



## Class X students with learning disability in limbo amid pandemic

Students wait for certification from civic hospitals so they can choose alternate subjects and vocational courses

**SHUBHA SHARMA**  
MUMBAI

Most Class X students worry about what stream to pursue once they finish school. But Dheeraj Kumar (14) has an altogether different dilemma. While most of his classmates are following online lessons in mathematics, Hindi, English and Marathi during the lockdown, he wishes he would not be bogged down by subjects he finds difficult to navigate. His mother, Anita Kumar (names changed to protect identity), said he understands concepts, but writing is a challenge. "Asking teachers for one-on-one guidance during online lessons is not possible. We wish we could get some clarity on alternate subjects that our son can choose," she said.

Dheeraj is among the students in regular classrooms all over the city who have been diagnosed with learning disability, a neurological disorder that shows up as difficulty with language, reasoning or reading, writing and mathematics in people with normal intelligence.

The lockdown has been

particularly hard on these students affiliated to the Maharashtra State Board of Secondary and Higher Secondary Education – they cannot choose subjects suitable to their special needs or have writers help with their exams, as they have not received government certification to this effect.

### Certification

The certification follows testing and is provided in three of the city's civic-run hospitals: Nair, KEM and Sion, which have diverted all their resources to tackling the COVID-19 pandemic.

Many students, such as Dheeraj, had started the learning disability testing process before the lockdown, hoping to complete the certification process during the 2020 summer vacation.

The academic year began on June 8, but there is still no clarity on the certification. "We went to Sion Hospital on March 24 for the last stage of testing, but were told everything was shut.

We are confused: what sub-

jects should my son study?" Ms. Kumar said.

"Certification is critical at the right time, because these students need to choose the right subjects when they start their Class X and head towards their board exams," said Sumati Purushottam, special educator and counsellor. "They need a little extra help, so that the playing field is made level for them."

### Vocational subject

Instead of Class X maths, for instance, the students are allowed to opt for Class VII maths. They are also asked to take up a vocational subject, and can drop a third language such as Marathi, French or Sanskrit, depending on what their school offers – it decides that in consultation with parents.

Students affiliated to the ICSE and CBSE boards have time till December when they can send the certifications, so those who follow the State board's Secondary School Certificate (SSC) syllabus are the hardest hit.

"This is their right, and not something special that is



The academic year began on June 8, but there is still no clarity on the certification.

PICTURE FOR REPRESENTATIONAL PURPOSE

being asked for," said Ms. Purushottam. "A writer and extra time to write exams is the minimum concession that boards offer, but students cannot avail of these because they don't have the certification."

### Assessment reports

Although most schools accept student assessment reports from private practi-

tions till the student is in Class IX, they prefer certificates from government hospitals once they are in Class X, as this is what colleges accept.

For students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds, getting testing done from private practitioners is not an option at all. At civic hospitals, the testing fee is ₹3,500, and

private practitioners can charge up to ₹10,000.

Also, a lot goes into convincing parents to take their children for testing, even if the disability is identified early, said Ms. Purushottam.

"They have to invest time, money and effort, so it takes a back seat."

Parents from lower socio-economic strata don't see the child as having a pro-

blem in the first place, said Jyoti Aiyar, principal of the Smt. Surajba Vidya Mandir in Jogeshwari (East). "They feel the child is not paying attention. It takes two to three years to make them understand the problem, and a lot of effort from school authorities, parents and special educators."

Dr. Sangeeta Gole, educational advisor to schools across the State, said for a daily wage earner, "a trip to hospital is a challenge." There are times when someone from the school needs to accompany the parent and student, even if that means paying for the journey and the testing, she said.

### Rising cases

And with COVID-19 cases rising each day, parents will not be comfortable taking their children to public hospitals, said Mansi Chanderkar, special educator at The Orchid School, Pune. "I have seen parents hesitate to go to government hospitals fearing all kinds of things. They also say they won't go as nothing is se-

riously wrong with their child."

Taking the tests – a battery of psycho-educational assessments – online is not an option either, said Dr. Gole. "A lot of tests need visual or verbal assessment, and cannot be done on a digital platform."

The only solution right now, she said, is to allow school counsellors to certify students and use their reports as a credible source for concessions. Hospitals could also create area-wise testing centres in schools, said Ms. Aiyar.

Parag Jain, secretary, Social Justice Department, said the department was ready to clear a proposal that would be sent to it in this regard.

"If this is the condition in Mumbai, we can imagine what it is in rural areas. We will take field reports from all assistant commissioners to get a clearer picture," he said.

Ms. Chanderkar pointed to the urgency of a solution. "The time is now. As it is, there's a tremendous academic lag this year," she said.

## HC asks Centre why ICUs in train coaches aren't being considered

Court also seeks details of Railways converting coaches into isolation facilities

**SONAM SAIGAL**  
MUMBAI

The Bombay High Court recently directed the Central government to file an affidavit detailing steps taken by the Western Railway and the Central Railway to convert coaches into isolation or quarantine centres, and explaining why ICU facilities in coaches are not considered necessary.

A Division Bench of Chief Justice Dipankar Datta and Justice S.S. Shinde was hearing a public interest litigation (PIL) filed by social activist Naresh Kapoor.

The PIL has sought that the hospitals, nursing homes, and dispensaries, which are presently closed

either due to departmental or judicial orders, should be reopened to meet the needs of patients who have tested positive for COVID-19 as well as patients suffering from other ailments. It has further sought that private practitioners ought to be permitted to prescribe COVID-19 tests, and railway coaches should be converted into makeshift ICU facilities for effective treatment of COVID-19 patients. The PIL also highlighted the need for making rapid testing kits for the novel coronavirus available across the city.

On reopening of closed hospitals and nursing homes, the HC said, "It has

been noticed that facilities for treating COVID-19 as well as non-COVID-19 patients presently at the disposal of the State and the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) are not that insufficient so as to call for an order to reopen closed hospitals, nursing homes and dispensaries."

The Bench said instead of the judiciary entering the domain of the executive, opening up more facilities should be left to the latter's judgement considering the need, if at all, therefor. "If the situation demands, the State or the BMC, keeping in mind the medical protocol required at the moment,

may explore ways to make more facilities available at their disposal, other than reopening closed hospitals, nursing homes, and dispensaries," the HC said.

About rapid testing kits, Advocate General Ashutosh Kumbhakoni, representing the State, had in the last hearing placed a circular before the HC. The circular, which was issued by the State government on June 22, was in pursuance of an advisory issued on June 14 by the Indian Council of Medical Research on the use of rapid antigen detection test for COVID-19.

The HC posted the matter for hearing on July 2.

## Hotelier held, gutkha seized

**RAINA ASSAINAR**  
NAVI MUMBAI

The central unit of the Navi Mumbai Crime Branch on Wednesday arrested a hotelier for allegedly selling gutkha, which is banned by the State government. The accused, Keraram Ruparam Chaudhary (33), ran a hotel, Ishita, in Rabale MIDC, and also had a grocery shop adjacent to the hotel in the same compound.

"He served tea and snacks in the hotel which

had been noticed that facilities for treating COVID-19 as well as non-COVID-19 patients presently at the disposal of the State and the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) are not that insufficient so as to call for an order to reopen closed hospitals, nursing homes and dispensaries," the HC said.

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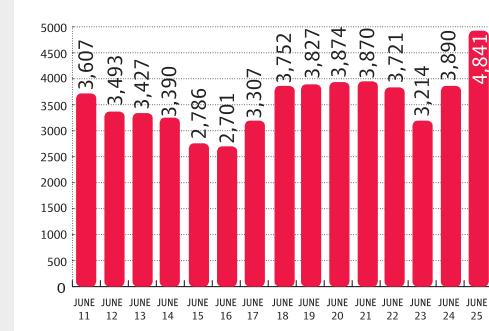
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**Maharashtra COVID-19 tracker**

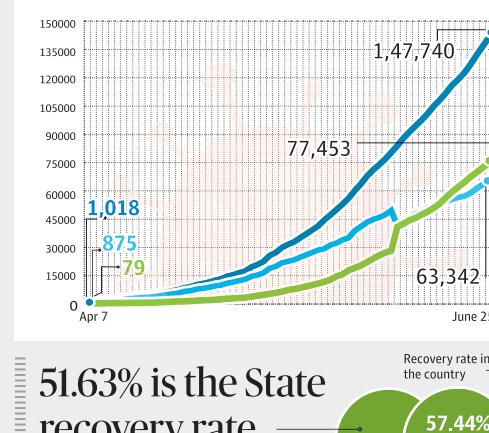
TOTAL CASES	NEW CASES	ACTIVE CASES	RECOVERED	DEATHS
1,47,740	4,841	63,342	77,453	6,931

**DISTRICTS AFFECTED: 35**

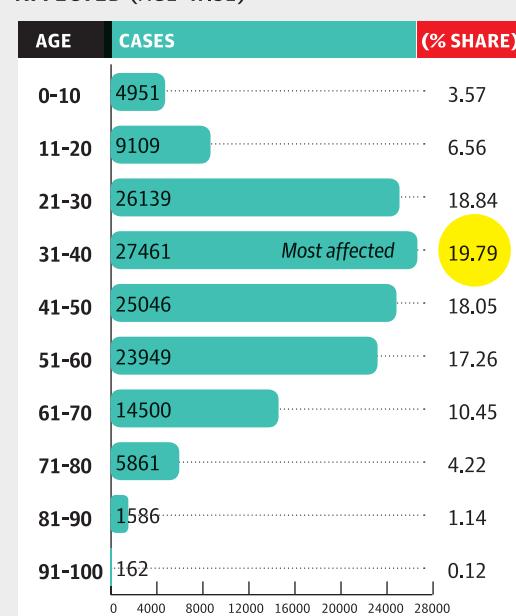
DISTRICT	CASES	DEATHS	DISTRICT	CASES	DEATHS
Mumbai	70,878	4,062	Ahmednagar	302	12
Thane	29,488	810	Nanded	304	11
Pune	18,015	659	Hingoli	265	1
Aurangabad	4,084	211	Yavatmal	279	9
Palghar	4,263	99	Latur	241	13
Nashik	3,276	194	Osmanabad	190	8
Raigad	3,085	94	Sindhudurg	190	4
Solapur	2,440	236	Buldhana	181	12
Jalgaon	2,652	204	Gondia	103	0
Nagpur	1,418	13	Parbhani	91	4
Akola	1,352	71	Beed	102	3
Satara	891	42	Nandurbar	90	6
Kolhapur	774	8	Washim	86	3
Ratnagiri	529	25	Bhandara	79	0
Dhule	615	47	Chandrapur	65	0
Amravati	486	24	Gadchiroli	60	1
Jalna	411	12	Wardha	15	1
Sangli	320	9			

**POSITIVE CASES OVER LAST 15 DAYS**

1,350 (27.88%) of Thursday's cases are from Mumbai

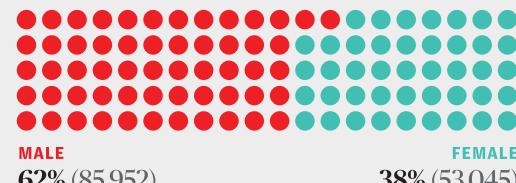
**CASES TREND****51.63% is the State recovery rate**

Maharashtra: 4.72%  
India: 3.15%

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

5,56,428 | 33,952

Home quarantine | Institutional quarantine

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

70% of deaths due to co-morbidities

**HELPLINE NUMBERS**

Toll free number: 104/1075

Maharashtra: 020-26127394

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

State helpline email id: ssummaharashtra@gmail.com

**CITY-WISE HELPLINE NUMBERS**

Mumbai city: 022 22664232

Mumbai suburbs: 022 2655799 / 26556806

Thane: 022 25301740

Palghar: 02525 297474

Ratnagiri: 02352 226248

Sindhudurg: 02362 228847

Source: Public Health Department, Maharashtra, BMC

# State reports new single-day high, tally nears 1.5 lakh mark

4,841 new cases, 192 deaths reported; Mumbai crosses 70,000-mark

**SHOUMOJIT BANERJEE**  
PUNE

Maharashtra recorded a new single-day high on Thursday, with a whopping 4,841 new COVID-19 cases that took its tally to 1,47,741 cases.

The death toll rose to 6,931, with 192 more deaths being reported. Of these, 109 were reported in the last 48 hours while 83 were from an earlier period, said State Health Department officials.

However, just 63,342 out of the total cases are active. As many as 3,661 patients were discharged on Thursday, taking total recoveries to 77,453.

With 1,350 new cases, Mumbai's case tally has crossed the 70,000-mark to reach 70,878. With 58 new fatalities, the city's death toll has breached the 4,000-mark to rise to 4,062.

Twenty-one deaths were reported from Pune as the total death toll shot to 659.

State Surveillance Officer Dr. Pradeep Awate said the State's recovery rate had marginally risen to 52.42%, while the case fatality rate stands at 4.69%.

Along with Mumbai city, most areas in the Mumbai Metropolitan Region reported record high case surges as



**Check-up time:** Healthcare workers screen residents at Appa Pada in Malad on Wednesday. ■ VIJAY BATE

well. Fresh cases continued to mount at an alarming rate in Thane, with the district reporting a record surge of more than 500 new COVID-19 cases to take the district's total tally to 11,730.

**Massive spike in Kalyan**  
Navi Mumbai piled up new cases as well with 256 fresh cases taking its total case tally to 6,663. Kalyan-Dombivli reported a massive spike of 391 new cases, taking its case tally to 5,234.

Mira-Bhayander and Vasai-Virar, too, witnessed sharp spikes of 145 and 184 cases, respectively, to take their total case tallies to 2,883 and 3,424.

Aurangabad reports surge of 230

**SHOUMOJIT BANERJEE**  
PUNE

The march of COVID-19 continued in Pune district, which reported another massive spike of nearly 400 new cases on Thursday, taking its total case tally to 17,905, said authorities.

390 new cases were reported while the district's death toll rose to 640 fatalities till date.

Of the total case tally, 6,664 are active positive cases while as many as 10,601 persons have been discharged thus far, said Pune Divisional Commissioner Deepak Mhaisekar, adding that district's recovery rate currently stood at 59.21%. The case fatality rate stands at 3.57% – a reduction from 3.73% last week. As many as 365 of the active cases are in a critical condition.

**Masks mandatory**  
In the wake of surging cases, Pune District Collector Naval Kishore Ram has issued a directive making it mandatory for all persons to wear a mask and that those found violating this rule would be penalised with a fine of ₹500. Ever since the process of unlocking began on June 1, Pune district has been witnessing notably high daily case surges, especially since the past week.

Authorities said 124 of these were from Aurangabad city while the remaining 106 cases had emerged from the rural areas of the district, which is a virus hotbed in the region.

218 persons had succumbed to the virus thus far, with at least 10 COVID-19-related fatalities being reported on Wednesday.

"Pune city's present case doubling rate till June 22 stands at 20.77 days, higher than last week's figure of 19 days. Moreover, we are adequately equipped to deal with any spike... cases have risen because we are testing more

**PUNE MUNICIPAL CORPORATION OFFICIAL**

Nashik district in north Maharashtra reported another steady surge of 172 new cases with Nashik city reporting 129 of these. The district's total cases have risen to 3,276, of which 1,309 are active. A total 193 fatalities have been reported from Nashik till date.

"Till date, of a total 8,48,026 laboratory samples, 1,47,741 (17.42%) have been tested positive with nearly 25,000 samples across the State tested today," Dr. Awate said.

He said presently, 5,56,428 people across the State were in home quarantine, and 33,952 were in institutional quarantine facilities.

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA**  
MUMBAI

A case has been registered against five people, including the trustees of an Andheri-based mosque, for allegedly violating the COVID-19 lockdown norms, after a group of people assembled in its premises on Thursday, the police said.

The police found that no social distancing norms were followed in the premises and further probe revealed that

## Three more policemen succumb

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA**  
MUMBAI

Three Maharashtra Police personnel, including an officer, died of COVID-19 in the last 24 hours, taking the toll in the State force to 54, an official said on Thursday.

Of the 54 victims, 34 were from the Mumbai Police force, he said.

Three of the personnel who have succumbed to the viral infection so far, since its outbreak, were officers, he said.

As of now, over 4,200 police personnel have been infected with the virus. Of these, over 3,000 have recovered.

There are 991 active cases, he said, adding that seven police personnel were discharged in the last 24 hours.

## 'Won't allow sale of spurious medicine'

Anil Deshmukh warns Baba Ramdev

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA**  
MUMBAI

Amid the ongoing controversy over Baba Ramdev's company Patanjali Ayurved introducing a "cure" for COVID-19, Maharashtra Home Minister Anil Deshmukh on Thursday warned the yoga guru that the State government won't allow sale of 'spurious' medicines.

"The National Institute of Medical Sciences, Jaipur will find out whether clinical trials of @PypAyurved's 'Coronil' were done at all. An abundant warning to @yogirishramdev that Maharashtra won't allow sale of spurious medicines (sic),"

Baba Ramdev at the launch of Coronil. ■ FILE PHOTO

Maharashtra or advertise that COVID-19 can be cured with it," Mr. Deshmukh said.

Hours after the launch of Coronil on Tuesday, the AYUSH Ministry had asked the firm to provide the details, telling it to stop advertising it till the issue is examined.

At the launch on Tuesday, the company had claimed that its medicine can cure the contagious disease within seven days. It said Coronil, taken along with another product developed by it, had shown a 100% success rate in clinical trials on infected patients, except those on life support.

Baba Ramdev said the medicines were developed by Patanjali Research Center, Haridwar, in association with privately-owned National Institute of Medical

**Kekee Manzil - The House of Art**  
chronicles a micro-history of the city anchored in a century-old family home

# Glimpses of Kekoo Gandhi's Mumbai

POOJA SAVANSUKHA

Filmmakers Behroze Gandhi and Dilesh Korya's documentary, *Kekee Manzil - The House of Art* offers a glimpse into the interiors of a heritage home, shedding light on its iconic residents Kekoo and Khorshed Gandhi. Kekoo established the only picture-framing company in Asia in the 1940s and later opened the city's first contemporary art gallery, Gallery Chemould, now known as Chemould Prescott Road, run by his daughter Shireen Gandhi. The documentary captures how Kekoo and Khorshed displayed compassion during challenging times, stayed true to their secular ideals, and remained engaged civically, while building frameworks within which art could grow in postcolonial India.

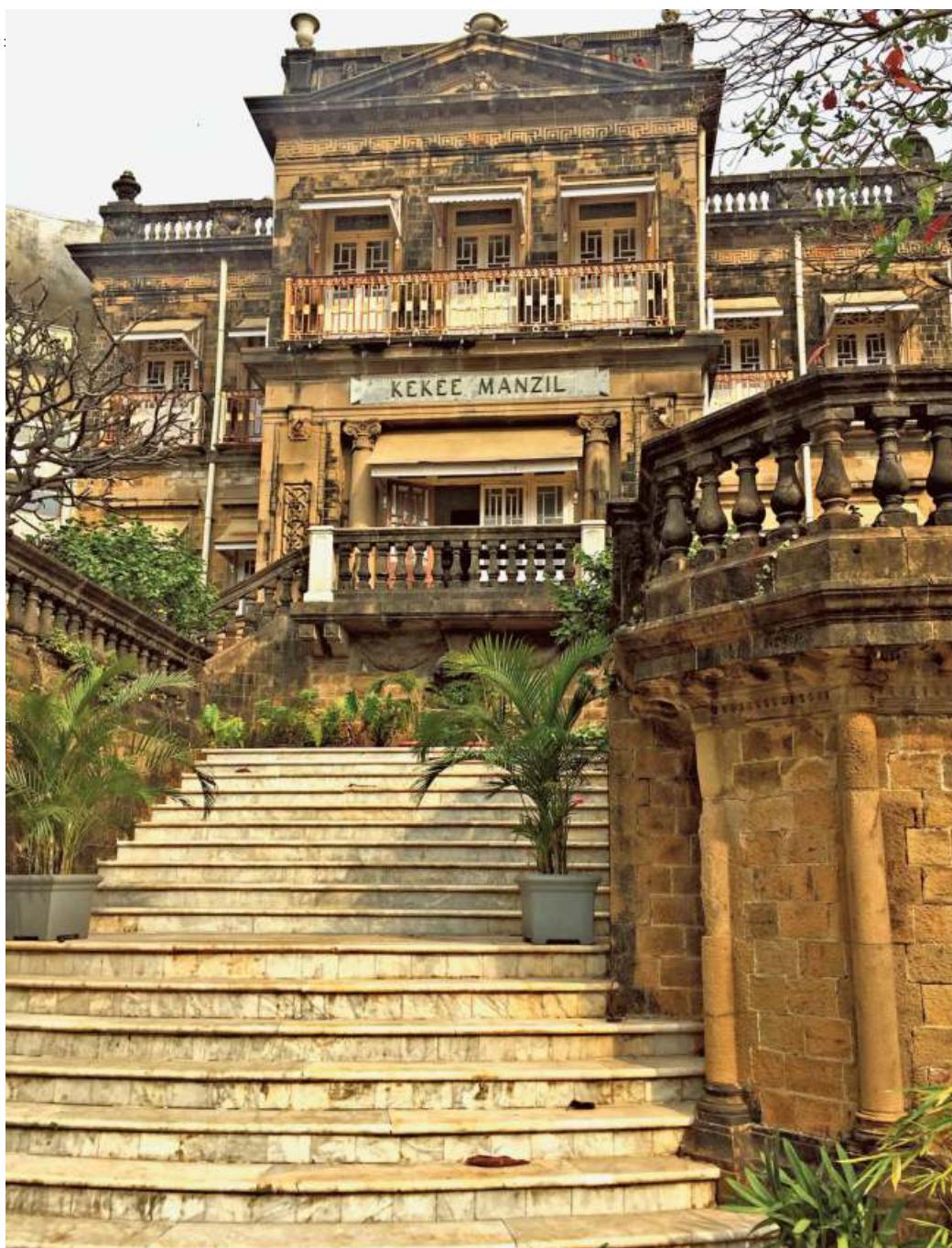
In an interview with *The Hindu*, Behroze shares how despite the fact that her grandfather, who built the house (naming it after Kekoo) was a traditional Parsi patriarch, Kekoo invited all kinds of people home. "It was a source of much amusement to us as kids watching our grandfather's face, as various folk used to troop through," she shares. Later, Kekoo opened up his home as a space for community meetings, for artists to live and practise in, and as a place of refuge. The bungalow, located in a secluded sea-facing neighbourhood, became a site where

the socio-political and artistic climates of the city were nurtured.

#### At the beginning

UK-based Behroze, grew up in Kekee Manzil and moved to London when she was 19. In her mid-thirties, while producing the show, *On The Other Hand* in the UK that dealt with South Asian issues, she realised, "How connected [her] father was as [she] had access to guests from every walk of life." She elaborates, "When the riots in Bombay exploded after the demolition of the Babri Masjid, I was commissioned to do a show in Delhi. This was when my father was busy with the Peace committees in Bombay and our work interconnected."

She began recording her parents in 2002, realising how they were a repository of the early years of the Indian art movement. She also interviewed their contemporaries - members of the Progressive Artists' Group including SH Raza, Akbar Padamsee, and Krishen Khanna. She took a short hiatus after her parents passed away between 2012-13, but soon began examining the material she had access to. Despite losing footage and being unable to clean-up profound interviews like the one with artist Ram Kumar, she had enough to construct a narrative in close collaboration with Korya that featured family members, friends,



Memory lane: Kekee Manzil in Bandra Bandstand; (right) Behroze Gandhi ■ COURTESY CHEMOULD PRESCOTT ROAD

and old archives from 8 mm film.

She says, "The story was a curious one - of how my father, a casualty of the Second World War, as far as his incomplete studies at Cambridge were concerned, landed up being one of the catalysts of an art movement, which was totally at odds with his family's Parsi business background. It all revolved around a shop selling picture frames and a series of curious co-incidences which led him to the point of opening Gallery Chemould."

Korya persuaded Behroze to embody the narrative voice in the film. It's a powerful choice that adds sensitivity to the story. She narrates Kekoo's life, acknowledging how her distance from Mumbai gave her a necessary "insider-outsider perspective." "Kekoo was excited I was filming him; he felt like someone was tak-

ing him seriously in his old age," says Behroze adding how Salman Rushdie, Nalini Malani, and Anish Kapoor instantly agreed to be interviewed for the film, a testament to his influence.

#### Family and friends

Intimate family scenes around the dining table and living room highlight the joint-family life in *Kekee Manzil*. Behroze's siblings Adil (who runs Chemould Frames), Rashna, and Shireen, Kekoo's brother Rusi, as well as the eldest surviving family-member, his cousin, Dara feature prominently. Behroze says, "I wanted to bring out how crucial my mother was in running a gallery like Chemould. We try to address this in the way my siblings and artists like Nalini Malani speak about her contribution, but somehow my father dominates the film." Kekoo, she de-

scribes was chaotic, "Khorshed had the persistence to see his visions through." The musical score of the film, produced by Talvin Singh, evokes the Indian classical music that Khorshed sang in the house every Thursday, or listened to frequently. While Khorshed is absent physically in much of the film, she is entirely present through the music.

The film narrates Kekoo's chance encounters in the city, with Italian prisoners of war who educated him in art, Jewish emigres who escaped Nazi Germany, and Belgian businessmen who wanted to invest in pictureframe moulding. Kekoo's meeting with Austrian artist Walter Langhammer was transformative; through him, Chemould Frames on Princess Street became a hub for artists. It led to Kekoo meeting the Bombay Progressives. The Gandhis' close

friendship with MF Husain is highlighted - although their conflicting stances following Indira Gandhi's Emergency strained their relations, they later reconciled.

"Something I learnt about my father is that he interacted with people at a human level. He would talk to the local sweeper, policeman, neighbours, strangers on the streets; he never made distinctions. He was wildly impractical and helped those in need at his expense," says Behroze. She acknowledges how his phases of depression during his later years were times when she spent reflective moments with him. She did not see his bi-polar disorder as a disease, "If he gave so much, he had to be able to recharge himself."

#### Art and politics

The film transports viewers to an old-world city - scenes in a quieter Bandra, Juhu Beach where the Gandhis would go swimming, and other parts of the city evoke simpler times. Kekoo and Khorshed watched the city develop, witnessed historic moments of optimism and disillusionment, and simultaneously built relationships

with artists grappling with the times. It showcases Tyeb Mehta who was offered a solo exhibition at Gallery Chemould in 1964, "became known as the conscience of the nation." Over the years, as the Gandhis witnessed the city transform topographically, they also found their ideals come under threat during crises like the Emergency and the Mumbai riots. For the Gandhis, secularism and freedom of speech were paramount. Kekoo showcased exhibitions at his gallery that embraced abstractionist, narrative, and conceptualist perspectives, featuring works by Vivian Sundaram, Nalini Malani, Gieve Patel, Mehlli Gobhai, and Rummana Hussain, among others. These artists reflected upon the events around them, challenged injustices, and even, as in the case of Bhupen Khakhar, "Scandalised the artworld with sexual depictions featuring his long-term partner, Vallabhai." The documentary, for us, is then a reminder that the fabric of art is intrinsically tethered to socio-political happenings. Email [communication@gallerychemould.com](mailto:communication@gallerychemould.com) for details on how to view the film online.



Illustrated book *Milton And The Invisible Coronavirus* helps children navigate the world amid the COVID-19 pandemic

AKILA KANNADASAN

Milton the rabbit is staying indoors in his cave. He knows this is the best thing to do under the circumstances. For company, he has Amanda the butterfly and Conrad the hedgehog. In the illustrated book *Milton And The Invisible Coronavirus*, brought out by Danish publisher Milton Around the World, the three characters take children on a journey at the end of which they will better understand the pandemic, and how best to deal with it. Jesper Strømfeldt, the CEO of the publishing house, tells us how the book came about. Edited ex-

cerpts from an email interview:

#### The rabbit and his world

Milton Around the World is an educational universe for children aged 5 to 8. Considering the sparse information about COVID-19, we decided to use Milton's universe as a starting point to create comfort around the situation.

We felt that the children may not quite understand what is happening around them, but they notice huge changes in their everyday life and see the worry



• In it together Milton and his friends ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

the time?

Parents themselves feel challenged now and it is a considerable task to also have to explain in pedagogical and non-frightening terms what COVID-19 is and why we need to be so careful. It is something that the parents may not fully understand themselves.

#### Power of words

We believe that the combination between Milton's universe, the book's illustrations and story is helping shed light on what the pandemic is all about, and how we can play our part in fighting it.

It can be used to alleviate concerns and explain the COVID-19 situation to young children, of-

ferring a way for parents, teachers and students to discuss some of the questions the pandemic has raised.

#### Show and tell

The hand-crafted watercolour illustrations are developed with children aged five to eight years in mind. With our colourful illustrations we believe the children are more encouraged to follow the curious rabbit Milton and his two best friends, as they navigate challenges in their daily lives as a result of the pandemic.

The book can be downloaded from pump manufacturer Grundfos' website, [grundfos.com/in/](http://grundfos.com/in/), that has sponsored and is distributing it.

#### POOCH CAFE



#### HAGAR THE HORRIBLE



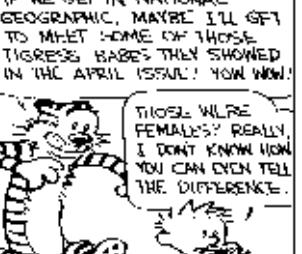
#### TIGER



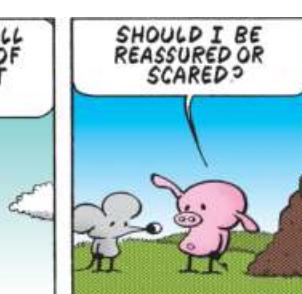
#### PEANUTS



#### CALVIN AND HOBBES

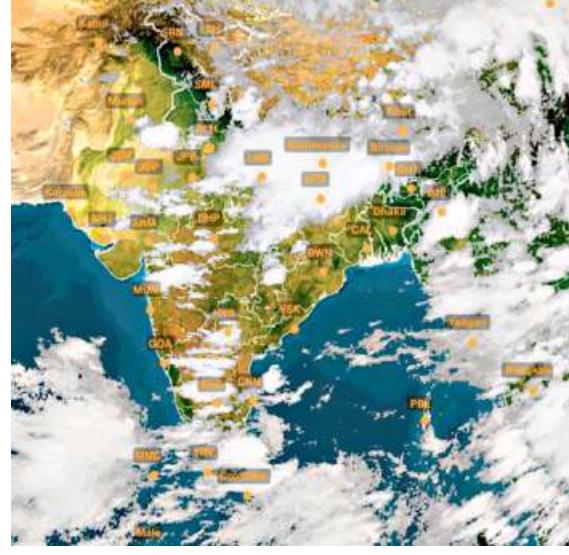


#### PEARLS BEFORE SWINE



**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 Friday:** Heavy/very heavy rainfall likely at a few/ isolated places over Sikkim, Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Meghalaya, Manipur, sub-Himalayan West Bengal, east Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Marathwada, coastal Karnataka, south interior Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Puducherry, Kerala and Lakshadweep

CITY RAIN MAX MIN CITY RAIN MAX MIN

Agartala ..... 36.0 ..... 28.2 Kozhikode ..... 3.2 ..... 33.2 ..... 25.4

Ahmedabad ..... 38.0 ..... 27.9 Kurnool ..... 36.9 ..... 25.3

Aizawl ..... 19.1 Lucknow ..... 31.7 ..... 27.4

Allahabad ..... 14.5 ..... 34.9 ..... 28.4 Madurai ..... 9.6 ..... 35.1 ..... 24.0

Bengaluru ..... 22 ..... 30.4 ..... 20.8 Mangalore ..... 0.5 ..... 31.0 ..... 24.1

Bhopal ..... 30.0 ..... 24.9 Mumbai ..... 33.7 ..... 26.9

Hubballi ..... 35.6 ..... 27.3 Mysuru ..... 31.0 ..... 21.0

Chandigarh ..... 23.8 ..... 34.1 ..... 25.6 New Delhi ..... 14.6 ..... 36.6 ..... 26.8

Chennai ..... 36.0 ..... 28.4 Patna ..... 2.4 ..... 30.6 ..... 28.2

Coimbatore ..... 0.4 ..... 34.4 ..... 23.6 Port Blair ..... 0.7 ..... 30.4 ..... 25.2

Dehradoon ..... 7.2 ..... 34.0 ..... 24.1 Puducherry ..... 3.7 ..... 33.8 ..... 24.0

Gangtok ..... 22 ..... 19.8 ..... 18.6 Pune ..... 34.6 ..... 22.9

Goa ..... 15.4 ..... 32.0 ..... 25.1 Raipur ..... 34.0 ..... 27.4

Guwahati ..... 34.8 ..... 29.0 ..... 23.9 Ranchi ..... 31.6 ..... 25.2

Hubballi ..... 31.0 ..... 22.0 Shillong ..... 20.7 ..... 23.4 ..... 18.5

Hyderabad ..... 0.5 ..... 35.6 ..... 26.2 Shimla ..... 24 ..... 24.7 ..... 16.6

Imphal ..... 1.5 ..... 29.2 ..... 22.9 Srirangam ..... 28.9 ..... 16.0

Jaipur ..... 1 ..... 39.4 ..... 27.0 Thiruvananthapuram ..... 32.8 ..... 25.4

Kochi ..... 3.2 ..... 31.6 ..... 24.4 Tiruchi ..... 1 ..... 38.0 ..... 26.0

Kohima ..... 5.6 ..... 24.6 ..... 18.4 Vijayawada ..... 35.4 ..... 27.6

Kolkata ..... 35.7 ..... 28.4 Visakhapatnam ..... 34.0 ..... 28.0

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)

**Pollutants in the air you are breathing**

CITIES SO<sub>2</sub> NO<sub>x</sub> CO PM2.5 PM10 CODE

Ahmedabad ..... 14 ..... 39 ..... 40 ..... 69 ..... — ■■■■■

Bengaluru ..... 10 ..... 29 ..... 39 ..... 78 ..... — ■■■■■

Chennai ..... 10 ..... 36 ..... 91 ..... 61 ..... — ■■■■■

Delhi ..... 17 ..... 28 ..... 24 ..... 95 ..... 119 ■■■■■

Hyderabad ..... 7 ..... 50 ..... 19 ..... 21 ..... 39 ■■■■■

Kolkata ..... 9 ..... 16 ..... 13 ..... 28 ..... 53 ■■■■■

Lucknow ..... 4 ..... 3 ..... 59 ..... 158 ■■■■■

Mumbai ..... 4 ..... 43 ..... 13 ..... 26 ..... 73 ■■■■■

Pune ..... 15 ..... 5 ..... 80 ..... 17 ..... 16 ■■■■■

Visakhapatnam ..... 21 ..... 20 ..... 19 ..... 49 ■■■■■

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

SO<sub>2</sub>: Sulphur Dioxide. Short-term exposure can harm the respiratory system, making breathing difficult. It can affect visibility by reacting with other air particles to form haze and stain culturally important objects such as statues and monuments.

NO<sub>x</sub>: Nitrogen Dioxide. Aggravated respiratory illness, causes haze to form by reacting with other air particles, causes acid rain, pollutes coastal waters.

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

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

Yesterday

In observation made at 4.00 p.m. in Navalsari, Gujarat recorded an air quality index (AQI) score of 197 indicating a moderate level of pollution. In contrast, Shillong, Meghalaya recorded a healthy AQI score of 17

## State gives nod to set up shacks on eight beaches

Govt. allows private firms to develop land owned by MTDC



**Boost to tourism:** A view of Bhogwe beach in Sindhudurg district in the Konkan region.

Under the government's policy, each beach can have a maximum of 10 shacks. ■ FILE PHOTO

ALOK DESHPANDE

MUMBAI

The State Cabinet on Thursday cleared a proposal to set up shacks on eight beaches in Maharashtra. The move is expected to provide a boost to tourism in the State.

The beaches selected for the pilot project are Guhagar and Aware in Ratnagiri district; Kunkeshwar and Tarkarli in Sindhudurg district; Varsoli and Dive-agar in Raigad district; and Kelwa and Bordi in Palghar district. More beaches will be selected in the next phase.

As per the government's policy, a temporary shack can be set up at a spot agreed upon by the Maharashtra Tourism Develop-

ment Corporation (MTDC) in consultation with the Maharashtra State Coastal Regulatory Zone. Each beach can have a maximum of 10 shacks and local entrepreneurs will be given preference to construct them. About 80% jobs will be reserved for locals.

**Three-year permit**  
The Cabinet also decided the dimensions of the shacks, which will be given permission to initially operate for three years. The shacks must be 15 feet in length, 15 feet in width and 12 feet in height. The roof will have to be 20 feet in length and 15 feet in width. The rent for the first year

will be ₹45,000 and for the second and third years, it will be ₹50,000 and ₹55,000 respectively. The shacks can remain open from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m., but no loud music can be played.

The Tourism Department headed by Aaditya Thackeray has also decided to allow private firms to develop government lands under the MTDC. Under the first phase, MTDC resorts in Ganpatipule, Matheran, Mahabaleshwar, Harihareshwar and Mithibav and plots in Tadoba and Fardapur in Aurangabad will be privatised. A high-level committee will fix the annual rent and an independent consultant will be appointed for the project.

## ASHA workers likely to get salary hike

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
MUMBAI

Around 65,000 accredited social health activists (ASHA) workers in Maharashtra are likely to get a monthly hike of ₹2,000 as an incentive for their hard work during the COVID-19 crisis, a State official said.

The ASHA workers, who have been assigned the task of surveillance in urban and rural areas, have so far been earning about ₹10,000 per month. "State Health Minister Rajesh Tope has finalised a proposal for their salary hike which would be discussed in the Cabinet meeting. If the proposal is cleared, ASHA workers will get a monthly hike of ₹2,000," the official said.

Their salary structure includes a basic payment of ₹2,000 each contributed by the State and the Central governments.

## No leave for police personnel in Gujarat

Need them to implement Unlock-1: govt.

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
AHMEDABAD

The Gujarat Home Department has asked the State Director General of Police (DGP) and other senior officers not to grant any leave to the police personnel, saying that their presence is necessary for the effective implementation of Unlock-1.

A notification issued on Thursday by the State Home Department said the presence of all the available police personnel is necessary for the implementation of the Centre's guidelines for the phased reopening or Unlock-1, which came into effect on June 1.

"For the effective implementation of Unlock-1, it is necessary that police personnel remain active in the field. Therefore, all the police officers as well as lower rung police personnel are hereby advised not to de-

mand leave unless it is for medical or any other unavoidable reasons," the notification said.

### Strict orders

The department also asked all senior officers, including the State DGP, range inspector generals and all the district superintendents of police, not to grant leave to their subordinate staff, except for medical reasons or any other emergencies.

Following the Central government's guidelines, the Gujarat government had announced relaxations in lockdown starting June 1.

As many as 29,001 people have tested positive for the novel coronavirus in Gujarat so far. While 1,736 have died, as many as 21,096 have been discharged. Around 400 cases are being recorded in the State every day over the last one month.

## Film, TV bodies resolve issues; shooting all set for resumption

Two sets of insurance coverage to be given to cast and crew

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
MUMBAI

The Federation of Western India Cine Employees (FWICE), the Cine And TV Artists' Association (CINTAA) and the Indian Film and TV Producers' Council (IFTPC) on Thursday said they have "amicably resolved" issues regarding insurance cover and salary for their members to restart filming immediately. Last month, the Maharashtra government allowed shooting of films, TV serials and web series with conditions.

All production activities in the city were suspended in mid-March in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. There were reports that CINTAA and FWICE called off shootings of some TV shows, which were scheduled to start from Tuesday, after IFTPC failed to meet demands for insurance cover.

In a virtual meeting held among the three bodies, IFTPC agreed to provide two sets of insurance coverage: a death cover of ₹25 lakh for

COVID-19 and hospitalisation cover of ₹2 lakh across all hierarchy of the cast and crew. "Apart from the insurance, IFTPC also assured that every precaution as per the government's guidelines will be put in place to ensure utmost safety for the entire cast and crew," read a joint statement from the bodies.

The 90-day cycle for payment in the TV industry has often come under scanner, with many in the industry asking for it to be done away with. In the meeting, a decision was also taken to reduce the period of credit for

cast and crew from existing 90 days to 30 days for at least the first three months.

"Mutually negotiated pay cuts without actors facing any sanctions, and continued dialogue with all parties for easing working conditions were also agreed to, without delaying the resumption of shootings. IFTPC acknowledged the contributions of CINTAA and FWICE, who in these extraordinary situations showed exemplary understanding and maturity in the workers and the national interest," the statement read.

Back in action: Film crew work at a studio set. ■ FILE PHOTO

## PUDR urges CM to improve conditions in State's prisons

Letter seeks bail or parole for inmates above 60 years

SONAM SAIGAL

MUMBAI

The People's Union for Democratic Rights (PUDR) on Thursday, the 45th anniversary of the Emergency, wrote to Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray highlighting the deplorable conditions in prisons and quarantine centres in Maharashtra, and sought urgent action to improve the facilities.

In the letter, PUDR also requested Mr. Thackeray to grant interim bail or emergency parole to undertrial prisoners and convicts above 60 years and those with co-morbidities, irrespective of the offences for which they have been booked.

**'Prevent spread of virus'**  
The letter said physical distancing norms must be strictly implemented in jails, and shacks remain open from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m., but no loud music can be played.

The Tourism Department headed by Aaditya Thackeray has also decided to allow private firms to develop government lands under the MTDC. Under the first phase, MTDC resorts in Ganpatipule, Matheran, Mahabaleshwar, Harihareshwar and Mithibav and plots in Tadoba and Fardapur in Aurangabad will be privatised.

A high-level committee will fix the annual rent and an independent consultant will be appointed for the project.



**Under threat:** Arthur Road jail saw a spike in COVID-19 cases last month. ■ FILE PHOTO

place demarcated for them to walk or engage in physical exercise. This stands in contravention to the Maharashtra Jail Manual, which provides for at least one toilet seat for every six prisoners and thorough ventilation, among other things."

PUDR also said the inmates are being kept arbitrarily at the facility beyond the 14-day quarantine period as Talaja jail is unable to accommodate more prisoners. "The jail has reportedly exceeded its capacity by 1,000 prisoners. Eight overcrowded prisons in the State have had to be 'locked down'. This does not even remotely indicate the Maharashtra High Powered Committee's resolve to reduce the jail population by at least two-thirds to implement physical distancing norms," it said.

Earlier, the Bombay High Court, after perusing the report submitted by the Inspector General of Prisons, had remarked on the sorry state of affairs in the State's jails. The court said the conditions being reported were a source of grave and urgent concern, and posed an imminent threat of disease and death to undertrials.

The letter said, "What is worse is that for 350 persons, there were only three toilets, seven urinals, and one bathing facility without either a bucket or a mug. The inmates also had no access to fresh air, as they were mostly locked in, with no

## 3 weeks after cyclone, 280 villages in Raigad district still without power

₹66 crore transferred into bank accounts of affected people

RAINA ASSAINAR

NAVI MUMBAI

Power is yet to be restored to 280 villages in Raigad district, three weeks after Cyclone Nisarga made landfall in Murud and plunged 1,976 villages in darkness.

Raigad District Collector Nidhi Choudhary said, "Gondghar sub-station, which provides power to some parts of areas such as Shrivardhan, Mhasla, Tala, Murud and Mangaon, has been badly damaged. The repair of the sub-station is taking a lot of time. Besides, heavy rainfall has been hampering the work. We hope to restore power in most of the villages by Sunday. We have been able to restore electric-

ity in 20 villages every day." Ms. Choudhary said the assessment of damages to houses, crops, and cattle has been completed. She said 1.83 lakh houses were damaged in the cyclone, while 16,060 hectares of land with coconut, mango, and cashew trees were destroyed.

So far, the district has received ₹373 crore from the State government for the relief and rehabilitation of people. "Of this, ₹72.37 crore has been disbursed as compensation to owners of damaged houses, ₹8.72 lakh for the injured and deceased, and ₹1.23 crore for agricultural loss," she said.

Around 15,000 government schools and 186 priv-

&lt;div style="background-color: #e6f2



## Senseless deaths

T.N's custodial deaths flag the failure to have guidelines to handle lockdown violations

Even for a country as inured to custodial violence as India, the death of a father-son duo arrested for a lockdown violation in Tamil Nadu is distressingly senseless. P. Jayaraj, 58, a timber trader, and his son, J. Benicks, 31, who ran a mobile phone service and sales centre, were arrested for allegedly keeping their outlets open after permitted hours at Sattankulam town in Thoothukudi district and remanded to judicial custody. The police claim they took ill on successive days while being lodged in a sub-jail and breathed their last in hospital. In a swift response, the Madurai Bench of the Madras High Court, which took suo motu cognisance of their death, has decided to monitor the progress of the statutory magisterial probe. It has asked for a status report from the police and also directed that the autopsy be video-graphed. Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami has announced a compensation of ₹10 lakh each, while two sub-inspectors have been suspended and an inspector placed on compulsory wait. The mere suspension of police personnel involved is an inadequate response to an incredibly wrongful abuse of authority by the law enforcement machinery. The police should register a case of murder and the matter taken over by an independent agency for a fair investigation. Custodial deaths are often the result of the pervasive use of torture in India's police stations for extracting admissions of crime, but it is not uncommon, regrettably, for the police to use their power and authority to settle personal scores.

If the death of Jayaraj and Benicks are ultimately established as custodial murder as a result of torture or assault by the police, it would only mean that the problem is much deeper than the mere lack of professionalism in investigative methods. It might indicate a different pathology among police officials that makes them inflict violence and harm against the weak. Since the early days of the current lockdown, there have been innumerable reports, often backed by video footage, of the police and officials attacking citizens in the name of enforcing restrictions, and awarding personalised punishment on violators, and sometimes kicking and overturning carts containing items for sale. In this case, the father was thrashed even before being taken to the police station. Their offence would have only attracted Section 188 of IPC (for disobeying the time restrictions ordered by a public servant), but they were also booked under Section 383 (extortion by threat) and Section 506 (ii) (criminal intimidation). It is well known that the police include 'intimidation' in the FIR solely to obtain an order of remand, as it is non-bailable, if they are bent upon sending someone to jail. The inclusion of non-bailable sections for a lockdown violation indicates a perverse and prior inclination to harass the two and cause suffering. The top brass of the police too will have to bear responsibility for this atrocity as it indicates a signal failure to lay down norms for policemen on the field to handle lockdown violations with humanity.

## Shut and open

The pandemic is still on, but tennis is returning in a couple of months

Just three months ago, as COVID-19 raged across Europe and North America, the nerve centres of the sport, tennis tournaments began to fold like in an avalanche. The French Open shifted its dates from late May to late September, guided more by hope than logic. Wimbledon was cancelled for the first time since World War II. And when the Rogers Cup in Canada, which ushers in the fall season in early August, was dropped, it seemed the virus would outlast the year. But over a frenetic few hours early last week, the sport was given a new lease of life. It was announced that the U.S. Open, normally the last Major of the season, would go ahead as scheduled in New York (August 31 to September 13), and would be followed by the French Open in two weeks' time in Paris. The Cincinnati Masters, which leads up to Flushing Meadows, and the Madrid and Rome Masters, warm-up events for Roland Garros, were also resurrected. While the ATP, the governing body of men's tennis, stopped short of announcing the schedule post-Paris, its women's counterpart, the WTA, went ahead full steam, listing events till the end of November, including the lucrative Asian swing in China.

The restart, however, will be a humongous challenge. A Grand Slam like the U.S. Open is a major confluence of the world's best tennis players and fans. To play it in a 'bio-secure bubble' involving no supporters, restricted movements, strict distancing norms and rigorous coronavirus testing protocols will be like a "sci-fi movie", as English cricketer Mark Wood said recently. International travel restrictions are expected to be in place for the foreseeable future, thus rendering tournaments far from level playing fields. Just this week there has been an uptick in infections in the United States forcing a few states, including New York, to impose a 14-day quarantine for travellers from areas with high case numbers. The recent fiasco involving Novak Djokovic's Adria Tour exhibition tennis in the Balkans, where a series of players including Djokovic tested positive, hasn't helped. The World No.1 and the current president of the ATP Player Council came across as anything but a leader, becoming the face of an event which flouted the most important of WHO guidelines, of wearing masks and implementing physical distancing measures. It's a stretch to say that the upcoming tennis calendar is now in jeopardy. Rather, the episode is a stark reminder of how easily things can go wrong if caution is thrown to the wind.

# The myopia of 20/20 hindsight

Judging history through the prism of the present can be very damaging to foreign policy formulation



SHYAM SARAN

**A**s Indians we have the indefatigable propensity to use a contemporary and often biased prism to judge past actors and their actions affecting the nation's interests. There is an unstated assumption that in taking certain decisions or in pursuing certain policies, these actors had the perfect astrological capacity to weigh the consequences and divine the changing context in which those actions would play out. We all have to make intelligent assessments of future trends and developments but these are mostly educated guesses at best. But we expect perfect powers of prediction in our leaders and decision-makers. When things work out differently, as they often do, because the circumstances have changed, we proceed to flay them for having let the country down. We profess perfect 20/20 vision by hindsight but are truly myopic in our perspective.

### Disengagement in Siachen

Recently, I have been at the receiving end of this wisdom by hindsight. India's relations with Pakistan are at an all time low. So everything remotely positive that may have occurred in the past becomes suspect. Those given the task of implementing the more hopeful policies during a certain phase in India's relations with Pa-

kistan then are turned into villains. In the specific case involving me personally, viral messages on social media accuse me of being an instrument of the Manmohan Singh government to hand over Siachen Glacier to Pakistan during negotiations with Pakistan when I was Foreign Secretary. There are selective quotes from my book and mischievous interpretations being circulated to promote this utterly false narrative.

The disengagement of Indian and Pakistan forces from Siachen had been on the agenda of India-Pakistan talks for several years under several governments. The sticking point had been Pakistan's refusal to agree upon an Actual Ground Position Line from which forces of the two sides would withdraw to new positions, negotiated between the two sides. Pakistan finally conceded this. The disengagement would be done in phases with less risky areas in the first phase and others in subsequent phases. There would be arrangements for continuous verification and monitoring of the zone of disengagement.

Disengagement is not surrender just as I presume current disengagement between Indian and Chinese forces does not imply surrender of our territory. This proposed agreement could not be pursued because the Cabinet Committee on Security failed to approve it. It was not formulated by me alone but the government system as a whole. It was also put aside by the same system. That was the end of the matter. Whether the idea itself was wise given the unfortunate and hostile trajectory India-Pakistan relations have ta-



THE HINDU ARCHIVES

ken since is another matter. In the context of the then state of relations this was an initiative deemed worthwhile.

The torrent of criticism that we now witness should then apply to several other instances. Should former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee have undertaken the bus ride to Lahore in 1999, in the light of what we now know of Pakistani coincidental plans to capture the heights over Kargil? Was his "hand of friendship" speech in Srinagar in 2003 based on romantic idealism now that we are convinced of Pakistan's perfidy? Does Prime Minister Narendra Modi's unscheduled visit to Lahore in 2015 and the image of his walking hand in hand with then Pakistan Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif count as unmitigated folly or as a well-considered political gamble to turn relations around? Do the Pathankot and Uri terrorist incidents thereafter show naivete on his part? Worse, should we accuse him of endangering India's security because we were lulled into trusting Pakistan's goodwill? How should we judge his highly publicised summits with Chinese President Xi Jinping in the light of what we have just gone through in Galwan? These decisions may still be com-

mended even if they may have turned sour because at the time they were taken, they promised to reorient India-Pakistan and India-China relations in a positive direction.

### A historical perspective

I am pointing this out because this tendency to be wise after the event can be very damaging to foreign policy formulation. The fear of being proved wrong may paralyse diplomacy. One should always have a historical perspective when formulating policy so that we learn from what turned out to be correct decisions and what turned out to be errors of judgement. But such success or failure can only be properly assessed in the light of then historical circumstances and then regional and international environment. We cannot judge history through the prism of the present. For example, given western support for Pakistan on the Kashmir issue and China's hostility, was the Indo-Soviet partnership between 1960 and 1990 a good strategic move or a bad one? Does the importance of the India-U.S. partnership today negate the earlier partnership with the Soviet Union? To my mind it does not because during the Cold War, and particularly after China and the U.S. became virtual allies after Henry Kissinger's visit to Beijing in 1971, Indo-Soviet partnership acquired great significance and played a role in the birth of Bangladesh that year. Just as the India-U.S. partnership today makes sense for India, so did the Indo-Soviet partnership earlier.

The great strength behind India's foreign policy has been the

broad national consensus it has enjoyed, according it a certain continuity and coherence. Despite holding various leaders to account for this or that error of judgement, there has been general acknowledgement that irrespective of their ideological or political persuasion, successive governments have upheld India's interests firmly and judiciously.

### Limiting room for manoeuvre

It is sad to see that now foreign policy, too, has fallen victim to very narrow and cynical jousting in domestic politics. This can be very damaging to intelligent and careful foreign policy-making. If policymakers constantly have their eye on how something will play out domestically then we will not be able to uphold the nation's larger interests. For example, Pakistan has become a domestic political issue which prevents any kind of sober and well-considered posture towards that neighbouring country. We thus limit our room for manoeuvre.

One is proud to have had the privilege of serving this great country as its representative and I do not take to heart the barbs being thrown at me. Let me also say that in my long years of service I have admired each of the Prime Ministers I have served under. Not for a moment did I ever feel that any one of them did not uphold the country's interests with firmness and, importantly, with passion. And Dr. Manmohan Singh is no exception.

Shyam Saran is a former Foreign Secretary and is currently Senior Fellow, Centre for Policy Research

# Why China is being aggressive along the LAC

Its moves are influenced by a host of factors — from the fractures in the global order to the decline of India's smart power



STANLY JOHNY

**T**he ongoing tensions along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) pose the biggest national security challenge to New Delhi in at least 20 years. The clashes in Galwan Valley in eastern Ladakh have claimed 20 Indian lives, the first incident of fatalities on the India-China border in 45 years. China has revived its claim on the entire Galwan Valley and has asked India to pull back from the areas. Satellite images in the public domain suggest that China has set up defence positions in the valley as well as the disputed "Fingers" of Pangong Tso. Both sides are engaged in a face-off at Hot Springs. Despite multiple rounds of military-level talks, tensions are unlikely to ease given the complexity of the ground situation.

What led to the current situation? In 2017, India and China agreed to amicably resolve the Doklam stand-off that lasted for more than two months. No blood was spilt then, and no shots fired. The National Democratic Alliance government led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi has been very careful not to upset China's domestic and geopolitical sensitivities. Barring occasional joint statements issued with leaders from

the U.S. and Asia-Pacific countries, reasserting India's commitment to "freedom of navigation" (a veiled criticism of China's claims over the South China Sea), India has stayed away from criticising China on controversial topics, whether its "de-radicalisation" camps in Xinjiang, crackdown on protests in Hong Kong, or disputes with Taiwan. Yet China chose to increase tensions along the LAC. Why?

### Salami slice strategy

One popular argument is that China's move, driven by local factors such as India's infrastructure upgrade and its decision to change the status of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh, was reckless. For some square kilometres of land, this argument goes, China has lost India strategically, to the West. Several experts have claimed that the tensions on the border are driving India deeper into a strategic embrace with the U.S. But it's not as simple as it seems. There is a clear shift in Chinese foreign policy post the COVID-19 outbreak. This is seen in China's rising tensions with the U.S., its threats against Taiwan, repeated naval incidents in the South China Sea, and a new security law for Hong Kong. The tensions along the LAC are part of this shift. To understand this shift, one has to get a sense of the sources of China's conduct.

Today's China is an ambitious rising power which wants to reorient the global order. Unlike the Soviet Union of the 1940s (in the



AFP

early stages of the Cold War), China is not an ideological state that intends to export communism to other countries. But like the Soviet Union of the post-war world, China is the new superpower on the rise. When it was rising, China had adopted different tactical positions — "hide your capacity and bide your time", "peaceful rise" or "peaceful development". That era is over. Under President Xi Jinping, the Chinese think they have arrived. With the global economy in the doldrums, globalisation in an irrecoverable crisis accentuated by the COVID-19 outbreak, and the U.S. under an isolationist President taking the most aggressive position towards China since Richard Nixon, Beijing believes the global order is at a breaking point. It is fighting back through what game theorists call "salami tactics" — where a dominant power attempts to establish its hegemony piece by piece. India is one slice in this salami slice strategy.

### Perception of decline

China doesn't see India as a 'swing state' any more. It sees India as an ally-in-progress of the U.S. Its ac-

tions were not reckless, taken at the risk of losing India strategically. Its actions are a result of what it perceives as a strategic loss that has already happened. If India is what many in the West call the "counterweight" to China's rise, Beijing's definite message is that it is not deterred by the counterweight. This is a message not just to India, but to a host of China's rivals that are teaming up and eagerness to recruit India to the club.

Within this broader framework there could be a host of factors — local, regional and global — that influenced China's moves. When most of the world's big powers are grappling with the pandemic, revisionist powers such as China have more room for geopolitical manoeuvring. Europe has been devastated by the virus. The U.S. is battling in an election year the COVID-19 outbreak as well as the deepest economic meltdown since the Great Depression. Its global leadership is unravelling fast. The Indian economy was in trouble even before COVID-19 struck the country, slowing down its rise. Social upheaval over the Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA), 2019, and the National Register of Citizens had weakened the Indian polity. India's traditional clout in its neighbourhood was slipping: tensions with Pakistan have been high keeping the troops occupied in the border areas; Nepal raised boundary issues with India; Sri Lanka is diversifying its foreign policy and China is making deep inroads into that region; and Bangladesh was

deeply miffed with the CAA. Even in Afghanistan, where Pakistan, China, Russia and the U.S. are involved in the transition process, India is out. More important, last year's Balakot airstrike was strategically disastrous. It may have helped Prime Minister Modi win a re-election, but there was no evidence that proved that Indian strikes hit the militants. India lost a jet to the neighbour and its pilot was captured and later released by Pakistan. The whole operation exposed the chinks in our armour, eroding India's deterrence. A confluence of all these factors, which point to a decline in the country's smart power, allowed China to make aggressive moves on the LAC.

This is a strategic trap. India has reached here partly because of the lack of depth in its strategic thinking. A deep embrace of a declining U.S. is not a solution as many argue; rather, it's part of the problem. Pakistan embraced a far steadier U.S. during the Cold War to check India. What happened to Pakistan thereafter should be a lesson for India. What India needs is a national security strategy that's decoupled from the compulsions of domestic politics and anchored in neighbourhood realism. It should stand up to China's bullying on the border now, with a long-term focus on enhancing capacities and winning back its friendly neighbours. There are no quick fixes this time.

stanly.johny@thehindu.co.in

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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

### Trade with China

Boycotting Chinese products is easier said than done ("No exit from the dragon", Data Point, June 24). The data make it clear that India stands to lose more than gain from an economic boycott. India doesn't buy from China because of a robust friendship; it is a purely market-motivated decision owing to China's ability to supply commodities at a better price. Since we do not have the means to sufficiently replace such a large volume of products at short notice, we will have to turn towards other options. This means we would have to compromise on quality or price or both, effectively leading to inflation. If there is a decision to boycott certain Chinese

products, this can happen only in a gradual, planned manner. A sudden boycott, especially at the customer level, would hurt all Indians in the supply chain, from small retailers to large wholesale dealers.

KANNAN K.  
Thrissur

**Conflicting statements**  
The statements issued on the border issue with China give absolutely no clarity on the ground situation ("PLA said Galwan clash was unfortunate" and "India must move out of Galwan: China", June 25). India says the two sides have agreed to disengage in Ladakh. On the other hand, China is demanding that India move out of Galwan Valley and is laying claim to the entire valley. The PLA says the

Galwan clash was unfortunate. The satellite image shows China having a military base in Indian territory even though the Prime Minister said a few days ago that not an inch of land has been ceded to China. Going by these confusing statements, it is clear that China gives scant respect to talks. Indian diplomacy seems to have failed with regard to China.

D. SETHURAMAN,  
Chennai

**Facts on Faripiravir**  
The article shows that we can't afford to be carried away by any promise of a cure ("The many questions about Faripiravir", June 25). It is scary that this drug has been launched with the DCGI's approval without having proved its

effectiveness on COVID-19 patients. It is important to highlight issues on approval of drugs as there is no dearth of "life-saving medicines" being propagated on social media.

SANATH KUMAR T.S.  
Kochi

**Lost opportunity**  
It is unfortunate that the failure of the prosecution has led to B. Chinnasamy's acquittal ("Undesirable acquittal", June 25). This was an opportunity for the Court to show that caste-related killings will not be tolerated in India. The verdict makes a mockery of the Constitution, especially of the right to equality and the right against exploitation. India needs a DalitLivesMatter

movement.  
RAJNISH SINGH,  
Haridwar

**An unethical act**  
When the world's best virologists, epidemiologists, immunologists and pharmacologists are racing to develop vaccines and drugs, it is shocking that not only does Ramdev claim to have found a cure but also that it gets debated on TV ("Ayush lens on

CORRECTIONS & CLARIFICATIONS: >>An op-ed page article titled "The U.S. trial at The Hague" (June 25, 2020) erroneously described the International Criminal Court (ICC) as a U.N. body. The ICC is an independent entity established under the 1998 Rome Statute. The ICC adjudicates complaints against individuals, whereas it is the ICJ (International Court of Justice) that judges disputes between states.

It is the policy of The Hindu to correct significant errors as soon as possible. Please specify the edition (place of publication), date and page. The Readers' Editor's office can be contacted by Telephone: +91-44-28418297/28576300 (11 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday to Friday); Fax: +91-44-28526263; E-mail: readerseditor@thehindu.co.in; Mail: Readers' Editor, The Hindu, Kasturi Buildings, 859 & 860 Anna Salai, Chennai 600 002, India. All communication must carry the full postal address and telephone number. Personal visits are welcome. The Terms of Reference for the Readers' Editor are on www.thehindu.com

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Ramdev's COVID cure", June 24). The good thing is that Patanjali has been asked to stop advertising the product despite Ramdev's political and financial clout. Using a pandemic for profiteering is an unethical act.

G. DAVID MILTON,  
Maruthanandam, Kanyakumari

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www.thehindu.com/opinion/letters/

# Can online learning replace the school classroom?

PARLEY

E-learning is out of reach for many students coming from the disadvantaged sections

*The COVID-19 outbreak has disrupted the academic year, cancelled classes and examinations across the country. To ensure that students do not miss out on their studies, schools moved classes online, forcing students to attend lectures via their gadgets. However, this has also sparked a debate on whether the increased amount of screen time helps students learn or if it impedes their progress. While Maharashtra has banned online classes from pre-primary to Class II, Karnataka and Madhya Pradesh have extended the ban till Class V. In a discussion moderated by Puja Pednekar, Kiran Bhatty and Reeta Sonawat look at the pros and cons of online learning. Edited excerpts:*

**Has screen time for students increased because of online classes?**

**Reeta Sonawat (RS):** No, I do not think that online classes have increased screen time. Children are anyways hooked to screens whether it is in the form of television, mobile or computer. Children have been addicted to screens even before the COVID-19 pandemic began. They have been using the screen for eight to nine hours daily. When it comes to online lessons, most schools are not depending only on screens. They are giving students a blended approach by including various activities in their lessons. At pre-school level, children are asked to do painting or craft. Some schools conduct music sessions; ask students to experiment in the kitchen, make a salad at home. Children only have to watch their screens during storytelling sessions. But those too are designed creatively to engage students. So, there is a bit of screen time, but it is interspersed with hands-on activities.

What we need to understand is that if we do not hold these classes, we will be hampering the child's brain development. In early childhood, the child's brain develops every day. So, we cannot afford to miss even a single day. And for brain development, children need to receive the right kind of stimulation, which only teachers can provide. They

have been trained to provide age-appropriate stimulation.

**Kiran Bhatty (KB):** Looking at the screen for long periods of time can be harmful. And since schools have shifted to online instruction, it does imply long hours of screen time for the child. And that doesn't seem to be a healthy way of learning. In addition to the impact on their health, online learning from home can also be very isolating and lonely for the child. They don't have their peers around them and are sort of learning by themselves. Even the teachers' role becomes limited. Children do not get the kind of supervision that they would in a classroom. Parents might be too busy with their own work to supervise online learning. These factors impact learning.

Also, many children, especially those attending government schools, are being deprived of education during the pandemic as they do not have access to online facilities. They are actually missing out on their lessons. Though some families may have access to digital technology, there might not be enough devices for the personal use of all the family members. The parents may be working from home and need to use their computers. So, each household needs to have several gadgets that they can distribute among all of them so that that is really not possible for a large section of the population.

**Many schools are holding online lessons for children in kindergarten as well. What are the dangers of exposing children to screens at such a young age?**

**RS:** Exposing children to screens from a young age is not right. It can hamper their overall development. The light emitted from the screen can strain children's eyes and could lead to vision problems throughout their lives. Watching a screen is also a passive activity that can make children lethargic and affect their thinking skills. Often, parents expose children to screens right from a young age – using videos to get toddlers to eat without a fuss is a com-



mon parenting method. This can lead to several behavioural problems. Schools should also keep this in mind while creating online content for younger kids. The lessons should be designed in such a way that the child only spends a few minutes looking at a screen. This can be done by integrating different activities into the lessons.

**The Karnataka High Court has asked for guidelines on online learning. What do you think some of these guidelines should include?**

**KB:** So, I think there are multiple issues surrounding online learning, which haven't been thought through. There has been a rush to switch to online classes almost overnight. That's why, some courts have asked the government to come up with guidelines on online instruction. They want to know what online classes entail, what it means, how is it going to happen and what will be its impact.

**RS:** The Early Childhood Association (a think tank on pre-primary education) has prepared detailed guidelines to be followed in online learning. Schools should be opened only if they are able to follow these guidelines.

Unfortunately, many of the *balwadis* and *anganwadis* (government-run creches and daycare facilities) might be located in congested

space that is safe again, for children to come back to, rather than make a complete switch to online learning.

**RS:** Schools may be reopening abroad, but we cannot compare that to the situation in India. The schools that have opened in these countries are taking utmost precautions. For instance, they are using tissue boxes for every class. Students can dump their used tissues in these boxes. But the waste generated is so huge, and it will also require to be discarded safely. Do Indian schools have that kind of infrastructure? Also, it is difficult to make children sit in the classroom wearing masks, without touching it. Or for them not to touch other children and their masks.

**What will education look like once schools reopen post COVID-19? Will online lessons continue and what will be the learning level of the students?**

**KB:** There is a large section of the population that is unable to access technology and that's a huge concern. Children belonging to migrant families might have moved far away from their schools. I know government school teachers in Delhi were trying to reach some of the students whose mobile numbers they have, but they are not able to reach them, they have disappeared. And these are kids who are going to be out of school soon. We don't know whether their families will return to the cities and what's going to happen to them. Teachers are doing enough to develop better online modules, based on activities, but how many children are benefiting from it? The problem is that our policy has always neglected the marginalised child. That is why we still have so many children who are not in school. All our policies tend to focus on those who already have access to certain facilities. We just forget the invisible – the poor and the marginalised.

**RS:** If we stop online education, even the children who have access to technology will lose out. So, stopping online classes is not the solution. Instead, we need to work on providing technology to these [disadvantaged] children. Some non-government organisations are already

working on these issues. They are providing smartphones, electronic tablets and teaching children to make use of technology. We need more such initiatives.

**So what are the alternatives that can ensure that students don't fall back academically because of this or any other pandemic that might arise in the future?**

**KB:** During this pandemic, many of the policy fault lines – across all sectors – have come to the fore. Most of all in public health. The fact that our public health system is not geared towards such situations has become evident and obvious to everyone. Even within the education sector, it has become clear that we have not invested in our education system in a way that it can take care of a situation like this. Going forward, we have to start thinking on these lines. We need to improve our education system in such a way that we do not have to keep schools closed in such situations. We need to make it possible for the students to have a safe environment in schools even during a pandemic. We need to ensure that there is no shortage of teachers. It is not just about online instruction, but also about preparing action plans to deal with students who have lost out on education because of the pandemic. A majority of the students who were unable to access technology in this pandemic may become drop-outs. This goes against their fundamental right to education.

**RS:** We (Early Childhood Association) have suggested that during pandemics, schools can be opened in a staggered manner, with 50% students attending every alternate day. This will help avoid crowded classrooms and give schools time to clean up their premises. Temperature checks of teachers, students and non-teaching staff should become mandatory. Teachers should not give students any books to carry home. Social distancing should be followed strictly by teachers and students. Second, it will be better to give priority to opening schools for marginalised and migrant children, as they might not have access to technology. We can create separate safe spaces for these children.



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Director at the  
Early Childhood  
Association



Scan the QR code to  
listen to the full  
conversation online

## Drug abuse amidst pandemic

The economic downturn may leave people vulnerable to use and trafficking of illicit drugs

**GHADA WALY**

More people are using drugs, and more illicit drugs are available than ever. The COVID-19 crisis has exposed our fragility, with health systems strained and social safety nets stretched to the limit. The economic downturn caused by the global pandemic may drive more people to substance abuse or leave them vulnerable to involvement in drug trafficking and related crime. We have been here before. In the global recession that followed the 2008 financial crisis, drug users sought out cheaper synthetic substances and patterns of use shifted towards injecting drugs, while governments reduced budgets to deal with drug-related problems.

Vulnerable and marginalised groups, youth, women and the poor have been harmed the most. Now facing the gravest socio-economic crisis in generations, governments cannot afford to ignore the dangers illicit drugs pose to public health and safety. All over the world, the risks and consequences of drug use are worsened by poverty, limited opportunities for education and jobs, stigma and social exclusion, which in turn helps to deepen inequalities, moving us further away from achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

While more people use drugs in developed countries than in developing countries, and wealthier segments of society have a higher prevalence of drug use, people who are socially and economically disadvantaged are more likely to develop drug use disorders. Only one out of eight people who need drug-related treatment receive it, according to the World Drug Report 2020. Some 35.6 million people suffer from drug use disorders globally.

**The affected segments**  
One out of three drug users is a woman but women represent only one out of five people in treatment. People in prison settings, minorities, immigrants and displaced people also face barriers to treatment due to discrimination and stigma.

Around 269 million people used drugs in 2018, up 30% from 2009, with adolescents and young adults

accounting for the largest share of users. While the increase reflects population growth and other factors, the data nevertheless indicate that illicit drugs are more diverse, more potent and more available. At the same time, more than 80% of the world's population, mostly living in low- and middle-income countries, are deprived of access to controlled drugs for pain relief and other essential medical uses.

Governments have repeatedly pledged to work together to address the challenges posed by the world drug problem, in the SDGs, and most recently in the 2019 Ministerial Declaration adopted by the Commission on Narcotic Drugs. But data indicate that support has actually fallen over time, imperilling government commitment as well as regional and global coordination. Development assistance dedicated to drug control fell by some 90% between 2000-2017. Funding to address drugs may be provided under other budget lines, but there is little evidence of international donor attention to this priority. Assistance for alternative development – creating viable, licit forms of income to enable poor farmers to stop growing illicit opium poppy or coca – also remains very low.

Leaving no one behind requires greater investment in evidence-based prevention, as well as treatment and other services for drug use disorders, HIV, hepatitis C and other infections. We need international cooperation to increase access to controlled drugs for medical purposes, while preventing diversion and abuse, and to strengthen law enforcement action to dismantle the transnational organised crime networks.

Health-centred, rights-based and gender-responsive approaches to drug use and related diseases deliver better public health outcomes. As we seek to overcome and recover from the COVID-19 crisis, our societies cannot risk compounding illicit drug threats through inattention and neglect. We need drug strategies addressing the country-level, as well as regional challenges.

*Ghada Waly is the Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime*



### NOTEBOOK

## Outside the confines of an interview

A tribute to Senthān from Jaffna, an LTTE critic and a cheerful raconteur

**MEERA SRINIVASAN**

Two Saturdays ago, I received an email from a friend saying "you have probably met him". It was a message conveying the sudden passing of Veerakathy Senthān, an engineer based in Jaffna, in Sri Lanka's Northern Province.

I have met Senthān four times, at his small home in Varany, where he lived earlier, and later in Nelliady, Jaffna. The first time I met him over five years ago, I did not interview him. I didn't even have specific questions to ask him. I was told he was an "interesting" man, an engineer by profession and Marxist by persuasion.

Like every new person you hear about before you meet, Senthān too raised my curiosity. Irrespective of ideology, every insight or opinion from a senior resident is invaluable for a reporter navigating a new place with many histories,

complex and contested. In Senthān's case, I'd heard more. He was a fierce critic of the LTTE during the war, and the rebel group detained him for months for helping a fellow dissident escape the north.

**Trees as neighbours**  
A narrow, muddy lane led to his small home. Its immediate vicinity had more trees than homes or neighbours. It seemed "interior" and felt quiet. Sporting a checked lungi and a half-sleeved shirt, the tall, lean man came out as he heard my van park. He was in his mid-60s then.

"So, you're *The Hindu* reporter. From Chennai?" he asked. "Yes," I said. "What are Vaiko and Seeman saying?" he asked with a smile, not seeming particularly keen on a specific answer. He began speaking of current affairs, as if he were scanning headlines of a newspaper dedicated to world news and analysis.

He spoke about Obama, the Democratic Party. He spoke about the Islamic State and of hard-line right-wing forces emerging everywhere. "The RSS too is gaining ground in India, isn't it?" Between these observations were his own comments or questions, brimming with quiet irony.

Though I spent well over an hour with him, he spoke very little about himself or Sri Lanka the first time.

I wanted to meet him again. Barely years after having witnessed and experienced a brutal war at close range, here was a man sitting in his small home in interior Jaffna, talking about the whole world which, to him, was far away.

"Marxists will tell you we have to mobilise people and build a movement against oppressive states. Don't listen to them," he'd laugh, in a self-mocking way. And seeing me tickled by his ready wit and sarcasm, he'd often ask: "Why are you laughing?"

When I met him again, he spoke more about Sri Lanka, its war-bruised north, the Tamil polity that he felt was inadequate in addressing people's concerns or aspirations. He was critical of nationalist politics in the Tamil-majority north and the mostly Sinhala-Buddhist south. His reflections had both, an unmistakable anger and regret about the past. However, neither sentiment interfered with what he thought could be done in the present. The engineer was active post-retirement and showed me around a local palmrya arrack distillery that he helped run. "Nothing like our palmrya tree to combat poverty," he told me, the only time I interviewed him about local industries.

Otherwise, Senthān was just happy to talk. In fact happier outside the confines of an interview.

### The Hindu

#### FROM THE ARCHIVES

FIFTY YEARS AGO JUNE 26, 1970

**U.S. to Resume Sale of Arms to Pak.**  
There are strong reasons to believe that the United States has decided to lift the embargo on the direct sale of arms to Pakistan and that President Nixon has approved the supply of certain items of lethal military equipment to that country. The U.S. Administration has so far refused to disclose to India the nature and quantity of these weapons, but it is understood that at least 50 Patton tanks, and possibly even some fighter planes are immediately involved. The U.S. decision marks a major watershed in the U.S. policy towards the Indian sub-continent. It means that the U.S. after a long period of indecision, during which it had kept its five-year old policy of not supplying any weapons to either India or Pakistan, "under review", has finally decided to disregard the Indian objections. The period since 1965, when the U.S. clamped the embargo, has in fact seen a gradual diminution of the U.S. will to resist Pakistan demands for a resumption of arms supplies. The fact that during this period Pakistan succeeded in obtaining large quantities of arms first from China and then the Soviet Union, and Delhi's persistent warnings that it would have serious repercussions in India, do not appear to have discouraged Washington from taking its latest decision.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO JUNE 26, 1920.

**The Baiting of Mr. Montagu.**

(From an editorial)

Mr. Montagu had a bad quarter of an hour in the House of Commons when he was put to a searching cross-examination by one of General Dyer's champions over his plea of ignorance in regard to the details of the Amritsar massacre. We must say that on the whole he emerged from it with his tail-feathers intact, but that was because his inquisitor took the wrong line altogether. On his own statement he was receiving daily cables. Why did he not insist on fuller particulars? We next come to his interview with Sir Michael. According to the letter he gave full details to Mr. Montagu then. Mr. Montagu says he did not know about the grosser features of the massacre till General Dyer blurted them out. Knowing what we do of Sir Michael's standards of truthfulness we prefer to believe Mr. Montagu. We can imagine the kind of "full details" Sir Michael would have poured forth, how the Punjab was seething with rebellion, how for him the British Empire would have been lost and how a murderous crowd was dispersed with a regrettably heavy, yet in view of the gravity of the situation not excessive, number of casualties.

FROM PAGE ONE

## Chinese build-up started in May: MEA

"At the heart of the matter is that since early May, the Chinese side has been amassing a large contingent of troops and armaments along the LAC. This is not in accordance with the provisions of our various bilateral agreements, especially the key 1993 Agreement on the Maintenance of Peace and Tranquillity along the Line of Actual Control in the India-China Border Areas," he said.

Referring to the June 15 clash in the Galwan Valley that claimed the lives of 20 Indian soldiers, he said that "resulting tension has thereafter expressed itself" after India had to undertake counter deployments along the LAC. The MEA said that the "deployment of a large body of troops and changes in behaviour has also been aggravated by unjustified and untenable claims. The recent shift in the Chinese position on the Galwan Valley is one example", referring to a series of statements made by the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, claiming sovereignty over all of Galwan Valley.

The statement by the MEA marks a perceptible

shift in India's position on the ongoing stand-off between Indian and Chinese troops along the LAC in Ladakh and in Sikkim. In statements in mid-May, Army chief General Naravane and the MEA spokesperson said the clashes at the LAC "arise due to difference in perception of LAC", and are managed by "local formations" according to established mechanisms.

In a series of interviews, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh also referred to a "sizeable" presence of Chinese soldiers, but indicated that they were in areas "they claim is their territory", disputed by India.

The MEA did not explain the reason for the turnaround in position, or why China's "altered behaviour" was not remarked upon by the government last month. Nor did Mr. Srivastava respond to specific questions about whether Chinese troops had occupied land across the LAC, and on satellite pictures that have shown a build-up of Chinese structures and large vehicles in the Galwan Valley, the Pangong Tso Finger area, and the Depsang plains.

## Industry flags delay in Chinese imports

Restricting imports of Chinese items will not serve any purpose until India has the capacity to produce those items or can import them from other countries at comparable prices, the President of Federation of Indian Export Organisations (FIEO), S.K. Saraf, said on Thursday. In a letter to Commerce Secretary Anup Wadhawan, Mr. Saraf said, "We have been given to understand that customs is physically examining all imports from China which is delaying clearance, adding to the cost of imports. Some exporters have informed that, in response to such action, Hong Kong and Chinese Customs are also holding back export consignments from India."

President of India Cellular & Electronics Association (ICEA) Pankaj Mohindroo, in a letter to Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, said the disruption comes at time when the industry has just begun to limp back to normal. He stated that industry needs to have confidence that the global logistics machinery will function without disruption in India.

In a separate letter to Revenue Secretary Ajay Bhushan Pandey and CBIC Chairman M. Ajit Kumar, Mr. Mohindroo said the member companies began facing disruption at Chennai airport from Monday night onwards and this has now spread to several ports and airports.

## CBSE, ICSE cancel pending exams

"For Class 12, the CBSE would also conduct an optional examination for papers which were to be held between July 1 and 15. This optional examination would be held when the situation is more conducive. Candidates whose results were declared as per the assessment scheme can write the optional examination. Then the marks got in the optional examination, whether higher or lower than the assessment, will be treated as the final," the Solicitor-General told a three-judge Bench, led by Justice A.M. Khanwilkar.

But Justice Khanwilkar asked who decides "when conditions would become conducive". "Will the State decide individually or will it be a pan-India decision taken by the Centre," Justice

Dinesh Maheshwari asked Mr. Mehta. "That would be dealt with at the Central level..." Mr. Mehta responded.

(With inputs from Priscilla Jebaraj)

## Armed gangs rule Nagaland: Governor

"Sometimes these unlawful activities [take place] in the presence of senior officials of the State government including the Chief Secretary, Home Commissioner and the DGP (director general of police)," Mr. Ravi said.

The letter also mentions reports of the Forest Department revealing rampant encroachment and deforestation of forest land including reserve forests by armed miscreants.

"They have become audacious enough to evict the

forest officials and their families from their residential houses at gun point...they do all these brazen illegal activities without any resistance whatsoever by the law enforcement authorities...when I asked the senior enforcement officers the reasons, they run silent and whisper 'direction from above,'" the letter said.

"I regret to say my urgings and advices at the political and bureaucratic levels have gone unheeded," the letter said.

## PHC doctor among virus fatalities in Karnataka

Six die of infection in Karnataka, seven in A.P.; Kerala to raise testing capacity from July, partner private hospitals for care

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**  
**BENGALURU**

A 30-year-old government doctor became the first to die from COVID-19 in the medical fraternity in Karnataka on Thursday. Basavaraj Karioudar, attached to Kaladgi Primary Health Centre in Mudhol taluk, Bagalkot district, succumbed to the infection at a private hospital in Bengaluru. The official

bulletin in Karnataka recorded six deaths and 442 cases. Andhra Pradesh detected 553 COVID-19 cases and seven people succumbed to the disease in 24 hours as of Thursday morning.

Dr. Karigoudar, who was infected with Hepatitis B following a needle prick injury at work later developed liver failure. He was shifted to For-

### COVID-19

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Andhra Pradesh detected 553 COVID-19 cases and seven people succumbed to the disease in 24 hours as of Thursday morning.

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With 442 new cases, total cases touched 10,560. This included 6,670 discharges,

170 COVID-19 deaths, four non-COVID deaths and 3,716 active cases. Bengaluru continued to top in new cases with 113 on Thursday.

Andhra Pradesh had total cases at 10,884 and the toll rose to 136. With 209 patients getting discharged in the past day, recoveries rose

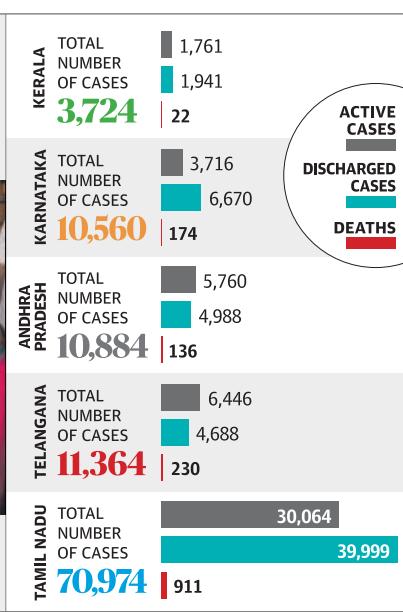
to 4,988 and the number of active cases too increased to 5,760. Of the new deaths, two each occurred in Kurunool, Krishna and Guntur

### Fighting hunger

Though the Andhra Pradesh government has closed schools, it is reaching out to beneficiaries of the mid-day meal scheme. The graphs show the spread of the pandemic in the southern States



Lined up: Rice meant for mid-day meal being distributed to children at a municipal corporation school in Visakhapatnam on Thursday. K.R. DEEPAK



districts and one in East Godavari district. Of total fresh cases, 477 were local while 69 were 'other State' cases and seven from abroad.

In Kerala, active cases or patients undergoing treatment went up to 1,761 with the State reporting 123 new cases and 53 recoveries.

All except six of the new cases were imported infections – from abroad or from other States. In the case of six patients, they contracted the disease through local transmission.

Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan told the media that the State intended to increase COVID-19 testing in stages to offer 15,000 tests per day by July. The Government was talking to the private sector on cooperation for care at a later stage in the pandemic.

(With inputs from Vijaya-wada and Thiruvananthapuram bureaus)

## UAE-bound NRIs have to clear more hurdles

Now, a prior approval of UAE Embassy a must

**BIJU GOVIND**  
**KOZHIKODE**

Thousands of UAE-bound Non-Resident Indians (NRIs) stranded in the country since March will have to clear more hurdles even as Air India and the Dubai-based Emirates fight for air-space on the route.

The United Arab Emirates, it is learnt, has objected to Air India's Vande Bharat flights carrying residents or even UAE nationals from India to Dubai. Now a prior approval of the UAE Embassy in New Delhi and the UAE's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation is required if anyone wishes to fly to the UAE.

Dubai has allowed visa holders to return from Monday and tourists from July 7. They will have to secure approval of the General Directorate of Residency and Foreigners Affairs. This apart, they should take a PCR test



A file photo of relatives and health workers waiting to receive Indians stranded in Dubai, at Calicut International Airport.

at Dubai airport, submit health declaration and quarantine undertaking form, and download COVID-19 - DXB smart app.

But the issue comes close on the heels of some countries, especially the United States, accusing India of engaging in unfair and discriminatory practices on charter air transportation services to and from India.

Air India has been operating repatriation flights between India and several countries since May 7. At the same time, India has banned all

commercial scheduled services following the lockdown.

Emirates, it is learnt, has expressed its willingness to operate flights to India.

The new development has brought an air of uncertainty to the expatriates wishing to return to their jobs and families in Dubai.

Following the objections, Air India has sought approval from the UAE to fly Indians on Vande Bharat flights to Dubai. Besides, other private airlines are also keen to fly out NRIs.

## Decision on chartered flights a setback to NRIs

**S. ANIL RADHAKRISHNAN**  
**THIRUVANANTHAPURAM**

The Centre's decision barring institutions and organisations from applying directly for operating chartered flights from foreign countries to bring back stranded non-resident Indians (NRIs) has come as a setback to voluntary organisations and industrial houses owned by Keralites in West Asia who had secured the nod to charter flights to repatriate people to the State.

From June 25, airlines will have to directly approach the States where the chartered flights are to be operated for their consent.

However, institutions and organisations can approach airlines to arrange chartered flights to the country.

The Kerala Muslim Cultural Centre (KMCC) alone was

behind the operation of more than 70 chartered flights for repatriating Non-Resident Keralites (NRKs) from the United Arab Emirates. Volunteer organisations such as the KMCC were able to bargain with private airlines for bringing down ticket rates and arrange flights for two months. The Indian embassies had asked them to give a written statement of the fares charged.

Official sources said the Centre's directive was in the wake of the misuse of the facility by individuals taking slots for the flights in advance and even going for open auction of tickets.

Those who have already secured the consent of the States and clearance from the Ministries can operate the flights as per the slot and the schedule approved.

## Vizag gas leak: panel given time till June 30

12 persons were killed in the incident

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**  
**VISAKHAPATNAM**

The Andhra Pradesh government has extended the time for submission of a report by the high-power committee, probing the styrene monomer vapour leak at the LG Polymers unit here, till June 30.

The government had earlier asked the panel to submit the report by June 22.

The committee was constituted to probe the May 7 incident, in which 12 people were killed and many others were hospitalised. Most

were residing in the vicinity of the factory, located at R.R. Venkatapuram village.

The committee, besides probing the cause of the incident, was told to recommend solutions to address the concerns raised by the victims and recommend steps to be taken, and identify hazardous industries.

Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy said action would be initiated against LG Polymers based on the report of the committee. He did not rule out shifting of the unit.

The committee was constituted to probe the May 7

## Fire on tracks



The charred remains of four wagons that caught fire after a goods train derailed near Surareddypalem in Prakasam district of Andhra Pradesh on Thursday. • KOMMURI SRINIVAS

## Life sentence for 'Cyanide' Mohan

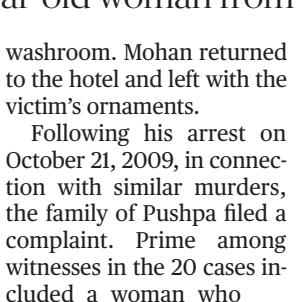
He was found guilty of murdering a 25-year-old woman from Kasaragod



'Cyanide' Mohan

she was with him in a hotel in Upparpet police station limits of Bengaluru.

On July 15, 2009, he took Pushpa to Majestic bus terminus where he asked her to consume 'cyanide' by making her believe it as a contraceptive pill. The victim was found dead in the public



'Cyanide' Mohan

washroom. Mohan returned to the hotel and left with the victim's ornaments.

Following his arrest on October 21, 2009, in connection with similar murders, the family of Pushpa filed a complaint. Prime among witnesses in the 20 cases included a woman who survived following the consumption of the pill and an astrologer to whom Mohan confided about the murders.

His modus operandi was to befriend unmarried women, all of them from Dakshina Kannada and Kasaragod in Kerala, with different names by promising jobs and marriage. He sexually assaulted them in lodges near a bus stand. He made them consume cyanide in five cases.

On Wednesday, the 6th additional district and sessions judge, Sayeedunnisa, sentenced Mohan to life term and imposed a fine of ₹25,000. He was also sentenced and asked to pay a fine under Sections 366, 376, 328, 392, 394, 417, and 201 of IPC. All the sentences will run concurrently.

So far, Mohan has been sentenced to death in five cases, of which one has been confirmed. In two other cases, it was reduced to life imprisonment by the Karnataka High Court. In 10 cases, he was sentenced to life and he filed an appeal. He was acquitted in five cases.

## Onus on India to ease tensions: Chinese envoy

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA**  
**NEW DELHI**

The Chinese Ambassador to India Sun Weidong said on Thursday that the onus was on New Delhi, not China, to ease tensions in eastern Ladakh.

"The onus is not on China. The Indian side crossed the LAC for provocation and attacked the Chinese border troops. The Indian forces seriously violated agreements on border issues between the two countries," Mr Sun said. He added that at present, the overall situation in the China-India border areas is "stable and controllable."

The Indian and Chinese armies are locked in a bitter standoff in multiple locations in eastern Ladakh for the last six weeks, and the tension escalated manifold after 20 Indian soldiers were killed in a violent clash in Galwan valley on June 15.

Mr. Sun repeated the Chinese government's stand – which has been rejected by India – that Indian troops were responsible for the Galwan valley clashes.

"We hope the Indian side meets the Chinese side half-

way, avoids taking actions that may complicate the border situation and takes concrete actions to maintain stability in the border areas," Mr. Sun said. He added that at present, the overall situation in the China-India border areas is "stable and controllable."

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Mr. Sun said China would not like to see a repeat of the Galwan clashes, but reiterated the Chinese Foreign Ministry's allegations that India was responsible for it.

# 'It's wait and watch on disengagement'

Meanwhile, continued build-up activities by PLA threaten India's positions in Daulat Beg Oldie

DINAKAR PERI  
SUHASINI HAIDAR  
NEW DELHI

The June 22 consensus reached between the Indian and Chinese Corps Commanders on disengagement is yet to be implemented, a defence source said, adding that it was "wait and watch by both sides". Meanwhile, satellite images and reports indicate a massive build-up and construction by China's People Liberation Army (PLA) along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in eastern Ladakh in Galwan Valley and in Depsang plains, threatening the Indian Army's positions in Daulat Beg Oldie (DBO).

"It is wait and watch, and not ending in a hurry. Optimism of ongoing engagement has to be viewed with due caution," the defence source said. At the Corps Commander-level talks, the two sides agreed on the modalities for disengagement from all the "all friction areas" in eastern Ladakh, which, officials said,



Keeping guard: An IAF helicopter flying over a mountain range near Leh. ■ AFP

would be done in a phased manner. There is no clarity yet on the timeline for the proposed disengagement.

The talks were held a week after the Galwan Valley clash, which had resulted in the death of 20 Indian personnel, including a Colonel. Satellite images and reports indicate that between June 15 and 22, China rebuilt the observation post and also set up structures reinforcing its positions at the clash site. It

has also been learnt that Chinese troops have made ingress at Depsang plains, which could extend the conflict points on the LAC.

As reported by *The Hindu* on June 2, there was heavy Chinese presence in the Depsang plains, at a crucial area called the Bulge. There was also build-up of tanks and armoured vehicles on the Chinese side very close to the LAC.

Fresh reports of Chinese

ingress in this area threatens Indian positions at Burtse and Raki Nala well inside Indian territory, and further the DBO by bringing Chinese troops closer to the 255-km-long crucial Darbuk-Skyok-DBO road. Army officials declined to comment on the issue. Depsang is also close to the Karakoram pass overlooking the strategic Saltoro ridge and Siachen glacier, which the Army chief Gen Manoj Naravane earlier this

year had called the closest point of "collusivity" between India and Pakistan.

**Plains occupied in 1962**  
India too has since moved its troops and armour closer, said another source. Depsang plains is one of the few places on the LAC where tank manoeuvres are possible. In the 1962 war, Chinese troops occupied the plains and in 2013, Chinese troops came 19 km inside and pitched tents, resulting in a 21-day stand-off.

Satellite images also show a massive build-up of defensive positions by China between Finger 4 and Finger 8 on Pangong Tso, including on the ridge lines in the Finger 4 area overlooking the Indian positions. The mountain spurs, also referred to as Fingers, have been a major area of contention. The fresh build-up has prevented Indian patrols from going beyond Finger 4. India's claim of the LAC lies at Finger 8.

# Cong. questions Centre on 'new' provocation by China

Party calls for virtual Parliament session to discuss key issues

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

The Congress on Thursday said satellite imagery clearly showed China making grave and new provocation by building fresh structures in the Galwan Valley and the Pangong Lake area, and asked the Centre to spell out its plans to deal with the situation.

The Congress called for a virtual session of Parliament to discuss important issues, especially the border stand-off with China. It said India's armed forces could give a fitting reply to China but the Modi government lacked strong political will.

Separately, in a series of tweets, former Union Finance Minister P. Chidambaram said people were watching if "the Modi government succeeded in restoring status quo ante."

Several Congress leaders have been talking of adopt-



Randeep Surjewala

said Mr. Chidambaram in a tweet.

Congress's chief spokesperson Randeep Surjewala said at a virtual press conference, "The Chinese have made fresh transgressions on patrol point 14 of Galwan Valley, where 20 of our soldiers, including Colonel B Santosh Babu, laid down their lives. What does the government have to say about it? Satellite images, expert opinions and news reports say China has made fresh transgressions in the area between Finger 4 and Finger 8 near Pangon Tso. If true, this is a new and grave provocation. What does the Prime Minister and the Defence Minister have to say about it?" Mr. Chowdhury, terming it as a "catch-22 situation" said that in spite of all efforts to defuse the tension along the LAC, China was "hell bent upon altering the status quo."

"Foreign Ministry and PLA [People Liberation Army] of China once again assert their claim to the entire Galwan Valley and demand that India should vacate the Valley. Extraordinary demand! Will BJP-led NDA government once again reassert India's claim and demand that "status quo ante" must be restored?"

## India weighing impact of U.S. visa curbs

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

India on Thursday said U.S. President Donald Trump's decision to suspend certain non-immigrant categories of visas till December 31, 2020 will affect movement of skilled Indian professionals. The Official spokesperson of the Ministry of External Affairs Anurag Srivastava said high skilled Indians bring important skills to the U.S. that "impart a competitive edge to the U.S. economy".

He maintained that India is assessing the impact on the industry and Indian nationals and is in consultation with all stakeholders.

The MEA reminded the U.S. of the importance of maintaining openness in its visa policies and highlighted the importance of people-to-people relationship and trade cooperation in shaping the bilateral relationship.

"U.S. has always welcomed talent and we hope our professionals will continue to be welcomed in the US in the future," said Mr. Srivastava.

In a Facebook post on the 46th anniversary of the Emergency, he urged the people to uphold the dignity of life founded on the individual freedoms guaranteed by the Constitution.

Mr. Naidu recalled how

he was arrested for inviting Jayaprakash Narayan to address the students of the Andhra University as the then president of the University Colleges' Union in 1974 while pursuing law. He recounted an incident from his prison term. One of the detainees, a vegetarian, was put in charge of cooking on a day when fish curry was on the menu. Mr. Naidu offered to take up the responsibility. The detainee con-

cerned told him: "I am a vegetarian and you are a non-vegetarian. I should do my job as the coordinator for the day as I respect your freedom of eating as per your choice."

The Emergency, he said, was used by the then Congress government to put a lid on the sentiment of change raging through the country.

"The enlightened countrymen despite being mostly poor and illiterate, rose in unison, for the first time since Independence in defence of the constitutional scheme of things which is the foundation of our parliamentary democracy," he wrote.

## No regular train services till August 12

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI

All regular mail, express and passenger services as well as suburban trains have been cancelled till August 12, the Railway Board said on Thursday.

Sources said the decision was taken keeping in mind the increasing number of coronavirus cases in the country. However, all special trains – 12 pairs running on the Rajdhani routes since May 12 and 100 pairs operating since June 1 – will continue.

The limited special suburban services, which began recently in Mumbai to ferry essential services personnel identified by local authorities, will also continue to run, officials said.

"All tickets booked for the regular time-tabled trains for journey date from 01.07.20 to 12.08.20 also stand cancelled. Full refund will be generated," the Railway Board order stated.

The Railways had earlier cancelled all trains till June 30.

## Naidu recalls his Emergency days

'It was the second freedom struggle'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

It took a national uprising to roll back Emergency, said Vice-President Venkaih Naidu, describing it as the second freedom struggle as he recalled his own days during the period as an underground courier, cook and his 17-month jail term.

In a Facebook post on the 46th anniversary of the Emergency, he urged the people to uphold the dignity of life founded on the individual freedoms guaranteed by the Constitution.

Mr. Naidu recalled how he was arrested for inviting Jayaprakash Narayan to address the students of the Andhra University as the then president of the University Colleges' Union in 1974 while pursuing law. He recounted an incident from his prison term. One of the detainees, a vegetarian, was put in charge of cooking on a day when fish curry was on the menu. Mr. Naidu offered to take up the responsibility. The detainee con-

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## 83 killed in lightning strikes in Bihar

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
PATNA

As many as 83 people, including three children, were killed on Thursday in lightning strikes in Bihar.

Chief Minister Nitish Kumar has announced a compensation of ₹4 lakh each to the families of the deceased.

Gopalganj district reported the highest number of 13 deaths.

Five each died in East Champaran, Darbhanga and Banka, six each in Siwan and Bhagalpur, three each in Aurangabad and Khagaria, eight each in Madhubani and Nawada and one each in Stipular, Sheohar, Madhepura, Saran and Sitamarhi.

The party said in a statement here that the decision

was taken without consultations with the States which supervised the cooperative sector. "This is yet another attack on our country's federal structure. Such over-centralisation is an assault on one of the basic features of our Constitution: federalism. This totally destroys the autonomy of the cooperatives," the statement said.

## Withdraw ordinance on cooperative banks: CPI(M)

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

The CPI(M) criticised the government for the "unilateral decision" to take over the supervision of 1,540 urban and rural cooperative banks through an ordinance and demanded its immediate withdrawal.

The party said in a statement here that the decision

### WALK-IN INTERVIEW

**NALCO**  
National Aluminium Company Limited  
(A Government of India Enterprise)

Smelter Plant, Nalco Nagar,  
Angul-759145, Odisha, India  
CIN : L27203OR1981GO100290  
A NAVRATNA COMPANY

### WALK-IN INTERVIEW FOR ENGAGEMENT OF DOCTOR ON CONTRACT BASIS

National Aluminium Company Limited (Nalco), a Navratna Company is looking for engagement of full time Doctors for the following positions purely on contract basis initially for a period of two years for its hospital at S&P Complex, Angul.

Position	Vacancy	Upper Age limit	Qualification	Monthly Remuneration
General Duty Medical Officer	02	63 years	MBBS from recognized University	Rs.51,000/-
Specialists Medicine Surgery Paediatrics Orthopaedics Skin Radiology	06 (one post each)		MD/MS/Recognized post MBBS Diploma from recognized University	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rs. 90,000/- (Upto 10 yrs. of Exp)</li> <li>• Rs. 1,15,000/- (10 yrs to 20 yrs. of exp.)</li> <li>• Rs. 1,40,000/- (more than 20 yrs. of exp.)</li> </ul>

Other facilities like accommodation, telephone, medical, etc. as admissible would be extended commensurate the merit of the incumbent and in accordance with the extant rules of the Company.

Interested doctors may call on us for a Personal Interview on 15.07.2020 at 9.00 AM at Training Centre, S&P Complex, Nalco Nagar, Angul. At the time of interview, the candidates are required to submit their duly filled in Bio-Data From available in the Career Section of our website www.nalcoindia.com along with all Original credentials and supporting documents in respect of their age, qualification & experience.

Advt. No.14200801

AGM (IE)-S&P, Rectt.

## Cong. counters BJP with photographs

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

As the political battle over the Chinese incursions intensified on Thursday with the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) alleging that the Rajiv Gandhi Foundation had received funds from the Embassy of the People's Republic of China, the Congress hit back by putting up photographs of BJP leaders meeting Chinese leaders and officials on social media.

Former Law Minister

Ashwani Kumar called the allegations regarding the Raiv Gandhi Foundation a 'new low' in India's politics and said "It needs to be rejected with the contempt it deserves".

Senior leader Anand Sharma, who heads the Congress party's cell for Foreign Affairs, responded to the allegations with a series of questions on Twitter.

"Did BJP president Amit Shah not receive Minister Wang Jianru in February 2015 along with BJP General

Secretaries Ram Madhav, Ram Lal, Bhupendra Yadav and Foreign Department head Vijai Chauthawale?" Mr. Sharma asked, tagging a photograph of Mr. Shah, then the BJP chief, shaking hands with the Chinese dignitary.

"Did not a ten-member BJP Mahila delegation led by Saroj Pandey, MP and present General Secretary visit China as CPC guests? Did a BJP delegation led by G.S. Arun Kumar visit China in 2019?" Mr. Sharma asked.

**INTER UNIVERSITY CENTRE FOR TEACHERS EDUCATION  
REGIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION**  
(National Council of Educational Research and Training)  
(राष्ट्रीय शिक्षक अनुसंधान और प्रशिक्षण परिषद्)  
Manasagangotri, Mysuru - 570 006.

E-mail / ई-मेल: contact@iucte.rimysore.ac.in iucte@rimysore.ac.in

**IUCTE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCE CENTRE (IERC)**

The MHRD has established *Inter University Centre for Teachers Education* [IUCTE] under the PMMMNTT Scheme at Regional Institute of Education, Mysuru. The Centre acts as a platform for the convergence of resources and best practices of various universities, schools of education, SCERTs, and DIETs in teacher education. For this, we seek nomination of Nodal Officer and active participation of all the concerned. For details to join the IERC please log on to <http://iucte.rimysore.ac.in/> and fill in the proforma.

# ICMR invites test kit makers

It wants rapid antigen detection tests validated, cites limited availability of RT-PCR

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

The Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) on Thursday invited applications for validation of rapid antigen detection tests for COVID-19 from manufacturers who have developed them. It acknowledged that the gold standard RT-PCR diagnostic test had limitations in terms of widespread availability.

It said that as India was lifting the lockdown in phases, it was expected to see an upsurge in cases. Hence, it was important to scale up the testing capacity.

The gold standard RT-PCR diagnostic test has limitations in terms of widespread availability. In view of this, there is an urgent requirement of reliable and convenient rapid point of care antigen detection assays with high sensitivity and specificity. So far, the ICMR



Anxious wait: People in line for COVID-19 test at a hotspot in northwest Delhi on Thursday. ■ SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

has validated and approved only one rapid antigen detection assay from SD Biosensor," the ICMR said.

The ICMR has identified sites for validation of the rapid point-of-care antigen detection tests. These are the All India Institute of Medical Sciences, Delhi; SMS Medical College, Jaipur; King George Medical University, Lucknow; Kasturba Hospital for Infectious Diseases, Mumbai; Post-Graduate Institute

of Medical Education & Research, Chandigarh; Jawaharlal Institute of Postgraduate Medical Education & Research, Puducherry; and the National Institute of Virology, Alappuzha.

The essential criteria for validation are a minimum of 300 rapid antigen tests for each validation; a minimum of 3-4 instruments (if the results are to be interpreted using specialised equipment such as fluorescence immunoassay readers); the ability to provide training to technical staff involved in validation of the test; and the commitment on the part of manufacturers to make adequate supplies of the product available to India with immediate effect.

## App to get blood

Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan launched the 'eBloodServices' mobile application of the Indian Red Cross Society on Thursday.

"Through this app, four units of blood can be requisitioned at a time, and the blood bank will wait for 12 hours for the person to collect it," Dr. Vardhan said.

The application was developed by the E-Rakthosh team of the Centre for Development of Advanced Computing under the Digital India scheme launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in 2015.

# No ideological clarity, says Digvijaya

Congress leader says party should not shy away from fighting the RSS

SANDEEP PHUKAN  
NEW DELHI

Raja Sabha member and senior Congress leader Digvijaya Singh said on Thursday that "lack of ideological clarity" was harming the party more than any "Press-scripted and media-sponsored" junior-senior divide within the organisation.

Through his tweets, Mr. Singh waded straight into Congress's internal debate on how it should target the Narendra Modi government.

"Rather it's lack of Ideological Clarity that leads to ambiguous stand. Why do some shy away from fighting RSS? Its divisive Ideology of Polarisation & Anti Poor, Anti Farmer, Anti Labour policies are destroying the Unity & Integrity of India, destroying its Socio Economic fabric," Mr. Singh tweeted.

The debate started last Tuesday when former Union Minister R.P.N. Singh said



Digvijaya Singh

policies of the Modi government could be targeted instead of mounting direct attacks on Mr. Modi, as it could be misconstrued as an attack on the institution of the Prime Minister's Office (PMO).

Countering Mr. Singh, the former Congress chief Rahul Gandhi had said he was "not scared to attack Mr. Modi, as every policy of the government was made by the Prime

Minister himself."

As most Congress leaders rallied around Mr. Gandhi, young party leader Rajeev Satav wondered how much the role of the senior leaders was in cornering Mr. Modi. Party general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra is reported to have talked about Mr. Gandhi carrying on against the government alone.

Pradesh Chief Minister said in another tweet.

On the 45th anniversary of the 1975 Emergency on Thursday, Union Home Minister Amit Shah made a reference to the June 23 CWC meeting and termed it "Emergency mindset where leaders not belonging to a dynasty are unable to speak up."

Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot, who was the first to propose Mr. Gandhi as the Congress president once again at last Tuesday's CWC, replied to Mr. Shah in a series of tweets.

"It is no secret that for last three decades, no one from the Gandhi family has held any position of power. They have always encouraged & empowered the cadre and ground worker of Congress party like me and if at all we are disconnected with public, why is Mr. Shah so worried?" asked Mr. Gehlot.

## Two militants killed in Sopore

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
SRINAGAR

Two Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) militants were killed in an operation launched by the security forces in north Kashmir's Baramulla on Thursday.

Their bodies were retrieved from the encounter site at Sopore's Hardshiva area. Their identities and affiliation are being ascertained. According to credible sources, they belonged to the proscribed LeT," a police spokesman said.

Around 110 militants have been killed in operations this year in Kashmir.

## Panchayats to get ₹10 lakh cr. till 2026

### Rise in allocation from Finance Commission

PRISCILLA JEBARAJ  
NEW DELHI

The Panchayati Raj Ministry has pitched for a fivefold increase in Finance Commission funding for rural local bodies.

In a meeting with the 15th Finance Commission on Thursday, the Ministry asked for ₹10 lakh crore to be allocated for the 2020-21 to 2025-26 period, in comparison to the ₹2 lakh crore allocated under the 14th Finance Commission. It noted that allocations had tripled between the 13th and 14th Com-

missions as well.

An impact evaluation study showed a 78% utilisation rate for FC grants between 2015 and 2019, the Ministry told the Commission, according to a presentation seen by *The Hindu*.

Road construction and maintenance, as well as drinking water supply have been the major projects carried out by panchayats using FC grants. The 2.63 lakh panchayats across the country have 29 functions under their ambit, according to the 11th Schedule of the Constitution.

Panchayats have also gained importance as crucial nodal points in times of crisis. During the COVID-19



Desilting on a village in Andhra Pradesh. ■ K.R. DEEPAK

pandemic, they ran 38,000 quarantine/isolation centres, apart from medical camps and contact tracing.

However, the Ministry admitted that a major challenge during the pandemic

and lockdown was that most panchayats could not provide cooked food at short notice. It has proposed that community kitchens be set up in each panchayat to be operated by local self-help groups.

Going forward, the new Garib Kalyan Rozgar Abhiyan will depend on panchayats to generate employment for newly returned migrant workers. The Chief Ministers of Bihar, Jharkhand, Punjab, Himachal Pradesh, Rajasthan, Kerala, Odisha are holding regular video-conferences with sarpanches to review COVID-19 control and employment generation measures, said the Ministry presentation.

## Central team to visit Gujarat, Maharashtra and Telangana

Country registers a record 16,000 new cases in one day

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI

A Central team, led by Joint Secretary in the Health Ministry Lav Agarwal, will visit Gujarat, Maharashtra and Telangana between June 26 and 29 to coordinate with officials in strengthening COVID-19 management efforts, the Ministry said on Thursday.

Maharashtra has reported the highest number of cases at 1,42,900. Gujarat has recorded 28,943 instances of the viral infection while Te-

langana has so far reported 10,331 cases, according to Ministry data.

### Over 400 deaths

India registered its worst single-day increase in cases on Thursday, recording more than 16,000 infections to push the overall tally to 4.73 lakh as the number of fatalities also jumped by 418, the Ministry said.

It said there are 33.39 cases for every one lakh population, against the global average of 114.67. Also,

country has 1.06 deaths per lakh population, which is amongst the lowest in the world and the global average is 6.24.

Following efforts to ramp up facilities across the nation, there are 1,007 diagnostic labs, of which 734 are in the government sector and 273 private.

From limited tests in January, a cumulative 75,60,782 samples have been tested up to June 24 with 2,07,871 samples being tested on Wednesday.

## Cong. changes nominee for Council poll

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
PATNA

The Congress on Thursday changed its nominee at the last hour for the Bihar Legislative Council poll, as its candidate Tariq Anwar's name was not found on the voters' list. His candidature was replaced by working president of the State unit of the party Sameer Kumar Singh, who later filed his nomination papers.

INTERVIEW | MANOJ JHA

## 'All is well in Mahagathbandhan'

We have the largest cadre base in Bihar, they want Tejashwi as CM: RJD leader

SOBHANA K. NAIR

A day after the first political meeting between the allies of the Mahagathbandhan in Bihar, senior Rashtriya Janata Dal leader Manoj Jha speaks on the Bihar Assembly election due later this year, the reluctance of the allies to work under RJD president Tejashwi Yadav and the resignation of Raghuvaran Prasad as the party national vice-president.

The allies of the Mahagathbandhan met for the first time through video-conference on Wednesday in an obvious attempt to show that all is well in the alliance, despite visible cracks. Your comments?

This was a very preliminary meeting, because of the pandemic we had been unable to come together. Each party was busy with its own programmes as the RJD was busy helping the migrant workers stuck in the cities. Yes, Wednesday's meeting was the first political meeting we have had. The idea was to touch base with each other, to know each other's mind and to arrive at a common platform.

But Hindustani Awam Morcha (Secular) leader Jitan Ram Manjhi has been

before rejoining the Congress recently. He had been a Rajya Sabha member.

He had also been the party MP from the Katihar Lok Sabha constituency several times.

Mr. Anwar later told mediapersons: "There was some technical problem in filing the nomination as my name was not on the voters' list of the State which is required for contesting As-

sembly or Council polls." His name was in the Delhi list, he added.

The RJD, JD(U) and BJP candidates have filed their papers for the poll. The RJD and JD(U) have put up three candidates, while the BJP has fielded two nominees. Thursday was the last date for filing nomination papers. The poll is slated to be held in April but was delayed due to COVID-19.

The party had received over 3,000 applications for the lone seat.

Mr. Anwar was with the Nationalist Congress Party

criticising the RJD and has even set an ultimatum for formation of a coordination committee, thus bringing out the discordance between the allies.

Yes, since February, he has been asking for a coordination committee. February onwards, we have had a three-and-a-half-month lockdown. And we went by the "corona consensus" of suspending all political activities in this period. Mr. Manjhi has an easy access to us any time. He can walk in to meet Tejashwi any time. A coordination committee is formed when you first decide on other issues such as the main concerns for election, strategy and a collective mind and will. I think it shall evolve in its natural course. There is nothing to worry or hurry.

Mr. Manjhi had to come down to Delhi to make this Wednesday's meeting happen. Isn't the RJD arrogant?

Look at the statements made by all our leaders, including Leader of the Opposition Tejashwi Yadav. Have we ever expressed any arrogance? We know our strength, and that strength has only taught us humility. As for Mr. Manjhi, he came

Tejashwi to lead this alliance. Our alliance parties, which apparently believe that there should be someone else, will also come on board once the election process gains momentum.

The question the allies are asking is that if the RJD leadership is not able to keep its flock together, how can it keep the alliance intact. This week we saw five of your MLAs jump the ship, we saw veteran leader Raghuvaran Prasad resign as vice-president

I will not equate the resignation of Raghuvaran Prasadji with that of the five MLAs. Raghuvaranji learnt from the media about the induction of an individual in the party and he expressed his displeasure about it. Tejashwiji is in touch with him. We all know Raghuvaranji will always remain in the RJD because the party is his creation, along with Lalu Prasad. He will never, ever disown his own creation; he is a man of commitment. Even in the roughest of weather, he has stuck to the party. As far as the MLAs are concerned, this episode is symptomatic of the chronic ailment that our politics is suffering from. The JD(U) has learnt a lot from the BJP, especially on how to employ dirty tricks.

Our allies will also come on board once the election process gains momentum

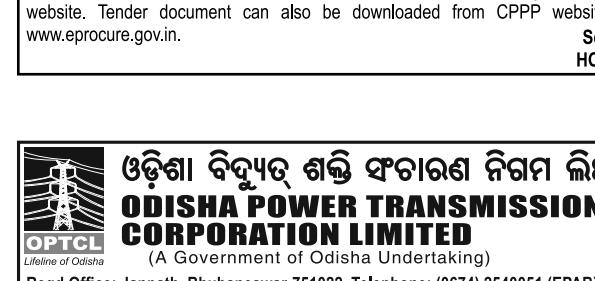
To Delhi because Congress president Sonia Gandhi had convened this meeting.

With Lalu Prasad, it was different. Now questions are being raised about Tejashwi Yadav's leadership. Is the RJD amenable to the idea of a consensus candidate chosen by all allies to lead the Mahagathbandhan in his place?

The question here is how is the leadership decided. A leader is chosen based on the vote share and followers he commands. We have the largest cadre base in Bihar and our rank and file want to see Tejashwi Yadav as the Chief Minister. There can't be a second Lalu Prasad, that's a fact. But then, this generation and the entire apparatus of our party wants



Our allies will also come on board once the election process gains momentum



### NOTICE INVITING TENDER (NIT) (DOMESTIC COMPETITIVE e-BIDDING)

ODISHA POWER TRANSMISSION CORPORATION LTD.  
(A Government of Odisha Undertaking)  
Regd. Office: Janpath, Bhubaneswar-751022, Telephone: (0674) 2540051 (EPABX), Website: www.optcl.co.in, CIN: U41202OR2004SC007553

Date: 25/06/2020  
Notice Inviting Tender

Sealed tenders are invited from registered and reputed firms for supply and installation of Laboratory Furniture:-

Sr. No. Description EMD Last Date & Time for submission

1. Laboratory Furniture Rs. 8,00,000/- 10th August, 2020

Tender document can be downloaded from INST website i.e. www.inst.ac.in under Tenders head. Tender head is available at the bottom of the homepage of INST website. Tender document can also be downloaded from CPPP website: www.eprocure.gov.in.

### Government of Kerala TENDER

FOREST & WILDLIFE DEPARTMENT

Window Number 20x 126 Tender No. A2-315/2019, Divisional Forest Officer, Timber Sales Division, Perumbavoor, Muttukkudi P.O-683547, Phone: +91-472-2522219. E-auction of timber on 03/07/21-07/07/21/2020 from various depots of Timber sales division, Perumbavoor P.O. : 4 Crore.

Note: Under Assessment, offered above are exhibited before the Office in which the tender preparation for the same is done. Please check whether the bid is valid or not. Please put it with the Bid Note for getting the other documents of your choice. Ref. No. 701/No.1/2020/UPK/103.

KSEB KERALA STATE ELECTRICITY BOARD LIMITED - E-TENDER NOTICE

Office of the Chief Engineer, Supply Chain Management Thiruvananthapuram

1. E-Tender ID : 2020\_KSEB\_366220\_1 "Supply of 22 KV /433V 160kVA ( 9 nos.) & 250kVA (12nos.) BEE Energy Efficiency Level 2 (1 star) Distribution Transformers with ISI marking \* PAC :Rs.90,26,000/- Last Date : 10-07-2020, 4:30PM

2. E-Tender ID : 2020\_KSEB\_366638\_1 "Supply of (1) 66KV Current Transformers for 220/110/11-1A-6 Nos. (2) 66KV Current Transformers - 600/300/150

# Student unions seek recall of EIA draft

Pan-India groups petition Environment Minister

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

Student unions from several universities and colleges from across India have petitioned Union Environment Minister Prakash Javadekar to put the draft of the proposed Environment Impact Assessment Notification, 2020 on hold.

The notification, which is open to public comments until June 30, is a proposed update to the existing EIA, 2006 that prescribes the procedure for industries to assess the ecological and environmental impact of their proposed activity and the mechanism whereby these would be assessed by expert committees appointed by the Ministry.

The new notification was officially made available online on March 23 and opened to public feedback until May 23.

However, with the COVID-19 pandemic and the closure of government presses and e-mails from individuals and organisations requesting more time, the deadline for comments was extended to June 30, a Press Information Bureau note said.

#### Haste questioned

On the basis of this, several activists, researchers and former Environment Minister Jairam Ramesh too wrote to Mr. Javadekar, questioning the haste with which the draft EIA was being processed.

A Right to Information (RTI) request by environ-



Prakash Javadekar

ty Students Union, Ambedkar University Delhi Students Union, Environmental and Social Initiative Council, IISER (Indian Institute of Science Education and Research)-Bhopal, Jawaharlal Nehru University Students' Union, Jindal Global Law School, Student Council, and Nature Committee of the West Bengal National University of Juridical Sciences.

#### Key points of dispute

The key points of dispute with the proposed draft are that it shortens the period of public consultation hearings to a maximum of 40 days, and reduces from 30 to 20 days the time provided for the public to submit their responses during a public hearing for any application seeking environmental clearance.

However, the documents show that Mr. Javadekar finally decided to accept public feedback only until June 30, and take expert reviews and consider the draft EIA for finalisation in August.

R.P. Gupta, the incumbent Environment Secretary, refused to comment or clarify on requests from *The Hindu*.

#### In midst of pandemic'

"It is appalling that the Ministry has put out a draft notification for public comments in the midst of a global economic and public health emergency when there is restricted public movement, social distancing and challenges to everyday life activities," says the representation led by the Tarang group of the Sonepat-based Ashoka University.

The signatories include the Aligarh Muslim Universi-

ty Students Union, Ambedkar University Delhi Students Union, Environmental and Social Initiative Council, IISER (Indian Institute of Science Education and Research)-Bhopal, Jawaharlal Nehru University Students' Union, Jindal Global Law School, Student Council, and Nature Committee of the West Bengal National University of Juridical Sciences.

Crucially, the draft also institutionalises "violation" projects.

Under a provision issued in 2017, it allows projects that have come up floating environmental norms to be reviewed by a committee of experts and, if they so decree, legalise the project after paying a fine. This, several environmentalists have argued, is seriously contrarian to several established principles of environment law.

This would, in the petitioners view, hinder public access in places where information was not easily accessible or areas in which people weren't familiar with the process.

The illegal trade is estimated to generate revenues of up to \$23 billion a year. The report says a financial investigation is key to dismantling the syndicates involved, which can in turn significantly impact the asso-

ciated criminal activities.

The findings of the study,

# 'IN-SPACe will be space industry regulator'

New unit will drive satellites, rockets & launch services through private players, says ISRO chief Sivan

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
BENGALURU

IN-SPACe, a new entity of the Department of Space, will have its own chairperson and Board, and regulate and promote building of routine satellites, rockets and commercial launch services through Indian industry and start-ups.

These activities had been largely the domain of the 50-year-old Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) until now, but the change will not upset the core research activity of ISRO, K. Sivan, Secretary, Department of Space, and ISRO Chairman, said in a televised briefing on Thursday.

IN-SPACe, or Indian Space Promotion and Authorisation Centre, is touted as the body that will ensure a level playing field for Indian in-

dustry in a fast-growing global space sector. It will function autonomously and parallel to ISRO "without taking away anything from it", Dr. Sivan said.

The entity was approved by the Union Cabinet on Wednesday and was unveiled by Minister of State for Space Jitendra Singh in Delhi.

#### Own set-up

IN-SPACe will have its own directorates for technical, legal, safety and security, monitoring and activities promotion.

The year-old NSIL [NewSpace India Ltd] will be strengthened and empowered with a larger role in what the government has called the new "open and inclusive" space sector. It will work with IN-SPACe and ena-



K. Sivan

ble industry consortia to take on some of the activities of ISRO. These include launch vehicles and satellite production, launch services and space-based services.

Over the past two years, ISRO has been in the process of finding industry partners who could take up these services; industry teams had been involved in assembling and testing satellites and also launched one navigation sa-

tellite last year.

Dr. Sivan said, "This [restructuring] will allow ISRO to allocate more time and resources for R&D endeavours. ISRO will continue to carry out its present activities with greater emphasis on development of advanced technology, human space flight missions and capacity building besides supporting private endeavours in the space sector."

"The reforms in the space sector are aimed at tapping the potential of the entire country for unlocking its potential by enabling private enterprises and start-ups to undertake end-to-end space activities. They are also aimed at mitigating the large investments required to set up facilities for undertaking space activities through sharing of such existing facilities

under ISRO."

A large number of jobs will be created, he said.

#### Navigation policy

A new satellite navigation policy, which has a strategic military element to it, is being proposed. The older ones, namely Remote Sensing Data Policy and the SatCom Policy of 2000, are being revised. These are apart from a proposed policy for space activities that has seen a draft.

IN-SPACe will be in place in three to six months. Meanwhile, the DoS will immediately start receiving and processing applications from private sector industries.

In about two weeks, a webinar on space sector reforms is planned to tell the industry the contours of the new set-up.

## CBI files first chargesheet in Yes Bank case

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

The CBI on Thursday filed a chargesheet against Yes Bank co-founder Rana Kapoor and others in connection with the ₹3,700 crore

in loans extended to Dewan Housing Finance Ltd. (DHFL) allegedly against ₹600-crore investment in a firm linked to his family members. Among those arrested are Mr. Kapoor, Roshni Kapoor, DHFL, Kapil and Dheeraj Wadhawan, Belief Realtors, RKW Developers and DOIT Urban Ventures (India).

# Push for pedalling during pandemic

Urban Affairs Ministry proposes non-motorised zones, community-led schemes

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

A plan to promote cycling in cities and a finance portal for urban local bodies were among the initiatives announced by the Housing and Urban Affairs Ministry on the fifth anniversary of the Smart Cities Mission on Thursday.

The Ministry marked the occasion with a webinar addressed by Housing and Urban Affairs Minister Hardeep Puri. A release here said that the 'Cycles4change Challenge' was an initiative of the Smart Cities Mission to support cities to quickly implement cycling-friendly initiatives in response to COVID-19. Low-cost interventions such as pop-up cycle lanes and non-motorised zones and community-led cycle rental schemes would be explored.

The finance portal plan is part of an effort to get finan-



**Cool wheels:** Cycling-friendly initiatives are the need of the hour, the Urban Affairs Ministry has said. ■ K. RAHUL KUMAR

cial statements of all cities on a single platform to enable sharing and learning of best practices and to help urban local bodies in accessing market funds, the release said.

About 31% of projects identified under the Smart Cities Mission and 33% of urban housing sanctioned

through the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (Urban) have been completed in the five years since the schemes were launched on June 25, 2015, the Ministry said. Mr. Puri said while the targets would be achieved, there was a need to broaden the scope of the schemes.

Through PMAY (U), 1,05

crore houses had been sanctioned against a demand of 1.12 crore homes in 4,550 urban cities. About 35 lakh houses have been delivered to the owners, the Ministry said.

Under the Smart Cities Mission, 5,151 projects worth ₹2 lakh crore had been identified in 100 cities. The Minister said that so far around 4,700 projects worth ₹1.66 lakh crore or 81% of the total projects had been tendered and 1,638 projects worth ₹27,000 crore had been completed.

Through the Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation (AMRUT), the government had provided 79 lakh household water tap connections and 45 lakh sewer connections. Projects worth ₹10,654 crore out of the approved projects of ₹77,640 crore had been completed, the Ministry said.

# Ozone pollution sees a spike: report

Findings based on data from 22 cities in 15 States during the lockdown, says CSE

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

While particulate matter and nitrous oxide levels fell during the lockdown, ozone – also a harmful pollutant – increased in several cities, according to an analysis by the Centre for Science and Environment (CSE).

Ozone is primarily a "sunny weather problem" in India, said CSE researchers, that otherwise remains highly variable during the year. It is a highly reactive gas; even short-term exposure of an hour is dangerous for those with respiratory conditions and asthma and that's why an eight-hour average is considered for ozone instead of the 24-hour average for other pollutants.

The analysis was based on Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) data from 22 cities in 15 States in lockdown days considered from



Sparse traffic during the lockdown brought down the levels of particulate matter in Delhi's air.

March 25 to May 31. It emerged that more than two-thirds of the lockdown days in Delhi-NCR cities and Ahmedabad had at least one observation station that exceeded the standard. In Ahmedabad, the city-wide maximum eight-hour average of ozone exceeded the standard on 17 days.

Chennai and Mumbai did not register a single day of excess ozone at the city-wide level, but at least one station

average of ozone in Gurugram exceeded the standard on 26 days – at least one observation station exceeded the standard on 57 days. The city-wide eight-hour maximum average in Ghaziabad exceeded the standard on 15 days, with at least one station exceeding on 56 days. In Noida, Uttar Pradesh, the city-wide maximum average exceeded the standard on 12 days; at least one station exceeded on 42 days. In Delhi, the maximum eight-hour average exceeded the standard on four days, and at least one station exceeded the standard on 67 days.

In Kolkata, the city-wide average of ozone was exceeded on eight days; at least one station exceeded the standard on 17 days. Chennai and Mumbai did not register a single day of excess ozone at the city-wide level, but at least one station

in both exceeded the standard on 61 days and five days, respectively.

Ozone is not directly emitted by any source but is formed by photochemical reactions between oxides of nitrogen (NOx) and other volatile organic compounds (VOCs) and gases in the air under the influence of sunlight and heat. It can be curtailed only if gases from all sources are controlled.

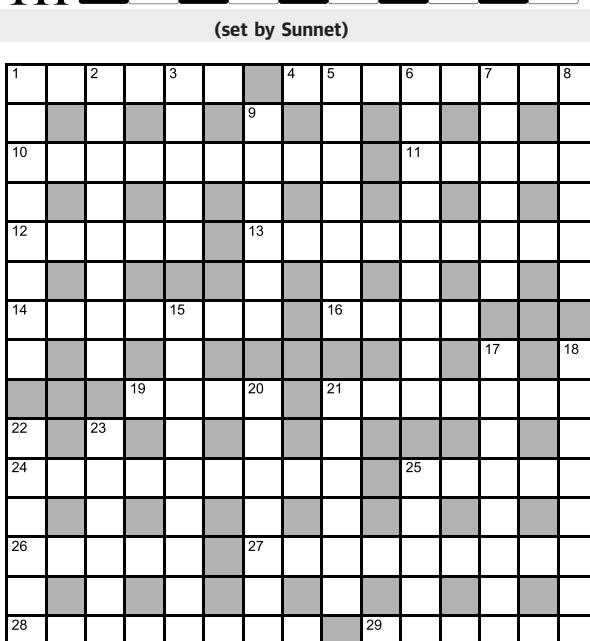
This pandemic-led change in air quality has helped us understand summer pollution. Normally, every year, winter pollution is what draws our attention.

The characteristics of summer pollution are different: there are high winds, intermittent rains and thunderstorms, and high temperature and heat waves," Anumita Roychowdhury, executive director-research and advocacy, CSE, said.

## CROSSWORD + 12972

(set by Sunnet)

There is no lockdown for your brain!  
Try solving a puzzle today!  
@ <https://crossword.thehindu.com>



- ACROSS
- 1 Brew of choice after operation is over (6)
- 4 A chance to house helpers (8)
- 10 Pine for example is always fresh (9)
- 11 Alto's gentleman's vehicle (5)
- 12 Gypsy's design finally is from an Italian city (5)
- 13 Helpful woman is given a gold coin by one (9)

- 14 Caught girl's jokes (7)
- 16 Bag and belt without cap (4)
- 19 Unite for a suit (4)
- 21 Breather for boy getting back on trail after disappearance of adult (7)
- 24 Foreigner had daughter transferred (9)
- 25 Fascinating magazine has one chapter (5)
- 26 Part of bank lending (5)
- 27 A parasite ruined some title (9)
- 28 Relish grooming (8)
- 29 Trips to judge relatives (6)
- DOWN
- 1 New pictures of a sweet base (3,5)
- 2 Winter wear got from the right shopping areas after spending money (8)
- 3 Rag or nag badly (5)
- 5 Bar's peaceful without some idiotic feast (7)
- 6 Rowdies divide a street and society (9)
- 7 Exile Bond's revolutionary superhuman character (6)
- 8 Easy catch for a model (6)
- 9 Note on tax break (6)
- 15 Perhaps English setter slurs (9)
- 17 Cow's just inside the swamp (8)
- 18 They don't like working with Cockney girl in informal trousers (8)
- 20 Spot upper class gentlemen with roofing material (7)
- 21 Demand for payment is raised by first nativist (6)
- 22 Tough to take a final letter and guess (6)
- 23 Bored the French peasant's representative? (6)
- 25 Take liquor to a Mediterranean island (5)

## SUDOKU

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

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★★

Solution to puzzle 12971

A	Z	T	E	C	S	T	E	X	T	B	O	O	K
T	U	L	M										

# Resurgence of virus in Europe as restrictions go, warns WHO

Germany reimposed lockdowns on more than 6,00,000 people in 2 districts

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
COPENHAGEN

Europe has seen a surge of COVID-19 cases since countries began easing restrictions aimed at curbing the spread of the potentially fatal virus, the World Health Organization said on Thursday.

"Last week, Europe saw an increase in weekly cases for the first time in months," the WHO's regional director for Europe Hans Kluge told reporters.

He said more than two dozen countries in Europe had seen resurgences of the deadly virus.

"Thirty countries have seen increases in new cumulative cases over the past two weeks. In 11 of these countries, accelerated transmission has led to very significant resurgence that if left unchecked will push health systems to the brink once again in Europe," he warned.

Mr. Kluge did not identify the countries by name, nor provide detailed numbers.

## Major setback

Germany, which began easing measures about seven weeks ago, is however one such country that has suffered a major setback.

On Tuesday, it reimposed lockdowns on more than 6,00,000 people in two districts in the western part of the country after an outbreak at a slaughterhouse infected more than 1,500 workers.

Portugal also imposed new restrictions in and around its capital on Tuesday.

Mr. Kluge noted that the European region was reporting a decreasing proportion



**Hard-hit:** Employees of Lufthansa staging a protest in Frankfurt on Thursday against the planned job cuts in Germany's flagship carrier. ■ REUTERS

## Shutdowns expected in some U.S. areas: Kudlow

REUTERS  
WASHINGTON

Spikes in novel U.S. coronavirus cases will likely trigger closures in some places but not a nationwide shutdown, White House economic adviser Larry Kudlow said on Thursday, as a number of states recorded a record rise in infections.

"There will be some shutdowns individually... in individual places and certain stores. We are keeping a very close eye on this," Mr. Kudlow said.

of global cases than earlier in the year, as the pandemic hits the Americas with full force, but Europe continues to report close to 20,000 new cases and over 700 new deaths daily.

"We're going to have hot spots. No question," he later told reporters at the White House. "We just have to live with that."

Overall, the U.S. recorded its second greatest daily increase in COVID-19 cases since early March, with a nationwide surge of nearly 36,000 new cases on Tuesday — the highest since a record 36,426 new U.S. infections recorded on April 24. Mr. Kudlow told Fox he still expected to see a "strong v"-shaped economic recovery.

Mr. Kudlow meanwhile singled out Poland, Germany, Spain and Israel for their swift responses to outbreaks in schools, coal mines, and food production settings in recent weeks.

## Iran COVID-19 deaths cross 10,000 mark

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
TEHRAN

Iran on Thursday announced 134 new deaths from the novel coronavirus, taking the overall toll in the country past 10,000. Tehran has struggled to contain the spread of the virus since it reported its first cases in Qom in February. "We lost 134 of our compatriots in the past 24 hours and the total number of victims is 10,300," said Health Ministry.

"Where new clusters of cases appeared, these have been controlled through rapid and targeted interventions. This is very good news," he said.

In the book "The Room Where It Happened", Mr. Bolton contends that the U.S. leader was inclined to offer "personal favours to dictators he liked."

Mr. Trump was said to be receptive when Mr. Erdogan

It has partnered with media publishers in Germany, Australia and Brazil

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
SAN FRANCISCO

Google will pay partnered media publishers in three countries and offer some users free access to paywalled news sites, the tech giant said on Thursday.

The announcement comes after legal battles in France and Australia over Google's refusal to pay news organizations for content.

In a blog post, the company said it would launch a licensing programme to pay publishers for high-quality content for a new news experience" due to launch later this year.

Brad Bender, Google's vice-president of product management, said they had been in discussions with partnered publishers — including the Spiegel Group in Germany, Schwartz media in



**Revenue-sharing model:** Google will offer to pay for access for users to read paywalled articles on a publisher's site. ■ AFP

Australia and Brazil's Diarios Associados — for several months, "with more to come."

Google will also offer to pay for free access for users to read paywalled articles on a publisher's site," the statement said, without offering any further details.

Bender said the program

calls for internet tech titans, notably Google, to pay for content.

A number of European and global publications — including AFP — have called on the European Union to adopt laws requiring internet companies to pay for the material they produce.

In April, France's competition regulator said the firm must start paying media groups for displaying their content, ordering it to begin negotiations after refusing for months to comply with Europe's new digital copyright law.

And earlier this month, Google rejected an Australian ruling that it pay hundreds of millions of dollars per year in compensation to local news media under a government-imposed revenue sharing deal.

## Japan scraps U.S. missile system

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
TOKYO

Japan has scrapped the deployment of a multi-billion-dollar U.S. anti-missile system, the government confirmed on Thursday, days after saying the programme had been suspended.

Fahrettin Altun, communications director of the Turkish presidency, on Wednesday sent out a flurry of tweets in English saying that the book "includes misleading, one-sided and manipulative presentations of our leader President Erdogan's conversations" with Mr. Trump. "It is clear that... (these) mischaracterisations and falsehoods are driven by domestic political considerations as well as personal gain," he tweeted.

But the government reversed course under pressure from local residents.

"The National Security Council reached the conclusion that the deployment of Aegis Ashore in Akita and Yamaguchi is to be rescinded," Defence Minister Taro Kono said.

## Turkish official slams Bolton memoir, says it is 'misleading'

Ex-NSA: Trump told Erdogan he would take care of things

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
ANKARA

Turkey has denounced as "misleading, one-sided and manipulative" the explosive book by former U.S. National Security Advisor John Bolton's that describes interactions between Turkish and U.S. Presidents Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Donald Trump.

In the book "The Room Where It Happened", Mr. Bolton contends that the U.S. leader was inclined to offer "personal favours to dictators he liked."

Mr. Bolton wrote that Mr. Trump told Mr. Erdogan "he would take care of things," explaining that New York



Recep Tayyip Erdogan

prosecutors handling the case were appointed by his predecessor Barack Obama and could be replaced.

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## No role in Sikh abduction: Taliban

The kidnappers of Nedan Singh will be punished, says political spokesperson

KALLOL BHATTACHERJEE  
NEW DELHI

The Taliban was not involved in the kidnapping of a Sikh leader in Chamkani district of Paktia province of Afghanistan and his abductors would face justice from the group, the Afghan Taliban said on Thursday. The comment came three days after Nedan Singh was kidnapped in the second such incident in recent months.

"As a policy, we don't kidnap anyone. Nor have we kidnapped this gentleman. Our goal is clear — putting an end to the [foreign] occupation. If we find his kidnappers, we will send them to our courts to punish them as per the law," Suhail Shaheen, spokesman of the political office of the Taliban, said in a message to *The Hindu*.



Security personnel inspecting a gurdwara in Kabul after it was attacked on March 25. ■ REUTERS

part of the group and had committed a crime.

### Minority rights

The spokesman had said the Taliban remained "committed to minority rights" and blamed the Islamic State fighters for the March 25 attack on a gurdwara in Kabul

that left at least 25 persons dead.

Mr. Singh went missing on June 22 from Chamkani, where he was a regular visitor as the caretaker of the Sri Guru Nanak Sahib Gurdwara, which is considered special because of historic and religious reasons. It is believed that Sikhism founder Guru Nanak visited the region during his tour of Afghanistan in the 15th century.

India had described the incident as a "matter of grave concern". It said it was in contact with the government of Afghanistan to ensure the safety, security and wellbeing of the minority community in Afghanistan. We believe the government of Afghanistan would be able to secure safe and early release of Mr. Nedan Singh".

## 150 Pak. pilots suspended in licence probe

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
ISLAMABAD

Pakistan International Airlines said on Thursday it had grounded almost a third of its pilots for holding fake or dubious licences, a month after one of its planes crashed into houses killing 98 people.

The move comes after the government released a report into the May 22 crash in Karachi. Investigators largely blamed the two pilots, who ignored flight protocols and had been discussing the coronavirus outbreak when they first attempted to land the Airbus A320. PIA spokesman Abdullah Hafeez Khan said that a government probe last year had found about 150 of its 434 pilots were carrying "either bogus or suspicious licences".

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It remained a 'safe harbour' for terrorists, said the report

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres expects all member states to "live up" to their obligations under the relevant Security Council resolutions, his spokesperson has said, after a U.S. report noted that Pakistan remains a safe haven for terrorists as it did not take actions against JeM founder Masood Azhar.

The U.S. State Department, in its Congressional-mandated 2019 Country Reports on Terrorism on Wednesday, said Pakistan remained a "safe harbour" for regionally-focused terrorist groups and that the suspension of U.S. aid to the country remained in effect throughout 2019.

Antonio Guterres

ty Council decision.

The report said Pakistan took "modest steps" in 2019 to counter terror financing and restrain India-focused militant groups from conducting large-scale attacks following the Pulwama attack in February, but it remained a "safe harbour" for regionally focused terrorist groups.

It further said that Pakistan took action against some externally focused groups, including Lashkar-e-Taiba founder Hafiz Saeed but did not take action against Jaish-e-Mohammed founder and UN-designated terrorist Azhar and 2008 Mumbai attack mastermind Sajid Mir, both of whom remain free in Pakistan.

## Democracy under threat during pandemic'

In open letter, 500 prominent persons warn some leaders are 'tightening grip on power'



Dissent on wheels: Activists protesting against an anti-terror Bill in Manila on June 3. ■ GETTY IMAGES

wrote. "At stake are the freedom, health, and dignity of people everywhere."

The letter — the aim of which is to raise "awareness and mobilise citizens" — was initiated by the Stockholm-based International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA).

Stressing that it was still early days and the full impact on democracy would have to be evaluated later, Mr. Casas-Zamora noted

economic and social consequences, it is very likely already having very profound political consequences," Kevin Casas-Zamora, the organisation's secretary general, told AFP.

Noting that emergency powers were a "legitimate part of the arsenal" of democratic governments to deal with exceptional circumstances, Mr. Casas-Zamora said the exercise of those powers had to be "proportional to the emergency."

there were already worrying signs.

Mr. Casas-Zamora pointed to "cases like Hungary where basically the emergency powers invoked by the government had no expiration date."

Those powers were lifted however by a unanimous vote in Parliament on June 16 that took effect the following day.

Mr. Casas-Zamora pointed to Philippines President Rodrigo Duterte's expansion of emergency powers and El Salvador's use of detention centres as other causes for concern.

Telecom giant Huawei — which has been dogged by allegations of stealing American trade secrets and aiding China's espionage efforts — and video surveillance giant Hikvision are among the firms named in the list, according to Bloomberg.

As the People's Republic of China attempts to blur the lines between civil and military sectors, "knowing your supplier" is critical," said Pentagon spokesman Jonathan Rath Hoffman.

The list covers firms "owned by, controlled by, or affiliated with China's go-

vernment, military, or defence industry," Mr. Hoffman said in a statement.

"We envision this list will be a useful tool for the U.S. Government, companies, investors, academic institutions, and likeminded partners to conduct due diligence with regard to partnerships with these entities," he added.

U.S. President Donald Trump has pursued a bruising trade war with China, and warned last week of "complete decoupling" between the world's top two economies despite both sides pledging to move forward on a trade deal.

China last month warned it would take "necessary measures" to protect Huawei and others after the U.S. announced restrictions on the tech giant's purchases of semiconductor technology.

## ELSEWHERE



SC bolsters Trump's power over deportation

WASHINGTON  
The U.S. Supreme Court on Thursday enhanced the ability of President Donald Trump's administration to quickly deport illegal immigrants, including asylum seekers with limited judicial review, handing him a victory in a case involving one of his signature issues. ■ REUTERS

Belarus accuses Russia of meddling in election

MINSK  
Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko accused Russian and Polish forces on Thursday of meddled in his country's presidential election campaign and trying to discredit him. Mr. Lukashenko said he would discuss the issue with Russian President Vladimir Putin. ■ REUTERS

## North, South Koreas mark 70 years of war

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
SEOUL

North and South Korea on Thursday separately marked the 70th anniversary of the start of the Korean War, a conflict that killed millions of people and has technically yet to end.

Communist North Korea invaded the U.S.-backed South on June 25, 1950, as it sought to reunify by force the peninsula Moscow and Washington had divided at the end of the Second World War.

The fighting ended with an armistice that was never replaced by a peace treaty.

In the South, the remains of nearly 150 soldiers repatriated from Hawaii after being excavated in the North were to be formally received at a government ceremony on Thursday evening.

CM YK

A-BM-BME

## MARKET WATCH

	25-06-2020	% CHANGE
Sensex	34,842	-0.08
US Dollar	75.65	0.09
Gold	49,072	-0.57
Brent oil	41	-0.61

## NIFTY 50

	PRICE	CHANGE
Adani Ports	344.00	-7.85
Asian Paints	1689.00	-58.25
Axist Bank	421.70	-2.95
Bajaj Auto	2820.45	3.20
Bajaj Finserv	6021.15	-24.90
Bajaj Finance	3005.35	70.90
Bharti Airtel	559.00	1.65
BPLC	370.25	-8.30
Britannia Ind	3450.40	4.00
Cipla	634.90	3.70
Coal India	140.40	-1.15
Dr Reddys Lab	4006.60	-36.05
Eicher Motors	18090.70	-346.15
GAIL (India)	103.10	1.70
Grasim Ind	607.45	-6.20
HCL Tech	550.05	-9.55
HDFC	1777.80	-19.95
HDFC Bank	1028.75	-3.75
Hero MotoCorp	2559.70	65.90
Hindalco	146.60	-4.80
Hind Unilever	2173.15	42.85
ICICI Bank	351.00	2.90
IndusInd Bank	475.15	-6.55
Bharti Infralet	228.45	-4.60
Infosys	700.50	-13.65
Indian Oil Corp	85.05	-2.05
ITC	202.10	10.25
JSW Steel	193.55	-0.35
Kotak Bank	1381.70	37.80
L&T	943.10	-12.45
M&M	507.25	-8.10
Maruti Suzuki	5762.30	6.95
Nestle India Ltd.	16787.00	79.05
NTPC	96.10	-0.95
ONGC	81.60	-1.50
PowerGrid Corp	179.35	0.85
Reliance Ind	1717.90	-9.95
State Bank	185.25	0.65
Shree Cement	22068.80	-497.45
Sun Pharma	487.65	3.25
Tata Motors	103.80	-1.00
Tata Steel	323.10	-2.95
TCS	2016.10	-26.10
Tech Mahindra	554.15	-6.80
Titan	977.60	-10.60
UltraTech Cement	3802.35	-19.25
UPL	442.90	-2.05
Vedanta	111.25	1.80
Wipro	218.20	0.00
Zee Entertainment	172.35	-1.75

## EXCHANGE RATES

CURRENCY	TT BUY	TT SELL
US Dollar	75.46	75.78
Euro	84.75	85.11
British Pound	93.82	94.22
Japanese Yen (100)	70.35	70.65
Chinese Yuan	10.66	10.71
Swiss Franc	79.58	79.92
Singapore Dollar	54.20	54.44
Canadian Dollar	55.36	55.59
Malaysian Ringgit	17.63	17.71
Australian Dollar	51.90	52.12

Source: Indian Bank

## Apollo Tyres commissions A.P. plant

## SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI

Apollo Tyres Ltd. commissioned the first phase of its greenfield project located in Chittoor district of Andhra Pradesh. Spread across 256 acres, this plant will have a capacity to produce 15,000 passenger car tyres and 3,000 truck-bus radials per day. It will target premium OEMs and after-market customers in India.

## IOB back in the black with Q4 net of ₹143.8 cr.

Lender posts a profit after 18 quarters

## SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI

State-owned Indian Overseas Bank (IOB) reported a net profit of ₹143.8 crore for the fourth quarter ended March 2020, after posting losses for 18 quarters.

The bank had reported losses of ₹1,985 crore in the year-earlier period and ₹6,975 crore in the December quarter, respectively. During the fourth quarter, operating profit rose 5.83% to ₹1,197 crore, from ₹1,131.50 crore.

"We have posted a net profit after 18 quarters," observed Karnam Sekar, MD & CEO. "Now that we have some profit, we will wait for

## SEBI eases preferential issue pricing norms for companies

Firms must maintain digital database of unpublished, price-sensitive information

## SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT MUMBAI

The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) has relaxed the preferential allotment pricing norms for companies while tightening the insider trading regulations as part of its attempts to minimise instances of unpublished, price-sensitive information getting leaked.

The board of the capital markets regulator, which met here on Thursday, also amended the settlement proceeding norms to enable a faster disposal of cases while tweaking the Takeover Regulations as well.

## Plea by stakeholders

"Due to serious challenges faced by the corporate sector in the wake of developments related to COVID-19, SEBI has been receiving numerous representations from various stakeholders for temporarily liberalising regulations relating to raising of capital from the securities market," stated a re-



The relaxed pricing option will be available for all preferential allotments between July 1 and Dec. 31, 2020. ■ SHASHI ASHWAL

lease by SEBI. The watchdog has provided an additional, temporary option to price shares in a preferential allotment in the light of COVID-19's impact on the markets.

Companies with frequently traded shares can take into account the average of the weekly high and low over the past 12 weeks or two weeks, whichever is higher, and price the preferential allotment above that mark.

While the existing pricing mechanism will continue, the relaxed pricing option

will be available for all preferential allotments made between July 1 and December 31, 2020.

Earlier this week, the regulator provided a similar relaxation to companies with stressed assets.

Meanwhile, the regulator has also amended the SEBI (Prohibition of Insider Trading) Regulations making it mandatory for companies to maintain a structured, digital database containing the nature of unpublished price-sensitive information (UPSI) and the names of persons

who have shared the information.

This assumes significance as the SEBI has been probing various matters wherein UPSI was shared by company officials with outsiders through applications like WhatsApp.

## Monetary penalty

The regulator has also amended the SEBI (Settlement Proceedings) Regulations that allow for an entity facing regulatory proceedings to file for settling the case – popularly known as consent route – by paying a monetary penalty.

"In order to save time, instead of issuing a settlement notice under Regulation 18, a paragraph shall be included in the show cause notice, informing the noticee about the option to file a settlement application," SEBI said in the statement.

The regulator has also tweaked the manner in which the base penalty amount is calculated.

## PFC cleared loans worth over ₹1 lakh-cr. in FY20

Disbursements stood at ₹68,000 cr.

## PIYUSH PANDEY

MUMBAI

State-owned Power Finance Corporation (PFC) had sanctioned loans worth more than ₹1 lakh crore, along with disbursements of about ₹68,000 crore for the financial year 2019-20.



ing institution registered a 16% growth in its standalone revenue while it managed a 16 basis points (bps) reduction in the cost of funds.

## Net NPAs dip

Net non-performing assets declined to 3.8% from 4.55% a year earlier.

PFC registered a 10% growth in its loan assets and a 16 bps increase in the interest spread.

Further, during the fiscal, PFC resolved two stressed projects – Rattan India Amravati and GMR Chhattisgarh – worth ₹2,700 crore.

## Exports may dip 10-12% in 2020-21: FIEO

## PRESS TRUST OF INDIA NEW DELHI

India's exports are likely to witness a 10-12% year-on-year decline during the ongoing fiscal, if the current trend persists, due to contraction in global demand on account of the COVID-19, the FIEO said.

Federation of Indian Export Organisations (FIEO) president S. K. Saraf said although exporters were receiving many enquiries from countries where anti-China sentiments were high, demand in employment-intensive sectors such as gems and jewellery was still a challenge.

"We expect about 10-12% decline in India's exports in the current fiscal," he said. However, in case of a second wave of the pandemic, the contraction in exports may reach 20%, according to Mr. Saraf.

India's exports contracted by a record 60% in April and 36.47% in May. Mr. Saraf also urged the Centre to focus on concluding free trade pacts with the likes of the European Union, Australia and New Zealand.

## SFL unit bags GM's supplier of year award

## SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI

Sundram Fasteners Ltd.'s (SFL) powertrain components division was named the GM Supplier of the Year by General Motors (GM).

The recognition is for performance in 2019. This is the seventh time SFL has received this award.

"Our suppliers play a key role in delivering the products, services and experiences our customers deserve – and these award-winning suppliers went above and beyond our expectations," said Shilpan Amin, VP, global purchasing and supply chain, GM.

"We are delighted to receive this award... from a highly esteemed and demanding customer like GM," said Arathi Krishna, MD, SFL. "This validates our product consistency and quality," she added.

## Apollo's revenue slides to ₹3,838 crore



Ashok Leyland sales skid, clocks ₹57-cr. loss in Q4

Firm's revenue slides to ₹3,838 crore

## SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI

Commercial vehicle manufacturer Ashok Leyland Ltd. has reported a standalone loss of ₹57 crore during the fourth quarter ended March 2020 against the standalone net profit of ₹653 crore posted in the year-earlier period as COVID-19 impacted sales.

During the period under review, total revenue stood at ₹3,838 crore against ₹8,846 crore. However, for the full year, the company has posted a net profit of ₹240 crore against ₹1,983 crore, said the company.

"This has been a challenging year for the industry, which witnessed a significant 42% decline in volumes. Consequently, Ashok Leyland also saw a reduction in volumes. Despite the drop in the volumes, we have been able to achieve an

## Merchants can avail loans via Google app

## SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI

Google India on Thursday said it was working with financial institutions to offer loans to merchants from within its digital payment app – Google Pay for Business – and that the feature would be rolled out soon.

"With over three million merchants now using Google Pay for Business app to accept and make payments digitally, Google Pay is also working with partner financial institutions to surface their loan offerings for merchants, which can be availed right within Google Pay for Business app, something that is especially pertinent in these uncertain times," it said.

It also unveiled 'Grow with Google Small Business Hub' to make it easier for small businesses to discover all the Google resources.

## Pharma exports rebound in May, clock 17% growth

Pharmexcil targets \$24 bn this fiscal

## N. RAVI KUMAR HYDERABAD

Apollo Hospitals Enterprise Ltd. reported a 168% growth in its standalone net profit for the fourth quarter ended March 2020 to ₹206 crore, aided by growth in healthcare services and standalone pharmacies.

Total revenue rose 19% to ₹2,572 crore. "FY21 will be challenging due to COVID-19," said Prathap C. Reddy, chairman. "The short term may see an adverse impact on aspects such as medical tourism but in the longer term, I am sure that the healthcare industry will bounce back to its normal growth."

Removal of various export restrictions would be another favourable condition for exports. "All these factors may boost the exports of Indian pharmaceuticals this year. We are expecting that the exports would be around \$24-25 billion," Mr. Bhaskar said.

in March and a negligible 0.25% growth in April.

The cumulative growth for April and May 2020 is 9.21% at \$3,508.24 million (\$3,212.44 million). "We believe the trend may continue this year owing to the demand for affordable generics from our country," Pharmexcil director general Ravi Uday Bhaskar said.

Removal of various export restrictions would be another favourable condition for exports. "All these factors may boost the exports of Indian pharmaceuticals this year. We are expecting that the exports would be around \$24-25 billion," Mr. Bhaskar said.

This month activists started petitions on Change.org, drawing thousands of signatures, including one by Nina Davuluri, who in 2014 became the first Indian American to be crowned Miss America.

This month activists started petitions on Change.org, drawing thousands of signatures, including one by Nina Davuluri, who in 2014 became the first Indian

# 'Don't know when chess will return to where it was'

Viswanathan Anand talks about coming to terms with how the COVID-19 pandemic has changed the world

P.K. AJITH KUMAR  
KOZHIKODE

When Viswanathan Anand left Chennai for Frankfurt in February, the city was waiting to see M.S. Dhoni back at Chepauk. The Southern metropolis was also talking about the latest Rajinikanth film, 'Darbar'. All those classical music and dance stages were still alive, though the season had ended.

It was an entirely different Chennai that he returned to, some three months later. The IPL had been postponed indefinitely, cinemas had been closed, dancers and musicians didn't know when they would be able to get back on stage.

The novel coronavirus has changed the world, almost unrecognisably.

Anand is relieved and happy that he is finally be home again; that he can spend time with his wife Aruna and son



**Home sweet home:** Anand is happy that he could finally spend time with wife Aruna and son Akhil. ■ FILE PHOTO

Akhil, after being quarantined in Bengaluru on his arrival from Germany.

He is also glad that he can play chess from his comfortable, familiar workstation at his home in Kottapuram,

Chennai. The five-time World champion wants to play in a tournament again, but doesn't know when.

"I don't know when chess will return to where it was before," he tells *The Hindu*

over phone. "It seems some countries are coming out [of the lockdown], but they are not completely out of danger, while others are still in an earlier stage."

"Only when the vaccine comes, we can breathe easy. A part of me hopes that by August or September we will at least be used to this and no doubt there will be a lot of precautions still. It could well be next year; I am getting used to that reality."

He is also getting used to playing competitive chess online. He had done quite a bit of that while he was stranded in Frankfurt.

#### In good nick

And he played some splendid chess, belying his 50 years – consider his 17-move demolition of World No. 4 Ian Nepomniachtchi at the Nations Cup.

"I was very happy with the

win against Nepo," he says.

"The funny thing is when I was preparing this line in the morning, this particular variation came up and I thought I should familiarise myself with it. I also liked the way I played against Teimour Radjabov, Maxime Vachier-Lagrave and Ding Liren."

He is not surprised that online chess really took off during the lockdown.

"It has been around for many, many years, like video calls or working from home," he says.

"We didn't imagine we would be doing those things this often".

## 'We should never take the virus lightly'

Viswanathan Anand thinks the Novak Djokovic episode is a warning for everyone. "I heard that Serbia was doing well and that enough people felt the risk had receded," he says. "But then you see what happened with the Adria Tour."

"We should never take the virus lightly," says Anand. "It is like playing chess against the computer. You can't completely understand the thing. All you can do is sit and focus on what you are supposed to do right, make your moves and hang in there." – P.K. Ajith Kumar

## SHORT TAKES

### US Open re-instates wheelchair event

NEW YORK

The US Open wheelchair competition will be staged from September 10-13 in its traditional spot on the calendar, the US Tennis Association said on Wednesday after widespread criticism of its cancellation. The event will be played at the National Tennis Center during the final four days of the Grand Slam



tournament. Men's and women's singles and doubles and quad singles and doubles events will be contested with similar field sizes to past events, the USTA said. AFP

### Nod for Etihad Stadium to host City vs Liverpool

LONDON

Manchester City has been given the go-ahead to stage its Premier League match against Liverpool on July 2 at its Etihad Stadium next week despite a police request to stage the game at a neutral venue. AFP



Berlin tennis event will allow 1,000 fans

BERLIN

One thousand fans will be allowed to watch a Berlin tennis tournament next month despite the controversy which has engulfed Novak Djokovic whose Adria Tour saw him and three other players testing positive for coronavirus. Australian firebrand Nick Kyrgios, in pic, as well as top-10 players Dominic Thiem and Alexander Zverev, who both featured in the Balkans, have signed up for Berlin. AFP

### No. 1 squash player Raneem calls it a day

CAIRO

The world's top-ranked women's squash player, Raneem El Welily, announced her retirement on Thursday, the Professional Squash Association said. The 31-year-old Egyptian, who won her only World Championship title in 2017 and was a three-time runner-up, was the first Arab woman to be World No. 1 in any sport. AP

## TV PICKS

**PGA Tour:** Eurosport (SD & HD), 1 a.m. (Saturday).  
**Serie A:** Sony Ten 2 (SD & HD), 1.10 a.m. (Saturday).

## ICC chairman: process to be finalised next week

AMOL KARHADKAR

MUMBAI

The International Cricket Council (ICC) Board on Thursday deliberated, via a teleconference, the process for electing the next ICC chairman to succeed Shashank Manohar. While the ICC didn't make any official announcement, it is understood that the process is likely to be finalised next week.

Manohar has said he is not interested in continuing after serving two terms of two years each. It is expected that the next chairman will take over before the end of August.

The ICC Board usually conducts its annual conference in June but the pandemic has forced it to be pushed back by almost two months.

Manohar has agreed to continue until the annual conference.

## Vaishali cruises into semifinals

P.K. AJITH KUMAR

KOZHIKODE

R. Vaishali stormed into the semifinals of the first leg of the FIDE Chess.com Women's Speed Chess, with a crushing victory over Munkhzul Turmunkh of Mongolia. The Chennai girl won 7.5-3.5.

In Friday's semifinal, Vaishali will take on Anna Ushenina of Ukraine, who defeated Kateryna Lagno of Russia 6-4.

In the other semifinal, an all-Russian affair, Alexander Kosteniuk will meet Valentina Gunina.

## Carlsen moves into the lead

RAKESH RAO

NEW DELHI

World champion Magnus Carlsen produced yet another dominant display to dismantle World No. 2 Fabiano Caruana in 48 moves to take a 1-0 lead in their quarterfinal clash of the \$150,000 Chess Masters on Thursday.

In the other quarterfinal, Ian Nepomniachtchi gained from the connectivity issue faced by younger Russian compatriot Vladislav Artemiev and 'won' in a completely drawn position.

**The results:**  
**Quarterfinals (Game One):** Magnus Carlsen bt Fabiano Caruana (USA); Ian Nepomniachtchi (Rus) bt Vladislav Artemiev (Rus).

■ FILE PHOTO: V.V. SUBRAMANYAM

## Liverpool on the brink of clinching title

Martial treble powers Manchester United to a win over Sheffield

### EURO LEAGUES

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

LONDON



**Hat-trick hero:** Martial scores United's second goal against Sheffield. ■ GETTY IMAGES

break, but was content with one more goal.

**The results:** Premier League: Liverpool 4 (Alexander-Arnold 23, Salah 44, Fabinho 55, Mane 69) bt Crystal Palace 0.

Manchester United 3 (Martial 7, 44, 74) bt Sheffield United 0; Newcastle 1 (Gaylor 68) drew with Aston Villa 1 (El Mo-

hamady 83); Norwich 0 lost to Everton 1 (Keane 55); Wolves 1 (Jimenez 60) bt Bournemouth 0.

**LaLiga:** Real Sociedad 0 lost to Celta Vigo 1 (Aspas 45+pen); Alaves 0 lost to Osasuna 1 (Latorre 64); Real Madrid 2 (Viniči Jr 19, Ramos 56) bt Real Mal-

lorca 0.

**Serie A:** Inter Milan 3 (Lukaku 41+pen, Biraghi 45+, Valero 86) drew with Sassuolo 3 (Caputo 4, Berardi 81+pen, Magnani 89); Atalanta 3 (Gosens 38, Malinovskiy 66, Palomino 80) bt Lazio 2 (De Roon 5-og, Milinković-Savić 11); AS Roma 2 (Dzeko 64, 85) bt Sampdoria 1 (Gabbiadini 11).

## Rasquinha's kind gesture

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI

Saddened by the financial hardship being faced by the hockey community amid the COVID-19 pandemic, former India captain Viren Rasquinha has raised ₹22 lakh to be distributed as a one-time benefit among players, coaches and groundsmen working at the grassroots level.

The fund has been raised in just one week through a joint initiative – #LetsStickTogether – of non-profit organisations Olympic Gold Quest, of which Rasquinha is director and CEO, and Go Sports Foundation.

### Saina nominates Aparna for Arjuna Award

KOCHI

Saina Nehwal, the 2012 London Olympics bronze medalist and 2015 Worlds silver medalist, has recommended badminton

Y. B. SARANGI

KOLKATA

Two-time Commonwealth Games gold-winning weightlifter K. Sanjita Chanu, who was recently exonerated of doping charges, will receive the Arjuna Award for 2018, said Indian Weightlifting Federation (IWLF) secretary Sahdev Yadav on Thursday.

Sahdev informed Sanjita, who fought an over two-and-a-half-year battle to see her name being cleared of doping charges by the International Weightlifting Federation (IWF) earlier this month, about the development on Wednesday night.

Sanjita had moved the Delhi High Court after being ignored for the Arjuna in 2017. After she was provisionally suspended for testing positive for a banned substance, the court, in its final order on August 30,

"If the Selection Committee is of the view that the petitioner is entitled to Arjuna 2018, the decision shall be kept in a sealed cover and her name shall be disclosed only if the petitioner is absolved of the charges of doping...." the order said.

The latest letter from the Ministry, addressed to the Director General, Sports Authority of India, stated, "in compliance with the Order dated 24.06.2020 passed by the Hon'ble Delhi High Court, the Department's letter of even number 02.06.2020 granting provisional annual recognition of 54 NSFs stands withdrawn."

**Fresh notice**

On Wednesday, a Delhi High Court bench, comprising Justice Hima Kohli and Justice

Rakesh Rao

NEW DELHI

Following Sanjita's exoneration, the IWLF reminded the Sports Ministry about the court order. "After going through relevant documents the Ministry confirmed that Sanjita would get the Arjuna for 2018," sahdev told *The Hindu*.

Following an order of the Delhi High Court, the Sports Ministry withdrew the annual recognition of 54 National Sports Federations (NSFs), including tennis, badminton, football, table tennis, chess, swimming, on Thursday.

What irked the bench was the defiance of its February 7 order that clearly directed the Indian Olympic Association (IOA) and the Ministry not to take a decision related to the federations without informing the Court.

Some of the prominent disciplines affected are: chess, football, tennis, carrom, baseball, kabaddi, athletics, badminton, basketball, billiards and snooker, boxing, cycling, equestrian, hockey, polo, rugby, triathlon, weightlifting, kho-kho, shooting, squash, swimming, table tennis, ten-pin bowling, volleyball, wrestling, and motor sports.

"Water Electrolysis" (WE), is clean, facile, and highly efficient technology for large-scale production of high-purity H2.

"Through this international collaboration we aim to develop novel low cost electrocatalysts for hydrogen evolution reactions," he said.

"This highly interdisciplinary team is working to broaden the understanding of advanced electrocatalysts with the potential to transform lab-scale research to deployable reactors/devices, Mr. Kumar said.

The first phase of this project began with a visit to University of Cologne by IIT Madras researchers and Mr. Mathur's visit to the Institute in February-March this year.

## Thiem admits Adria Tour was a mistake



Dominic Thiem. ■ AFP

"Our behaviour was a mistake, we displayed too much euphoria, I am extremely sorry."

He put this exuberance down to playing in front of fans for the first time "in weeks".

"I've been tested five times in the past 10 days and each time it was negative," he added.

## Western model impractical: Gopi Chand

Says need to promote sports which are fundamentally Indian

M.R. PRAVEEN CHANDRAN

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Chief National badminton coach P. Gopi Chand said it was not sensible to follow the Western model blindly to produce world-beaters and Olympic champions.

Speaking at a webinar conducted by SAI-LNCP on Thursday, Gopi said the Western model was expensive and impractical in a country like India. The former All-England champion said there was a need to promote sports which are fundamentally Indian.

"In the Western model you need to spend around \$10,000 each year on an athlete which is phenomenally expensive. For example you can't build indoor stadiums everywhere for the kids to play basketball or 50m pools for the kids to learn swim-

ming. "But we can do a lot by promoting local sports and our culture. I feel sports like wrestling, hockey, yoga, kho-kho and tennis are which are fundamentally imbibed in our culture should be given preference over others," he said.

Gopi stressed the importance of physical literacy and said sports and physical ac-

tivities definitely made children smarter. He also added that physical education (PE) teachers played a huge role in grassroots development and there was a need to recognise their efforts.

"We should shift our thinking from winning medals to beyond medals. I must confess I also thought sports was all about winning

and encourage them to play sports as it makes them smarter."

"I think the role of the PE teacher at the grassroots level is very important. They are the ones who make the children love or hate sports. And like others, the PE teachers should be recognised for their efforts," he said.

"The little games we play in our backyard give us early lessons about leadership, adaptability and competition. Those who hate sports are the ones who were forced to leave sports early."

"I think the role of the PE teacher at the grassroots level is very important. They are the ones who make the children love or hate sports. And like others, the PE teachers should be recognised for their efforts," he said.

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