



JUNE 21, 2020

on Sunday

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Despite TV, OTT boom during lockdown, 82% movie-goers miss theatres

Most willing to revisit cinema halls within weeks of them opening, or even sooner

NAMRATA JOSHI
MUMBAI

Theatres might be under lockdown at the moment, but the movie-going experience still fires the imagination of committed film viewers. As many as 82% cinema goers are missing going to the theatres during the lockdown despite their film consumption on TV and over-the-top (OTT) platforms having grown substantially, a study by a Mumbai-based media consulting firm has found.

As many as 58% said they were watching lot more films on TV than before, and 60% said the same about OTT platforms.

The study, 'Back to the Theatres,' was conducted online among Hindi, Tamil and Telugu film audiences across 58 cities and towns in India by Ormax Media Pvt. Ltd. Audiences across all three industries are equally emphatic about missing theatres. In the Hindi film market, Mumbai - at a whopping 93% - are feeling the most theatre deprived.

The study was conducted among 1,000 regular cinema-goers (15+ years) in May, with demographic proportion as per 2019 box office footfall.

While only 6% said they won't go to the theatres for the next six months, 28% claimed they'll go as soon as they opened. Most of them (47%) expressed willingness to visit in two to three weeks of theatres reopening, as long as theatres take physical distancing and sanitisation precautions.

Unlike the popular per-

ception that theatres will now primarily be about big-ticket films, 69% audience said they will also visit theatres for medium and small films.

While 71% are fine with ticket prices remaining the same, they want chains to spend more on safety and sanitisation.

However, only 6% audience said that they trusted single screen cinemas in their city to implement adequate safety measures. According to Ormax CEO Shailesh Kapoor, there is still a significant trust deficit with single screen cinemas. "It's a perception that can limit their footfall in the immediate future," he said.

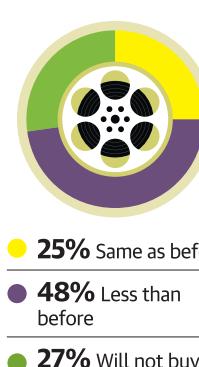
"Theatre-specific measures and the local COVID-19 situation will drive the decision to go to movie theatres more than the content itself. Hence, effective communication by theatre chains will be pivotal to win the audience's confidence," Mr. Kapoor said.

According to him, food and beverage consumption at theatres is also likely to be impacted adversely by about 60% due to concerns related to COVID-19. While 27% of the viewers said they wouldn't avail F&B inside theatres, 48% said they would consume less.

On the OTT front, Amazon Prime Video seems to be the preferred destination for 37% viewers for Hindi films, 44% for Tamil films and 55% for Telugu movies. Netflix leads on the Hollywood front, with it being the choice of 69% viewers.



EXPECTED IN-THEATRE F&B CONSUMPTION



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FROM PAGE ONE
State's TB alerts dip drastically

JYOTI SHELAR
MUMBAI

According to Dr. Udwadia, weekly counts of reported cases dropped by 75% in the country in the three weeks since the lockdown started. An average 45,875 weekly cases were recorded before that. China, too, reported a 20% drop in its TB case detection rate this February as compared to the same period last year.

Dr. Nerges Mistry, director of Foundation for Medical Research, said the follow-up of patients has been hampered with many suffering adverse drug reactions. "The movement of migrants has also led to a slight decline. We will know in the next few months how things pan out as they return" she said.

Child's cries save woman in nick of time

Upset due to job loss and marital discord, she tried to take her life

RAINA ASSAINAR
NAVI MUMBAI

A 27-year-old woman, who tried to end her life as she was upset due to job loss and marital discord, was saved in a nick of time by a patrolling team from NRI coastal police station.

The incident occurred on Thursday night when constables Kiran Swar and Pandurang Kawte, who were patrolling at Sector 5 in Ulwe, got a call from Navi Mumbai police control room around 8.30 p.m. They were informed that a resident had alerted the control room about a house where a woman stayed alone with her 4-year-old daughter. The caller

said the child had been crying loudly for a while and there has been no response to repeated knocking on the door of the house, which was locked from inside.

"We thought that the child would have got locked inside accidentally and immediately informed the fire brigade. The fire brigade reached the spot within minutes and broke open the door," Mr. Swar said. On entering the house they saw a four-year-old girl in the hall, crying continuously and pointing towards the bedroom door.

Movement in finger

The police and the fire brigade found the door of the bedroom to be locked from inside and knocked twice. Since there was no response, they broke open this door too and found a woman lying unconscious. Since Mr. Swar noticed some movement in

Helplines

BMC mental health helpline:
022 24131212 (24x7)

Vandrevala Foundation:
18602662345/ 18002333330 (24x7)

I Call:
022-25521111 (8 a.m. to 10 p.m. | Monday to Saturday)

ASRA:
9820466726 (24x7)

The Samaritans Mumbai:
8422984528/ 8422984529/ 8422984530 (5 p.m.- 8 p.m. all days)

We thought that the child would have got locked inside accidentally

CONSTABLE KIRAN SWAR
NRI coastal police

to D.Y. Patil hospital and saved in the nick of time.

"She had not left any note before attempting suicide. Later, when we spoke to her, she revealed that she worked in a private firm and had lost her job during the lockdown. The financial crisis and the marital discord lead her making such a decision," senior police inspector Tanvir Shaikh, NRI Coastal police station, said.

The woman's brother in Hyderabad was intimated about the incident. While the victim was in hospital, her child was taken care of by the house owner who stays in CBD Belapur.

Taxi, rickshaw unions urge CM to ease passenger norms from July 1

Drivers also allege they faced harassment from police

AJEET MAHALE
MUMBAI

Black and yellow taxi and autorickshaw unions in Mumbai have written to the government to permit drivers to take any passengers from July 1, and not limit services only to essential workers or emergencies.

In a letter written to Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray, A.L. Quadros, general secretary, Mumbai Taximen's Union, said drivers have had literally no source of income for three and half months under lockdown. These people are self-employed and have no other source of income for their families and their livelihoods, he said.

"The government has allowed the traders and offices

cles and issuing huge e-challans. It added that the police were also discriminating against black and yellow taxis and rickshaws and were not taking action against cabs on app-based aggregators such as Ola and Uber.

Panna Lal Yadav, a rickshaw driver living in Virar, said he had been challaned twice in the last week. "The police just issue a challan worth ₹300 and ask us to collect our vehicle from the chowki. When we ask what is the reason behind this, they said that we are not allowed to run rickshaws," he said, adding that with business already low, the fines were leaving with him little money after working nearly 12 hours.

HC seeks State help for fishermen

Disaster Management authority asked to assess losses due to cyclone

SONAM SAIGAL
MUMBAI

The Bombay High Court on Friday directed the State Disaster Management Authority to ameliorate the grievance expressed by fishermen to the extent possible, upon due assessment of the loss and damage that might have been suffered by them due to Cyclone Nisarga, within three weeks.

Fishermen in distress

A Division Bench of chief justice Dipankar Datta and justice K.K. Tated was hearing a public interest litigation (PIL) filed by Damodar Tandel, a fisherman and the chairman of Akhil Maharashtra Macchimar Kruti Samiti, a registered association of fishermen. The PIL, filed through advocate Rakesh Bhatkar, said there has been large scale destruction in the coastal districts owing to Cyclone Nisarga, leaving several fishermen in extreme distress.

Mr. Tandel's grievance is that the State authorities assessed the damages due to the cyclone and issued guidelines for providing standards of relief to persons affected on June 10, and declared the amount of compensation on June 11. The State has considered damage caused to farmers, residential damages and small scale sellers however, there is no relief for fishermen. Even though the fisheries department of each districts separately carried out survey to assess damage/

Representation to CM
The court noted that Mr. Tandel is the chairman of an organisation for fishermen and a representation had been made on June 13 to Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray. However, the representation, according to the petitioner, is yet to receive consideration.

The court directed the State authority to ameliorate the grievance by fishermen upon due assessment of the loss and damage that might have been suffered by them within three weeks.

Body of 70-year-old found by roadside

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MUMBAI

The body of a 70-year-old man was found lying on a roadside on the outskirts of Ulhasnagar in Thane, police said on Saturday.

The body was recovered on Friday evening, they said. "Police had received information that the body was lying along a road leading to a brick kiln on the outskirts of Ulhasnagar," an official of Hill Line police station said.

The victim was later identified as Sejumal Ramnanai and it came to light that he was a resident of Ulhasnagar. Police suspect it to be a case of murder as strangulation marks were found on the neck. "Somebody might have strangled the elderly man using a wire," the official said.

The body was sent for post-mortem and an offence under Section 302 (murder) of the Indian Penal Code was registered, police said.

Timings
MUMBAI

SUNDAY, JUN. 21	RISE 06:02 SET 19:19
MONDAY, JUN. 22	RISE 06:03 SET 19:19
TUESDAY, JUN. 23	RISE 06:03 SET 19:19

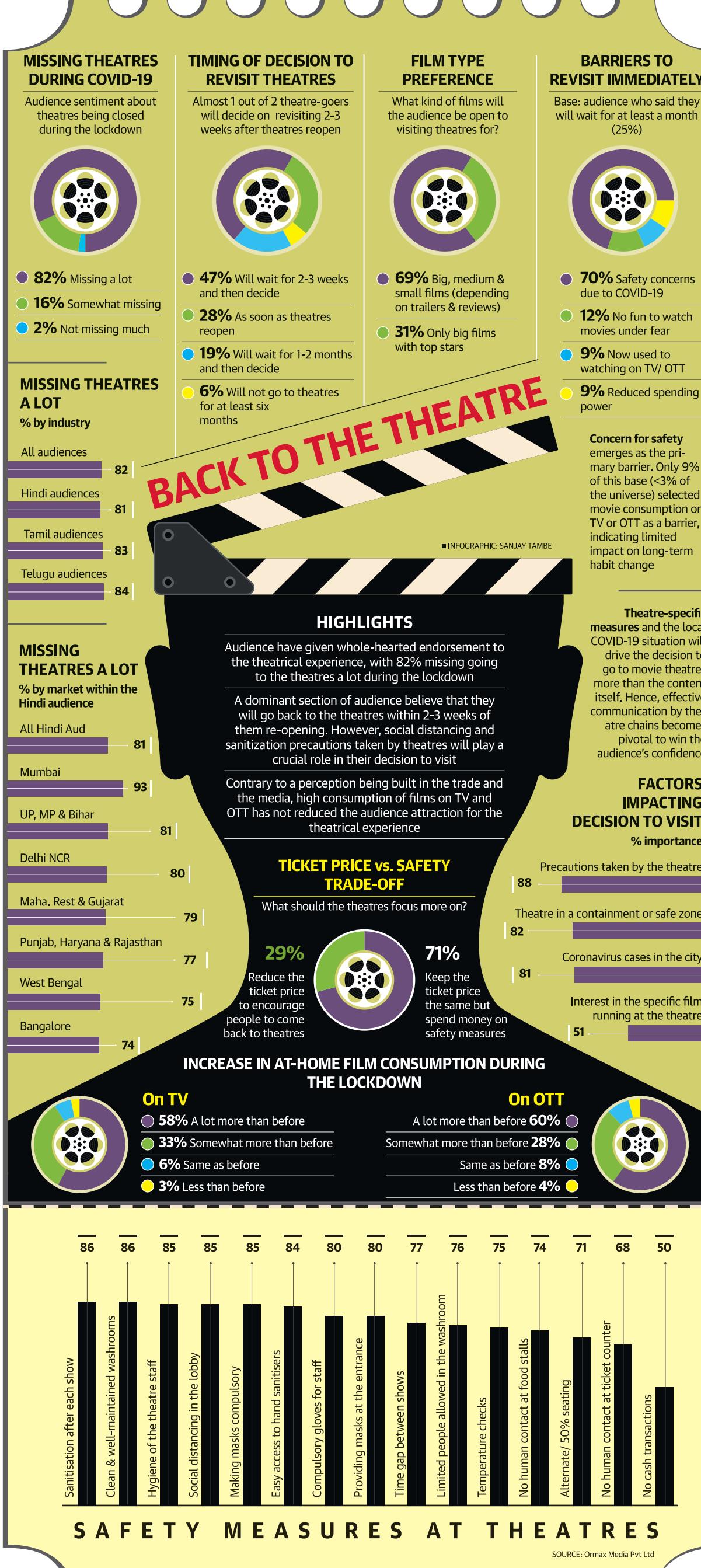
Mumbai Weather max min

Mumbai Airport	33	27
Pune	31	23
Mumbai City	33	27

Mumbai Today
32°C Light to moderate rain and thunderstorms will affect. A comfortable morning. The sky will remain cloudy.

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Maharashtra COVID-19 tracker

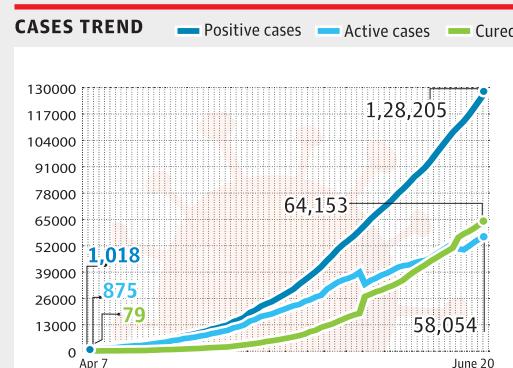
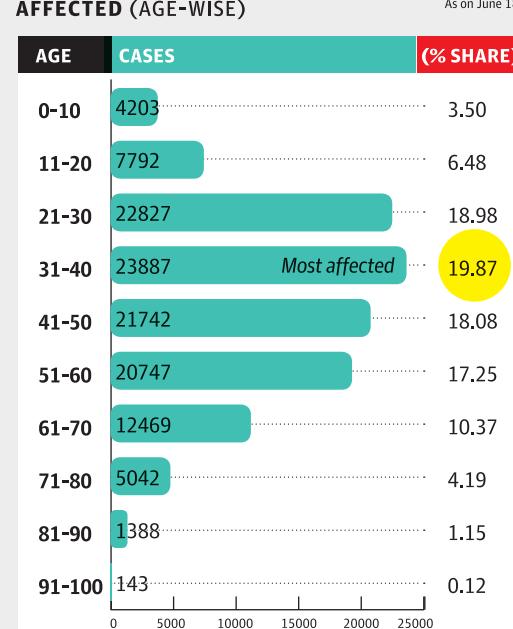
TOTAL CASES	NEW CASES	ACTIVE CASES	RECOVERED	DEATHS
1,28,205	3,874	58,054	64,153	5,984

DISTRICTS AFFECTED: 35

DISTRICT	CASES	DEATHS	DISTRICT	CASES	DEATHS
Mumbai	65,329	3,561	Hingoli	252	1
Thane	22,212	675	Sangli	282	7
Pune	15,286	587	Nanded	279	11
Aurangabad	3,273	173	Yavatmal	230	7
Nashik	2,635	145	Latur	212	11
Palghar	3,225	88	Osmanabad	169	6
Raigad	2,399	89	Sindhudurg	163	4
Solapur	2,178	172	Buldhana	156	5
Jalgaon	2,183	182	Parbhani	84	4
Akola	1,164	59	Gondia	101	0
Nagpur	1,271	13	Beed	84	3
Satara	823	38	Gadchiroli	54	1
Kolhapur	739	8	Chandrapur	58	0
Ratnagiri	482	18	Nandurbar	83	5
Dhule	483	46	Bhandara	71	0
Anravati	416	21	Wardha	14	1
Jalna	363	11	Washim	70	2
Ahmednagar	273	11			

POSITIVE CASES OVER LAST 15 DAYS

1,190 (30.71%) of Saturday's cases are from Mumbai

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

70% of deaths due to co-morbidities

HELPLINE NUMBERSToll free number: 104/1075
Maharashtra: 020-26127394

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

State helpline email id: ssuumarashtra@gmail.com

CITY-WISE HELPLINE NUMBERSMumbai city: 022 22664232
Mumbai suburbs: 022 26556799 / 26556806
Thane: 022 25301740Palghar: 02525 297474
Raigad: 02141 222118
Ratnagiri: 02352 226248
Sindhudurg: 02362 228847

Source: Public Health Department, Maharashtra, BMC

Maharashtra sees highest spike with 3,874 new cases

State reports 160 deaths, its second-highest single-day rise; toll rises to 5,984; cumulative case load jumps to 1,28,205

**At the ready:** A policewoman stores a hand sanitiser in her holster in Mumbai on Saturday. ■ VIVEK BENDRE**JYOTI SHELAR**

MUMBAI

Maharashtra recorded 3,874 new COVID-19 cases on Saturday, its highest surge in a day, pushing its tally to 1,28,205. The State also recorded 160 fatalities, its second-highest single-day rise, taking its death toll to 5,984. Nearly 51% of Maharashtra's cases and 59% deaths are from Mumbai.

Of the latest deaths, 136 were recorded in Mumbai, 10 in Jalgaon, six in Aurangabad, five in Pune, and one each in Solapur, Jalna and Beed. Of the 35 districts in the State, only three – Bhandara, Gondia and Chandrapur – have not reported a single death yet. Wardha and Gadchiroli, which had not reported any positive cases in the initial weeks of the outbreak, have now reported one death each.

Surge in cases in MMR
In the Mumbai Metropolitan Region (MMR), with nine municipal corporations – Thane, Navi Mumbai, Panvel, Kalyan-Dombivli, Ulhasnagar, Bhiwandi Nizampur, Mirra Bhayander and Vasai-Virar – the case load is inching towards the 95,000 mark.

As on Saturday, the tally of cases in the MMR was 94,165. After Mumbai and Thane, Navi Mumbai, Kalyan-Dombivli and Vasai Virar have emerged as hotspots, with the civic bodies reporting a huge rise in positive cases within their limits.

The data reconciliation exercise is under way in many parts of the State. 'Barring Mumbai, Thane, Raigad and Palghar districts, the reconciliation of deaths in all districts and municipal corporations in the State has been completed,' a State health official said.

On Saturday, 1,380 patients were discharged, taking the total tally of recoveries to 64,153. The State's recovery rate stands at 50%.

Tribals to work in COVID-19 hospitals

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

PALGHAR

Tribals from Palghar district will work in hospitals treating COVID-19 patients, an official said on Saturday.

At least 30 tribal volunteers, including six women, who are part of an NGO, have undergone basic training in nursing.

They will serve at Golden Park Hospital at Vasai in the district, and the civic-run Indira Gandhi Hospital at Mira-Bhayandar in Thane district.

Of 542 new cases, 359 reported from areas controlled by PMC

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

PUNE

The number of COVID-19 cases in Pune district crossed the 14,000 mark, after 542 more people tested positive for the virus in the last 24 hours, a State health official said on Saturday.

The COVID-19 case count of the district now stands at 14,292, the official said. With the virus claiming eight more

lives in the district, its death toll has reached 560, he said.

'Of the 542 cases, at least 359 were reported from the areas controlled by Pune Municipal Corporation (PMC), where the count has reached 11,554. However, 157 recovered patients were discharged from hospitals, the official added. With a surge of 32 cases in neighbouring Pimpri-Chinchwad, the COVID-19 tally in the area has grown to 1,381, he said.

The number of positive cases in rural parts of the district, areas under the Pune Cantonment Board and the civil hospital has increased

to 1,246, the official said.

85 new cases in Nagpur

At least 85 people have tested positive for the novel coronavirus in Maharashtra's Nagpur district in the last 24 hours, taking the tally in the region to 1,228, a district official said on Saturday.

No new casualties were reported in the district, where 18 persons have succumbed to the infection so far. As per a release, swab reports of 85 people returned positive on Saturday morning. Of the 1,228 cases recorded in the district, 784 patients have recovered from the virus so far.

Pune district crosses 14,000 cases; toll rises to 560

**Fitness first:** Municipal workers perform exercises on the eve of International Yoga Day, in Pune on Saturday. ■ JIGNESH MISTRY

HC: can't do away with prescription as prerequisite for tests

Court refuses to allow testing for all

SONAM SAIGAL

MUMBAI

The Bombay High Court on Friday observed that testing kits must be used rationally, but refused to direct the State government and civic authorities to do away with the requirement of a prescription by a medical practitioner as a prerequisite for COVID-19 tests.

A Division Bench of Chief Justice Dipankar Datta and Justice KK Tated was hearing a petition filed by Narendra Murkumbi, co-founder of Shree Renuka Sugars, one of the largest sugar producers in India. The plea sought direction to the State government, Central government, the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation and the Indian Council for Medical Research (ICMR) to do away with the production of a prescription or certificate of a medical practitioner as a pre-condition to test for COVID-19.

The court also refused to issue an order allowing access to COVID-19 testing for all, including asymptomatic people or those who haven't come in contact with positive patients.

The petition had said testing for all would flatten the curve by ensuring the timely detection of COVID-19 cases and containing the spread of the virus.

We are of the prima facie opinion that there has to be a rational use of testing kits

BOMBAY HIGH COURT
It would also ensure the protection of people's rights under the Constitution, the petition said. "Currently, the public is being denied quick and timely access to medical attention, which in many cases has resulted in the loss of human life," the plea said.

'Violation of rights'
The PIL stated that conditions imposed by ICMR and the Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare as per the March 31 guidelines were in violation of fundamental rights, including Articles 14 (equality before the law) and 21 (right to life).

After hearing the plea, the High Court observed, "We are of the prima facie opinion that there has to be a rational use of testing kits and the present situation is not such warranting grant of interim relief."

During the inquiry, the hospital contended that the government resolution (GR) capping the prices for COVID-19 treatment, reserving 20% beds and offering free treatment for the poor, came into effect on April 30 and May 21 respectively, which was after

these patients had been discharged. Last week, the seven residents had approached the High Court alleging that the hospital had charged them ₹12.5 lakh for treatment and had threatened to stop their discharge if they failed to pay the money.

Demand for refund
In their plea, filed through advocate Vivek Shukla, the petitioners had sought a refund saying that the hospital was bound to reserve beds for the poor and provide them free treatment since it was run by a charitable trust.

A Bench of Justices R.D. Dhanuka and Madhav Jamdar had then directed the State Charitable Commissioner to conduct an inquiry in the matter.

In an affidavit submitted before the High Court on Friday, the charity commissioner said while the hospital had reserved 20% beds for persons from indigent and economically weaker sec-

tions, it had treated only four such patients since the start of the lockdown on midnight of March 24.

According to the State charity commissioner, the hospital had treated three patients under the scheme for indigent and poor patients during the lockdown period till the end of May, while one such patient was treated in June.

However, there were no complaints about the hospital denying treatment to any patient during this period, the affidavit stated.

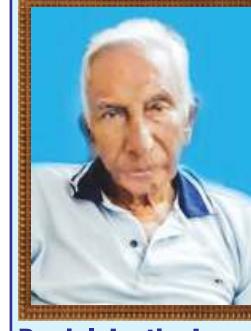
"The full inquiry report is awaited. However, it is clear that

OBITUARY & REMEMBRANCE

DEATH

We deeply mourn the sad demise of Susheela Padmanabhan, 7 Basazul Road, Chennai 600017, on June 18, 2020. Family and relatives.

He served the Lord his God with all his heart and with all his soul and with all his might. (Deut 6:5)

**Daniel Justin James**

Beloved father, father-in-law, and grandfather; brother, brother-in-law, uncle, cousin, friend. Manager, mentor, and teacher.

Author, poet, and writer extraordinaire.

Avid bridge player.

Sportsman.

Composer and singer.

Appa, you will be sorely missed.
Died 20.06.20 and was buried the same day.

Deeply mourned by:

Nilima, Amit, Vinaya & Vinod

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SUNALINI MATHEW
NEW DELHI

Mohammed Ebrahim, 65, from Bhulni village in Araia, Bihar, became a symbol of the migrant crisis when a video of him crying at Gurugram's Tau Devi Lal stadium went viral in the first week of June. Mr. Ebrahim, like many others from Bihar, was asked to go to the stadium, from where migrants were to be taken to the station to board a train. Due to a delay, they ended up spending about a day and a half there, in the heat.

Shalu Johar Sahni, a Gurugram resident and entrepreneur, who is associated with Pure Hearts, a not-for-profit, and Helping Hands, an initiative by civil society, saw him there one morning, when they went on their usual rounds to distribute food. "Most of the time we would ask the people from the crowd to pass around the *chhaas* and rusk, but that morning I happened to hand it to him. But he wasn't reaching out in the right direction," she says.

She found that the elderly man was blind, that his grandson-in-law was taking partial care of him, and that he had come to Rewari, Haryana, a few weeks before the lockdown. "He felt he had lost his eyesight because of the smoke from heating the tar to build roads, a job he was doing," says Ms. Sahni, who promised to help him in whatever way she could.

While he made the approximately 20-hour bus journey and the

two-hour tempo ride home, many phone calls were being made in Delhi-NCR.

Ms. Sahni reached out to former journalist Swati Sinha, another Gurugram resident and fellow volunteer. "I called a relative, Jatin (Singh), because I thought he may know someone in that part of Bihar," says Ms. Sinha, who hails from the State. His cousin's wife Pratishtha Singh, a writer, then got in touch with old friend and fellow JNUite Shakeel Ahmad Khan, an MLA from Kadwa in Kathar, Bihar.

"He put me in touch with Sibtain Ahmad, who runs a career coaching centre in Araria," says Ms. Singh, adding that he then arranged for Mr. Ebrahim to be taken to a doctor, and then another for a second opinion, locally.

Since the doctors had diagnosed the problem as a retinal detachment, they suggested he be taken to a bigger place like Patna or Siliguri for surgery. "We found out that because of the COVID situation, the Indira Gandhi Institute of Medical Sciences in Patna was not

performing non-essential surgeries," says Ms. Singh.

So they settled on the Retina Institute of Bengal in Siliguri.

A transfer of money by Pure Hearts directly to the medical facility and also to Mohammed Saibul, Mr. Ebrahim's son's account took place. Dr. Somnath Chakraborty of the Siliguri institute advised against surgery in the right eye, but said there was some chance for the left.

On June 15, father and son made the trip in a hired Scorpio to Siliguri, going back home the same day.

His son says this time there was a



Mohammed Ebrahim (left) on the bus to Araria, Bihar, from Gurugram.

• SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

fight at home, and his father, who he claims has a temper, left home, his wife, son, daughter-in-law, and six grandchildren in a huff.

Mr. Saibul says he had no idea where his father was in Haryana, when he got stuck between a lock-down and losing his eyesight.

He says the contractor did not pay him either. "Lockdown mein agar main wahan pohunchta bhi, to maine socha itne bade shahar mein main kaise dhoondoonga. Allah ne mere dua sun liya aur inko farishtey ke roop mein Baba paas pohuncha diya," he says.

It took a trail of people from diverse backgrounds, many phone calls and WhatsApp messages and a ton of coordination to help a man none of them knew. "We are a first world that lives within the third world. Like a lazy middle-class person I thought I could pay my way through everything, but this experience has taught me that if we just come together and talk to each other, we can get a lot done," says Mr. Jatin Singh, founder-MD of Skymet and founder of Gramcover, in Noida.

Partial sight restored

"It was probably caused by a combination of old age and a cataract surgery that had complications," says Dr. Chakraborty, who performed the retinal detachment surgery.

The next morning, Mr. Ebrahim could see partially in his left eye, and could go to the bathroom without assistance. "I have done construction work in Ludhiana about 15 years ago," he says, of time spent away from home in the past.

His son says this time there was a

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MATRIMONIAL

BRIDEGROOMS WANTED

INDEX OF MATRIMONIAL

BRIDES WANTED

BRIDES & GROOMS WANTED

Classification common for Brides, Bridgrooms, Brides & Grooms

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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

MARRIAGE BUREAUS

WEDDING ARRANGEMENTS

CMYK

THE HINDU

B.M-B.ME

THE HINDU

In lockdown, postal employees deliver against all odds

A network of 1.56 lakh post offices ensures that essential services reach doorsteps of beneficiaries

LALATENDU MISHRA
MUMBAI

While scores of Indians stayed indoors after the lockdown to contain the COVID-19 pandemic came into force, around four lakh postal department employees across the country worked day in and out to keep essential services running.

These unsung heroes risked their lives not only to deliver parcels and letters but also cash to pensioners, elderly citizens who could not visit the banks to withdraw money, and direct benefit transfer (DBT) beneficiaries. As regular flights and passenger trains remained suspended, they deployed special measures like using the postal mail motor service to ferry letters, parcels, answer sheets, mangoes, medicines, personal protective equipment (PPE) suits, COVID-19 test kits, and ventilators.

As per data procured from the Department of Post, India Post as of Thursday had conducted 8.8 crore post office savings bank (POSB) transactions worth ₹1.53 lakh crore and 3.8 crore India Post Payments Bank (IPPB) transactions worth ₹9,166 crore, of which 1.17 crore were Aadhaar-enabled Payment System (AePS) transactions worth ₹2,196 crore.

During the lockdown, India Post made 1.5 crore DBT payments worth ₹1,210 crore through POSB and more than 51 lakh DBT payments worth ₹610 crore. Over 80.1 lakh money orders worth ₹857 crore and more



Going the extra mile: Employees of India Post have been working round the clock to deliver testing kits, ventilators and medicines to far-flung places in the country. ■ FILE PHOTO

than two crore mails and articles weighing 5,000 tonnes were delivered.

India Post, during the nationwide lockdown, leveraged its vast network of over 1.56 lakh post offices to provide essential services to people at their doorsteps even in the remotest corners of the country.

Special road network

It also developed a national road transport network with 22 long routes of over 500 km, interspersed with 34 inter-State and intra-State schedules, touching over 75 cities. Mr. Bisoi said, "This initiative was taken to ensure that there was a movement of essential items within the country so that the Department of Post could be able to deliver parcels containing such items."

Through the national road transport network, the department could deliver more than 2,000 tonnes of life-saving medicines and medical equipment, including COVID-19 testing kits, and medical equipment.

Since there was no private courier services during this period, a lot of citizens ordered life-saving medicines and postal employees delivered these with care.

PPE kits, masks, sanitisers, and test samples, in tie-ups with the Indian Drug Manufacturers Association, Directorate General of Health Services, Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), and online pharma companies. ICMR had tasked India Post to deliver testing kits from depots to 200 labs.

During these trying times, the department helped disburse pension payments and the social benefits of the government at the doorsteps of citizens.

The AePS could facilitate withdrawal of cash from any scheduled bank through the IPPB. "More than two lakh postal personnel and gramin dak sevaks could deliver cash up to ₹10,000 to citizens at their doorsteps," he said.

In Telangana, Asara Pension Payments worth ₹1,293 crore were made to around 56 lakh beneficiaries. In Karnataka, around 70 lakh diyyangjan, elderly and widowed beneficiaries received pensions through money orders worth around ₹600 crore at their homes during the lockdown period, officials said.

Similarly, in Gujarat, it delivered ₹159 crore to four lakh beneficiaries of Ganga Swaroop Yojana (widow financial assistance).

The department allowed the public to withdraw cash from its ATMs. Around 17.7 lakh transactions worth ₹585 crore took place through its ATMs during the period. It also pressed mobile post offices into operation in the country.

Proving to be the saviour to farmers, the department despatched fruits, in partnership with various State horticulture departments. In Bihar, 6,280 kg of Shahi litchis were delivered to customers, while 9,382 kg of mangoes were delivered in Bengaluru. In Maharashtra, the India Post Kisan Rath Service helped farmers from Ratnagiri and Sindhudurg deliver 105 tonnes of Alphonso mangoes in Mumbai and Nashik, when the regular transportation network was unavailable. It also provided logistic support to district administrations and NGOs to deliver food items and rations to migrant labourers and the needy.

Besides, postal employees distributed more than six lakh food packets and dry rations through voluntary contributions and in partnership with various NGOs and gurudwaras. The employees have also contributed ₹42 crore to PM CARES Fund.

"Call them unsung heroes or by any other superlatives, the fact is, it is the working class – the invisible masses – doing their job without pomp and show, amidst danger, that sparks the hope that humanity is not dead," said Powai resident Prakriti Sharani, a research scholar at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London.

Now that the lockdown is being lifted gradually and customs flocking to post offices, the focus would be shifting to personal safety and hygiene.

State gives more funds for Raigad

RAINA ASSAINAR
NAVI MUMBAI

The State government has increased the relief package to the districts affected by Cyclone Nisarga on June 3.

Guardian Minister for Raigad, Aditi Tatkare during a visit to the district on Friday said the State government will get an additional ₹301 crore.

"Till now, we have disbursed ₹373 crore for relief work," said Nidhi Choudhary, Raigad district collector. Of the relief granted, ₹278 crore is for repair work of houses and for loss of crops, cattle and fisheries.

Meanwhile, a six-member team from the National Disaster Management Authority visited the cyclone-affected areas on June 16 to assess the damage.

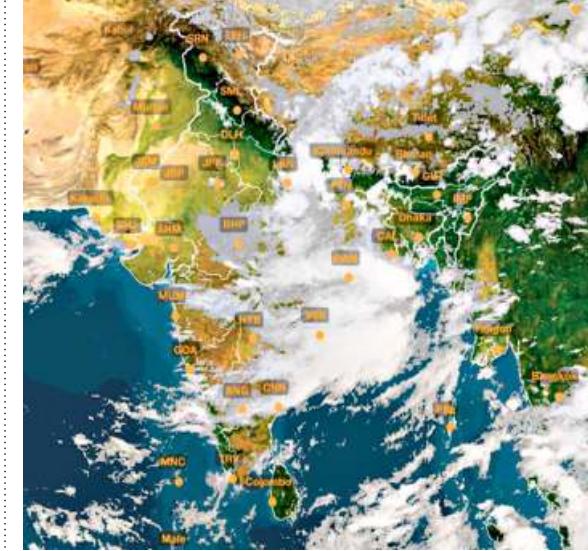
"The central government procedures are prolonged and it will take time to know the amount that would be granted," Ms. Choudhary added.

Fishermen will now get ₹5,000 instead of ₹2,500 for damage to fishing nets, and ₹25,000 instead of ₹9,000 for damage to boats.

Private schools, not receiving grants, will now be eligible for compensation.

WEATHER WATCH

RAINFALL, TEMPERATURE & AIR QUALITY IN SELECT METROS YESTERDAY



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

Forecast for Sunday: Thunderstorm accompanied by lightning very likely at isolated places over Uttarakhand, east Rajasthan, west Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand and central Maharashtra

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	0.2...	34.9...	26.3	Kozhikode	28.5...	33.4...	23.4
Ahmedabad	...-37.7	30.2...	27.7	Kurnool	28.8...	36.0...	25.1
Aizawl	...-26.1	19.8	-	Lucknow	...-36...	27.2	-
Allahabad	...-32.7	27.7	-	Madurai	...-41...	27.4	-
Bengaluru	...-30.3	21.2	-	Mangalore	20.4...	30.9...	23.0
Bhopal	33.2...	29.6...	22.6	Mumbai	5.4...	33.0...	27.5
Bhubaneswar	...-33.9	26.3	-	Mysuru	1...	31.4...	20.8
Chandigarh	23.4...	36.8...	29.1	New Delhi	4.8...	38.1...	22.4
Chennai	...-38.6	30.2	-	Patna	13.6...	31.0...	26.3
Coimbatore	...-33.8	23.8	-	Port Blair	14.4...	31.1...	25.9
Dehradoon	...-33.7	30.2	-	Puducherry	...-39...	28.9	-
Gangtok	15.2...	19.9...	18.1	Pune	...-31.4...	23.3	-
Goa	14.3...	30.8...	24.8	Raipur	10.2...	34.0...	23.0
Guwahati	6.2...	34.6...	24.6	Ranchi	0.2...	27.6...	24.4
Hubballi	...-29.0	30.2	-	Shillong	5.9...	25.1...	18.7
Hyderabad	...-33.0	24.6	-	Shimla	...-29.0...	21.4	-
Imphal	13.6...	29.4...	22.0	Srinagar	...-30.0...	12.8	-
Jaipur	...-40.0	30.6	-	Thiruvananthapuram	1.6...	32.1...	24.4
Kochi	19.8...	31.8...	24.4	Tiruchi	...-39...	28.4	-
Kohima	2.2...	24.2...	18.8	Vijayawada	...-37.0...	29.0	-
Kolkata	0.2...	32.4...	27.8	Visakhapatnam	...-33.0...	28.8	-

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)

Pollutants in the air you are breathing

Yesterday

CITIES	SO ₂	NO _x	CO	PM _{2.5}	PM ₁₀	CODE
Ahmedabad	13	42	26	39	118	...
Bengaluru	...	22	44	...	63	...
Chennai	...	5	30	196
Delhi	...	30	39	64	180	...
Hyderabad	28	25	7	57	102	...
Kolkata	...	8	15	24	48	...
Lucknow	...	4	2	54	123	...
Mumbai	54	14	13	28	81	...
Pune
Visakhapatnam	14	52	46	41	75	...

In observation made at 4.00 p.m., Sirsa, Haryana recorded an average AQI of 300, indicating an unhealthy level of pollution. In contrast, Aizawl, Mizoram recorded a healthy AQI score of 15.

NO_x: Nitrogen Dioxide. Aggravates respiratory illness, causes haze to form by reacting with other air particles, causes acid rain, pollutes coastal waters.
CO: Carbon monoxide. High concentration in air reduces oxygen supply to critical organs like the heart and brain. At very high levels, it can cause dizziness, confusion, unconsciousness and even death.
PM_{2.5} & PM₁₀: Particulate matter pollution can cause irritation of the eyes, nose and throat, coughing, chest tightness and shortness of breath, reduced lung function, irregular heartbeat, asthma attacks, heart attacks and premature death in people with heart or lung disease

Convict moves HC against transfer to Yerwada jail

Manoj Lohar is serving life term in Arthur Road prison

SONAM SAIGAL
MUMBAI

A cancer survivor and heart patient, serving a life term at Arthur Road jail in Mumbai, has moved the Bombay High Court challenging the decision to shift him to Yerwada Central Prison, Pune.

Manoj Lohar (46) has applied for an emergency parole on medical grounds through advocate Samir Vaidya. In his bail plea, Lohar said that Yerwada jail is COVID-19 infected and the entire Pune city is a containment zone. The matter was heard on Friday by Justices A.A. Sayed and V.G. Bishnoi through video conferencing, and State prosecutor S.R. Shinde sought an adjournment on the ground that the officer who was to present the report on Lohar had tested positive.

The petition says that "at Arthur Road jail, there are almost 184 inmates and 26 police personnel have tested positive for corona virus and the jail administration is not adequately equipped to deal



Arthur Road Jail ■ FILE PHOTO

had undergone heart surgery, while in custody, at JJ Hospital on February 25 and has undergone AICD implantation in his heart to avoid sudden cardiac arrest. He said Lohar needs constant medical attention and treatment which is not being provided by jail authorities.

On June 17, Lohar wrote to the Superintendent of Prisons, Arthur Road, regarding his missing medical reports from the jail as informed to him by the chief medical officer (CMO). The letter says, "As per the requirement of the Aurangabad Bench of HC where he has filed for bail, Mr. Lohar's medical reports pertaining to various ailments are needed, however the CMO called me at 1.30 p.m. and said all the reports and documents from private and government hospitals with pre-existing medical conditions have been inadvertently misplaced."

Mr. Vaidya had, on June 15, told a Division Bench of Justice Ujjal Bhuyan and Justice R.I. Chagla that Lohar

Sushant case: YRF hands over copies of contract

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MUMBAI

Yash Raj Films (YRF) on Saturday submitted copies of the contract signed by late actor Sushant Singh Rajput, said Abhishek Trimukhe, Deputy Commissioner of Police, Zone-IX.

So far police have recorded statements of 15 persons, including family members of the actor, his staff, his close friend actor Rhea Chakraborty and of casting director Mukesh Chhabra.

The Bandra Police had sent a letter to Yash Raj Films seeking details of the contract on June 18, a police official said.

With the situation in as much as there have been few deaths of inmates and also the testing of inmates and police personnel has been stopped."

As per directions from the Chief Justice of Bombay High Court which has permitting prisoners to call their families, Lohar called his wife on June 16 and said he had been shifted to Yerwada jail and did not know the reason.

Mr. Vaidya had, on Saturday requesting for urgent hearing.

Will discuss Rana's extradition with Centre: Deshmukh

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MUMBAI

The Maharashtra government will discuss with the Centre the extradition process of Tahawwur Rana, recently re-arrested in the U.S. for his alleged involvement in the 26/11 Mumbai terror attacks, State Home Minister Anil Deshmukh said on Saturday.

Rana had been declared a fugitive by India.

Pakistani-American terrorist David Coleman Headley had told investigators that he had acted as an agent of Rana during the 26/11 attacks, Mr. Deshmukh said.

"We will discuss Rana's extradition process with senior police officials in Maharashtra and at the Central-level," he said.

Meanwhile, special public prosecutor Ujjwal Nikam said on Saturday that Rana's extradition will throw more light on the activities

FROM PAGE ONE

Drug for mild, moderate COVID-19 cases



Glenmark has received nod for marketing Favipiravir in oral form in India.

Since it is an oral medicine, the patient can stay at home.

"It is a significant step in the fight against COVID-19 India. Glenmark is leading the fight. We are not looking it as a business opportunity. The priority is to make the drug available to as many patients and save lives," said Sujesh Vasudevan, president, India Formulations, Middle East and Africa, Glenmark Pharmaceuticals Ltd in a video conference. On Friday, the company received approval from Indian drug regulator for manufacturing and marketing of Favipiravir in oral form in India.

The drug is currently under clinical trial on 150 patients at 11 sites in India.

Studies conducted on Favipiravir in Russia, Japan and China point to rapid reduction in viral load, faster fever reduction, faster reduction of chest CT changes and faster clinical recovery," said Dr Monika Tandon, VP, Head, Clinical Development, Glenmark.

Since COVID-19 cases are rising every day and the healthcare infrastructure has come under severe strain, the availability of the drug will help in tracking the spread, she said.

"The need of the hour is to help healthcare professionals by enabling patients to get treatment at home and help in faster recovery of patients, save lives," said Dr. Tandon.

Glenmark said it identified Favipiravir as a potential candidate because it has a proven in-vitro activity against SARS-CoV2 and has wide therapeutic safety margins for COVID-19 dose.

"Since it is an oral product, it is a big benefit when

hospital infrastructure is under strain," she said.

Glenmark is ramping up production to cater to the growing demand of the drug as India on June 20, 2020 added 14,516 new cases to the total number of 39,504 confirmed cases. Though the fatality rate in India is low at 3.28% as compared to global average of 5.37%, the constant rise in cases is still a matter of worry.

The company has done end to end to manufacturer and market the drug starting from synthesising the API to developing the formulation, getting approval, conducting clinical trial, manufacturing the drug to supplying across India.

Oral Favipiravir in oral form has been approved under the accelerated approval process taking into account the severity of the disease. The drug has been cleared under emergency use authorisation which is a provision that allows countries to use drugs that are urgently needed for an emergency situation or health crisis like this pandemic.

"It is for restricted use. Its use entails responsible medication where every patient must have signed informed consent before start of treatment," Dr. Tandon said adding that approval was given based on global evidence and the ongoing clinical trial on 150 subjects.

The drug will be available both at hospitals and chemists but will be sold strictly only on prescription.

The company is now planning a combination of antiviral drugs Favipiravir and Umifenovir which is applied for influenza for treatment of COVID-19 for which clinical trials will commence soon.

Four civilians injured in Pakistan firing

"Around a dozen villages were affected due to the constant firing and shelling in Baramulla," he added.

J&K recorded over 1,640 ceasefire violations this year. In an anti-militant operation, the security forces killed an unidentified militant at Kulgam in south Kashmir.

"A gunfight erupted when a search party established contact with hiding mili-

tants in the Likhdipora area. So far one unidentified terrorist has been killed. The operation is going on," the police spokesman said.

Over 30 militants were killed in south Kashmir this month, as the security forces upped their operations against the Hizbul Mujahideen and the Jaish-e-Muhammad. A total of 103 militants have been killed in Kashmir this year.

Tahawwur Rana arrested again after release in U.S.

Rana was arrested in 2009 for providing material support to Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), which planned and executed the 2008 attack. The NIA has registered cases of forgery, criminal conspiracy, murder and various sections under the UAPA.

The official said that since it was a judicial procedure, it was difficult to give a definitive date for Rana's extradition.

"He could possibly challenge the extradition up to two levels of court that might take time. It is not possible to give a time frame when the case is being tried judicially," the official noted.

Another official said Rana, after his extradition, could be interrogated only by the NIA and not the Mumbai police.

The police and the NIA registered separate cases pertaining to 26/11 attack.

In 2016, Headley who is serving a 35-year sentence in the U.S., deposited through

video link as an "approver" or a witness in a city court in a case registered by the Mumbai police against Zabiuddin Ansari alias Abu Jundal, an alleged LeT operative, who was present in the Karachi control room that gave directions to the 10 terrorists on phone. The NIA refused to make him an approver.

Headley held in 2009 An NIA charge sheet filed in 2011 said Headley did not stop at conducting reconnaissance and planning the 2008 Mumbai attacks, but was also involved in "execution of other future planned terrorist attacks [planned at Chabab houses and the National Defence College] at the behest of LeT and HuJI."

He travelled to India again in March 2009 to conduct a reconnaissance for the attacks, before being arrested at O'Hare airport, Chicago, in October the same year.

CM YK

Community spread not a possibility yet: Kerala CM

19 deaths reported in three southern States; Telangana adds 546 cases, Andhra Pradesh 491 and Karnataka 416

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
BENGALURU

Karnataka recorded nine more deaths from COVID-19 on Saturday, taking its toll to 132. Andhra Pradesh reported another single-day spike of 491 cases and five deaths.

The sharp rise in cases continued in Telangana as 546 more tested positive, the highest rise till date. Total cases crossed the 7,000 mark at 7,072. Five more pa-

tients died taking the toll to 203.

The test positivity rate for the day was 17%. In all, 53,757 tests were conducted till June 20. With the goal of 50,000 tests in 10 days', more cases were detected.

While three of the nine deaths in Karnataka were from Bengaluru Urban, two were from Bidar and one each from Davangere, Chikmagalur and Udupi. One death was reported in the "others" category as a 66-year-old female patient was



Breaking all rules: A woman driving a two-wheeler in the Red Zone area of Machavaram in Vijayawada on Saturday. ■ V RAJU

brought dead to a hospital in Bidar from outside the State.

In the last 11 days, the number of deaths in the State doubled. From 66 on June 9, the number rose to 133 (including a constable's) on June 20. In the last five days alone, 45 deaths were reported at an average of nine per day.

As new cases, 416 were re-

ported, taking the total to 8,697. This included 5,391 discharges and 3,170 active cases. The new cases included 116 inter-State and 22 international passengers. With 94 cases, Bengaluru continued to report the highest number for the second day and total positive cases in the

city touched 1,076. A deputy

director from the Information Department at Vidhana Soudha tested positive on Saturday.

Kerala reported 127 new cases of COVID-19. The go-

vernment was relieved that in spite of cases going up every day, almost all were imported cases and those diag-

nosed were already in quarantine.

On Saturday, 123 of 127 new cases were imported. Four persons, including one health-care worker, acquired the infection through local transmission.

With 57 recoveries reported, there were 1,450 active COVID-19 cases in the State.

Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan said the State was able to contain local transmission and limit the number stemming from contact, which was proof of successful containment strategies. He said it also indicated that community transmission was not yet a possibility.

Of the 2,413 persons testing positive between May 4 and June 19, 2,165 were imported cases. On the issue of more than 50 people crossing to Tamil Nadu post-lockdown and testing positive in Tamil Nadu, indicating community spread (and included in bulletins issued by the Tamil Nadu Health authorities), Mr. Vijayan said the State had not received any official intimation.

For the first time, Andhra Pradesh tested 22,371 samples in a single day, the Health Department said.

The State tally was 8,452 and 4,240 were under treatment. The death toll was 101.

The worst-hit Krishna and Kurnool districts reported two more deaths each while Guntur recorded one fatality. The 77 deaths in these three districts accounted for 76% of the State toll.

Of the 8,452 cases, 6,620 cases were of locals and 1,506 of people from other States, migrant returnees and 326 foreign returnees.

Also, 785 persons who came to A.P. from Maharashtra during relaxation of lockdown down were positive. Other entrants were from Tamil Nadu (297) and Telangana (212).

Also, 289 from Kuwait tested positive while 10 were from Saudi Arabia, seven from Qatar and 20 from Indonesia, South Africa, UAE, Kazakhstan, Oman, Bahrain and Sudan.

(With inputs from Vijayawada, Hyderabad, and Thiruvananthapuram bureaus)

Monsoon fury



Wild and roaring: Raging waves attacking the coast in Chellanam, West Kochi, as a child looks on from the geotextile mound constructed to prevent sea incursion. Sea ingress has been a problem in Chellanam during monsoon for the past five years. ■ THULASI KAKAT

A.P. Minister tells weavers to return from Karnataka, T.N.

STAFF REPORTER
CHITTOOR

A.P. Panchayat Raj Minister Peddireddi Ramachandra Reddy on Saturday said the YSR Nethanna Nestham scheme was a boon to weavers, and that it would pave the way for providing succour to migrant workers at the looms.

The Minister was speaking after disbursing cheques to beneficiaries under the scheme at a programme in Tirupati.

Mr. Reddy said the scheme would help impoverished weavers overcome their financial difficulties and develop their looms further.

In this context, he appealed to those who had migrated to Tamil Nadu and Karnataka to return to the



P. Ramachandra Reddy

State, particularly in the weavers' belt of Chittoor, and seek work in the looms, apart from getting benefited from the various welfare schemes of the government.

Mr. Reddy said the Nethanna Nestham scheme would be a continuous process, and new beneficiaries would be included from time to time.

ANDHRA PRADESH

'Video-conference can be used to record pleas of accused'

It is lawful in view of two Supreme Court rulings: HC

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
BENGALURU

Now, trial courts can use video-conference to record pleas and examine accused persons, either lodged in prison if they are in judicial custody or in private locations if they are on bail, to ensure the progress of trials in criminal cases during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The High Court of Karnataka upheld the new provision, introduced in the Video Conferencing Hearing Rules, 2020, holding that it was "lawful" in view of two recent judgments of the Supreme Court, which ordered stopping of the presence of undertrial prisoners in

courts and use of video-con-

ference to reduce the presence of stakeholders on court premises.

A Division Bench of Chief Justice Abhay Shreenivas Oka and Justice S. Vishwanath Shetty passed the order while hearing a PIL petition initiated *suo motu* for addressing the technical and legal difficulties in conducting the proceedings in trial courts owing to the restrictions.

The Supreme Court had said production of all undertrial prisoners before courts must be stopped immediately and video-conference must be used for all purposes in view of the pandemic, and the High Courts could

take steps to resort to video-conference.

The order of the court mainly deals with two situations – recording of pleas of accused persons during framing of charges (under Sections 228 and 240 of the Code of Criminal Procedure) and recording of the statements of the accused under Section 313 of the Cr.PC.

If the accused are in prison, prison authorities will have to produce them through video-conference and they will act as coordinators to enable the court to interact with the accused and record their pleas, the Bench said.

IN BRIEF



No judge, staff in quarantine: Kerala HC

KOCHI The Kerala High Court Registrar General on Saturday denied the reports that a judge and a few court staff had gone into quarantine after it emerged that a police officer who visited the court in connection with a case tested positive for SARS-CoV-2. Sophy Thomas, Registrar General, said neither the judge nor any staff had been advised to go into quarantine.

A.P. government cancels SSC examination

VIJAYAWADA The Andhra Pradesh government has decided to cancel SSC public exams in view of a sharp increase in COVID-19 cases. Announcing the decision at a press conference on Saturday, Education Minister Adimulapu Suresh said keeping the safety of the students in mind, it was decided to pass all students of Class 10. The students had been scheduled to write their exams from July 10 to 17.

UDF asks Jose K. Mani's group to step down

KOTTAYAM Hard-pressed to find a way out of the wrangling between two Kerala Congress (M) factions over the president post of the Kottayam district panchayat, the United Democratic Front (UDF) on Saturday demanded the Jose K. Mani group to step down from the president's post in the local body immediately. The Mani group refused to budge, terming the move "an unfair attempt" to amend the seat-sharing deal.

IIT-Palakkad develops ultrasound for COVID-19 screening

The institute's cloud-based app is available for clinicians to perform automated analysis



Aiding detection: IIT-Palakkad has developed automated lung ultrasound for COVID-19 screening and monitoring.

(Dr. C. Kesavadas) and Government Medical College, Kottayam (Dr. Kiran Vishnu Narayan).

An IIT team led by Professor Mahesh R. Panicker started investigations using the

LUS images provided by Dr. Yale Tung Chen, director of the Ultrasound Division at Hospital Universitario, La Paz, Dr. Yale, who tested positive for SARS-CoV-2, shared his own LUS images over the

successive 13 days of disease progression.

Motivated by the promising results that showed the relevance and importance of LUS in COVID-19 patients, the IIT team conducted LUS analysis of normal, viral, and bacterial infected lungs, using image processing and neural networks and developed an automated LUS analysis tool.

Explaining the workflow, Vinod A. Prasad, professor and dean (Industry Collaboration and Sponsored Research), IIT-Palakkad, said a nursing assistant (in the absence of a skilled clinician), following a simple protocol

of LUS, acquires the lung images and transfers the images to the cloud (pulseecho.in/alus/).

The images are analysed over the cloud and scores are assigned according to certain criteria either for the type of infection or its severity.

He said the methodology would be extremely useful in time-critical COVID-19 working conditions, where clinicians have time limitations in manually evaluating ultrasound videos of all patients.

According to Dr. Panicker, the approach is not only restricted to COVID-19 detection but also helps to identify other lung infections.

'No intrusion due to soldiers' bravery'

In response to criticism, PMO clarifies that the Galwan intrusion occurred but was repulsed by Army

NISTULA HEBBAR
NEW DELHI

The Prime Minister's Office (PMO) on Saturday clarified that no part of India's territory was under Chinese occupation, but that the statement made at the all-party meeting was also to indicate that the state of affairs was a "consequence of the bravery of our soldiers", pointing to the June 15 violent face-off between Indian and Chinese troops in eastern Ladakh that left 20 Indian soldiers dead.

In his closing remarks at the meeting, Mr. Modi categorically stated that "neither is anyone inside our territory nor is any of our post captured".

Questions by Congress

This statement had led to questions by the Congress on the reasons why 20 soldiers died in a clash with the Chinese in the Galwan valley, if there was no intrusion and the continuing military-level



Keeping watch: Soldiers on guard as an Army convoy moves on the Srinagar-Ladakh highway on June 18. ■ AP

talks to defuse the situation on the Line of Actual Control (LAC). In Saturday's clarification, the intrusion is acknowledged as having occurred and then repulsed by Indian soldiers, hence currently no intrusion exists on India's western border with China.

"Attempts are being made in some quarters to give a mischievous interpretation to remarks by the Prime Mi-

nister to the APM [all-party meeting] yesterday [Friday]," said a press release from the PMO.

"Prime Minister was clear that India would respond firmly to any attempts to transgress the Line of Actual Control [LAC]. In fact he specifically emphasised that in contrast to the past neglect of such challenges, Indian forces now decisively

"What is Indian territory is clear from the map of India. This government is strongly and resolutely committed to that. In so far as

counter any violations of LAC. The APM was also informed that the Chinese forces have come in much larger strength to the LAC and that the Indian response is commensurate. As regards transgression of LAC, it was clearly stated that the violence in Galwan on June 15 arose because Chinese side was seeking to erect structures just across the LAC and refused to desist from such action," the statement said.

The focus of Mr. Modi's remarks to the discussions were the events of June 15 that led to the loss of lives of 20 Indian soldiers.

"The Prime Minister's observations that there was no Chinese presence on our side of the LAC pertained to the situation as a consequence of the bravery of our armed forces," it stated.

"What is Indian territory is clear from the map of India. This government is strongly and resolutely committed to that. In so far as

there is some illegal occupation, the APM was briefed in detail how over the last 60 years more than 43,000 square kilometres has been yielded under circumstances with which the country is well aware. It was also made clear that this government will not allow any unilateral change of the LAC," said the statement, taking aim at the Congress.

It did acknowledge that the overall sentiment of the meeting was of unequivocal support to the government and the armed forces at a time of national crisis, and that the "unfortunate and unnecessary controversy" being created to "lower morale" would not be allowed to undermine the confidence of people. Nearly 20 presidents of mainline Opposition parties met the Prime Minister, and expressed support to the government and the Army and asked for the restoration of status quo ante on the LAC.

China lost over 40 soldiers in Galwan, says Minister

Beijing hiding numbers, says General V.K. Singh (retd.)

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

While India lost 20 soldiers in the violent clash at Galwan area, China lost more than 40 soldiers, Union Minister Gen. V.K. Singh (retd.) said on Saturday.

This is the first response from anyone in the government on casualties on the Chinese side in the June 15 clash.

"If we lost 20 soldiers, more than double the number were killed on their [Chinese] side," Gen. Singh said. "China hides numbers. In the 1962 war too, it did not accept the casualties," he added.

In the first combat fatalities in 45 years along the Line of Actual Control (LAC), 20 Indian soldiers were killed when they were attacked by Chinese troops in Galwan valley during the "de-escalation" process on Monday night.

PLA's (People's Liberation Army) Western Theatre Command spokesman Senior Colonel Zhang Shuili said on Tuesday that the clash in Galwan valley had led to casualties on both sides but so far China has not revealed its casualty numbers.

Queries from veterans
Prime Minister Narendra Modi's comments on Friday that "neither is anyone inside our territory nor is any of our post captured", raised several questions from the military fraternity, both serving and retired.

The statement further said the focus of Mr. Modi's remarks were the events of June 15 at Galwan that led to the loss of lives of 20 soldiers.

The statement clarified that his observations that there was no Chinese presence on 'our side' of the LAC "pertained to the situation as a consequence of the bravery of our armed forces", and added that the sacrifices of the soldiers of the 16 Bihar Regiment "foiled

the attempt of the Chinese side to erect structures and also cleared the attempted transgression at this point of the LAC on that day."

Soon after Mr. Modi's comments, China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokesperson Zhao Lijian claimed on Twitter that "Galwan Valley is located on the Chinese side of the LAC in the west section of the China-India boundary."

"For many years, the Chinese border troops have been patrolling and on duty in this region", he said.

Veteran helicopter pilot AVM Manmohan Bahadur (retd) debunked those remarks.

"We flew regularly over Galwan estuary way back in 1978 and my predecessors were doing this from before. Our maps clearly showed the LAC way to the East of the estuary - else we would have skirted the confluence of Shyok and Galwan. Sorry sir, but you are wrong," he said in reply on Twitter.

Past agreement
Beginning May 5, Chinese troops have come inside Indian territory at several points.

At the Corps Commanders talks on June 6, both sides reached an agreement for a partial pullout of troops and equipment from some of the stand-off areas in Galwan.

They also identified five locations of conflict- PP 14, 15 and 17, North bank of Pangong Tso and Chushul. In Pangong Tso, they are sitting at Finger 4, while India's claim is till Finger 8.

It remains a major area of contention and that is expected to be discussed at the Corps Commander level at a later stage.



In unison: Flight cadets from all branches of the Indian Air Force Academy marching with masks during a combined graduation parade at Dundigal, on the outskirts of Hyderabad on Saturday. ■ G. RAMAKRISHNA

Rajnath Singh to pay 3-day visit to Russia

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh will pay a three-day visit to Russia beginning Monday to attend a grand military parade in Moscow to mark the 75th anniversary of the Soviet victory over Germany in the Second World War.

The Defence Minister's visit comes in the midst of escalating border tensions between India and China, particularly after the killing of 20 Indian Army personnel by Chinese troops in eastern Ladakh's Galwan Valley on June 15.

"Defence Minister Rajnath Singh will pay a visit to Moscow to attend the victory parade on June 24 to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the victory in the Second World War," the Defence Ministry said in a statement. Officials said Mr. Singh is going ahead with the visit due to India's decades-old military ties with Russia.

"I wish a safe journey to Defence Minister of strategic partner India @rajnathsingh who is scheduled to depart to Moscow on Monday to witness the Great Victory Day Military Parade on June 24," Russian Ambassador Nikolay Kudashev tweeted.

A tri-service 75-member Indian military contingent has already reached Moscow to participate in the parade. The Indian marching contingent will be led by a major rank officer of the Sikh Light Infantry Regiment, which had fought with valour in the Second World War.

**ABHINAY DESHPANDE
HYDERABAD**
Air Chief Marshal R.K.S. Bhadauria on Saturday said that despite the unacceptable Chinese action after agreements were reached at military talks and the resulting loss of lives, all efforts were made to ensure that the current situation was resolved "peacefully" along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) at the Galwan valley in eastern Ladakh.

He said the IAF had been flying combat patrols whenever required, but there had been no incursion from the fighters. "We know what their [the Chinese] airfields are, where they are deployed and what their operational bases are," he said.

Chinese air activity

Responding to a question on Chinese air activity over Tibet since the crisis in Ladakh began, Air Chief Marshal Bhadauria said, "In this period, normally China deploys a fair number of air

craft in the area for their own training. It happens every summer. But this year, the number of deployments has increased and, beyond May, it increased further. We are aware of what has been deployed and are monitoring the deployments and postures and have taken the necessary action."

He said the IAF had been addressing the fighter jets, he said, "The contributions by our esteemed veterans have been pivotal in changing the course of several wars fought

by India since Independence."

Full alert

The armed forces have gone into full alert following the Galwan clash. The IAF has forward-deployed its frontline fighters, including Su-30MKI and MiG-29UPG, and deployed the AH-64E Apache heavy attack helicopter in Leh. The CH-47 Chinook heavy lift helicopters have also been deployed in this region. China has deployed artillery, armoured vehicles and tanks close to the LAC.

It has been learnt that the Army, too, has moved additional divisions from Bareilly and other areas forward for acclimatisation.

(With inputs from Dinakar Peri in New Delhi)

Opposition seeks Centre's explanation

PMO's clarification is 'a lame attempt to obfuscate the truth', says Congress

SOBHANA K. NAIR
NEW DELHI

After Prime Minister Narendra Modi's concluding remarks at the all-party meeting on Friday and the subsequent clarification issued by the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) the day after, the Congress raised several questions on the government's position on Galwan valley and the sequence of events that claimed the lives of 20 Indian soldiers.

At the all-party meeting, Mr. Modi said, "Neither anyone has intruded into our territory nor took over any post". The Congress attacked him for his comments, with its former president Rahul Gandhi terming it a "surrender" in the face of the Chinese aggression.

At a press conference on Saturday, senior Congress leader P. Chidambaram asked Mr. Modi, "If no Chinese troops were inside Indian territory, where did the



P. Chidambaram

clashes take place on June 15-16? Where were 20 Indian soldiers killed and 85 injured?" he said.

Chidambaram's query

Mr. Chidambaram flagged the statements made by Minister for External Affairs Jaishankar and the Ministry demanding the "restoration of status quo ante". "What was the meaning of 'status quo ante'? What was the meaning of the 'disengagement' that the government said was 'underway'?", he asked.

The Prime Minister's Of-

fice (PMO), in a detailed clarification claimed that the statement made at the all-party meet was a reference that the state of affairs was a "consequence of the bravery of our soldiers".

The Congress called the clarification by PMO "a lame attempt to obfuscate the truth". Its chief spokesperson Randeep Surjewala said, "First of all, the PMO and the Government need to clearly state their position on the Galwan Valley. Is Galwan Valley not part of Indian territory? Why is the Government not coming forward and strongly rebuking the Chinese claim over Galwan Valley?"

"But what about the intrusions between May 5 and June 15? We refer to several statements of the Defence Minister admitting to the presence of Chinese forces 'in large numbers' and the statement of the Chief of the Army Staff on 'disengage-

ment', he added.

Other Opposition parties also attacked the oscillating positions of the PMO. CPI (M) general secretary Sitaram Yechury said, "What else did the PM say in the all-party meeting last evening which he did not mean? Can we trust anything that was said on an issue of such strategic importance, if he changes his statements so quickly?" he asked.

CPI general secretary D. Raja called the 'flip-flop' from the PMO as "misleading" and "irresponsible".

The Samajwadi Party, despite supporting the government unilaterally during the meeting, appeared unconvinced. "Confused by the Prime Minister's India-China LAC statement, the people are asking that if China did not enter our territory, then under what conditions our soldiers were martyred," said party president Akhilesh Yadav.

BRUHAT BENGALURU MAHANAGARA PALIKE

Office of the Executive Engineer, Road Infrastructure

Yelahanka Division, N.R.Square, Bengaluru-560002

No: EE/R/YNK/TEND/03/2020-21 Date : 20.06.2020

INVITATION FOR TENDER (IFT)

Turnkey Lum Sum fixed Price No Variation Contract Basis

(Two Cover System) (Through GOK e-Procurement Portal only)

The Government of Karnataka vide G.O. No. UDD/185/MNY/2017, Bengaluru dated 26.12.2017, has accorded approval in principle and sanctioned budget under Karnataka special infrastructure project Scheme for taking up of the Works listed below.

SL No.	Name of the work	Appox. Amount put to tender (Rs.in Lakhs)	EMD (Rs.in lakhs)
1	Construction of Grade separator at Yelahanka Police station circle in Yelahanka Assembly Constituency	5423.00	54,23,000

(1) Last date for receipt of Queries 01.07.2020 upto 15.00 in the office of the Executive Engineer Road Infrastructure Yelahanka Division, BBMP. (2) Pre Tender Meeting will be held on 01.07.2020 at 16.00 hours in the office of the Chief Engineer (Road Infrastructure) (3) Technical Bids will be opened on the website <https://eproc.karnataka.gov.in> in the office of the Executive Engineer (Road Infrastructure)-Yelahanka Division on 29.07.2020 at 16.30 hours.

Further details may be obtained from the above office during office hours on working days or from website <https://eproc.karnataka.gov.in>

Sd/-
Executive Engineer, Road Infrastructure-
Yelahanka Division.

PAY DEVELOPMENT CHARGES-HELP TO DEVELOP BENGALURU



If we lost 20 soldiers, more than double the number were killed on their [Chinese] side

GEN. V.K. SINGH (RETD.)

Union Minister

the attempt of the Chinese side to erect structures and also cleared the attempted transgression at this point of the LAC on that day."

Soon after Mr. Modi's comments, China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokesperson Zhao Lijian claimed on Twitter that "Galwan Valley is located on the Chinese side of the LAC in the west section of the China-India boundary."

"For many years, the Chinese border troops have been patrolling and on duty in this region", he said.

Veteran helicopter pilot AVM Manmohan Bahadur (retd) debunked those remarks.

"We flew regularly over Galwan estuary way back in 1978 and my predecessors were doing this from before. Our maps clearly showed the LAC way to the East of the estuary - else we would have skirted the confluence of Shyok and Galwan. Sorry sir, but you are wrong," he said in reply on Twitter.

PMO's clarification

The PMO issued the clarification that with regard to LAC transgression, it was clearly stated that the violence in Galwan on June 15 "arose because Chinese side was seeking to erect structures just across the LAC and refused to desist from such actions".

The statement further said the focus of Mr. Modi's remarks were the events of June 15 at Galwan that led to the loss of lives of 20 soldiers.

The statement clarified that his observations that there was no Chinese presence on 'our side' of the LAC "pertained to the situation as a consequence of the bravery of our armed forces", and added that the sacrifices of the soldiers of the 16 Bihar Regiment "foiled

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

No: ME/3/2020/993 Lucknow: Dated - 18 June, 2020

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

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

'Chinese troops responsible for deadly clashes'

External Affairs Ministry rejects China's account of what led to the killing and its claim to the entire Galwan valley

SUHASINI HAIDAR
NEW DELHI

Rejecting China's "step by step" account of what led to the killing of 20 Indian soldiers in the Galwan valley on June 15, the Ministry of External Affairs on Saturday said the Chinese troops were wholly responsible for the deadly clashes and they had "attempted" to transgress into the Indian side of the Line of Actual Control (LAC) many times.

"Both sides had agreed to respect and abide by the LAC and not undertake any activity to alter the status quo," MEA spokesperson Anurag Srivastava said in a statement on Saturday in response to the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA).

"The Chinese side departed from these understandings in respect of the LAC in the Galwan valley area and sought to erect structures just across the LAC [on the Indian side]. When this at-



In protest: People calling for the boycott of Chinese goods in Mumbai. ■ VIVEK BENDRE

tempt was foiled, Chinese troops took violent actions on 15 June, 2020, that directly resulted in casualties," Mr. Srivastava added.

The MFA also rejected, for the second time this week, China's newly articulated claims on the entire Galwan valley. In a statement, repeated by spokesperson Zhao Lijian in a series of tweets on Saturday, the Chi-

nese MFA had said, "The Galwan valley is located on the Chinese side of the Line of Actual Control in the west section of the China-India boundary. For many years, the Chinese border troops have been patrolling and on duty in this region." It claimed that India had agreed "not to cross the estuary of the Galwan river to patrol and build facilities" dur-

ing the military commanders meeting on June 6.

'Historically clear'

The MFA said the position on the Galwan valley was "historically clear". "Attempts by the Chinese side to now advance exaggerated and untenable claims with regard to the Line of Actual Control (LAC) there are not acceptable. They are not in

accordance with China's own position in the past," Mr. Srivastava said, adding that Indian troops had been patrolling the Galwan area for a "long time without any incident".

To the Chinese version of the events unfolding over the past few weeks, which the MFA put out as a "step by step" account of the developments, the MFA said China had been "hindering" normal patrols by Indian troops since early May 2020. "This

had resulted in a face-off which was addressed by the ground commanders as per the provisions of the bilateral agreements and protocols. We do not accept the contention that India was unilaterally changing the status quo. On the contrary, we were maintaining it," it said.

The MFA's response came hours after the government clarified Prime Minister Narendra Modi's comments on the Galwan valley clashes, in

which he had said, "No one has intruded into Indian territory, nor is anyone in our territory, nor have any of our border posts been captured." The statement, which has been questioned by the Opposition, also led to comments from former diplomats, who said all communication during times of conflict must be closely monitored.

"It appears the PM mis-spoke as it is not possible to deny that China has transgressed, and the clarification has come too late," former diplomat K.C. Singh told *The Hindu*. "In times of conflict, as it was during the Kargil war and PM Vajpayee's statements, it is important that public positions conform to facts and inherited strategic wisdom. What the PM says is being heard not only in India but by our opponents and beyond that in the Asia-Pacific region and the world," he added.

Chouhan asks people to boycott Chinese goods

'We will give a befitting reply to China'

STAFF REPORTER
BHOPAL

Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has called upon the State's residents to boycott Chinese products in view of the killing of 20 Indian soldiers in face-off between Indian and Chinese troops at Galwan in Ladakh.

"India will give a befitting reply to China," Mr. Chouhan told presspersons in Ra-



Shivraj Singh Chouhan

Chinese products and give priority to items manufactured locally."

Meanwhile, Deputy Inspector General of Police, Indore Range (City), Harinayanchari Mishra, on Friday night withdrew an advisory, hours after issuing it, asking personnel to uninstall 50 Chinese mobile phone applications, including Tik Tok and Share it, citing the possibility of data theft.

Bengal BJP chief Ghosh sparks a row

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
KOLKATA

West Bengal BJP president Dilip Ghosh has courted a fresh controversy by seeking revenge for the murder of a party supporter in Paschim Medinipur district.

"*Bodlao hobey, bodolo hobey* (There will be revenge, there will be change)," Mr. Ghosh posted on social media.

Mr. Ghosh's remarks were made in connection with the murder of Pawan Jana, a party worker who was killed at Chokaimail on June 17.

Another senior BJP leader later threatened to torch a police station over the death of Jana.

Campaign for Yoga Day launched

Kejriwal had opposed Lieutenant-Governor's move; assessment to be done of facilities available for home isolation

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

With the hope that 10 million people would join in, Union Culture Minister Prahlaad Singh Patel on Saturday urged everyone to perform Surya Namaskar on International Yoga Day, falling on Sunday, and share the images on social media with the hashtag #10MillionSuryaNamaskar.

Mr. Patel said he would perform the yoga poses of Surya Namaskar at Purana Qila in Delhi on the occasion.

The Ministry's campaign 'Namaste Yoga' to promote yoga as a part of daily life started on Friday and will culminate on Sunday.

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

A day after announcing five-day mandatory institutional quarantine in the national capital, Lieutenant-Governor Anil Baijal rolled back his order on Saturday. The mandatory institutional quarantine was vehemently opposed by Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal and his deputy, Manish Sisodia, at the first session of a meeting of the Delhi Disaster Management Authority (DDMA) on Saturday morning.

This was followed by another meeting at 5 p.m. where the DDMA approved recommendations of a high-level expert committee for fixing rates of hospital beds

for treatment. The committee was constituted on the directions of Union Home Minister Amit Shah under the Chairmanship of Vinod K Paul, Member, NITI Aayog, to fix rates charged by private hospitals in Delhi for isolation beds and ICUs without and with ventilator support.

"Regarding institutional isolation, only those positive cases which do not require hospitalisation on clinical assessment and do not have adequate facilities for home isolation would be required to undergo institutional isolation," Mr. Baijal tweeted after the meeting.

Earlier, in his capacity as the Chairperson of the DDMA, Mr. Baijal had or-

dered that the five-day institutional quarantine would mandatorily apply to each case currently under home quarantine. In a city where close to an estimated 80% of the infected patients are un-

der home isolation, the Delhi government had called the decision "arbitrary" and asked it be reconsidered.

"The issue of mandatory institutional quarantine was also discussed in detail. As the government has started intensive community-based rapid testing, it is possible that individuals who are positive may have moderate to severe illness necessitating hospitalisation which can be missed if they are home isolated," the Raj Niwas said.

To prevent this from happening, it said, all individuals who are positive would be referred to the COVID care centres for assessment of clinical conditions, the severity and the presence of co-morbidities.

Simultaneously, it also said, physical assessment will also be done whether adequate facilities for home isolation like minimum two rooms and separate toilet ex-

ists so that the family members and neighbours are protected.

If adequate facility for home isolation exists and the person on clinical assessment does not require hospitalisation, he would be offered to either continue to stay in COVID centre/paid isolation facility [hotels etc] or can opt for home isolation," the Raj Niwas said.

"Those who are in home isolation should follow the guidelines laid down by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare and should stay in touch with healthcare providers so that if their condition deteriorates, they can be moved to the COVID hospitals," it said.

Trinamool expels village leader on graft charges

He attempted to siphon off relief funds

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
KOLKATA

West Bengal's ruling Trinamool Congress has expelled a pradhan of a gram panchayat in the State's Hooghly district from the party for allegedly siphoning off Amphan relief funds.

Narenra Nath Singh, the pradhan of Garalgachia gram panchayat, was expelled as he put his phone number and that of his family members in the list of beneficiaries who are likely to receive relief. In the list of 166 beneficiaries, there were hundred entries pertaining to the name of his family

members, a statement said. "It is very unfortunate that a party person attempted to misuse the State relief fund in this time of crisis," Dilip Yadav, the party's Hooghly district president, said. Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee had hinted at strong action against those indulging in corruption during relief efforts.

Cyclone Amphan had battered south Bengal on May 20. The State government had announced funds to the tune of ₹6,500 crore, and the Centre has given ₹1,000 crore for cyclone relief measures.

The initiative has been taken to promote online education during the COVID-19 lockdown.

Smart classrooms would be established in 100 government schools at a cost of ₹1.85 crore, Mr. Datasara said, adding that e-content for the curriculum of classes I to 12 would be made available to the students. Four teachers in each school would be trained to teach in

the smart classrooms, he said. Schools situated in remote areas, where computer teachers and laboratory as-

sists have already been appointed, would be given priority for establishing the smart classrooms. All arrangements would be made for the upkeep of the classrooms as well as for the continuation of the new mode of education, Mr. Datasara said.

Recently selected

The Minister said the 33 go-

vernment schools recently

selected to be converted into

English medium institutions

would also get digital class-

rooms.

Besides, schools being de-

veloped as centres of excel-

lence would be also

equipped with these class-

rooms.

Assam NRC's rejection orders may be rechecked

Some were found to be faulty: official

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GUWAHATI

Officials at the helm of updating the National Register of Citizens (NRC) in Assam said the rejection orders to be issued to those excluded from the list of citizens may be rechecked.

Around 1.9 million out of 33 million applicants were excluded from the final NRC draft published on August 31, 2019. Each of them was supposed to have been issued a rejection order spelling out the reasons for their exclusion.

According to the proce-

dures framed under the su-

pervision of the Supreme

Court, a person would be enti-

tled to a 120-day win-

dow to appeal for inclusion

after receiving such an or-

der at the Foreigners' Tribu-

nals in Assam.

Faulty orders

Hitesh Dev Sarma, the State Coordinator for the NRC, said some of the orders were found to be faulty. He said ensuring proper rea-

sons for rejection was ne-

cessary for the exercise.

The process of issuing the

rejection orders was to have

started from March but has

been delayed due to the CO-

VID-19 lockdown. "The pan-



Long wait: People waiting to check their names in the list in 2019. ■ PTI

demic does not make it ideal for people to collect their rejec-

tion orders," he said.

Authorities have been uti-

lising the "break" to correct,

update and sort the rejec-

tion orders.

Those involved with NRC-

related issues said the ack-

nowledgement of faulty re-

jection orders have cast a

shadow of doubt on the

exercise.

"It's been more than nine months and those excluded have not been told why they have been left out. So incorrect orders would have been issued then [had the formalit-

y been completed on time?]" said Aman Wadud,

an advocate who specialises in cases of people declared foreigners.

Pollution board sends closure notice to OIL

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GUWAHATI

The Pollution Control Board, Assam, (PCBA) has issued notice to Oil India Limited (OIL) to close down all production and drilling operations in the Baghjan area of eastern Assam's Tin-sukia district.

The closure notice, issued on June 19, is likely to

hit the production of crude oil from 17 wells and natural gas from four in the greater Baghjan oilfield where one of the gas wells – Number 5 – had a blowout on May 27 before bursting into flames on June 9. The PCBA accused OIL of not adopting safety measures and flouting rules of the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986.

SUDOKU



DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★★

Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

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

Brazil's virus count crosses one million

It reported 55,000 infections on Friday and has seen more than 1,000 deaths each on 4 days this week

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
RIO DE JANEIRO

The World Health Organization (WHO) warned on Friday of a "new and dangerous phase" of the COVID-19 pandemic, as infections continued to surge in the Americas, with Brazil registering more than one million cases.

Colombia and Mexico also passed bleak milestones, as their death tolls topped 2,000 and 20,000, respectively, showing how the virus continues ravaging the Americas and parts of Asia even as Europe starts to ease out of lockdown.

'A new, dangerous phase'
The measures imposed to halt the spread of the disease have caused crippling economic damage, but the WHO warned against giving in to isolation fatigue. "The world is in a new and dangerous phase. Many people are understandably fed up with being at home... but the virus is still spreading fast," WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus told a virtual press conference.

The virus has now killed more than 4,58,000 people and infected 8.6 million worldwide.

Brazil, which has the second-highest number of infections and deaths after the United States, reported a one-day record of nearly 55,000 new infections, becoming the second country to pass one million cases.

The Health Ministry said the jump was caused by "instability" in its reporting system, which delayed previous days' figures for some States.

Brazil's death toll now stands at nearly 49,000, and has risen by more than 1,000 each of the past four days – though its curve finally appears to be starting to flatten.



No distancing: People at a popular shopping street in São Paulo, Brazil, on Friday. ■ REUTERS

Authorities in Mexico City meanwhile pushed back a planned reopening of the economy from next week to the following, saying the rate of infection was still too high.

And Argentina, which is reeling from the economic impact of the health crisis, bought more time to negotiate its \$66 billion debt restructuring with creditors, who agreed to extend the deadline once again, to July 24. The U.S. has the highest death toll by far, at more than 1,19,000. Top U.S. expert Anthony Fauci said in an interview he was optimistic America would not impose a new lockdown. He predicted it would instead focus on "trying to better control those areas of the country that seem to be having a surge of cases." Normality is returning to cultural and sporting events disrupted by the virus. France said it would reopen cinemas from Monday and stadiums from July 11, though with a 5,000-fan limit.

Pope thanks Italian doctors, nurses

REUTERS
VATICAN CITY

Pope Francis on Saturday held his first audience for a group of people since Italy lifted its COVID-19 lockdown, granting it to health workers from the Italian region most affected by the pandemic. "You were one of the supporting pillars of the entire country," he told doctors and nurses from the Lombardy region gathered in the Vatican's frescoed Clementine Hall, which had not been used for months because of the crisis.

"To those of you here and to your colleagues all across Italy go my esteem and my sincere thanks, and I know very well I am interpreting everyone's sentiments," he said. He thanked the health workers, who wore masks, for being "angels," including by lending their



Pope Francis at a meeting in the Vatican on Saturday. ■ REUTERS

cell phones to dying patients so they could say their final goodbyes to their loved ones. Italy returned to relative normality on June 3 when Italians were allowed to move between regions again. But rules such as social distancing in public and wearing masks are still in effect.

Nearly 35,000 people in

Pak. records 153 new deaths

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
ISLAMABAD

Pakistan on Saturday reported 153 COVID-19 deaths, the highest spike in a single-day in the country, while the total number of confirmed COVID-19 cases crossed the 1,71,000-mark, health officials said. According to the Ministry of National Health Services, the total number of confirmed cases rose to 1,71,665 after 6,604 new infections were recorded in 24 hours. The total toll stands at 3,382 after 153 deaths were registered.

White House likely to issue immigration restrictions

Trump met officials from govt. departments to finalise order

SIRRAM LAKSHMAN

A potential executive order from U.S. President Donald Trump restricting, for a limited period, several visa categories, including the H-1B skilled worker programme, is expected in the next few days as per multiple industry sources.

Mr. Trump and his advisers met with stakeholders from U.S. government departments on Tuesday, as per sources, to finalise an executive order on immigration – the second since April 22. The new order is likely to renew the first one, which restricted new immigrant visas from outside the U.S. and is due to expire on Monday. It is also likely to include additional visa categories.

The U.S. issues 85,000 H-1Bs each year. Just over 70% of H-1B visas (initial employment and continuing employment) have been allotted to Indians in the last two fiscal years. The bulk of these go to IT consulting firms and big tech – Google, Amazon, Facebook, Apple and others. Google and Amazon topped the list of new H-1B visa receipts in FY19.

Several media outlets have been reporting an extension and broadening of April's executive order since mid-May. The extensions are likely to include H-1B visas, H-2B visas (temporary non-agricultural workers), L1 (intra-company transfers), H4 (immediate relatives of H-1B visa holders), J1 exchange visitor visas and optional practical training authorisations given to foreign students already in the U.S.

Last week's meetings indicate that the order is taking shape. The individuals at the meeting included White House advisers Stephen Miller and Jared Kushner (who is the President's son-in-law), National Economic Council

Policies that impose wide-ranging bans undercut our economy's ability to grow

THOMAS DONOHUE,
CEO, U.S. Chamber of Commerce

said in a letter to Mr. Trump earlier in June. Unemployment rates in 'computer occupations' was 2.5% in May 2020 – much lower than the 13.5% unemployment rate for that month all other occupations, according to Bureau of Labor Statistics analysed by the National Foundation for American Policy, a non-partisan research organisation.

The Trump administration has progressively made legal immigration to the U.S. harder via a number of executive orders. It has generally adopted the line that foreigners are taking American jobs and at lower wages.

A central driving force behind this position is Senior White House adviser Stephen Miller. There are also others in the administration such as USCIS acting head Ken Cuccinelli, who are known to be hawkish on immigration while Mr. Kushner and Mr. Kudlow are known to take a softer line. The State Department, whose representative was present at the meetings during the week, is also aware of the importance of visas, the sources said. Visas are an important driver of income for the Department. Also, as the point of contact with other countries, the Department will have to deal with the fallout of any restrictions on visas. Some of those crafting the new order will likely have two dates in mind as per discussions *The Hindu* had with those tracking the issue.

"Policies that would, for example, impose wide-ranging bans on the entry of non-immigrant workers or impose burdensome new regulatory requirements on businesses that employ foreign nationals would undermine that access to talent, and, in the process, undercut our economy's ability to grow and create jobs," CEO of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, Thomas Donohue,

China to set up 'security agency' in Hong Kong

It is aimed at cracking down on dissent

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
BEIJING

China will set up a "national security agency" in Hong Kong to oversee a forthcoming new law aimed at cracking down on dissent in the city, state media said on Saturday. The new law also would override any existing Hong Kong laws that may conflict with it once it is implemented, Xinhua news agency said in a report.

The report followed the conclusion of a meeting in Beijing of China's top law-making committee that reviewed draft provisions aimed at snuffing out the pro-democracy movement that has rocked the city.

The future security agency would be established by



A sign against the security law in Hong Kong. ■ AFP

China's Central government and would "supervise, guide, coordinate, and support" the maintenance of national security in the territory, Xinhua said.

Xinhua said the eventual law would criminalise "secession, subversion of state power, terrorism, and colluding with foreign and external forces to endanger national security."

Protesters topple Confederate general's statue

Demonstrations held across the country to mark the anniversary of Juneteenth

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
WASHINGTON

Protesters in Washington toppled a statue of a Confederate general late on Friday, after nationwide rallies to demand racial justice on a day heavy with symbolism – the Juneteenth holiday commemorating the end of slavery in the United States.

Demonstrations were held in Atlanta, Chicago, Los Angeles, New York and Washington against a backdrop of weeks of protests fuelled by the deaths of African Americans at the hands of police. In a stark illustration of the tensions roiling the nation, President Donald Trump issued a solemn White House statement commemorating Juneteenth, while also threatening protesters on Twitter ahead of



Rallying for rights: Protesters marching on Friday in Brooklyn, New York City, to mark Juneteenth. ■ AFP

his controversial rally in Tulsa, Oklahoma on Saturday.

End of slavery

Juneteenth marks the day – June 19, 1865 – when a Union general arrived in Galveston, Texas and informed slaves that they were free – two months after the Civil War had ended and two-and-a-

half years after president Abraham Lincoln had issued the Emancipation Proclamation.

The date is generally celebrated with prayer services and family gatherings, but comes this year amid a national soul-searching over America's legacy of racial injustice.

Late on Friday, a statue of Confederate general Albert Pike was torn down by demonstrators in the capital and set on fire, in an act labelled a "disgrace" by Mr. Trump. Earlier, several thousand demonstrators marched across New York's Brooklyn Bridge to Manhattan, chanting the names of black men and women killed by police in recent years.

Protesters in Atlanta, where a police officer was charged with murder this week for shooting a black man in the back, marched on the Georgia State Capitol.

More gathered in Washington outside the Lincoln Memorial and near the White House, while thousands marched in Chicago and danced at festive rallies in South Los Angeles.

Prosecutor who probed Giuliani refuses to quit

Berman's resignation was announced

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
NEW YORK

A U.S. prosecutor who investigated allies of President Donald Trump insisted on Friday that he had no intention of quitting after the Attorney-General issued a press release announcing his resignation.

Geoffrey Berman

over-saw the prosecution of former Trump lawyer Michael Cohen and probed advisor Rudy Giuliani's efforts to discredit the President's political opponents since he was appointed to head the powerful Southern District of New York attorney's office in 2018. Attorney General William Barr announced Mr. Berman's resignation late on Friday.

But Mr. Berman said he first learned of his apparent departure from Mr. Barr's press release. "I have not resigned, and have no intention of resigning," Mr. Berman wrote. "I will step down when a presidentially appointed nominee is confirmed by the Senate. Until then, our investigations will move forward without interruption."

ELSEWHERE



UN's race vote amounts to hypocrisy: Pompeo

WASHINGTON
U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said on Saturday a UN Human Rights Council vote condemning racism amounted to hypocrisy.

"The council's decision to vote yesterday on a resolution focusing on policing and race in the U.S. marks a new low," he said. ■ AFP

N. Korea gearing up to send anti-South leaflets

SEOUL
North Korea is gearing up to send propaganda leaflets over its southern border, denouncing North Korean defectors and South Korea, its state media said on Saturday. Enraged North Korean people across the country "are actively pushing forward with the preparations for launching a large-scale distribution of leaflets," said state news agency KCNA. ■ REUTERS

Sri Lanka's Easter bombings probe is at final stages, say police

200 suspects have been arrested; inquiry is now focusing on financial networks connecting suicide bombers; role of foreign groups suspected

MEERA SRINIVASAN
COLOMBO

Sri Lanka's probe into the April 2019 Easter terror bombings is in its "final stages", authorities have said, while raising suspicion that the suicide bombers were funded by "two foreign outfits".

The Colombo Crime Division, Criminal Investigation Department (CID) and the Terrorism Investigation Department (TID), who are investigating the attacks of last summer, have arrested over 200 suspects since.

The coordinated bomb blasts at three luxury hotels in Colombo and three churches in Colombo, nearby Negombo, and the eastern city of Batticaloa, were the deadliest attacks in Sri Lanka's post-war decade, claiming 279 lives.

On what remains to be found out in the ongoing probe, police spokesman Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Jaliya Senaratne said investigators are focus-

ing on the financial networks connecting the suicide bombers.

"We have to trace the flow of finances. We have nearly established the network within Sri Lanka. Once that is completed, we may seek INTERPOL's support to look into the two foreign organisations that we suspect funded the suicide bombers," he said, speaking to *The Hindu* at the police headquarters.

So far, police have seized millions – in Sri Lankan rupees and U.S. dollars – in cash, some 130 acres of land and eight vehicles.

Bank accounts with funds over LKR 134 million have been frozen. "We hope to complete the basic investigation within the next month," Mr. Senaratne said.

The current investigating team took charge after the November 2019 presidential elections that President Gotabaya Rajapaksa fought on the plank of national security and won decisively, with 52.25% of the vote.

Proceeding with the investigations, Mr. Rajapaksa's newly formed government recast the CID. Soon, more arrests began making news.

Taking it forward

The outgoing CID team had arrested some 100 suspects already. With support from the Australian Federal Police and the FBI, its officers had also recovered and analysed data from all the phones and gadgets seized from the suicide bombers' network, according to a former official. It helped the CID map out the command structure, he told *The Hindu*.

A 'supreme council' led by radical preacher Zahran Hashim – the mastermind of the IS-inspired Easter attacks – had a second rung of "military leaders" in Sri Lanka's nine provinces. In addition to coordinating the April bombings, they had identified a few more targets, the CID had then deduced, corroborating evidence from the command structure, he told *The Hindu*.



The St. Sebastian Catholic Church in Negombo after it was bombed. ■ REUTERS

they unearthed in Wanathawilla town, near Wilpattu national park, in January 2019. Once "all key suspects" were nabbed, the CID "was reasonably certain" that a second attack by Zahran Hashim's group was unlikely, though they were watching other "potential radical net-

works", a top source familiar with the probe told *The Hindu*.

The then CID made submissions on the eight key suspects to the magistrate court. Three files were submitted to the Attorney-General's Department on what in retrospect are seen as preludes to the deadly bombings – the killing of two police constables in Vavunithivu, Batticaloa in late November 2018; the vandalising of Buddha statues in the central Mawanella town in December 2018 and the shooting of Mohammad Razak Taslim, in Mawanella in March 2019, after he helped investigators probe the statue incident.

Despite multiple attempts, *The Hindu* was unable to obtain a comment from the AG's Department on the status of the files.

There is continuity'

Meanwhile, the new CID team has said Zahran's radical Islamist outfit had

planned a second attack". The bombers had attempted to mislead intelligence agencies by staging split in group, police spokesman Mr. Senaratne told media in April this year.

All the same, the current investigators were drawing upon the findings of the outgoing CID team, Mr. Senaratne told *The Hindu*, adding: "so there is continuity."

Unanswered questions

However, a few crucial questions remain. One, how and where exactly did the lapse occur, leading to the failure of the former government acting on prior intelligence? Two, what were Zahran Hashim's specific motivations to carry out the attack? While the network reporting to Zahran Hashim has been established, was there a structure above him?

On the first question, a Presidential Commission appointed by President Maithripala Sirisena continues to investigate the attacks. Its



Govt. invites global vessel owners to flag ships in India

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

The government said it has invited global vessel owners to flag their ships in India to take advantage of the Make in India policy.

The government has recently revised its 'Make in India' policy for public procurement under which no global tender enquiry will be issued, except with the approval of the competent authority, for procurement of services with an estimated value of below ₹200 crore.

"It is estimated that the 'Make in India' policy will provide an opportunity to at least double the number of Indian flag vessels in the immediate term – from the present approximately 450 to at least 900 and more over a period of three years – leaving further scope for additional investment in the Indian flag tonnage," Ministry of Shipping said.

With a modern maritime administration, continuous supply of trained seafarers, ship management skills already available, ship owners worldwide are invited to now flag their ships in India to take advantage of the 'Make in India' policy in respect of transportation of government cargoes. Shipping Minister Mansukh Mandaviya has reviewed the readiness of Indian shipping for implementation of the Cargo Transportation Policy, the statement said.



Clothed in uncertainty: The steep dip in shipments has sent the alarm bells ringing among exporters. ■ S. SIVA SARAVANAN

shared by the Cotton Textiles Export Promotion Council (Texprocil).

Texprocil chairman K.V. Srinivasan said in a press release that export of cotton textiles between April and February last financial year was \$9,405 million against

\$11,262 million during the year-earlier period. Export of cotton yarn declined steeply, almost 28%, during this period and in April and May this year too, export of cotton yarn fell sharply.

Buyers in the U.S. and European Union (EU), the two

major destinations for Indian cotton textiles and clothing, were cancelling orders or invoking force majeure clauses within their contracts. Buyers of cotton yarn were demanding a 15% to 20% price reduction.

Raise competitiveness
"This is a matter of concern and the government should support the industry," Mr. Srinivasan said. "It should cover cotton yarn and fabrics under the scheme to reimburse State and Central levies. It should also enhance the overall competitiveness of the textile industry so that India becomes a hub for fabric and yarn production to serve the domestic and export markets," he added.

Siddhartha Rajagopal, executive director Texprocil,

said the government should come out with clear measures to boost exports so that India does not lose out to competing countries.

"Textile and clothing exports were already weak last year and then came COVID-19," he said. "Buyers are cancelling or re-negotiating orders. Textile and clothing exporters need production-linked incentives so that they are able to compete in the international market. Cotton yarn should also get the 3% interest subvention benefit".

Observing that exporters were awaiting a nod to export PPEs and MMF masks, Mr. Rajagopal said there were opportunities that India must not lose out on as countries such as Bangladesh and Vietnam already had advantages in the international market.



Costly transition: State-owned refiners had invested more than ₹35,000 crore to introduce BS-VI fuels ■ AFP

Hikes helping refiners recoup BS-VI capex

Recovering up to ₹1 a litre, says official

PIYUSH PANDEY
MUMBAI

State-owned oil marketing companies (OMCs) have used the latest round of fuel price increases to begin recovering a part of the combined ₹35,000 crore investment made in upgrading their refineries to BS-VI fuels.

"The revised fuel prices have an inbuilt element of [recovery on] expenditure that we have made towards upgrading to BS-VI fuels," said a top official at an OMC, speaking on the condition of anonymity.

The official, however, declined to provide details on how much the OMCs were recovering per litre of petrol and diesel sold.

State-owned refiners had invested more than ₹35,000 crore in upgrading their refineries, pipelines and marketing and distribution network to be able to introduce BS-VI fuels, directly leapfrogging from BS-IV fuels.

The 'Auto Fuel Vision and Policy 2025' of 2014 had recommended a 75 paise cess to recoup the additional investments projected for producing cleaner fuels.

"The OMCs are recovering up to ₹1 per litre of petrol and diesel sales from the consumers," said another senior official at an OMC, who declined to be identified. "However, it is not reflected in the price buildup."

During the launch of BS-VI fuels in late March, OMC officials had sought to address concerns that consumer prices of petrol and diesel could be raised to recover the investments made in upgrading refineries by pointing to the fact that the prices of automobile fuels had remained unchanged since March 16.

Upgradation cost
"The element of BS-VI upgradation cost had to be built into the cost of petrol and diesel as BS-VI has enhanced operating expenditure besides the capital expenditure of ₹35,000 crore," said a director at an OMC, speaking on the condition of anonymity.

OMCs, on Saturday, revised fuel prices for a 14th consecutive day with a 51 paise increase in the price of petrol and a 61 paise increase in diesel prices, taking the cumulative increase in the rates of the fuels in two weeks to ₹7.62 and ₹8.28, respectively.

A litre of petrol now costs ₹78.88 in New Delhi, while diesel costs ₹77.67 a litre.

Fed officials signal rising caution on U.S. recovery

Flag risks of reopening too hastily

REUTERS
NEW YORK/WASHINGTON



Two U.S. Federal Reserve officials sounded increasing pessimism on Friday on the swiftness of any economic recovery from the COVID-19 epidemic and warned the unemployment rate could rise again if the disease is not brought under control.

The central bank already made clear it expects a full economic healing from the impact of the virus to take years as it kept interest rates near zero at its policy meeting last week.

But nascent signs of recovery in U.S. economic data, with better-than-expected job gains and retail sales for the month of May, had fueled some hopes that the

United States could bounce back more quickly.

Fed officials pushed back on that view on Friday and cautioned against reopening the economy too hastily after the end of State lockdowns aimed at containing the virus, which has killed more than 1,18,000 Americans.

PNB Q4 loss narrows as bad loans ease

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

State-owned Punjab National Bank (PNB) has said its standalone net loss narrowed to ₹697.20 crore in the fourth quarter ended March 31, on lower bad loan provisioning.

The lender had posted a loss of ₹4,750 crore in the year-earlier period.

Total income rose to ₹16,388.32 crore from the ₹14,725.13 crore in the year-ago period.

Addressing the media, PNB MD S. S. Mallikarjuna Rao on Saturday said the bank was expecting recovery of ₹6,000-8,000 crore during the current fiscal and the recovery will gather momentum from the third quarter onwards.

Piramal Pharma to buy G&W's U.S. drug unit

Deal to broaden acquirer's offerings

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI



U.K. and India.

The site can also produce liquids, creams, and ointments, further expanding the PPS portfolio.

PPS expects to further grow the site's current strength to support development services as well as any COVID-19 management drug opportunities, PEL said.

INTERVIEW | SRIVATS RAM

'Consumer demand needs a financing fix'

A bus building scheme can benefit CV, component makers: Wheels India MD

K. BHARAT KUMAR

Two years ago, when the going seemed good, Srivats Ram, MD, Wheels India Ltd., had said his industry was cyclical and that what goes up typically comes down. In the midst of a pandemic, he takes a tempered view, suggesting that things could look up soon. Excerpts from an interview:

Is the government taking the right steps? Does spurring consumer demand without looking at the supply side risk fanning inflation?

■ With companies working at a fraction of their capacity, industrial inflation is not a major concern at the moment. When we came out of the lockdown, supply chain was very visible as an issue but this is likely to be more short term in nature. Longer term issues are really demand related.

One concern in the passenger cars segment is about getting customers to come to the dealerships and buy cars. The issue that could come up there is the credit rating of individual customers. The banking sector has been risk averse. Given the current situation of lower prospects for most people, banks are likely to be even more risk averse. Demand is a question of aspiration and of financing.

After the financial crisis of 2018-19, the banks have started looking into credit history even more. In the current scenario, when most people are struggling, if banks continue with tough norms, then

you had said global firms looking to de-risk were exploring locations outside China. Has India failed to capitalise on the trend?

■ Even pre-COVID, a lot of investors had been asking the global companies to look at 'sourcing' portfolio de-risking. This is not a knee jerk reaction but had started a couple of years back.

So, the opportunity is there for Indian companies; but in the current situation there are limitations as well.

The possibility of international travel is limited. When an Indian firm becomes a supplier to a new global customer, an audit is conducted by the overseas firm.

With travel

If banks continue with tough norms, then financing of consumer demand could be an issue

restrictions, that could still take a while. But if you are an existing part of the [vendor] mix and if they are looking to change, then Indian companies could stand to gain as they may give more [business] to the existing suppliers.

Has Wheels India benefitted from this de-risking strategy?

■ Yes, for some of the newer products where we are just making investments, we are aligning with the strategy of some of these companies that are moving away from a particular geography.

The opportunities were there even earlier but the current scenario has speeded it up and kind of given it a fillip.

In the last couple of years, the global firms have been looking at redistributing their sourcing. Post COVID, because the uncertainties are more, a few more companies are now looking at distributing their sourcing. One of the industry segments that Wheels India is present in is looking at this redistribution of sourcing but for it to fructify, it will take 1-2 years.

In the windmill industry where we are becoming more and more of a global player, we are looking at customers and their de-risking strategy and seeing if we can align with that and get business from some of these companies who are looking at changing the mix.

What about prospects of the defence segment?

■ Government has launched many defence programmes but most have a long gestation period that involves testing and validation and these will come to fruition in course of time. And the auto sector will benefit from that.

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SNAPSHOTS



Dinosaur eggs

Scientists have unearthed the first fossils of soft-shelled eggs laid by dinosaurs - two disparate species from Argentina and Mongolia - in a discovery suggesting that the earliest dinosaurs produced such eggs before some lineages turned to hard shells. The embryo-containing eggs were leathery on the outside rather than hard and calcified like those of birds and belonged to dinosaurs *Mussaurus* and *Protoceratops*.



Water worlds

Saturn's moon Enceladus and Jupiter's moon Europa are still interesting as candidates that may support life, because scientists have spotted water plumes bursting from their icy shells. A mathematical calculation by NASA scientists guesses that more than a quarter of the several dozen exoplanets they have analysed could be 'water worlds'. This includes some members of the Trappist-1 system which is about forty light years away.

Antibodies against coronavirus start to decrease in 2-3 months, study finds

Even if the antibody level decreases, it might be protective against the COVID-19 disease

R. PRASAD

A few countries, including the U.K., were toying with the idea of issuing some form of a certificate to people who have been infected with novel coronavirus and recovered subsequently, as such people were assumed to be resistant to reinfection. Incidentally, this idea was born even before any evidence about how long the antibodies produced in response to infection would last.

Now, a study published in *Nature Medicine* suggests that antibodies formed against SARS-CoV-2 begin to decrease in number, just two-three months after infection. "We observed that IgG levels and neutralizing antibodies in a high proportion of individuals who recovered from SARS-CoV-2 infection start to decrease within two-three months after infection," Quan-Xin Long from Chongqing Medical University, Chongqing, China and others write.

In contrast, circulating antibodies against 2002-2003 SARS and MERS coronavirus were found to last more than one year. In the case of the 2002 SARS, sustained IgG levels were seen for more than two years after infection, while antibody response lasted for nearly three years in the case of MERS.

This does not necessarily mean that people previously infected with SARS-CoV-2 can be reinfected soon after. Even if the antibody level decreases, it might be protective. "A person with



Weaker response: Asymptomatic people elicited a weaker immune response to the virus compared with those who developed symptoms... ■ GETTY IMAGES

low antibody level can get reinfected but the viral load will be low, infectivity will be less and he/she may not progress to a diseased state," says virologist Jacob John formerly with CMC Vellore. "Antibodies specific to a virus even when present in low levels will be protective against disease."

Cellular immunity
Besides inducing neutralising antibodies, novel coronavirus has also been found to induce cellular immunity. As a result, the immune system's T cells and B cells are elevated in an infected person. "Generally, when antibody levels are high, the T cells are low and vice versa," says Dr. John.

When infected by a virus, non-specific immune response in the form of macrophages, neutrophils and other cells tend to prevent the virus from causing symptoms. Soon after, the body makes antibodies specific to the virus called the immunoglobulins - IgG and IgM, called the adaptive response. In addition, the cellular immunity kicks in when the body makes T cells that destroy cells that have been infected by the virus. The combination of adaptive response and cellular immunity "may prevent progression to severe illness or re-infection by the same virus. This process is often measured by the presence of antibodies in blood," WHO says.

For the study, the researchers compared 37 asymptomatic people with an equal number of people who exhibited overt symptoms in the Wanzhou District of China. They found that asymptomatic people elicited a weaker immune response to the virus compared with those who developed symptoms.

As a result, 40% of asymptomatic individuals had antibody levels at undetectable levels compared with nearly 13% in the case of symptomatic individuals. Nearly 80% of people infected with SARS-CoV-2 show no or very mild symptoms.

Implications

"The reduction in IgG and neutralizing antibody levels in the early convalescent phase might have implications for immunity strategy and serological surveys," they write. "These data might indicate the risks of using COVID-19 'immunity passports' and support the prolongation of public health interventions, including social distancing, hygiene, isolation of high-risk groups and widespread testing."

Another paper published in *Nature* found that even when the antibodies were present at low levels, it was sufficient to neutralise the virus. The authors say that "most convalescent plasmas obtained from individuals who recover from COVID-19 do not contain high levels of neutralizing activity" yet antibodies with "potent antiviral activity" were found in all these individuals.



Lockdown tale: As the Ganga was less polluted at this time, many more Ganges dolphins were sighted. ■ FILE PHOTO

Wild animals in urban clusters



SPEAKING OF SCIENCE

D. BALASUBRAMANIAN

During these days of lockdown across various parts of India, we see reports of 'wild' animals coming over to the cities, towns and urban clusters. In Uttarakhand, an elephant was reported to come down unusually near Hari ki Pauri in Haridwar. A leopard was sighted in Almora. In Karnataka, elephants, spotted deer and sambar deer had transgressed into towns, while in Maharashtra, people spotted scores of civet cats, mongooses and porcupines in communities. All these 'trespasses' have been happening not only in India but across the world, wherever lockdowns took place and regular human activities have been curtailed. Once these lockdowns are lifted, animals are expected to retire back to their wild environment - wherever and however limited they are.

To get a perspective of this, note that of the total land area of the world, which is about 510 million square km, 30% is desert and 24% mountainous, leaving us humans to occupy about 45-50% of the remaining area when we started to live as communities about 17,000 years ago. (Prior to that, humans lived in the wild, along with animals and plants, as hunter-gatherers). And over these millennia, particularly during the present one, we have built cities and urban clusters, thus making what was 'wild' land into 'civilised' land. (Note, too, that even today, adivasis and tribals still live in the wild, along with the local animals and plants). Indeed, geo-zoologists have argued that it is we humans who have transgressed and changed the landscape of Mother Earth.

Incidentally, this appears to be true of not only on land, but in water as well. *BBC news* reported how with a lull in traffic in the Bosphorus marine route during lockdown in Istanbul, dolphins are increasingly sighted near the shores of the city. Likewise, as the Ganga became less polluted in recent days due to decreased industrial and human waste during lockdown, the Ganges dolphins and gharials (fish-eating crocodiles) have been sighted in larger numbers. In mountains, too, Marco Lambertini of the World Wildlife Fund is concerned that COVID-19 could infect mountain gorillas which are likely to be particularly vulnerable as they share about 98% of their DNA with humans. They, like all great apes, are already endangered due to habitat loss, poaching and diseases - only 900 remain in the mountains of Central Africa.

Five reasons

In an excellent analysis of this situation, particularly in the U.S., Bethany Brookshire, who writes regular columns in *Scienccenews.org*, has written an article there on June 5, titled "Five reasons you might be seeing more wildlife during the COVID-19 pandemic". These are: (1) since restaurants are closed and trash collections have moved elsewhere, this 'human handout' causes rats and insects to invade towns in search of food; (2) since there are not many humans and their pets are around, the fear that predatory animals and us, 'super-predators', are not there; this has caused the increase of wild animals in urban areas; (3) common birds are not scared of us. We see and hear them chattering and singing. During the lockdown, it is nice and quiet and it appears that birds adjust their songs and the times they sing. (The ongoing study called *The Sounds of the City* supports this idea); (4) the seasons play a role too. In the U.S., springtime occurs during March through May, and birds start migrating, snakes come out of hibernation and look for food and for mates. (In India, the seasonal farming starts around this time as well) and (5) we ourselves are (finally) paying more attention to all these features during lockdown than at other times, and exchange all these observations through social media.

Global human confinement experiment

Recently, an exciting and doable idea has been suggested by Amanda Bates and coworkers, in the paper: "COVID-19 pandemic and associated lockdown as a 'Global Human Confinement Experiment' to investigate biodiversity conservation" in the journal *Biological Conservation*, June 10; <<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bioco.2020.108665>>. This experiment is a unique opportunity to identify positive and negative effects of human presence and mobility on a range of natural systems, including wildlife, and protected areas, and to study processes regulating biodiversity and ecosystems. The authors encourage ecologists, environmental scientists, and resource managers to contribute their observations to efforts aiming to build comprehensive global understanding based on multiple data streams, including anecdotal observations, systematic assessments and quantitative monitoring. They argue that the collective power of combining diverse data will transcend the limited value of the individual data sets and produce unexpected insights. We can also consider the confinement experiment as a 'stress test' to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses in the adequacy of existing networks to detect human impacts on natural systems. Doing so will provide evidence for the value of the conservation strategies that are presently in place, and create future networks, observatories and policies that are more adept in protecting biological diversity across the world. I believe that India should join this experiment.

dbala@vpe.org

A struggle to co-exist with humans

ASWATHI PACHA



Free-rangers: Dogs have been noted to prey on saiga, blue sheep, argali and other such ungulates. ■ GETTY IMAGES

In 1968, when the book, *The Population Bomb*, was published, there were a little over 350 crore people on Earth. Today, the whopping 750 crore human population has made an impact on most flora and fauna. Taking into consideration this lack of abatement in human population growth, an international team of researchers observes how these ecological disruptions affect the life of ungulates (hoofed large mammals). The team notes that humans have brought about changes in the Himalayan realm - there is an increase in cashmere goats, and also, stray dogs have started hunting ungulates including threatened, endangered, and rare ones such as kiang, chiru, saiga and takin.

Himalaya and Andes
The team also draws similarities between the two giant mountain ranges - the Himalaya and the Andes, both homes to unique ungulate fauna. Both are currently experiencing increased deglaciation, human colonisation, climate alteration, livestock and tourism-induced changes.

A paper published in *Frontiers in Ecology and Evolution* stresses that the "world's 400 million free-ranging dogs - through disease, predation, and displacement - have changed the face of ungulate communities on every conti-

nent." Dogs prey on saiga, blue sheep, argali, chiru, kiang, goral, ibex, sambar, chital and blackbuck. Joel Berger from Wildlife Conservation Society, the first author, witnessed multiple predation attempts on takin and blue sheep in Bhutan. He writes about seeing up to four dogs in 11 attacks of takin; three of nine calves were individually separated from the group and disappeared. "Their fates remained unknown... death appeared likely."

The high elevation dogs of Bhutan also harbour tapeworms which when consumed via grasses by yaks can cause coenurosis, a neurological disease that may result in about 10% mortality of young yaks.

Human activities such as the seasonal relocation of agro-pastoralists to collect the worm fungus *Cordyceps* can also have an impact on the ungulates. These high-elevation environments have expe-

Key issues
The authors write: "Issues of the 19th and 20th century, overharvest, poaching, and wildlife slaughter will not be the most pressing in the 21st century." Climate change and rapid destruction of habitat will be key. High-elevation ungulates have been known to be affected through changes in ice and snow and the availability of snow patches.

They further add, "Conservation practitioners should work fiercely... to protect what we have while simultaneously recognising that disturbed habitat and altered communities still offer important contributions to beta biodiversity."

If the interaction between the viral RBD and ACE-2 of the host can be disrupted, the host cell would be protected from infection.

Identifying drugs to fight COVID-19

Study shortlists 25 candidate small molecules in databases

SHUBASHREE DESIKAN

We are now testing these molecules in cell-based assays.

MATTHEW HALL
NCATS, NIH, U.S.

With COVID-19 spreading rapidly across the globe, there is need to expedite discovery of drugs that can arrest the disease and vaccines to prevent individuals from contracting it. In this line, to identify drug candidates, U.S.-based researchers have developed an assay that can measure the effectiveness of candidate molecules in disrupting the invasion of host cells by the virus. From a list of 3,384 candidates in a database, they shortlist 25 small molecules that can be tested further. The preprint on this work was posted in *bioRxiv*. The preprint has not been peer-reviewed.

Mode of infecting

When the SARS COV-2 virus attacks the cells in human body, the first step in the interaction is the way it makes contact and connects. The spike protein receptor binding domain (RBD) of the virus binds to the angiotensin-converting enzyme2 (ACE-2) in the host cell. This initiates the invasion of the host cell by the virus. Knowing this also provides a target for drug developers.

If the interaction between the viral RBD and ACE-2 of the host can be disrupted, the host cell would be protected from infection.

Major efforts are therefore being made to identify molecules that can disrupt this interaction.

Disrupting the link

The researchers from National Centre for Advancing Translational Sciences (NCATS), which is part of the U.S. National Institutes of Health, have developed a method to determine how effectively a drug candidate can disrupt the RBD-ACE-2 interaction.

In this assay, the RBD and ACE-2 are tagged with beads that can transmit a signal to each other. "When they are exposed to the candidate molecule, it either disrupts the RBD-ACE-2 binding process or not. So, when ACE-2 and spike are interacting, the beads are also close and pass a signal. When a drug (or antibody) blocks binding, the signal is lost, and this is the basis for the assay," explains Matthew Hall, Acting Director and Biology Group Lead, Early Translation Branch, NCATS, in an email to *The Hindu*.

Repurposing drugs that were either approved by the Food and Drug Administra-

"We are now testing these molecules in cell-based assays. The initial study was about sharing an important new biology approach (the assay), and showing it is useful for supporting therapeutic development for this approach. The activity in later assays will be important and give us confidence to develop them further (or not!)," says Dr Hall.

Further steps

"We are now testing these molecules in cell-based assays. The initial study was about sharing an important new biology approach (the assay), and showing it is useful for supporting therapeutic development for this approach. The activity in later assays will be important and give us confidence to develop them further (or not!)," says Dr Hall.

Small animals that received high dose of antibodies did not lose weight and the amount of virus in the lungs was low

R. PRASAD

A team of scientists led by Dennis R. Burton from the Scripps Research Institute has discovered that neutralising antibodies present in the blood of COVID-19 infected who have recovered offers powerful protection against novel coronavirus in animals. The researchers found that passive transfer of neutralising antibodies into Syrian hamsters protects them against the disease when exposed to the virus. The protection was found when antibodies at high dose were transferred to the animals.

Role for antibodies
The small animals that received high dose of antibodies did not lose weight and the amount of virus in the lungs was low compared with those that received low dose of the

antibodies and the control group. "The study suggests a role for neutralising antibodies in prophylaxis, and potentially therapy, of COVID-19. The neutralising antibodies define protective epitopes to guide vaccine design," they write in a paper published in *Science*.

Prior to transferring and testing the ability of the antibodies to protect the animals from the virus, the researchers tested it on human cell cultures and found the antibodies to have superior ability to protect against the virus.

Two different antibodies in five different concentrations were tested on the small animals to evaluate dose-dependent protection. The highest dose tested was 2 mg/animal and the lowest dose was 8 microgram/animal. The animals were challenged with the virus 12 hours after the antibody

doses were transferred. Lung tissues were collected to measure viral load on day 5 post virus challenge.

In contrast to the antibody to receptor-binding domain of the virus, the less potent and incompletely neutralising antibody showed no evidence of protection at any concentration compared to the control animals.

Promising study

The authors state that the efficacy of the antibodies in Syrian hamsters is "promising" and suggest that human studies be undertaken based on animal trial results.

Incidentally, the researchers also identified one antibody that can neutralise the 2002 SARS virus.

According to the release, the antibodies can be injected into patients in the early stage of the disease to reduce the vi-

ral load and thus protect the patient from progressing to the severe form of the disease. "The antibodies also may be used to provide temporary, vaccine-like protection against SARS-CoV-2 infection for healthcare workers, elderly people and others who respond poorly to traditional vaccines or are suspected of a recent exposure to the virus," the release notes.

"If further safety tests in animals and clinical trials in people go well, then conceivably the antibodies could be used in clinical settings as early as next January," the researchers say in the release.

The antibodies can then be mass-produced either as a treatment to prevent deterioration of the disease and as a preventive vaccine, as in the case of Ebola virus, the release notes.

"If further safety tests in animals and clinical trials in people go well, then conceivably the antibodies could be used in clinical settings as early as next January," the researchers say in the release.

More than 1,000 antibody-producing immune cells called the B cells were first isolated. These antibodies were isolated based on their ability to bind to the virus and prevent it from infecting the test cells.

Gene sequence
Each of the 1,000 immune B cells produced a distinct antibody against the virus. In order to mass-produce the antibody, the scientists obtained the gene sequence of each antibody. They then screened each antibody and 33 antibodies that could block the virus from binding to the test cells were identified. They identified one antibody that could also protect hamsters against heavy viral exposure.



Hamster trial: The animals were challenged with the virus 12 hours after the antibodies were transferred. ■ GETTY IMAGES

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GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCKPHOTO

Google Chrome in spying spot

What have researchers unearthed? Has the tech industry failed to protect web browsers?

SRIRAM SRINIVASAN

The story so far: A few days ago, Reuters reported a “newly discovered spyware effort” targeting users of Google’s browser Chrome. The spyware, it said, has been pushed through at least 111 malicious or fake Chrome browser extensions, which have been downloaded some 32 million times. (Browser extensions are add-ons that provide additional capabilities to the user.) The report also said Google had taken off more than 70 extensions from its official Web Store last month after being alerted to their malicious nature by researchers at Awake Security. The rest were never in its web store.

How do these malicious extensions get in to the Chrome store in the first place?

Short answer: they seem harmless, to begin with. According to the report by Awake Security, which brought this issue to light, these “sleeper agent extensions” appear to do nothing in the beginning. The “malicious payloads” are only pushed on to the extensions much after the “clean” versions have been approved.

What do the malicious extensions do?

They can take “screenshots, read the clipboard, harvest credential tokens stored in cookies or parameters, grab user keystrokes (like passwords),” says the report.

How has Google reacted to this?

As mentioned above, Google has recently removed the malicious extensions. Reuters reported Google’s spokesman Scott Westover as saying, “When we are alerted of extensions in the Web Store that violate our policies, we take action and use those incidents as training material to improve our automated and manual analyses.”

It also said in its report: “Google declined to discuss how the latest spyware compared with prior campaigns, the breadth of the damage, or why it did not detect and remove the bad extensions on its own despite past promises to supervise offerings more closely.”

It has been mentioned that some of the fake extensions were never in the Chrome Web Store. How were they made to work then?

This is due to the misuse of an open-source browser project, Chromium, and installing it with malicious add-ons. This works as a rogue browser when users unwittingly give it the okay to run when prompted.

Are browser extensions vulnerability?

A significant part of what we do on the computer these days is via the browser. Also, the research report points out that it has been a challenge for security solutions to spot malicious activity that is happening within the browser. The Awake Security report says, “Rogue access to the browser therefore frequently means rogue access to the ‘keys to the kingdom’ – from email and corporate file sharing to customer relationship management and financial databases.”

How are users fooled?

Watch out for prompts that urge you to make a new browser as default. That is not all, though. The security firm has also documented some standard characteristics of malicious campaigns. For starters, some of these malicious players have professional-looking web sites that peddle false promises. An example recorded is that of a security extension that certifies a page with malicious content as secure.

Security experts can visually figure out if an extension is malicious or fake, says the Awake Security report, listing out the following easy identifiers: These extensions, for an unknown brand and little information, have a huge following; the user reviews are always great; these extensions have a huge following despite being relatively new in the market.

What other vulnerability has this finding revealed?

The Awake Security report ends with a question mark on the conduct and practices of a small Israel-based domain registrar called Galcomm, formally known as CommuniGal Communication Ltd according to Reuters. Its report says 60% of its domains are high risk for organisations. These malicious domains have managed to evade categorisation as unsafe because their actions depend on where the client is connecting to it from. They act maliciously only if the client connects from a broadband or cable network. They act benignly if the request comes from a data centre or virtual private network.

It says, “This registrar, who also maintains a Registrar Accreditation Agreement with ICANN (The Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers), is responsible for putting far more malicious domains, malware, and exploitative content on the internet than legitimate content. We believe the research and analysis summarized in this report proves that Galcomm is at best complicit in malicious activity.”

The bigger issue raised by the report is one of lack of oversight by ICANN, which oversees domain name standards.

What has been Galcomm’s response?

Reuters reported that Galcomm owner Moshe Fogel has denied any wrong-doing.

Who does Galwan Valley belong to?

Has China staked claim to it before? Why do maps paint a complicated picture? Where is the LAC?

ANANTH KRISHNAN

The story so far: On June 15, the worst violence on the India-China border since 1967 claimed the lives of 20 Indian soldiers. The clash occurred in the Galwan Valley, which hasn’t been a site of conflict since 1962. On June 19, the Chinese Foreign Ministry in a statement claimed that the entire valley is located “on the Chinese side of the Line of Actual Control (LAC)”, which followed a statement from the People’s Liberation Army stating that “China always owns sovereignty over the Galwan Valley region”. India has described the claims as “exaggerated and untenable”.

Where is Galwan Valley?

The valley refers to the land that sits between steep mountains that buffer the Galwan River. The river has its source in Aksai Chin, on China’s side of the LAC, and it flows east to Ladakh, where it meets the Shyok river on India’s side of the LAC. The valley is strategically located between Ladakh in the west and Aksai Chin in the east, which is currently controlled by China as part of its Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region. At its western end are the Shyok river and the Darbuk-Shyok-Daulet Beg Oldie (DSDBO) road. Its eastern mouth lies not far from China’s vital Xinjiang Tibet road, now called the G219 highway.

Where does the Line of Actual Control lie?

The LAC lies east of the confluence of the Galwan and Shyok rivers in the valley, up to which both India and China have been patrolling in recent years. After the June 15 clash, however, China has claimed the entire valley lies on its side of the LAC. Since early May, China has been objecting to India’s road construction activities at the western end of the valley, in the area between the Galwan-Shyok confluence and the LAC. Beijing is now saying the entire valley is on its side of the LAC, which pegs the line further west near the Shyok river. India has rejected the claim as “exaggerated and untenable”.

The Line of Actual

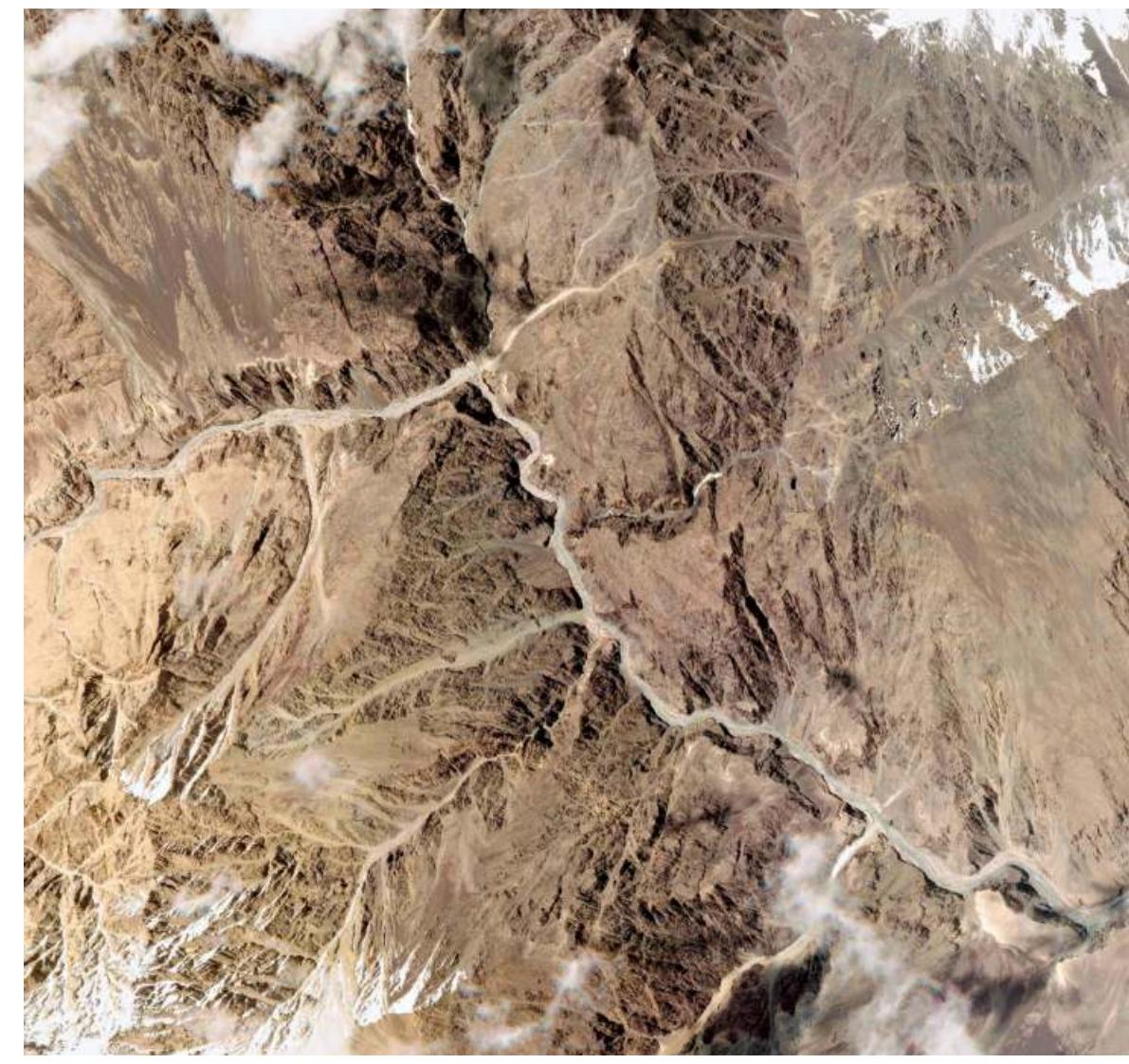
Control has never been demarcated and there are differences in perception of where it lies in more than a dozen spots, but there have not been previous incidents in the Galwan Valley

Are China’s claims new?

Most Chinese maps show most of Galwan river on China’s side of the line, but short of the confluence. This broadly corresponds with the LAC as India sees it – and in India’s view, as China saw it, until recently. “Chinese maps that I have seen show almost all of the Galwan River as lying within the territory China claims in the area,” said M. Taylor Fravel, a professor at that Massachusetts Institute of Technology and author of Strong Borders, Secure Nation: Cooperation and Conflict in China’s Territorial Disputes. “The one discrepancy would be the western tip of the Galwan River as it meets the Shyok River. Here, the last few kilometres of the Galwan River are often depicted as lying beyond China’s border.”

What do maps tell us?

Maps paint a complicated picture. As Manoj Joshi of the Observer Research Foundation notes, in 1959, then Premier Zhou Enlai said a 1956 map portrayed the correct alignment. This showed the entire Galwan Valley as a part of India. However, in June 1960 China put out a map claiming sovereignty over the valley. A Chinese map from November 1962 also claims the entire valley, but subsequent maps have not shown the western tip of the



Zoomed in: A satellite photograph provided by Planet Labs shows the Galwan Valley area. ■ AP



Contested valley

For the first time since 1962, the Galwan Valley has emerged as a site of dispute



MAP NOT TO SCALE

river as a part of China.

By citing its territorial claims, can China alter the Line of Actual Control?

Territorial claims and LAC claims are not the same. Regardless of whether or not China claims territorial rights to the valley, as one scholar suggested this week, the LAC that both countries abided by until recently ran through the valley. The distinction between territorial claims and LAC claims is sometimes blurred. The LAC refers to territory under the effective control of each side, not to their entire territorial claim. For instance, India’s territorial claims extend 38,000 sq km on the other side of the LAC across all of Aksai Chin, but the LAC India observes runs through the valley. It is true that the LAC has never been demarcated and there are differences in perception of where it lies in more than a dozen spots, but there have not been previous incidents in the valley.

By now staking a claim to the entire Galwan Valley and up to the confluence of the rivers, China is, in India’s view, unilaterally altering the LAC here. According to the 1993 Border Peace and Tranquility Agreement (BPTA), India and China agreed to “strictly respect and observe the LAC between the two sides”. This referred to the LAC at the time, rendering irrelevant the line of actual control in 1959 or 1962. It also says that “when necessary, the two sides shall jointly check and determine the segments of the line of actual control where they have different views as to its alignment.” Clarifying the LAC has also been explicitly codified in the 1996 agreement on confidence-building measures and subsequent agreements. China, however, has refused to exchange maps in the western sector to take this process forward. The BPTA also said “the two sides agree that references to the line of actual control in this agreement do not prejudice their respective positions on the boundary question.”

How are the Rajya Sabha polls different?

What is the voting process? What are some of its distinguishing features from the general elections?

K. VENKATARAMAN

The story so far: Another round of Rajya Sabha elections has been completed. Polls to some seats were postponed in view of the situation caused by the novel coronavirus outbreak. All the 19 seats for which balloting was held had clear winners, but there was a hint of controversy about who ought to have been allowed to vote or barred from voting in Manipur. Such issues arise mainly due to the interpretation of rules and features peculiar to the Rajya Sabha elections. Cross-voting, breach of confidentiality by showing the ballot/vote to a person other than the member’s own party’s agent, and eligibility to vote under certain conditions are common grounds for objections to be raised. There are several features that distinguish elections to the Council of States, or the Upper House of Parliament, from the general elections.

What is peculiar to the Rajya Sabha polls as far as the electorate is concerned?

Only elected members of the State Legislative Assemblies can vote in a Rajya Sabha election. The legislators send a batch of new members to the Upper House every two years for a six-year term. A third of Members of Parliament in the Rajya Sabha (which is a permanent House and is not subject to dissolution), from each State retire once in two years and polls are held to fill up the vacancies. In addition, vacancies that arise due to resignation, death or disqualification are filled up through bypolls after which those elected serve out the remainder of their predecessors’ term.

Voting is by single transferable vote, as the election is held on the principle of proportional representation. In other words, a bloc of MPs belonging to one or more parties can elect a member of their choice if they have the requisite numbers. This is to avoid the principle of majority, which would mean that only candidates put up by ruling parties in the respective States will be elected.

The Delhi and Puducherry Assemblies elect members to the Rajya Sabha to represent the two Union Territories.

When are the elections held?

Polling for a Rajya Sabha election will be held only if the number of candidates exceeds the number of vacancies. Since the strength of each party in the Assembly is known, it is not difficult to estimate the number of seats a party would win in the Rajya Sabha poll. For instance, if there are four seats to be filled up, and the ruling party and its allies command a two-thirds majority, and the Opposition a third, it will mean that the election will go



On Friday: An MLA casting his vote for the Rajya Sabha election, at the Madhya Pradesh State Assembly. ■ PTI

A third of MPs in the Rajya Sabha, which is a permanent House and not subject to dissolution, from each State retire once in two years and polls are held to fill up the vacancies

three seats to one in favour of the ruling party. In many States, parties avoid a contest by fielding candidates only in respect to their strength. Where an extra candidate enters the fray, voting becomes necessary.

Candidates fielded by political parties have to be proposed by at least 10 members of the Assembly

or 10% of the party’s strength in the House, whichever is less. For independents, there should be 10 proposers, all of whom should be members of the Assembly.

A single transferable vote means electors can vote for any number of candidates in order of their preference. A candidate requires a specified number of first preference votes to win. Each first choice vote has a value of 100 in the first round. To qualify, a candidate needs one point more than the quotient obtained by dividing the total value of the number of seats for which elections are taking place plus one. For instance, if there are four seats and 180 MLAs voting, the qualifying number will be 180/5 = 36 votes or a value of 3,600. Normally, the results are clear after one round itself. The extra candidate is eliminated for want of enough first preference votes.

However, counting may go to the second round, if more than one candidate fails to get the specified number. In such a situation, the second preference polled by the candidates (in ballots where the first preference has gone to those already qualified) will be transferred to their kitty, but with a diminished value. The total value of the votes polled by the remaining candidates both as first

and subsequent preferences would be used to decide the winner.

Why is there no secret ballot in the Rajya Sabha elections?

The Rajya Sabha polls have a system of open ballot, but it is a limited form of openness. As a measure to check rampant cross-voting, which was taken to mean that the vote had been purchased by corrupt means, the system of each party MLA showing his or her marked ballots to the party’s authorised agent, before they are put into the ballot box, has been introduced. Showing a marked ballot to anyone other than one’s own party’s authorised agent will render the vote invalid. Not showing the ballot to the authorised agent will also mean that the vote cannot be counted. And independent candidates are barred from showing their ballots to anyone.

Why does not ‘None of the Above’, or NOTA, apply to the Rajya Sabha polls?

The Election Commission of India (ECI) issued two circulars, on January 24, 2014 and November 12, 2015, giving Rajya Sabha members the option to press the NOTA button in the Upper House polls. However, in 2018, the Supreme Court of India struck down the provision, holding that the ‘none of the above’ option is only for general elections held on the basis of universal adult suffrage, and cannot be applied to indirect elections based on proportional representation.

Does cross-voting attract disqualification?

No. The Supreme Court, while declining to interfere with the open ballot system, ruled that not voting for the party candidate will not attract disqualification under the anti-defection law. As voters, MLAs retain their freedom to vote for a candidate of their choice. However, the Court observed that since the party would know who voted against its own candidate, it is free to take disciplinary action against the legislator concerned.

Can a legislator vote without taking oath as a member of the Assembly?

While taking oath as a member is for anyone to function as a legislator, the Supreme Court has ruled that a member can vote in a Rajya Sabha election even before taking oath as legislator. It ruled that voting at the Rajya Sabha polls, being a non-legislative activity, can be performed without taking oath. A person becomes a member as soon as the list of elected members is notified by the ECI, it said. Further, a member can also propose a candidate before taking oath.

K.P. OLI

From the Jhapa revolt to the seat of power

The Nepal Prime Minister used nationalism as a plank and opposed identity-based devolution of power to consolidate his position

Srinivasan Ramani

Khadga Prasad Oli knows the meaning of ups and downs that very few politicians in this part of the world have experienced. The Prime Minister of Nepal and the Chairman of the Nepal Communist Party is today at the helm of one of the most stable governments in the country since it moved away from absolute monarchy in 1990, after having become the Prime Minister for the second time in February 2018. It is almost an anomaly for a government to last more than two years without turbulence or shuffling of the decks of power in Nepal, which has seen 25 different governments led by 13 individuals as Prime Minister. Only Girija Prasad Koirala of the Nepali Congress had a longer uninterrupted tenure for three and a half years from May 1991 to November 1994.

Mr. Koirala was among the key leaders in the first Jan Andolan that marked the end of absolute monarchy. Mr. Oli, on the other hand, did not quite represent the forces of change during the second Jan Andolan that helped accelerate the demise of the institution of monarchy itself. But he did manoeuvre himself into becoming the dominant voice of the status quo as the post-monarchy polity fought bitterly over versions of a federal, democratic republic.

It is this role of being the most committed voice against greater devolution of power based on identity and that of a figure representing "Nepalese nationalism" that has catapulted Mr. Oli into his current role as the Prime

Minister, who orchestrated the change of Nepal's official map by adding 335 sq. km to its territory. This decision has exacerbated a recent strain in relations with India with whom Nepal shares intricate and dependent ties, but which have slowly eroded over time.

Oli's tenure in power has seen greater expansion of ties between Nepal and its northern neighbour, with China stepping up aid and participation in development projects

Born in 1952 in the hilly Tereltham region of eastern Nepal into a Brahmin farming family, Mr. Oli migrated to Jhapa in the Terai plains in south-eastern Nepal as a 10 year old while his father pursued better prospects. Thrust into the communist party as a young teenage activist, Mr. Oli as a 19 year old was soon participating in a violent movement against the Panchayat regime that was inspired by the Naxalbari agitations in India. Naxalbari wasn't very far from Jhapa. The Jhapa movement organising armed rebellions was short-lived and put down by the government quickly. Mr. Oli, a foot-soldier in this movement, was sentenced to prison in 1973 and remained in jail for 14 years, which included, according to him, long periods of solitary confinement.

Unlike the Naxalite parties that underwent splits and de-

clined over time, the factions that organised the Jhapa movement merged into a larger party – the Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist-Leninist). It brought together functionaries who believed in the parliamentary path and were later engaged in struggles to transform Nepal's governance from an absolute monarchy into a democratic and constitutional monarchy. The UML's role in the first Jan Andolan helped it become a major political force, second only to the Nepali Congress. By the 1990s, the UML had committed itself firmly into parliamentary politics. The UML, which lost its prominent leader Madan Bhandari in a car accident also enjoyed short stints in power. Mr. Oli served as the Minister of Home Affairs in Manmohan Adhikari's cabinet between November 1994 and September 1995.

Changes in polity
The rise of the Maoist movement from the mid-1990s, the royal massacre in 2001, the return to absolute monarchy under Gyanendra in late 2002 all paved the way for significant changes in Nepal's polity, leading up to the second Jan Andolan in 2006 led by a coalition of forces that included the mainstream parties and the Maoists. This coalition was forged with Indian support and soon Nepal became a republic. In the elections leading up to the new constituent assembly, Mr. Oli lost in two constituencies and the UML finished third behind the Maoists and the Nepali Congress. The polity following the CA elections developed

fissures on two distinct questions – the integration/rehabilitation of Maoist combatants into Nepal's security forces and the federal restructuring of the country. On both these questions, Mr. Oli presented a strident line of opposition. In 2014, Mr. Oli became the party chairman

of the UML and opposed any concession to the Madhesi aspirations of identity-based devolution of power and restructuring.

Mr. Oli became Prime Minister for the first time on October 11, 2015 as yet another turbulent period over the state restructuring issue

came about. The Madhesis launched an agitation that resulted in an embargo over goods transit to the hills via the plains from India and this was tacitly supported by the Indian establishment. The move fuelled anger and a nationalist surge in the capital. As Prime Minister, Mr. Oli vi-

sited China in 2016 and signed a number of pacts, which included a transit and transport agreement.

Using Nepalese nationalism, loosely translated into a strong position against Indian interference in the country, as a plank, Mr. Oli emerged as the most popular leader in the hills and he consolidated his position following a decisive victory for the UML in the 2017 parliamentary elections with support from the Pushpa Kumar Dahal-led Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist Centre). In a significant move, the UML and the CPN(MC) merged into the Nepal Communist Party, garnering a two-thirds majority in Parliament after Mr. Oli entered his second stint as Prime Minister.

The China factor

The NCP's tenure in power has seen greater expansion of ties between Nepal and its northern neighbour, with China increasing aid and participation in development projects.

The Indian government released a new political map in November 2019, following the changes in the status of Jammu and Kashmir, which removed the label "Kali river". This, besides the inauguration of a road towards Lipu Lek in what Nepal considers its territory, raised the hackles of the Nepali government. Soon, Mr. Oli, giving voice to resentment within Nepal about the disputed status of Kalapani, promoted the move to redraw Nepal's official map, showing Kalapani, Limpiyadhwani and Lipulekh of Uttarakhand as part of its sovereign territory. This move was ratified by both Houses of Parliament in Nepal and led to a new impasse with the Indian government, which refused any dialogue following what it termed a "unilateral gesture".

Nepal has considerably diversified relations beyond its deep ties with India but history has shown that close ties between the two countries have been beneficial for both. Mr. Oli has yet again consolidated his position in Nepal's fragile polity, but how his brinkmanship resulting in antagonism in ties with India will play itself out can only be answered in the medium term.

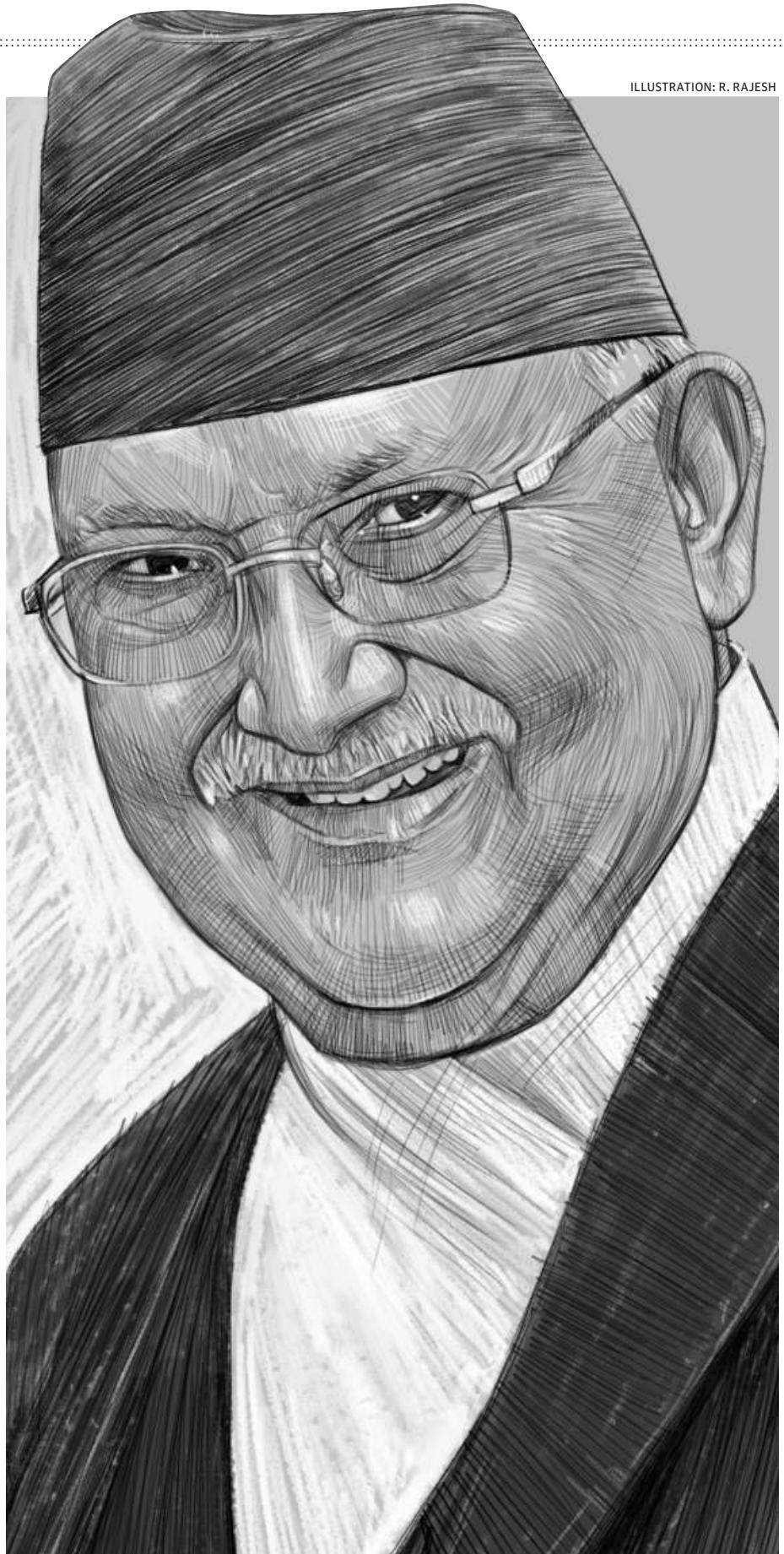


ILLUSTRATION: R. RAJESH

In Focus

■ As a teenager, Oli was a footsoldier of the Jhapa uprising in the early 1970s

■ After spending 14 years in jail, he became active in UML and rose fast through its ranks

■ Now, after merging the UML with a Maoist faction, Oli heads the most stable government in the post-monarchy Nepal

GALWAN VALLEY

A spur in the grand rivalry

The mountains of the Galwan region are of high strategic value for both nations

ATUL ANEJA

The deadly clash at patrolling Point 14 on a ridge line overlooking the fast flowing Galwan river in eastern Ladakh, in which 20 Indian soldiers were killed, echoes episodes of the Great Game – the late 19th century tussle where colonial Britain worked feverishly to block Russian influence from permeating through the mountainous "gates" of India.

There were multiple fronts of the Great Game, including Central Asia and Afghanistan, but Ladakh, starting from Leh, known for its lucrative trade through the lofty Karakoram Pass, into the heart of Xinjiang, had become an important spur in this grand imperial rivalry.

But two decades into the 21st century, India and China – two aspirational Asian nations – are following this trail of rivalry at strategic pivots along their contested mountainous borders.

New road

Point 14, overlooking the Galwan river valley, is one of these key fulcrums, over which the Indian Army and the People's Liberation Army of China brutally clashed with barbed wired rods, stones and rocks on the night of June 15. The area, from where the Chinese were supposed to withdraw, following a June 6 understanding, is of considerable strategic value.



Europe. The Chinese have long established Heweitan – 48 km northeast of the LAC as the crow flies – as their main base servicing the Galwan Valley posts. Incidentally, Heweitan was also a launch pad for mounting an offensive during the 1962 India-China war.

Chinese claim line
In order to protect their strategic road in Aksai Chin built in the 1950s, the Chinese have unilaterally expanded their territorial claim line along commanding heights, including the Galwan Valley. In response, India, in mid-1962, established a post opposite Samzungling, an area from where the 80-km-long Galwan river originates before joining the Shyok river, which in turn merges with the Indus.

During the 1962 war, a Chinese battalion destroyed this hopelessly outnumbered Galwan Valley post, after fierce combat, which lasted 24 hours.

Despite bouts of violence in its recent history, Galwan Valley was so named during the less brutal encounters of the Great Game. The Galwan river was named after Ghulam Rasool Galwan, a Ladakhi adventurer and explorer, who had been part of many European explorations, including two in 1890 and 1896 led by Francis Younghusband – a British explorer and Army officer, who became famous for his role in blocking Russian advances in Tibet.

buk Shyok Daulat Beg Oldie (DSDBO) road, which leads to the base of the legendary 18,176-feet high Karakoram Pass, is within striking distance from this vantage point in the high mountains. In case the Chinese manage to build an observation tower in this area, they can disrupt traffic over an under-construction bridge along the DSDBO road, using heavy weapons. Understanding the strategic value of this location, it is hardly surprising that the soldiers following Col. Santosh Babu laid down their lives in a bid to prevent a permanent Chinese encampment near Point 14.

Traditionally, the Galwan Valley area has been part of the winter trade route that linked Leh with Yarkand and Kashgar across the Karakoram Pass, when frozen rivers allowed caravans to progress towards their destinations. From Leh, the caravans breached the Ladakh range at Chang La pass,

reaching Darbuk, Shyok village on their way to the Karakoram Pass via Daulat Beg Oldie (DBO). Once the pass was crossed, traders, often in company of monks and scholars, headed for Yarkand and Kashgar, where British India had opened a consulate in a building complex called Chini Bagh. Much later, a motorable road was built from Leh. It entered the Nubra Valley, cutting through the Ladakh range via the 18,600-foot Khardungla Pass and heading to the base of Saser Kangri. Thereafter, a track headed to Murgo – linking up with the DSDBO route.

But the Galwan Valley is also not far from Aksai Chin, which is occupied by China. China's highway number G219 passes through Aksai Chin, which is a vital artery linking the sporadic regions of Tibet and Xinjiang, the gateway to Beijing's ambitious Belt and Road Initiative, heading in the direction of Central Asia en route

COVID-19 TRIALS

In solidarity with recovery

Clinical trials of WHO and the U.K. are leading scientific efforts against the virus

RAMYA KANNAN

It is only appropriate that any pandemic the size of COVID-19 is matched by almost equivalent human effort to counter it. A range of treatments have been proposed, but only extensive population based-trials will provide evidence on their safety and efficacy. The need to fast-track development of drugs and a vaccine, and subsequently, the necessity to scale up manufacturing processes have naturally spurred vast, global efforts involving a large number of people, and in one instance, many nations.

The World Health Organisation's (WHO) Solidarity Trial and the U.K.'s RECOVERY Trial are two of the world's leading scientific efforts pivoting cutting edge research in the battle against COVID-19. These past weeks have brought these two trials into the limelight, the latest being the study by the RECOVERY Trial that showed success in reducing mortality with low doses of a steroid – dexamethasone – to target lung inflammation.

WHO Director General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus explained the rationale of the Solidarity Trial: "The pressure COVID-19 puts on health systems means that WHO considered the need for speed and scale in the trial. While randomised clinical trials normally take years to design and conduct, the Solidarity Trial will reduce the time taken



by 80%."

It started out to compare four treatment options against standard of care, to assess their relative effectiveness against COVID-19: Hydroxychloroquine (HCQ), Remdesivir; Lopinavir with Ritonavir; and Lopinavir with Ritonavir plus Interferon beta-1a. On June 17, however, the WHO announced that the HCQ arm of the Solidarity Trial was being stopped. The decision was based on evidence from the Solidarity Trial, the RECOVERY Trial and a Cochrane review of other evidence on HCQ. Data showed that HCQ did not result in the reduction of mortality of hospitalised COVID-19 patients.

While it came with its own controversy over the validity of data sets used in papers published in two peer-reviewed journals, as the clouds cleared, ultimately the generation of conclusive evidence to suspend HCQ is proof of concept. In the process of moving to

wards the end point of COVID-19, it is also important to move on to treatments that will work, leaving by the wayside those that are just diversions.

Timeline for a vaccine

The WHO also anchors the Solidarity Vaccine Trial, to evaluate the safety and efficacy of several preventive candidates under development. In a recent webinar organised by Project Echo, Soumya Swaminathan, Chief Scientist, WHO, said the expected timeline for a possible vaccine is between 12-18 months. Further, it is important "ultimately to ensure that the vaccine is available to a large number of people."

Solidarity II promotes the implementation of serological surveys of SARS-CoV-2. "Understanding the occurrence of SARS-CoV-2 infection is critical for the world to know how frequently infection occurs among different populations, how many

people have had mild or asymptomatic infection, how many have been infected but may not have been identified by routine disease surveillance, and what proportion of the population may be immune from infection by SARS-CoV-2 in the future," the WHO explained.

The RECOVERY Trial was reportedly set up in record time, taking just nine days from conception to launch, and has recruited over 10,000 patients in 176 U.K. hospitals in just two months. Deputy Chief Investigator of the trial, Martin Landray, said: "What we have achieved with RECOVERY is unprecedented, but it couldn't have been done without the support and commitment of everyone involved."

It tests existing drugs on hospital in-patients with suspected or confirmed COVID-19. Each participant is randomised to receive either standard hospital care, or one of four active treatments. Besides its recent success with Dexamethasone, it also uses Lopinavir-Ritonavir, Azithromycin, Tocilizumab, and convalescent plasma. The HCQ arm was dropped. Ed Juszczak, associate professor - director, NPEU Clinical Trials Unit, Oxford university notes the path-breaking nature of such trials. "For this trial, the timeline has been rewritten. The timescales have gone from months and years to hours and days, which is just phenomenal, and shows what's possible."

United manages a draw

Fernandes nets equaliser against Spurs; Barcelona held



Saviour: Bruno Fernandes' penalty conversion helped Manchester United salvage a point. ■ AFP

REUTERS
LONDON

Manchester United's Bruno Fernandes' late goal rescued a point for the visitor in a lively 1-1 draw at Tottenham Hotspur in the Premier League on Friday. It had looked as though Steven Bergwijn's strike would prove enough to revive Spurs' hopes of qualifying for the Champions League before Fernandes' penalty evened things.

Stalemate

Meanwhile in LaLiga, Barcelona dropped points for the first time since the season restarted as it was held to a goalless draw at Sevilla on Friday. The Catalans are on top of the standings with 65

points but Real Madrid (62) can move ahead if it beats Real Sociedad on Sunday as it has a superior head-to-head record.

Robert Lewandowski, who struck twice as Bayern Munich beat Freiburg 3-1, became the first foreign player to score 33 goals in a Bundesliga season.

The results: Premier League: Watford 1 (Dawson 90+3) drew with Leicester 1 (Chilwell 90); Brighton 2 (Dunk 75, Maupay 90+5) bt Arsenal 1 (Pepe 68). **Friday:** Norwich 0 lost to Southampton 3 (Ings 49, Armstrong 54, Redmond 79); Tottenham 1 (Bergwijn 27) drew with Manchester United 1 (Fernandes 81-pen).

LaLiga: Espanyol 1 (D. Lopez 28) lost to Levante 3 (Mayoral 14, Bardhi 67, Pedrosa 87-o.g.).

TV PICKS

Premier League: Star Sports 1 (SD & HD), 11.15 p.m.; SS Select 1 (SD & HD), 6.15 p.m., 8.40 p.m. & 11.15 p.m.
Serie A: Sony Ten 2 (SD & HD), 11 p.m. & 1.10 a.m. (Monday).
PGA Tour: Eurosport (SD & HD), 1.30 a.m. (Monday).

IN BRIEF



Mortaza tests positive for COVID-19

DHAKA
Former Bangladesh captain Mashrafe Mortaza, in pic., has tested positive for COVID-19, becoming the second high-profile cricketer to be infected with the deadly virus. Last week, former Pakistan captain Shahid Afridi had tested positive for the contagious disease. Nafees Iqbal, former cricketer and elder brother of ODI captain Tamim Iqbal, and Nazmul Islam have also tested positive, according to a media report. AGENCE

Chandrasekar applies for Dronacharya award

CHENNAI
Former International paddler and experienced coach V. Chandrasekar has applied for the prestigious Dronacharya award through the Tamizhaga TT Association here. The 63-year-old, a three-time National champion who has been coaching since 1990, has trained the likes of S. Raman, Chetan Baboor, Arul Selvi, M.S. Mythili, N.R. Indu and G. Sathiyam at different points of their career.



Simpson takes sole lead; McIlroy makes the cut

WASHINGTON
Webb Simpson fired nine birdies in fashioning a six-under 65 on Friday for a one-stroke lead midway through the US PGA Tour RBC Heritage. Simpson's second straight six-under put him one clear of American Bryson DeChambeau and Canadian Corey Conners. Former World No. 1 Brooks Koepka carded a 66 to head a group on 133. World No. 1 Rory McIlroy rallied after a disappointing first-round 72 with a bogey-free 65 that saw him make the cut with a stroke to spare. AFP

Paralympic champ Zanardi injured

MILAN
Ex-Formula One driver Alex Zanardi has been placed in an artificial coma, but remained "stable" after suffering horrific head injuries in a crash while competing in a handbike race in Italy. Zanardi, who had both legs amputated in a motor racing accident almost 20 years ago before going on to become a Paralympic champion, was participating in the 'Obiettivo tricolore' relay race in Tuscany on Friday when he lost control of his bike and hit an oncoming truck. AFP

US Open rethinks decision on wheelchair events

NEW YORK
The organisers of the US Open said on Friday they could have communicated better with wheelchair athletes before announcing they would not be part of this year's event, and that they are rethinking their decision. USTA held a call with the wheelchair tennis leadership on Friday. "USTA expects to gather player feedback and work with the ITF to finalise an approach to the 2020 U.S. Open wheelchair competition." REUTERS



'Ring of fire' will be visible in parts of north India today

Most other places will witness a partial eclipse, when the moon passes between the earth and the sun

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
HYDERABAD

A rare celestial event, an annular solar eclipse, which is popularly known as the "ring of fire" eclipse, will be visible on Sunday in parts of India.

The annular phase will be visible only in few places of northern India, while the rest of the country will observe this event partially, said a press release from Pla-

netary Society, India. Across the world, the eclipse in various phases will occur between 9:16 a.m. and 3:04 p.m. "In India depending on the location of a person from the central path, the eclipse, mostly in the partial phase, will be visible between 9:56 a.m. to 2:29 p.m.," the release said.

Across the world the eclipse will be visible in the

region covering Africa except western and southern parts, southeast Europe, Asia (except north and eastern Russia) and Indonesia, among others.

Though the central path of the eclipse begins its journey in Congo (Africa), in India it traverses from Suratgarh (Rajasthan), Sirsa and Kurukshetra (Haryana), Dehradun, Chamoli and Joshimath in Ut-

'Was born tough... but the pandemic is tougher still'

Marathon great Eliud Kipchoge on how COVID-19 has affected his life and training

EXCLUSIVE

RAYAN ROZARIO
COIMBATORE

Ever since he won the marathon gold at the Rio Olympics in 2016, Eliud Kipchoge of Kenya has been smashing records with authority. He planned to crack a few more this year before the pandemic struck and halted his progress.

"The postponement of the Tokyo Games [to 2021] has turned everything, from preparation to planning, upside down for me," he told *The Hindu* in an exclusive chat from Kenya on Friday.

The World record holder, who has won 11 of the 12 official marathons he has taken part in, said he is tackling the

tough days by staying positive and setting safety as his first priority.

"I have never been in a hard situation like this. This is completely different and has hampered my training in a big way," he said. "It has not only affected my training but my fitness too. Training in isolation is not easy and, without your teammates around, it is hard to gauge your fitness as well. Consistency and setting your goal is another recipe."

Big lesson

But Kipchoge was quick to point out that the pandemic has taught him life's big lesson. "To treat the uncertainties and accept the change as it happens."



Stopped in his tracks: Kipchoge may have to wait for things to settle down before getting back on the road. ■ FILE PHOTO

tough situations in life but the pandemic is tougher still," he said.

How about defending the marathon title at the Tokyo Games? "It's not easy to

clinch the gold as it needs total dedication and patience and, above all, consistency," said the 35-year-old, who won at Rio with the biggest margin of victory (70 seconds) in the Olympics since 1972. The Kenyan had bagged a silver at Beijing (2008) and bronze at Athens (2004), both over 5000m.

Despite his advancing years, Kipchoge, who ran the world's first ever sub-two-hour marathon by clocking 1:59:40 at a special event in Vienna last year, is determined to run many a mile. Besides the Olympics, he is eyeing a fifth London Marathon title.

He may have to wait for things to settle down before getting back on the road.

IPL GC to review Chinese sponsorship deals

Move follows 'border skirmish', says league's Twitter handle; signals change of stance

AMOL KARHADKAR
MUMBAI

The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) has changed its stand on Chinese sponsors for the Indian Premier League (IPL) by announcing that the IPL Governing Council will "review various IPL sponsorship deals" next week.

"Taking note of the border skirmish that resulted in the martyrdom of our brave jawans, the IPL Governing

Council has convened a meeting next week to review IPL's various sponsorship deals," read a tweet on the IPL's verified handle late on Friday night.

The move is in stark contrast to the Board's stand on Thursday when treasurer Arun Dhumal had said that the BCCI had no plans to revisit the IPL and BCCI sponsorship deals.

At least four of BCCI's major sponsors have substan-

tial Chinese investors. IPL title sponsor Vivo, the mobile phone manufacturer, is a Chinese company, while online fantasy game entity Dream11 – an associate sponsor of BCCI and IPL – has Chinese investment.

Similarly, e-learning platform Byju's and Paytm – India's team sponsor and the BCCI's title sponsor for cricket in India respectively – are also funded by Chinese entities.

Despite the fate of IPL-2020 continuing to remain uncertain, all the sponsorship deals are long-term.

If the BCCI decides to terminate the deals and invite new bids for the next edition – be it 2020 or 2021 – it may severely dent BCCI's coffers.

Despite broadcast deals dominating cricket's revenue model, sponsorship deals are vital for the IPL and international cricket.

According to *Impact of*

COVID-19 on revenues of world cricket and Indian sports, a paper published by former IPL chief operating officer Sundar Raman, 18% of global cricket revenue is generated through sponsorship.

When it comes to the IPL, Raman noted that sponsorship makes up 30% of the annual revenue, with broadcast deals (65%) and gate receipts (5%) making up the rest.

Artemiev trumps Harikrishna

RAKESH RAO
NEW DELHI

Young Russian speed-chess specialist Vladislav Artemiev converted a slight middle-game advantage into a 40-move victory over debutant P. Harikrishna in the opening round of the \$150,000 Chessable Masters on Saturday.

Before Hikaru Nakamura fought from a pawn-deficit against Magnus Carlsen to draw in 73 moves in the most-watched game of the evening, Harikrishna paid the price for overestimating the value of his pawn-move on the 21st turn.

The results (first round): Vladislav Artemiev (Rus) bt P. Harikrishna; Hikaru Nakamura (USA) drew with Magnus Carlsen (Nor); Daniil Dubov (Rus) drew with Alexander Grischuk (Rus).

Fans will be allowed to watch T20 World Cup action, says Hockley

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MELBOURNE

If 15 teams can be allowed to enter Australia for the T20 World Cup, then fans will not be stopped from watching live action from the stadiums, Cricket Australia's (CA) interim CEO Nick Hockley said on Saturday.

Different possibilities are being worked out for the T20 World Cup to go ahead as scheduled later this year and one of them is to host the tournament before empty stands in the wake of COVID-19 pandemic.

However, Hockley said crowds will be allowed, though, hosting 15 teams with players, officials and support staff is "complex" as of now, hinting that probably the ICC flagship event

could be pushed back. "The reality is, and we've got much more understanding about this in recent weeks, is crowds are most likely to come back before international travel.

"Our biggest challenge is getting 15 teams into the country," Hockley told *cricket.com.au* when asked if he would like to see the World Cup proceed without fans.

"If I compare it with the prospect of a bilateral tour, you're talking about bringing one team in and then playing individual matches.

"But the prospect of bringing 15 teams in and having six or seven teams in one city at the same time, it's a much more complex exercise."



Charm of the game: A cricket match played in front of a full house is what everybody loves. ■ AP

ICA raises ₹78 lakh, helps 57 cricketers

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

Boosted by significant contributions, Indian Cricketers Association (ICA) has managed to raise ₹78 lakh and will provide financial assistance to 57 needy cricketers during COVID-19. The ICA had originally planned to help 25 to 30 former players.

"Unlike the rest of us, Shoaib Malik has not seen his immediate family for nearly five months due to his commitments and the subsequent international travel bans," PCB chief executive Wasim Khan said.

Lavishes praise on his wards Rajyavardhan Singh Rathore and Ronjan Sodhi

KAMESH SRINIVASAN
NEW DELHI

Russell Mark competed in six Olympics, winning gold in Atlanta (1996) and silver in Sydney (2000). But he is more familiar in India as the coach who guided Rajyavardhan Singh Rathore to the double trap silver at the Athens Games in 2004.

Entrepreneur
In an entertaining conversation with Ritika Singh, as part of the Manav Rachna Happy Times series on the web, the 56-year-old Mark charmed everyone with the understandable versatility of a successful entrepreneur.

Mark has a hotel business in Melbourne and is in the process of strengthening on-

line coaching of shooters. Even though he missed the Athens Olympics as a shooter, Mark said that he was proud of Rathore's success and happy to see the relief on the Indian's face when he stepped on the podium.

Mark recalled Rathore's fantastic shooting at the Commonwealth Games in 2002, when he won the individual gold with 49 out of 50 in the final, after securing the pairs gold with Morad Ali Khan, defeating the formidable Aussies – Mark and Michael Diamond.

He said that the seeds of excellence for India were sown in the 1994 Commonwealth Games in Victoria, Canada, when Mansher Singh won the trap gold.



Russell Mark.

line coaching of shooters. "Chilly" was one of the toughest competitors I ever shot with," said Mark, praising the former Union Sports Minister Rathore, fondly called 'Chilly' in his close circles.

He was equal in praise for another of his wards, former World No. 1 and Asian Games champion Ronjan Sodhi.

Technically better

"Ronjan was technically better. In 2010, 2011, he shot better than anyone. He could have made the London Olympics final and anything was possible after that," said the Aussie.

"I was a mentor, giving them the confidence and belief," said Mark, about his friendly approach to coaching.

Mark recalled that it took him his third Olympics to win a gold medal. "Shooting became an obsession and I was hungry to get the gold," he said.



Celestial sparkle: The moon covers the sun during the solar eclipse in Dindigul, Tamil Nadu, on December 26, 2019. ■ AFP

'Ring of fire' will be visible in parts of north India today

Most other places will witness a partial eclipse, when the moon passes between the earth and the sun

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