 50 this month, shot a 7-under 63 in the Travelers Championship to take a one-stroke lead on Friday. Two more players withdrew because of the coronavirus — Denny McCarthy for a positive test, and Bud Cauley, who tested negative, but decided to pull out after playing alongside McCarthy on Thursday. First-round leader Mackenzie Hughes (68) dropped to a second-place tie with Will Gordon. AP

NBA, NBPA announce plan for July 30 restart

NEW YORK The National Basketball Association (NBA) and the National Basketball Players Association (NBPA) on Friday announced that they have finalised a "comprehensive plan" for a July 30 restart to the 2019-20 season. The season will resume with 22 teams and no fans. ANI

Barcelona drops points

Aspas' brilliant free-kick negates Suarez's efforts



On a high: Barcelona's Luis Suarez celebrates scoring his second goal against Celta Vigo.

• GETTY IMAGES

EURO LEAGUES

AGENCIES

MADRID

A brilliant free-kick by captain Iago Aspas ensured that host Celta Vigo walked away with a draw that could potentially damage champion Barcelona's LaLiga defence.

Twice the visiting Catalan team had gone up with goals from Luis Suarez only for Celta to bounce back.

The results: Premier League: Aston Villa 0 lost to Wolves 1 (Dondoncker 62).

LaLiga: Celta Vigo 2 (Smolov 50, Aspas 88) drew with Barcelona 2 (Luis Suarez 20, 67); Athletic Bilbao 3 (Raul Garcia 16-pen, Sancto 24, Villalibre 90) bt Real Mallorca 1 (Budimir 70-pen).

Bundesliga: Dortmund 0 lost to Hoffenheim 4 (Kramaric 8, 30, 48, 50-pen); Leverkusen 1 (Volland 2) bt Mainz 0; M'Gladbach 2 (Hoffmann 7, Embolo 78) bt Hertha Berlin 1 (Ibisevic 90+1); Wolfsburg 0 lost to Bayern Munich 4 (Coman 4, Cuisance 37, Lewandowski 72-pen, Muller 79); Eintracht Frankfurt 3 (Rode 9, Silva 33, Dost 52) bt Paderborn 2

(Draeger 55, Michel 75); Werder Bremen 6 (Osako 22, 58, Rashica 27, Fuellkrug 29, Klaassen 55, Sargent 68) bt Cologne 1 (Drexler 62).

Freiburg 4 (Waldschmidt 20, 57, Schmid 38, Hoeler 48) bt Schalke 0; Augsburg 1 (Vargas 71) lost to RB Leipzig 2 (Werner 28, 80).

Union Berlin 3 (Ujah 26, Gentner 54, Abdullahi 90) bt Fortuna Dusseldorf 0.

Friday: LaLiga: Sevilla 1 (Ocampos 83-pen) drew with Real Valladolid 1 (Olivas 25).

Serie A: Juventus 4 (Dybala 53, Ronaldo 62-pen, Higuain 83, De Ligt 85) bt Lecce 0.

Every cricketer wants IPL this year: Bhuvneshwar

India seamer hopes ICC will solve the saliva issue; Mary Kom stresses on fitness

P.K. AJITH KUMAR
KOZHIKODE

Bhuvneshwar Kumar wants to play at the IPL this year and believes every cricketer – even those from other countries – wants to.

"The IPL must happen," India's premier swing bowler said on Friday. "The tournament is important for both cricketing and financial reasons."

He was speaking at a webinar organised jointly by GainAccess Sports & Entertainment and Sportz Power.

Bhuvneshwar, who has 236 international wickets, said he hadn't expected the situation to be as bad as it turned out to be, following the coronavirus outbreak.

"After the first ODI against South Africa (which was washed out at Dharamshala

on March 12), we were scheduled to play the second match at Lucknow, but the entire series was abandoned," he said.

"I was coming back to the Indian team after a gap of four months, following an injury. I had then thought (the problem created by the virus) would be soon over."

It didn't, unfortunately.

One potential problem the coronavirus created specifically for swing bowlers like him was the ICC's ban of using saliva on the ball.

"I hope the ICC comes up with some artificial way by which we can shine the ball," he said. "You need to do it when you bowl in swinging conditions in (places like

England. Even the spinners need it."

M.C. Mary Kom, the six-time World boxing champion, was also part of the panel. She stressed on the need to be completely fit, even during the lockdown.

"I train every day," she said. "I keep myself fit though I don't have all the equipment to train at home."

Correct decision

Mary said the decision to postpone the Olympics to next year was the correct one. She will be aiming to win her second Olympic medal in Tokyo.

She said women's boxing had come a long way in India. "I was the only one in London," she said. "Now four have qualified for Tokyo."

Simms has boxer-specific training plans ready

Vikas and Ashish to work under him at IIS in Vijayanagar, Karnataka

Y.B. SARANGI
KOLKATA

Boxing coach Roland Simms has prepared specific training plans for Olympics-bound boxers Vikas Krishan and Ashish Kumar.

The two are now in quarantine before joining the Inspire Institute of Sport (IIS) camp at Vijayanagar, Karnataka.

According to Simms, former World championships bronze medallist Vikas, who switched back from professional boxing to try his luck in

Roland Simms. • FILE PHOTO

Roland Simms.

and make sure that his professional style of boxing complements his amateur style," Simms said in an interaction with *The Hindu*.

"With Ashish, initially the focus will be on rehab from the slight injury he picked up at the (Olympic) qualifiers.

"We'll have to discuss his strategy with the National coaching team (Santiago Nieva and C.A. Kuttappa), see what they have planned for him. Speaking of Vikas, since his focus will be on the professional circuit, we will be

working on that basis, while for Ashish we'll have to see where the national team is going to train for us to be able to take a call."

Regular classroom

On the training sessions for different levels of boxers at the IIS, Simms said: "We have the regular classroom (theory) sessions after which we do conditioning and then individual technical training like the basic fundamentals of punching, footwork and defence."

Chickens were first domesticated in southwestern China

Study contradicts the earlier claim that they were reared in northern China and Indus Valley

SHIV SAHAY SINGH
KOLKATA

A recent study by scientists has revealed new details about the earliest domestication of chicken. The DNA sequencing of 863 genomes has shown the first domestication of chicken occurred in southwestern China, northern Thailand and Myanmar.

A collaborative study, which involved sequencing of genomes from all four species of the genus *Gallus*, five sub-species of Red Jungle Fowl and various domestic chicken breeds collected worldwide, revealed single domestication from Red Jungle Fowl sub-species *Gallus gallus spadiceus*.

The study also demonstrated that all five Red Jungle Fowl sub-species were genetically differentiated from

each other approximately 50,000 years ago (much earlier than domestication), corresponding to their geographic ranges and taxonomic classifications.

"Our study suggests that domestic chickens were initially derived from the Red Jungle Fowl sub-species *Gallus gallus spadiceus* whose present-day distribution is predominantly in southwestern China, northern Thailand and Myanmar," said the paper, '863 genomes reveal the origin and domestication of chicken', which was published in *Cell Research*, an international journal.

Mukesh Thakur, a scientist of the Zoological Survey of India (ZSI), who contributed to the study, said the results contradicted the earlier



Jungle Fowl.

claim that chickens were domesticated in northern China and the Indus Valley.

"The research assumes significance as despite the substantial role played by chickens in human societies across the world, both the geographic and temporal origins of their domestication remain controversial," Dr. Thakur said. Scientists

across the world contributed to the study in which DNA from indigenous village chicken, four species of wild jungle fowl and domesticated chicken were collected and analysed.

Dr. Thakur said Wang Ming-Shan of the University of California, Professor Wu Dong Dong of the Chinese Academy of Sciences and Professor Han Jianlin of the International Livestock Research Institute, Nairobi, Kenya, contributed to the study done over several years.

The question of domestication of chickens has intrigued scientists for centuries. Charles Darwin postulated that chickens were domesticated around 4,000 B.C. from a single ancestor, Red Jungle Fowl in the Indus Valley. An impor-

It's been an emotional journey: Robertson

We showed our 100 per cent every single game, says Liverpool's left-back

SHYAM VASUDEVAN
CHENNAI

"Not many things bug me, but if there's one thing that does, it's the idea that my story is a football fairytale", thus wrote Andy Robertson for *The Players Tribune* last year, two days before Liverpool's Champions League triumph.

His arrival at Anfield in 2017, however, most definitely sparked a fairytale for the club as Robertson has now added the Premier League title to his glorious list of achievements with Liverpool.

The Scotsman's transfer to Liverpool was tipped as a move that would bring a



Andy Robertson.

• GETTY IMAGES

change of fortune for the Reds.

The belief stemmed from the fact that Liverpool had won most of its titles with a Scot in its ranks. The last time Liverpool won the En-

glish top division, in 1990, was under Kenny Dalglish, a Scot.

"We've had to wait a long time. The three months of lockdown was long for everyone, but for us to be so close to something that the club hasn't achieved in 30 years, it was extra-long for us and our fans.

Extra special

"And we managed to do it on my mum's birthday, so that's probably extra special for me," the defender said in an interaction with the broadcaster.

"We've been relentless. There were games that people thought that we would

drop points, but we did not.

"We've come from behind, we scored so many late goals – the best team never gives up. We showed our 100 per cent every single game," he said.

"It's an emotional journey to win the Premier League for this club.

Desperate to win

"We were so desperate to win it last season and this season luckily, we've run away with it. We are the Premier League champion, that's something I will never get bored of saying."

Watch the Premier League live on Star Sports Select and Disney+ Hotstar VIP.



Brendan Rodgers. • REUTERS

Liverpool displayed amazing consistency: Rodgers

AMITABHA DAS SHARMA
KOLKATA

Former Liverpool FC manager Brendan Rodgers was happy with the "amazing" style with which the Reds realised their "holy grail" by winning the Premier League title.

Congratulating the side for its dominant performance, Rodgers, who handed over the coaching duties of Liverpool to Jürgen Klopp in 2015, said the title was "well-deserved" for a team

that maintained a fantastic level of consistency through the season.

"For Liverpool it has really been the Holy Grail. And I sensed it first hand as the manager as I could feel the expectations of the huge fan-base that Liverpool has worldwide," he said in an interview on the Sony TV show *Pit Stop*.

Absolutely delighted

"I am absolutely delighted. They (Liverpool) thoroughly deserved the title."

"They have been the most consistent top team this season and it is absolutely amazing in the way (seven matches to spare) they have done it," Rodgers, who is currently managing the third-placed Leicester City FC, said.

"And to get it off their backs (the burden of not winning the title) after 30 years is a long time. It is generations of families. So I think the happiness and the joy will be celebrated for a number of weeks."

Carlsen lets Caruana off the hook

RAKESH RAO
NEW DELHI

In a clash involving the World's top two players, favourite Magnus Carlsen let Fabiano Caruana off the hook in the first game of the second set of their quarterfinals clash in the \$150,000 Chessable Masters on Saturday.

The other quarterfinals, featuring Russians Ian Nepomniachtchi and Vladislav Artemiev also ended in a draw after 56 moves.

Other results (quarterfinals):
After Game Four: Ding Liren (Chn) bt Hikaru Nakamura (USA) 2.5-1.5.

After Game Seven: Anish Giri (Ned) drew with Alexander Grischuk (Rus) 3.5-3.5 (Giri declared the winner after the drawn Armageddon game).

AICS appeals to Rijiju

RAKESH RAO
NEW DELHI

The All India Council of Sports (AICS) president Vijay Kumar Malhotra has appealed to Sports Minister Kiren Rijiju to call an urgent meeting of all stakeholders to end the impasse following the non-renewal of affiliation of 54 National Sports Federations (NSFs).