



NDA will win two-thirds majority in upcoming Bihar poll: Amit Shah
page 9



COVID-19 pandemic delays delivery of India's first VVIP planes
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Tens of thousands rally in U.S. demanding racial equality
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Scientists funded by Zuckerberg urge him to rein in hate on Facebook
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NEARBY



Sena questions Sonu Sood's 'Mahatma' status
MUMBAA
The Shiv Sena on Sunday took a swipe at actor Sonu Sood, saying that a good actor like him could very well be working for a political director this time.
REGION ▶ PAGE 2

Gujarat to open religious places, Goa temples shut

AHMEDABAD/PANAJI
Places of worship in Gujarat are planning to open their doors from Monday. In Goa, nine major temple trusts decided against opening temples for devotees.
REGION ▶ PAGE 5

EDUCATION PLUS ▶ PAGE 11

Ready to roll



Shopping therapy: A shopping mall in Vijayawada being cleaned on the eve of reopening, on Sunday. Malls in various parts of the country will reopen on Monday after remaining shut for more than two months due to COVID-19 pandemic. ■ K.V.S. GIRI

Fadnavis seeks probe into missing patient

TANVI DESHPANDE
MUMBAI

Leader of Opposition Devendra Fadnavis has demanded a government inquiry into the death of Gyantidevi Vishwakarma, who died on June 3 after being shuffled between hospitals without her whereabouts being known to her family for two days.

Vishwakarma (62) was one of the 200-odd patients moved out from the Bandra-Kurla Complex (BKC) field hospital owing to Cyclone Nisarga. She died at Sion hospital.

Sandeep Sharma, the woman's grandson, said, "I am satisfied, but I want to see someone held accountable for this fiasco. We have not been given her hospitalisation record by Sion hospital so far, but today I got a call that they will share it on Monday."

No means in Cong. to share ideas: Jha

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

It is a "false" claim that Congress has a robust internal mechanism to listen to its members, party spokesperson Sanjay Jha has said, publicly questioning the party's leadership during the pandemic.

In a newspaper opinion piece on Sunday, Mr. Jha said at a time when the Narendra Modi government "seemed clueless about basic governance, the Congress should have presented an alternative white paper on governance".

Restore April status along LAC: India

Talks with China cordial; diplomatic engagements will continue to resolve the issue, says MEA

DINAKAR PERI
SUHASINI HAIDAR
NEW DELHI

India has firmly conveyed its demand to China for restoring the status quo as existed in April along the border during the senior military commander talks on Saturday, sources said.

The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said the talks were held in a "cordial and positive" atmosphere, and both sides will continue the military and diplomatic engagements to "resolve the situation".

Back to governments
Sources said the talks, which went on for several hours, remained inconclusive, but each side put across their issues, which would be con-

Face-to-face

A timeline of the ongoing standoff between India and China along the Line of Actual Control

May 5/6: Indian and Chinese troops scuffle at Pangong Tso in Ladakh, resulting in injuries in large numbers on both sides

May 9: Clashes erupt between troops at Naku La in north Sikkim

May 14: Army chief makes statement on clashes, says there was "aggressive behaviour" on both sides

veyed to the respective governments and taken up in subsequent meetings.

While India was firm on restoring the status quo of

May 18: China accuses India of "trespass", alleges "illegal" infra work on LAC

May 21: MEA says Chinese troops "hindering normal patrols"

May 27: China says situation "stable and controllable"

June 2: Defence Minister Rajnath Singh says Chinese troops present at LAC "in large numbers"

June 5: MEA Lt. Secy holds videoconference with Chinese MFA Director General

June 6: Military commanders talk on Chinese side of LAC

tory and that China had already developed infrastructure on its side, sources said.

Senior defence sources had told *The Hindu* earlier that infrastructure development would continue along the LAC despite the ongoing tensions. China's actions violate the existing boundary agreement meant to preserve peace and tranquillity on the border and this was also communicated, it has been learnt.

"A meeting was held between the Corps Commander based in Leh and the Chinese Commander on June 6, 2020, in the Chushul-Moldo region," the MEA said in a statement.

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Timings**MUMBAI**

MONDAY, JUN. 08
RISE 06:01 SET 19:15
RISE 21:54 SET 08:13
TUESDAY, JUN. 09
RISE 06:01 SET 19:16
RISE 22:45 SET 09:11
WEDNESDAY, JUN. 10
RISE 06:01 SET 19:16
RISE 23:30 SET 10:07

Mumbai Weather
max min
Mumbai Airport 35 27
Pune 32 22
Mumbai City 35 27

Mumbai Today
33°C One or two spells of rain and thundershower with partly cloudy sky. A warm and humid weather will prevail.

Mumbai Tomorrow
33°C Day will be warm with a partly cloudy sky. One or two Spells of rain and thunder-shower are likely.

Copyright Skymet Weather 2019
All rights reserved.**NMMC releases COVID-19 dashboard****RAINA ASSAINAR****NAVI MUMBAI**

The Navi Mumbai Municipal Corporation (NMMC) has released a 'COVID-19 dashboard' which enables citizens to keep a track of number of positive and recovered cases along with knowing about the COVID-19 care hospitals and the beds available.

The link – www.nmmcovid19.in – shows the statistics of confirmed cases, active cases, number of discharged and deaths reported. It also had list of functional and planned COVID-19 Care Centre (CCC), Dedicated COVID-19 Health Centre (DCHC) and Dedicated COVID-19 Hospital (DCH). The list mentions the beds available at each centre and the number of occupied ones.

The CCC list has names of 15 centres with a total of 4,535 beds. These include 2,482 at three planned centres. Of these 254 beds are occupied. There are also nine DCHC centres with 1,620 beds. This includes 1,175 beds at four planned centres. Of these, 172 are occupied. Meanwhile, there are eight DCHs with 850 beds. These include 50 beds at one planned centre. As of now, 365 DCH beds are occupied.

The municipal corporation said it also has an online doctor available between 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. at 022-27567269 who can be reached for any doubts and guidance. The toll free numbers to contact the NMMC are 1800-222309 and 1800-222310.

Sena questions Sood's 'Mahatma' status

Raut asks how actor could arrange so many buses, flights without political backing

ALOK DESHPANDE**MUMBAI**

The Shiv Sena on Sunday took a swipe at actor Sonu Sood, saying that a good actor like him could very well be working for a political director this time.

Mr. Sood is currently under the limelight for sending back migrant workers stranded in Mumbai to their hometowns. Commenting on the public reaction to this, Rajya Sabha MP Sanjay Raut, in Sena mouthpiece *Saamana*, said the actor has emerged as a 'Mahatma' and questioned if someone can be made 'Mahatma' in such a short period.

"Recently, 177 girls from Odisha were stuck in Kerala's Ernakulam district. Mr. Sood supposedly flew them to Bhubaneswar on a special plane. Would he have been able to do this without the backing of political and administrative machinery?" Mr. Raut asked.

'Parallel government'
"I read that Mr. Sood has been sending over 1,000 stranded migrants to U.P., Bihar, Jharkhand and West Bengal every day. However, U.P. CM was not willing to allow any migrant to enter the State without a COVID-19 negative certificate, and West Bengal CM was asking for migrants to not be sent back. Then where did these workers reach? How did Mr. Sood

**Facing fire:** Bollywood actor Sonu Sood meeting Maharashtra Governor Bhagat Singh Koshyari at Raj Bhavan. ■ FILE PHOTO

manage to arrange so many buses by violating lockdown norm? It was as if he was running a parallel government and got what he wanted." Mr.

Raut said.
The Sena leader said 'Mahatma' Sood's name will soon come up in Prime Minister Narendra Modi's

'Mann ki Baat,' and he will go to Delhi to meet the PM, only to eventually become a star campaigner in Mumbai, U.P., Bihar and West Bengal. "Such an agreement might have been inked already and that is why Mr. Sood has become the bright shining hero of the lockdown," he said.

Pointing to the sting operation carried out by a website called Cobrapost on a number of Bollywood actors, which also involved Mr. Sood, the MP said, "Mr. Sood is an actor. He takes money to make statements. Cobrapost had exposed. He had asked for ₹1.5 crore to speak in favour of the Bharatiya Janata Party on social media. People like Mr. Sood are known to wear anyone's

mask and campaign in return of money."

Criticising Governor Bhagat Singh Koshyari, who called Mr. Sood for a meeting to congratulate him on his work, Mr. Raut said, "Doctors, police personnel, municipal staff, nurses and bank employees who have been working for months could not shine. No political party-appointed publicity machinery was working for them."

Sood visits CM

After facing criticism, Mr. Sood visited Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray at his residence late on Sunday. In response to this, Mr. Raut tweeted, "Finally, Mr. Sood has found the Maharashtra CM's address."

Home Minister Anil Deshmukh lauds actor

SHOUMOJIT BANERJEE**PUNE**

While Shiv Sena leader Sanjay Raut cast aspersions on Bollywood actor Sonu Sood's efforts to help stranded migrant workers, Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) leader and Maharashtra Home Minister Anil Deshmukh on Sunday lauded Mr. Sood.

"He has done good work by sending a lot of migrant workers to their homes. I

did not hear what Sanjay Raut *sahab* said. We will appreciate whoever takes such good initiatives, be it Mr. Sood or anyone else," said Mr. Deshmukh, who was in the city to review the COVID-19 situation.

The Sena, NCP and Congress are allies in the Maha Vikas Aghadi government led by CM Uddhav Thackeray.

Mr. Deshmukh also lauded the efforts of

Special Police Officers and the Pune Police in helping check the spread of the virus in Pune's 'red zones'.

9,671 prisoners released

Speaking to reporters later in the evening, he said there were 38,000 prisoners in 60 jails in Maharashtra, of whom 9,671 had been released till now to ensure social distancing. "We are going to release 11,000 more

prisoners on emergency parole. We have set up 31 temporary prisons in 24 districts," he said.

Stating that 3,000 police personnel had tested positive for COVID-19 while around 30 others had succumbed to the virus, Mr. Deshmukh said he had directed that normal duties be given to personnel between 50-55 years of age and paid leaves to personnel over 55.

Unlocking life

**First day of freedom:** People stroll along Marine Drive after spending over two months in lockdown, on Sunday. ■ EMMANUEL YOGIN

Matches in the virtual field, polls the decider

Rugby India pulls off nationwide online tournament

NANDAKUMAR MARAR**MUMBAI**

With competitive sporting activity in pause mode since March, Rugby India pulled off a nationwide tournament – the TRY Series Cup – from its Mumbai headquarters without a single player stepping on the rugby pitch.

There were no lung-bursting runs through the opposition ranks, no flying tackles, nor any injuries as 32 teams, affiliated to the national body, engaged in an online competition for the first time. For two weeks in May, @Rugbyindia buzzed with excitement as players, coaches, followers and fans got involved in voting online.

Popularity votes determined the winning side. Kerala Rugby Warriors emerged winners with 10,531 votes, beating Young Rugby Club who polled 7,994 votes. Black Dot Rugby came third.

2 Mumbai squads in fray
Two Mumbai-based squads – Bombay Gymkhana and Magicians Foundation – were also in the fray. Other participants were State units from across the country, institutional teams like Kalinga Institute of Social Sciences from Odisha, and popular

**Clear favourite:** Kerala Rugby Warriors emerged winners with 10,531 votes, beating Young Rugby Club. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

clubs like Kolkata Jungle Crows. Competitive rugby is played between 15-a-side or seven-a-side teams, featuring male or female players separately. TRY Series was kept neutral with no format or gender restriction.

Nasser Hussain, ex-India rugby player and CEO, Rugby India, said, "The aim of this initiative was to keep the

rugby community engaged and inter-club rivalries alive, while building a fan base and following for the sport. No player names, gender or format is mentioned. The focus is solely on teams and empowering them to engage with their players, fans, supporters and followers."

In all, 80 voting matches were played over 14 days

with aggregate votes polled touching 6,09,860. Mr. Hussain said, "With no on-field rugby possible, we need to utilise online platforms effectively to keep people engaged with the game. The opportunities in the digital space are limitless."

Similarity to reality
Mr. Hussain said, "Even though this tournament is not the real deal, there is similarity to an actual match day... there is anxiety, excitement, the team that turns up with their game face on match day and performs [gets the share of votes] comes out on top. There are no favourites!"

Kerala Rugby Warriors won on the strength of mobilising votes by supporters and players, leaving teams from Punjab, Haryana, Bihar, and Karnataka in the shade.

Mr. Hussain said, "With just off-field bragging rights on offer, the potential fan base and following outside the big powerhouses of rugby in India is visible and can be tapped."

Enthused by the interest for virtual rugby, the organisers are game for a second edition.

HC relief to liquor shop at Nariman Point
In such cases, approach of the authorities need to be practical, not technical'

SONAM SAIGAL**MUMBAI**

The Bombay High Court recently granted relief to a liquor shop situated in a mall at Nariman Point and allowed it to sell liquor saying, "the approach of the Commissioner of State Excise, Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) and the State government needs to be practical, rather than technical."

A Division Bench of Justices S.J. Kathawala and S.P. Tavade was on Saturday hearing a plea filed by Ojus Marketing Management Pvt. Ltd. that carries out retail sale of spirits, wine, beer and other alcoholic beverages under the name 'World of Wines'. The company sought directions against the BMC and government, in order to allow it to sell liquor from their shop at Nariman Point. While they did not receive a formal reply, they were orally refused permission to conduct business from the said shop.

Thereafter, in view of the overcrowding near liquor shops in Mumbai, and impossibility of maintaining social distancing, on May 5, the BMC ordered immediate closure of non-essential shops, including standalone liquor shops.

Eventually, on May 22, the



The Bombay High Court. ■ FILE PHOTO

said guidelines specifically excluded stores inside malls.

On May 4, the company made a representation before the BMC and State, seeking permission to commence home delivery of alcohol from their shop at Nariman Point. While they did not receive a formal reply, they were orally refused permission to conduct business from the said shop.

Thereafter, in view of the overcrowding near liquor shops in Mumbai, and impossibility of maintaining social distancing, on May 5, the BMC ordered immediate closure of non-essential shops, including standalone liquor shops.

Eventually, on May 22, the

cal interpretation provided by the authorities to show that the shop is inside the mall. The intent of the guidelines issued by the State in not allowing the operation of businesses situated inside malls is to ensure that too many people do not gather in one place, where it would be difficult to follow the norms of social distancing," the court noted.

Separate entrance

The 11-page order also said the court did not see how permitting the company to operate their business from the said shop, which has an independent entrance and exit from that of CR2 Mall, does not fall within the relaxation given by the government guidelines.

"Again, since all the liquor shops are strictly prohibited from selling liquor over the counter, and are only permitted to effect home delivery, the authorities ought to have granted permission to the company also considering the peculiar facts and circumstances of the present case. In matters such as the present case, the approach of the authorities need to be practical, rather than technical," the judges said.

Former BJP legislator injured in melee

Group of drunken youth assault leader

SHOUMOJIT BANERJEE**PUNE**

Former Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) legislator Medha Kulkarni suffered minor injuries after she was allegedly assaulted by a group of drunken youths whom she tried to accost for creating a ruckus outside a residential society in Pune's Kothrud.

The incident occurred on Saturday evening when four inebriated youths allegedly assaulted a senior citizen, his son and daughter-in-law after they complained of the former drinking in front of their housing society. When Ms. Kulkarni, a neighbour of the concerned senior citizen, along with other residents, attempted to confront the inebriated group, they were also allegedly assaulted by the youths.

In the ensuing melee, the former MLA suffered minor injuries to her hand.

A case was lodged against the four youths at Kothrud police station. Two of them have been taken into police custody.

"There is a major menace from drunkards in this area. It is unfortunate that such incidents are occurring with growing frequency in hitherto peaceful residential areas. This poses a big question to the security of residents, especially senior citizens," Ms. Kulkarni said,



Former MLA Medha Kulkarni. ■ MANDAR TANNU

remarking that the problem in her area continued to persist despite complaints to the local police authorities in the past.

Ms. Kulkarni, a prominent face of the BJP in Pune city, was dropped by her party for the Kothrud Assembly segment before the 2019 elections to make way for the State BJP president Chandrakant Patil.

A greatly disappointed Ms. Kulkarni, along with her resentful supporters, had even rushed to the BJP headquarters in Mumbai to challenge the decision.

While it was hoped that she would be compensated for helping Mr. Patil win the Kothrud seat by a handsome margin, Ms. Kulkarni was disappointed again after the BJP overlooked her candidature for the elections to the Legislative Council.

the police personnel and latter handed over to his younger brother.

In another incident around 6.30 p.m., a woman from Gharonda in Ghansoli had come to the bridge with her two children with the intention of ending her life. When the police received information about the same, they rushed to the spot and stopped her from taking the extreme step.

"At the police station, she revealed that her husband was an alcoholic who used to torture her daily. Fed up of the torture, she decided to take the extreme step. We then called her husband to the police station and counselled both of them," an officer from Vashi police station said.

family problem and thus decided to take

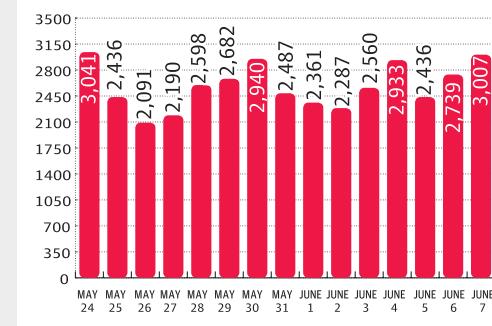
Maharashtra COVID-19 tracker

TOTAL CASES	NEW CASES	ACTIVE CASES	RECOVERED	DEATHS
85,975	3,007	43,591	39,314	3,060

DISTRICTS AFFECTED: 35

DISTRICT	CASES	DEATHS	DISTRICT	CASES	DEATHS
Mumbai	48,774	1,638	Jalna	177	3
Thane	13,014	331	Yavatmal	160	2
Pune	9,705	406	Nanded	169	7
Aurangabad	1,965	92	Sangli	188	4
Nashik	1,521	89	Latur	137	4
Raigad	1,441	55	Osmanabad	124	3
Palghar	1,485	40	Sindhudurg	113	0
Solapur	1,343	104	Buldhana	87	3
Jalgaon	1,049	109	Parbhani	78	3
Nagpur	747	11	Gondia	68	0
Alkola	778	36	Beed	55	1
Kolhapur	647	8	Gadchiroli	42	0
Satara	630	27	Nandurbar	40	4
Ratnagiri	354	10	Bhandara	39	0
Amravati	293	18	Chandrapur	32	0
Hingoli	213	0	Wardha	11	1
Dhule	238	21	Washim	10	2
Ahmednagar	203	8			

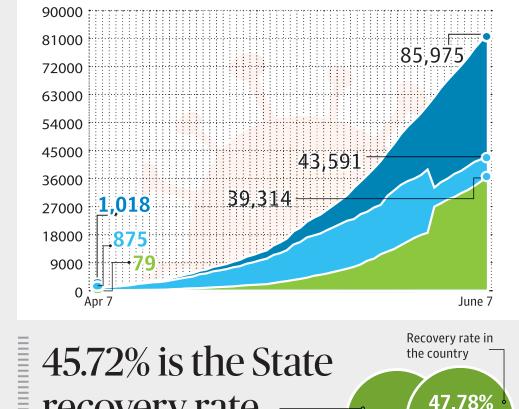
POSITIVE CASES OVER LAST 15 DAYS



1,420(47.2%) of Sunday's cases are from Mumbai



CASES TREND



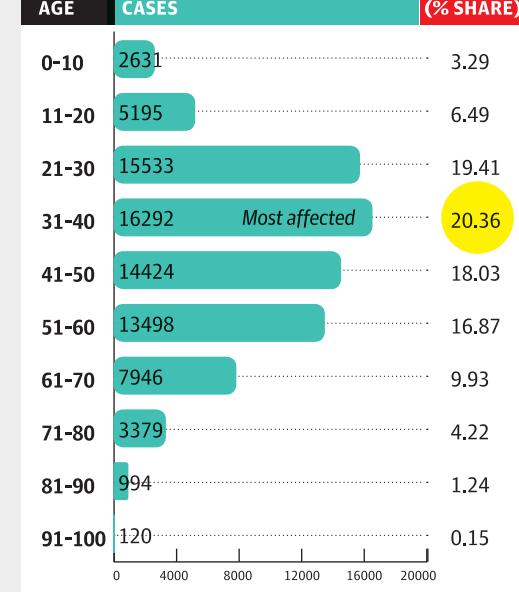
45.72% is the State recovery rate

MORTALITY RATE

Maharashtra 3.55%

India 2.79%

AFFECTED (AGE-WISE)



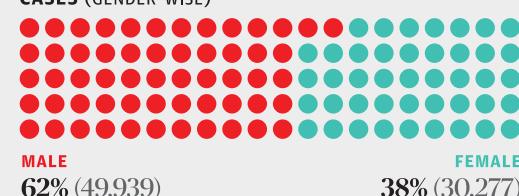
QUARANTINE NUMBERS

5,58,463 | 28,504

Home quarantine



CASES (GENDER-WISE)



DEATH (GENDER-WISE)



69% 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 26556799 / 26556806

Thane: 022 25301740

Source: Public Health Department, Maharashtra, BMC

Mumbai inches close to 50,000 mark with 1,420 new cases

61 more COVID-19 deaths in city even as total cases reach 48,774

TANVI DESHPANDE MUMBAI

Mumbai reported 1,420 new cases and 61 deaths on Sunday, on the eve of the next phase of the State government's Mission Begin Again to unlock more of the city.

The city's case tally is now 48,774 cases, and its death count is 1,638. Of the total cases, only 25,940 are active, while 21,190 patients have recovered so far.

According to the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC), of the 61 deaths reported on Sunday, 46 patients had co-morbidities. While 30 of them were in the 40-60 age group, 28 were above the age of 60, and three were under 40.

Mumbai's cases grew at 3.09% on Sunday, as compared to Saturday's rate of 3.28%. P North ward (Malad) took over Ghatkopar's N ward to have the fastest growing cases in Mumbai at 6.2%. The other wards where cases grew the most also belong to western suburbs, with R South (Kandivali) growing at 5.6% and R



Field exam: A medical team checks residents of Sonapoore Lane in Dharavi on Sunday. ■ VIJAY BATE

North (Dahisar) at 5.7%. Byculla's E ward continued to grow the slowest at 1.4%.

In terms of absolute numbers, L Ward (Kurla) became the second ward to cross the 3,000-case mark. As on June 6, it had 3,026 cases. G North is still at the top spot with 3,416 cases. Andheri East is close to the 3,000 mark, with 2,994 cases. There are now eight city wards with more than 2,400 cases each. Only the lowest four have fewer than 1,000 cases.

The city has 761 containment zones and 3,992 sealed buildings that will see necessary restrictions in place despite the unlocking of the rest of the city.

Despite claims of bringing together information of all hospital beds in Mumbai on one online platform, the BMC has not been able to achieve that yet.

"Our platform is ready but hospitals are not updating information on it. We need real-time information from

them on where a bed is available. Without that, it can lead to chaos," said a senior civic official.

Meanwhile, the BMC's recent order to hospitals to issue notices to Class IV staff to report to work within 72 hours or face dismissal has drawn ire.

Sainath Rajyadhyaksha, executive president of the Municipal Engineers' Union, said, "How can the BMC issue such blanket notices? It should first check whether the staffers are not reporting to work because they are above 50 years of age. People are also unable to report to work for lack of transportation."

115 cases in Navi Mumbai
The Navi Mumbai Municipal Corporation (NMMC) has reported 115 new cases, taking its tally to 2,886 cases. Panvel Municipal Corporation has reported 19 cases, taking its tally to 712, while Panvel rural reported three new cases, taking its total to 409.

(With inputs from Raina Assainer)

COVID-19 claims 33 police lives so far

2,562 State personnel infected till now



The police have registered more than one lakh offences against lockdown violators. ■ FILE PHOTO

Two Thane hospitals fined ₹16 lakh for violations

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA THANE

Two hospitals in Thane district designated as COVID-19 care facilities have been fined ₹1 lakh per patient for violating government regulations.

Thane deputy municipal commissioner Vishwanath Kelkar said on Sunday the hospitals were given several warnings before the fines were imposed on them under the Maharashtra COVID-19 Rules and the Epidemic Diseases Act.

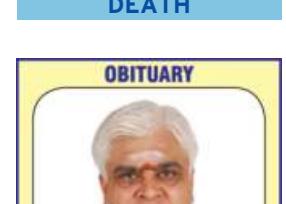
The hospitals were for critical COVID-19 patients and not asymptomatic ones or those showed mild symptoms. They also kept patients for durations longer than prescribed. They have been fined ₹1 lakh per patient, which comes to ₹13 lakh in the case of one hospital and ₹3 lakh in the other," Mr. Kelkar said.

Meanwhile, the Thane District Courts Bar Association has said courts here should start from July 1 and not on June 8. A spokesperson for the association said bail and urgent matters can be heard in the current way till June 30.

OBITUARY & REMEMBRANCE

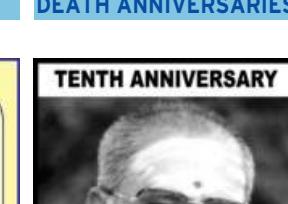
DEATH

OBITUARY



Mr. R. RAVIRACHANDRAN (68)
DGM - Canara Bank (Retd)
Passed away on 07.06.2020
Cremation on 07.06.2020
Deeply mourned by Family & Friends

TENTH ANNIVERSARY



NAMBUNGAL R. NARAYANAN
DOD - 08.06.2010
We Miss you...
Family & Friends
Ph: 044- 2433 8787
044- 2434 3775

EIGHTH ANNIVERSARY



R. PADMAVATHI
My mind still talks to you.
My heart still looks for you.
I miss you so much Padhu....
Radhakrishnan R (RK)

DEATH ANNIVERSARIES



S. SHANMUGAVADI
B.A., B.L., D.S.S.
Rtd. Asst. Commissioner of Labour, Chennai.
Fondly remembered by the FAMILY

In memory of your loved ones

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DONATE EYES - GIFT SIGHT

Pune's recovery rate exceeds 60%

District reports over 200 new cases

SHOUMOJIT BANERJEE PUNE

Despite more than 200 new COVID-19 cases reported across Pune district on Sunday, authorities said the district's recovery rate has now exceeded 60%.

Skin therapy

Locking in moisture is one of the best ways to keep your skin supple. Coimbatore-based Juicy Chemistry's Tamanu Carrier Oil is known to soothe, repair and diminish redness, scars, stretch marks and irritation. Ideal for the skin and hair, it has a luxurious and conditioning viscosity. ₹925 for 30 ml on juicychemistry.com

**Lather up**

■ Santhosh Farms in Pollachi offers homemade vetiver, sandalwood, aloe vera, papaya and lemongrass soaps made with farm-fresh coconut oil. Packed in areca nut leaf boxes, they start from ₹60 onwards. Details: 9842493273.

■ If you're up for some DIY, try Delhi-based Blend It Raw Apothecary's Ayurvedic Bath Powder. A collection of six ayurvedic powders – including kaolin clay, avarampoo, wild turmeric, lemon balm, gotu kala and tulsi – it is ₹1,490 for a unit, on blenditrawapothecary.in

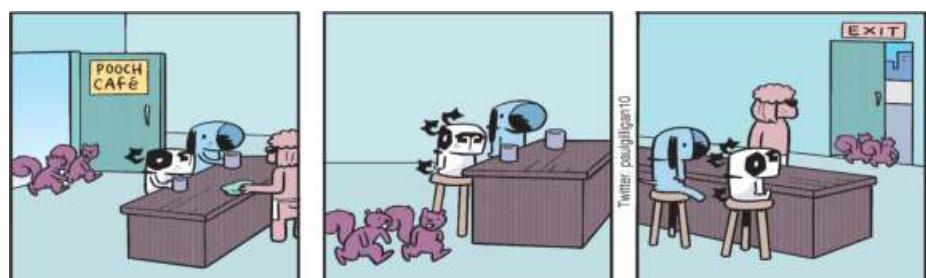


■ The market is saturated with handmade soaps and natural body scrubs, but Lucknow-based Mitti Se's green tea walnut soap blends the two. Crafted with plant-based oils, glycerine, green tea and lime, one of its surfaces is layered with walnut scrub. ₹190 for 100 gm on mittise.com

■ Vajraayu in Bengaluru also has a DIY option with amla, besan, neem and methi that comes in a zip-locked paper bag. ₹192 for 100 gm on vajraayu.com



■ You could also try the paraben and sulphate-free soap bars at Ghar Soaps. Made from neem, activated charcoal and the like, these carved variants are perfect if you like some colour and quirk. ₹600 onwards on gharsoaps.com

POOCH CAFE**HAGAR THE HORRIBLE****TIGER**

From bath salts and handmade soaps to organic shampoos and bamboo loofahs, here's our pick of natural bath products crafted by small businesses across India

**Tame that mane**

■ Chennai-based Krya's ayurvedic low-foam hair wash powder – complete with 27 natural herbs such as *bhringara*, *liquorice* and *shikakai* – address almost every issue, from hairfall to dandruff. ₹300 onwards on krya.in

■ A great option to keep your locks clean is Bare Necessities' aerosol-free Desert Dry Shampoo. Made from organic cocoa powder and cornstarch sourced from Auroville in Tamil Nadu, all you need to do is sprinkle some on your hair, lightly rub it in and comb through. ₹475 for 45 gm at barenecessities.in



■ Gloriously Handmade's Ebony Shampoo Bar specifically tends to people with dark hair – whether natural or dyed. The shampoo bars are made from *jeera*, clove, cinnamon or coffee-infused solutions, among other herbs and spices. ₹759729285

■ The hair care benefits of apple cider vinegar are much written about and New Delhi-based The Switch Fix incorporates it in its Natural ACV Hair Rinse Concentrate. Packed with lemon, lavender and spearmint oils, along with the product's star ingredient, it also has enzymes that ensure a healthy scalp. ₹350 for 100 ml on theswitchfix.co

Elevate your daily soak

SOAK

■ LESLEY SIMEON

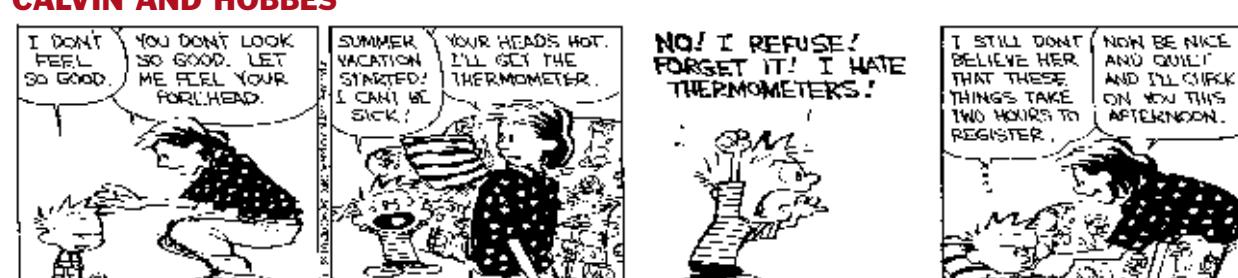
Nothing can substitute a restorative bath, especially during the pandemic with its endless sanitiser and soap routine. In *Ritual Bath*, wellness expert Deborah Hanekamp's book that launched just before the lockdown, she teaches readers to use herbs and flowers to transform the bathroom into a healing space. Taking a bath is one way of bringing tranquility and self-care to your home, she tells *Women's Wear Daily*. "Put some intention into it. Light candles, put on music that heals your soul... make it smell divine," she continues. But even if you are not one for crystal and herb cleansing rituals (like Hanekamp's celebrity clientele), here's how you can run a bath at home that feels like a spa treatment.

Looking for mindfully-made products, free of chemicals, is key. Let's

start with cold-pressed oils. Juicy Chemistry in Coimbatore has rose and grapefruit variants, whereas Earthy Sapo in Hyderabad has a baby massage oil with *kanyasara*, *gulab* and *marjistha*. Next comes soap. "Handmade ones are better, since they don't leave your hands excessively dry like ordinary soaps," says Surya D of Bengaluru-based homegrown brand, Gloriously Handmade, known for products featuring rose clay and coffee. Then there are scrubs, body butters, deodorants, facial oils and masks. Gurgaon-based Harini Sivakumar of Soapworks India (rebranded as Earth Rhythm in 2018) has them all, free of synthetic fragrance. Look for simple ingredients you don't have to travel the world for. Kokum and watermelon seeds or river bed clay are found in age-old self-care essentials like tooth powders and hair masks from Jalandhar-based Raw Beauty, operating

out of a modest home. "Our raw materials are sourced directly from farmers in and around Punjab," says the wellness brand's founder, Sunayana Walia.

This new crop of homegrown wellness brands promise to deliver the 'organic' factor and are mindful of the demands of an aware customer. They use transparency about the ingredients used, simple language and modest packaging in paper and glass containers to counter claims of imported ingredients and fancy packaging from more established brands. "I rely on a check-your-label test: the layman needs to understand what the ingredients listed on the label are. If you don't understand half of what it says, the product is not for you," says Sivakumar of Soapworks India. So here are a few indie brands to help you go natural, transform your bath experience, and save small businesses this season:

PEANUTS**CALVIN AND HOBBES****PEARLS BEFORE SWINE**

In Gujarat, religious places to reopen today

New normal for devotees: prayers in shifts and a token system to enter the shrine

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

AHMEDABAD

Temples, mosques, churches, and other places of worship outside the COVID-19 containment zones in Gujarat are planning to open their doors for devotees from Monday after over two months, while taking all precautions to check the spread of the infection.

To maintain physical distancing and avoid crowding, some of the religious places have decided to organise prayers in shifts and even start a token system to specify time slots to devotees for visits.

The famous Somnath temple in Gir Somnath district will open for local devotees from Monday, but visitors from other districts will have to first register themselves online, starting June 12, an official of the temple trust said.

Devotees have been asked to mandatorily wear face masks, get sanitised before entering the temple premises, and not bring elderly people (those above 65 years) and children (below 10 years) with them, he said. The temple will only allow priests to conduct the 'aarti' with no presence of devotees.

The Ambaji temple in Banaskantha district will open from June 12 and allow devotees to visit the place in three shifts every day, starting at 7.30 a.m. and ending at 10.15 p.m., the temple trust said in a statement. It will not allow 'aarti' or special prayers, and visitors will be given a token specifying the time for visit, to ensure they enter and leave the temple premises without crowding the place, it said.

The district administration and the temple trust have made arrangements for sanitisers and to ensure physical distancing.

Mosques and churches are also making arrangements for



The famous Somnath temple in Gir Somnath district will open for local devotees from Monday, but visitors from other districts will have to first register themselves online, starting June 12. ■ FILE PHOTO

C We will ensure physical distancing during prayers and keep sanitiser for devotees. Since people gather in large numbers during the Friday prayers, we are planning to organise prayers in shifts

ANIS DESAI
Member of Gujarat Chand Committee

ments for prayers while ensuring that physical distancing is maintained.

The historic Jama Masjid in Ahmedabad will allow Friday prayers in shifts, said Anis Desai, a member of Gujarat Chand Committee, which manages the mosque.

"We will ensure physical distancing during prayers and keep sanitiser for devotees. Since people gather in large numbers during the Friday prayers, we are planning to organise prayers in shifts," Mr. Desai said.

The St. Thomas Catholic

Church at Gandhidham in Kutch district is also making arrangements to allow people to offer prayers by following the physical distancing norms.

Only one or two devotees will be allowed to occupy each of the 80 benches during the Sunday prayer, Father Joychen Paranjatty said.

"We will follow all instructions of the government regarding this. We will open from next Sunday. Prayers will be held in shifts with a small number of people in each shift," he said.

On Saturday, Chief Minister Vijay Rupani held a video-conference with religious leaders from different communities and urged them to ensure adherence to lockdown guidelines while opening the places of worship for devotees.

Mr. Rupani asked the religious places to make arrangements of token systems for visitors so that they come at the specified time slot to avoid crowding.

ADITYA ANAND
MUMBAI

A meeting of nine major Goan temples' trusts held at Mahalsa Devasthan in Margao, Goa, on Sunday decided against opening the temples for devotees from June 8, after observing that the situation pertaining to the spread of COVID-19 was deteriorating.

This comes a day after churches and mosques in the State decided to remain closed for now. Goa had 235 active cases of COVID-19 till Sunday evening. Of these, 33 cases were reported on Sunday. As many as 30 of the new cases were from Mangor Hill in Vasco locality, which has since been declared a containment zone by the government.

Under the government's phase I of unlocking the lockdown or Unlock I, places of religious worship have been permitted to reopen from Monday. The decision against reopening temples in Goa was backed by Ramnath Devasthan, Mahalsa Devasthan, Nagesh Devasthan, Mahalaxmi Devasthan, Devki Krishna Devasthan, Kamaxi Devasthan, and Ramnath Damodar Devasthan, all affiliated to the Par-

No decision yet in Maharashtra: official

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

MUMBAI

The Maharashtra government is yet to take a decision on opening religious places for devotees as part of lockdown relaxations, an official said on Sunday.

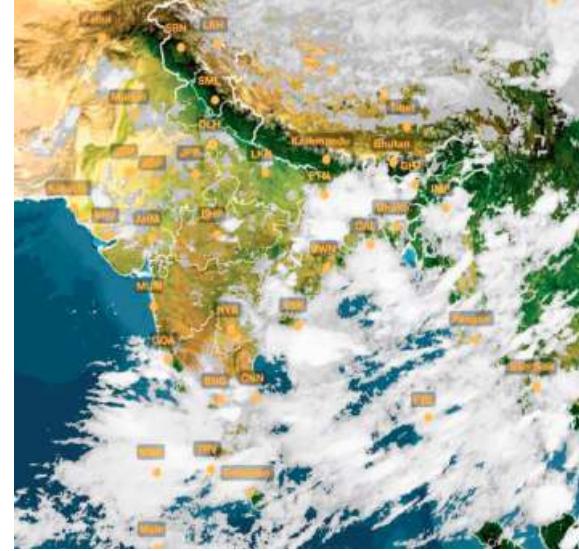
The Union Ministry of Home Affairs last week said 'Unlock-I' will be initiated from June 8 under which the lockdown, will be relaxed, including opening of shopping malls, restaurants and religious places. However, the State, while last week ex-

tended the lockdown till June 30, decided to keep religious places closed for some more period, and no fresh decision has been taken on it.

"A decision is yet to be taken on opening of temples, mosques, churches and other religious establishments for people. There has been no decision so far on allowing people to gather at such places." State's law and judiciary department secretary Rajendra Bhagwat told PTI.

WEATHER WATCH

RAINFALL, TEMPERATURE & AIR QUALITY IN SELECT METROS YESTERDAY



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

Forecast for Monday: Thunderstorm accompanied with lightning/gusty winds likely at isolated places over Andaman & Nicobar Islands, Gujarat, Rajasthan, Odisha and Madhya Pradesh. Heavy/heavy rainfall likely at isolated places over Andaman & Nicobar Islands, coastal Andhra Pradesh, Yanam and Kerala

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	16.4	33.7	25.6	Kozhikode	20.2	31.0	23.2
Ahmedabad	19.8	34.2	22.6	Kurnool	—	37.5	27.0
Aizawl	—	24.9	18.6	Lucknow	—	36.1	24.3
Allahabad	—	37.3	25.6	Madurai	—	38.7	27.2
Bengaluru	20.2	29.4	20.8	Mangalore	13	31.8	23.4
Bhopal	0.1	35.0	24.4	Mumbai	—	34.8	27.4
Bhubaneswar	—	34.4	26.2	Mysuru	—	30.9	22.0
Chandigarh	9.6	31.6	21.8	New Delhi	1.2	34.8	23.2
Chennai	—	39.0	29.6	Patna	—	35.2	25.0
Coimbatore	5.4	31.2	23.6	Port Blair	164.6	26.5	23.1
Dehradoon	2	32.3	22.2	Puducherry	—	37.8	27.5
Gangtok	7.4	22.3	15.2	Pune	0.6	32.4	22.6
Goa	19.3	32.0	23.0	Raipur	3.2	38.2	27.6
Guwahati	0.1	35.2	25.0	Ranchi	—	33.6	24.0
Hubballi	—	29.0	22.0	Shillong	7.5	25	—
Hyderabad	—	37.3	27.2	Shimla	0.1	26.4	16.0
Imphal	0.6	29.3	20.8	Srinagar	47.4	27.0	11.0
Jaipur	—	38.0	26.7	Thiruvananthapuram	30.6	31.8	23.8
Kochi	11.4	27.4	24.6	Tiruchi	37.6	37.5	25.5
Kohima	3.4	25.8	16.6	Vijayawada	—	41.5	30.0
Kolkata	—	37.0	29.2	Visakhapatnam	2	32.6	27.6

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)
Pollutants in the air you are breathing

CITIES	SO ₂	NO ₂	CO	PM _{2.5}	PM ₁₀	CODE
Ahmedabad	16	48	41	...47	...73	■■■■■
Bengaluru	10	13	11	...34	...48	■■■■■
Chennai	4	32	72	—	—	■■■■■
Delhi	1	34	94	222	137	■■■■■
Hyderabad	37	19	11	...49	101	■■■■■
Kolkata	4	10	45	45	57	■■■■■
Lucknow	4	24	56	49	—	■■■■■
Mumbai	22	22	10	...19	54	■■■■■
Pune	19	7	58	24	22	■■■■■
Visakhapatnam	6	45	24	47	90	■■■■■

In observation made at 4.00 p.m., Gwalior, Madhya Pradesh recorded an overall air quality index (AQI) score of 276, indicating moderate level of pollution. In contrast, Aizawl, Mizoram recorded a healthy AQI score of 15

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

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

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

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

PM_{2.5} & PM₁₀: Particulate matter pollution can cause irritation of the eyes, nose and throat, coughing, chest tightness and shortness of breath, reduced lung function, irregular heart beat, asthma attacks, heart attacks and premature death in people with heart or lung disease

16 years on, 4 policemen accused + in Khwaja Yunus case reinstated

14 policemen indicted, govt. sanctioned prosecution of four

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

MUMBAI

An assistant police inspector and three constables, who were suspended 16 years ago for the alleged custodial killing of Ghatkopar blast case suspect Khwaja Yunus, have been reinstated in service by the Mumbai Police, an official said on Sunday.

Besides the BJP and the Congress, the 182-member Assembly also comprises two MLAs of the Bharatiya Tribal Party, one MLA of the NCP, and an Independent legislator, Jignesh Mevani.

The effective strength of the House, however, stands at 172 as of now as 10 seats are currently vacant – two due to court cases and the rest because of resignations.

The four policemen, who were suspended in 2004, are facing trial on various charges, including murder and destruction of evidence, in the Yunus case.

Following their reinstatement on Friday, assistant police inspector Sachin Vaze and constables Rajendra Tiwari, Sunil Desai resumed duty in the local arms unit on Saturday, while constable Rajaram Nikam was

reinstated in the motor vehicles department, a police official said.

Mr. Vaze, a 1990 batch police officer and an encounter specialist, was arrested in 2004 and charged in the alleged custodial killing case for concealment of facts.

He resigned from the police force in November 2007. But, his resignation was rejected pending inquiry against him, the official said.

Yunus (27), a native of Parbhani resident, was an engineer and used to work in Dubai. He was detained soon after the December 2002 Ghatkopar bomb blast case.

While the police claimed Yunus escaped when he was being taken to Auranga-

bad for questioning, a Criminal Investigation Department inquiry ordered by the Bombay High court on a petition filed by his father earlier revealed he had died in police custody.

The inquiry had indicted 14 policemen, but the government sanctioned prosecution of only four – Mr. Vaze, Mr. Tiwari, Mr. Nikam and Mr. Desai – who are facing charges of murder, voluntarily causing grievous hurt to extort confession, fabricating evidence, and criminal conspiracy in the case.

A prosecution witness earlier told a sessions court that Yunus was stripped, and beaten on chest and abdomen with a belt in a lock-up.

Timely wage payment among major factors, says minister

SIDHARTH YADAV
BHOPAL

Continuing work during the lockdown, timely wage payments, and willingness of workers were credited for Chhattisgarh achieving 37% of the yearly target within two months under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), the highest for any State in the period, Panchayat and Rural Development Minister T.S. Singh Deo said on Saturday.

The Union Rural Development Ministry had set for the State a target to create 288.14 lakh projected persondays in April and May, under the MGNREGA, of which it has generated 503.37 lakh persondays, 175% more than the target. As a result, it has been

able to cover 37% of the financial year's target of creating 1,350 lakh persondays.

"The scheme has helped pump money into the rural economy during the lockdown," Mr. Deo told *The Hindu*. "Agricultural activity will be least affected by the COVID-19 pandemic as there is no issue of plants shutting or unavailability of labour. And the MGNREGA component will put money straight in the hands of households."

Mr. Deo pointed out that as urban business centres closed during the lockdown, more number of people returned to villages, needing some kind of work. "So, we were able to be there for them when they needed us."

Second to Maharashtra
So far, the State has provided 100 days of employment to 1,996 families, the most only after Maharashtra. As Chhattisgarh has allowed more than one member of a family to work on a job card, Bijapur



Upper hand

The battle for Rajya Sabha control is crucial for the BJP to push its agenda without resistance

The BJP won two consecutive majorities in the Lok Sabha but still stands short of one in the Rajya Sabha. But it is, along with its partners, making a gradual upward climb, though the halfway mark is still some distance away. A string of losses in State elections in recent years slowed down its pursuit and there are more State polls in the near future that will influence its fortunes. The BJP is currently the single largest party in the Rajya Sabha with 75 members. Together with its allies, including the nominated and independent members, the tally hovers around 102 in a house of 245. The Congress is perhaps at its lowest tally, with 39 members. The Congress and its friendly parties count to 73, which includes Left parties (6), TMC (13), SP (8), NCP (4) and one each of JD (S), IUML and Kerala Congress (Mani). These numbers are fluid as parties have hopped sides depending on issues. Another cohort of parties that largely favour the ruling dispensation include the Biju Janata Dal, Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP), TDP and TRS. On June 19, elections will take place for 24 Rajya Sabha seats – only part of existing vacancies – across 10 States, and the ruling party appears to be on an overdrive to maximise its numbers.

The lack of a majority in the Rajya Sabha was considered a hindrance for the BJP in the first term, particularly for economic reforms. The party devised a dubious route to bypass the Upper House in lawmaking by arbitrarily labelling bills as money bills that need approval only by the Lok Sabha. The constitutional validity of this blatant approach was challenged in the Supreme Court, where the case is now lingering. The BJP has managed to muster the numbers in the Rajya Sabha for controversial laws that advance its social and political agenda in its second term. Last July, the Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Marriage) Bill was passed despite opposition to some of the provisions from NDA allies, the JD(U) and AIADMK. The Triple Talaq Bill as it is popularly known, sailed through as parties such as the BSP conveniently went missing during the vote. The government could also get the numbers to pass the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill. The BJP has been relentlessly chiselling away at the Opposition ranks, meanwhile. On August 5 last year, as the Centre moved the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Act, Congress chief whip Bhupaneshwar Kalita was nowhere to be seen. He resigned and has since found his way back to the Rajya Sabha on the BJP ticket. The TDP lost four of its six members and Samajwadi Party, three over the last year. The BJP also has a younger bench in the house of the elders compared to the Congress. It is not that the lack of a majority has stopped the BJP from doing what it was determined to. Still, the party is leaving no stone unturned to win a majority for itself and partners.

Profit, not profiteering

States have done well to step in to regulate charges for COVID-19 care in private hospitals

The role of the state as a big brother is problematic, and yet only a vigilant, just state can temper the avaricious excesses in the society it governs. The move by certain States to regulate hospital fees charged in the private sector for COVID-19 care falls square in this category. Bombarded with reports about exorbitant bills being raised in the private sector for hospital care of persons who tested positive for COVID-19, a few States decided to get involved, rightly so, and set a cap on the tariff that can be charged by private hospitals. In some instances, the Indian Medical Association also prayed for intervention by the government to regulate this. Maharashtra was the first to fix a tariff, followed by Gujarat and Tamil Nadu, three of the States seeing a high number of COVID-19 infections. For the initial part of the epidemic, it was the State that was the primary testing agent and care giver, for all COVID-19 cases. At that stage, few private hospitals, if any, were in the front line of the battle. All tests were initially done by the government, and anyone who tested positive was shifted to a government hospital for isolation and treatment. However, as the number of cases increased, naturally calling all hands to the deck meant the significant involvement of the private sector. Complaints of overcharging followed. Media reports revealed differential rates across the country, but costs were upwards of ₹7 lakh for a minimum 14-day period of hospitalisation, even for mildly symptomatic or asymptomatic patients. If intensive care unit care is warranted, then the rates would be much higher.

The state's intervention could not have been delayed any further. In fact, in retrospect, the strategy employed by the Central government to cap the price of tests for COVID-19 at ₹4,500 in private labs could have been used to regulate private hospitals' charges too. Hospitals have been graded into categories, depending on facilities provided, with reasonable rates fixed per day for each category. ICU rates are naturally higher, and States have specified that private hospitals should follow the tariff for beds or they could be charged for violations. Making it a participatory process, the private sector was also co-opted into discussions on tariff. Tamil Nadu has also fixed a separate tariff for beneficiaries under the Chief Minister's Comprehensive Health Insurance Scheme (now subsumed under the Central Insurance scheme) making it easy for patients from lower income groups to access private care treatments for COVID-19. It has also re-fixed the rate for testing in a private lab at ₹3,000 per test. Further watchfulness should continue on the part of the State, but shorn of high-handedness. Staying alive to the hardships of its people, it must ensure that the harsh times are not further exacerbated by profiteering.

In Persian Gulf littoral, cooperative security is key

India's interests would be best served if stability in the region is ensured this way



HAMID ANSARI

The United Nations defines this body of water as the Persian Gulf. The lands around it are shared by eight countries (Bahrain, Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates), all members of the UN. There is a commonality of interest among them in being major producers of crude oil and natural gas, and thereby contributing critically to the global economy and to their own prosperity. This has added to their geopolitical significance. At the same time, turbulence has often characterised their *inter se* political relations.

A framework

For eight decades prior to 1970, this body of water was a closely guarded British lake, administered in good measure by imperial civil servants from India. When that era ended, regional players sought to assert themselves. Imperatives of rivalry and cooperation became evident and, as a United States State Department report put it in 1973, 'The upshot of all these cross currents is that the logic of Saudi-Iranian cooperation is being undercut by psychological, nationalistic, and prestige factors, which are likely to persist for a long time.' The Nixon and the Carter Doctrines were the logical outcome to ensure American hegemony. An early effort for collective security, attempted in a conference in Muscat in 1975, was thwarted by Baathist Iraq. The Iranian Revolution put an end to the Twin Pillar approach and disturbed the strategic balance. The Iraq-Iran War enhanced U.S. interests and role. Many moons and much bloodshed later, it was left to the Security Council through Resolution 598 (1987) to explore 'measures to en-

hance the security and stability in the region'.

Any framework for stability and security thus needs to answer a set of questions: security for whom, by whom, against whom, for what purpose? Is the requirement in local, regional or global terms? Does it require an extra-regional agency? Given the historical context, one recalls a Saudi scholar's remark in the 1990s that 'Gulf regional security was an external issue long before it was an issue among the Gulf States themselves.'

The essential ingredients of such a framework would thus be to ensure: conditions of peace and stability in individual littoral states; freedom to all states of the Gulf littoral to exploit their hydrocarbon and other natural resources and export them; freedom of commercial shipping in international waters of the Persian Gulf; freedom of access to, and outlet from, Gulf waters through the Strait of Hormuz; prevention of conflict that may impinge on the freedom of trade and shipping and; prevention of emergence of conditions that may impinge on any of these considerations. Could such a framework be self-sustaining or require external guarantees for its operational success? If the latter, what should its parameters be?

The GCC and the U.S. link

The past two decades have revaluated William Fulbright's observation that statesmen often confuse great power with total power and great responsibility with total responsibility. The war in Iraq and its aftermath testify to it. The U.S. effort to 'contain' the Iranian revolutionary forces, supplemented by the effort of the Arab states of the littoral (except Iraq) through the instrumentality of the Gulf Cooperation Council, or GCC (May 1981), to coordinate, cooperate and integrate to 'serve the sublime objectives of the Arab Nation' initially met with success in some functional fields and a lack of it in its wider objectives.

In the meantime, geopolitical

GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCKPHOTO



factors and conflicts elsewhere in the West Asian region – Yemen, Syria, Libya – aggravated global and regional relationships and hampered a *modus vivendi* in U.S.-Iran relations that was to be premised on the multilateral agreement on Iran's nuclear programme agreed to by western powers and the Obama Administration but disowned by U.S. President Donald Trump whose strident policies have taken the region to the brink of an armed conflict.

Perceptions of declining U.S.

commitment to sub-regional security have been articulated in recent months amid hints of changing priorities. This is reported to have caused disquiet in some, perhaps all, members of the GCC, the hub of whose security concern remains pivoted on an Iranian threat (political and ideological rather than territorial) and an American insurance to deter it based on a convergence of interests in which oil, trade, arms purchases, etc have a role along with wider U.S. regional and global determinants.

An evolving transformation

It is evident that a common GCC threat perception has not evolved over time and has been hampered by the emergence of conflicting tactical and strategic interests and subjective considerations. The current divisions within the organisation are therefore here to stay. These have been aggravated by the global economic crisis, the immediate and longer term impact of COVID-19 on regional economies, the problems in the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), and the decline in oil prices.

One credible assessment done recently suggests that in the

emerging shape of the region, Saudi Arabia is a fading power, UAE, Qatar and Iran are emerging as the new regional leaders and Oman and Iraq will have to struggle to retain their sovereign identities. The GCC is effectively ended, and OPEC is becoming irrelevant as oil policy moves to a tripartite global condominium. None of this will necessarily happen overnight and external intervention could interfere in unexpected ways ... But it is fair to say that the Persian Gulf as we have known for at least three generations is in the midst of a fundamental transformation.'

With the Arab League entombed and the GCC on life-support system, the Arab states of this sub-region are left to individual devices to explore working arrangements with Iraq and Iran. The imperatives for these are different but movement on both is discernible. With Iran in particular and notwithstanding the animosities of the past, pragmatic approaches of recent months seem to bear fruit. Oman has always kept its lines of communication with Iran open; Kuwait and Qatar had done likewise but in a quieter vein, and now the UAE has initiated pragmatic arrangements. These could set the stage for a wider dialogue. Both Iran and the GCC states would benefit from a formal commitment to an arrangement incorporating the six points listed above; so would every outside nation that has trading and economic interests in the Gulf. This could be sanctified by a global convention.

The relationship with Iran, complex at all times and more so recently on account of overt American pressure, has economic potential and geopolitical relevance on account of its actual or alleged role in Pakistan and Afghanistan. Iran also neighbours Turkey and some countries of Central Asia, the Caucasus and the Caspian Sea region. Its size, politico-technological potential and economic resources, cannot be wished away, regionally and globally, but can be harvested for wider good.

India has eschewed involvement in local or regional disputes.

Indian interests do not entail power projection; they necessitate in their totality, peace and regional stability, freedom of navigation and access to the region's markets in terms of trade, technology and manpower resources. Indian interests would be best served if this stability is ensured through cooperative security since the alternative – of competitive security options – cannot ensure durable peace.

Hamid Ansari is the former Vice President of India, 2007-2017

Paging the private sector in the COVID fight

The pandemic is a chance to bring in structural changes in the health sector and rejuvenate private partnerships



VIJAYASHREE YELLAPPA &
A. VENKAT RAMAN

The COVID-19 pandemic is unlikely to disappear in the immediate future. Managing the epidemic and ensuring a full complement of health care will require extraordinary resources and investment. India's public health sector has already spread itself thin in tackling the pandemic. This unprecedented crisis has highlighted the critical need to mobilise available resources in public sector, and the private sector in particular.

However, the current strategies to involve the private sector in combating the infectious disease are shrouded in ambiguity. There are no clear policy guidelines to use private sector resources that could complement public sector efforts, and how the payments for their services made. Having been directed to suspend most of its services and be ready to manage COVID-19 cases (none forthcoming), the private sector is gasping for cash flows. Countries that have had a policy-based strategic relationship with the private sector seem to have performed well in controlling this pandemic. Instead of 'arm twisting' the private sector, there is a need to formulate a stable policy-based strategy to get

the private sector on board.

The pandemic has provided India an opportunity to restructure the strategies of engaging the private sector in realising public health goals. The recent economic package announced for the health sector, of around ₹2.1 lakh crore, envisions strengthening the health infrastructure in the immediate future. This is an opportunity to bring in structural changes in the health sector to rejuvenate partnerships with the private sector.

Despite governments trying to scale-up testing capacity in the country, there is still a long way to go for mass scale testing. We propose the following options to scale up testing capacity:

Option 1: An accredited private laboratory can be contracted to be co-located in a public health facility preferably in tier-II/tier-III public hospitals. States that already have private laboratories under a public-private partnership (PPP) contract can be asked to add COVID-19 tests. The government may procure test kits and the private sector could charge a service fee from the government.

Option 2: Suspect cases can be issued vouchers for testing at any empanelled private laboratories. E-vouchers generated by tele-health call centres can subse-



quently be reimbursed by the go-

vernment.

Option 3: A mobile sample collection and testing facility can be operated by a private entity in high density clusters; it can also be used as a fever clinic. This arrangement can be under the hub-spoke principle. The cost of tests, key performance indicators and payment system should be worked out in the purchase contract.

Hospital infrastructure

Hospitalisation of COVID-19 cases cannot be restricted to hospitals in major cities alone. Improving the infrastructure and capacity in tier II and tier III cities in collaboration with the private sector is critical. The latest announcement to increase viability gap funding to 30% is bound to ease the capex pressure for the private sector. The options can be:

Option 1: A private contractor could be hired to refurbish an existing ward in a public hospital into an intensive care unit (ICU) ward with additional beds and equipment and handover the refurbished ward to the public authority. Under this turnkey project, an ICU ward could be made available within a short time.

Option 2: In a scenario where the district hospital does not have staff to operate an ICU ward (option 1), a private hospital partner could be contracted to provide staff and operate the ICU ward. Alternatively, a private hospital partner can refurbish, operate and later transfer the ICU ward. Though the model takes more time, the operator can convert the facility into any other speciality ward in the future. The Centre can provide viability gap funding to the State to support the development of such a facility.

Option 3: The government can refer patients to empanelled private COVID-19 hospitals, at a fixed package rate. This kind of strategic purchasing or insurance reimbursement (say under the Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana) requires clear policy directions, a robust referral system, agreement on tariffs, and a quick reimbursement mechanism. The current government tariffs do not seem to evoke interest from the private sector.

Supply chain

The upsurge in the demand for test kits, ventilators, and other biomedical supplies cannot be met by current manufacturers or supply chain sources. Repurposing through alternate sources indigenously is the need of the hour. A plethora of innovations and prototypes need government laboratories to test in quick time, approve and grant a licence for production which includes patenting. Besides facilitating quick credit access for

manufacturing, the government may also give buy back guarantees and facilitate the supply chain channels.

Central intelligence system

An IT system with artificial intelligence capability should be the backbone of supporting all public and private sector efforts in combating COVID-19. The intelligence system should seamlessly help in case identification, contact tracing, managing a tele-health centre, generating e-vouchers, authorising tests, managing referrals for isolation and hospitalisation in the private sector, payment, follow-up, etc. IT behemoths in India should be roped in to configure an integrated system to detect any unusual pattern in terms of an increase in numbers.

The resources dedicated to fighting the COVID-19 pandemic have the potential to create a good health infrastructure and strengthen health systems eventually. However, these initiatives require quick policy formulation followed by guidelines for contracting/purchasing, payments, defining standards, supply chain, strengthening procurement, etc. A group of inter-disciplinary experts to guide in institutionalising the private partnership arrangements would go a long way.

Dr. Vijayashree Yellappa is fellow at NITI Aayog and senior specialist, Health System Transformation Platform, and Prof. A. Venkat Raman, FMS, Delhi University. With inputs by Sonjoy Saha, Adviser, PAMD/PPP Cell, NITI Aayog

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.

India's CFR
The Editorial (*The Hindu*, June 4), "Curves and recoveries", cited "2.79%" as India's "case-fatality rate" (CFR). The graphic ("How India fares in COVID-19 deaths") accompanying a report, "Maharashtra reports highest fatality surge with 139 deaths" (June 6), said India's CFR is 2.8% ("hovering around the 3% mark") as against the world average of 5.9%. These have resulted from erroneous calculations, taking cumulative total deaths on

a particular day as numerator and cumulative total infections on the same day as denominator. On June 4, total deaths were 6,363 and the total infected were 2,26,713, for the ratio of 2.8%. This ratio is not CFR. The total number, 226,713, are not all "cases" (COVID-19) but "coronavirus infections" (lab-confirmed); hence the derived rate will be Infection-fatality rate (IFR), not CFR. IFR is a fraction of CFR, since cases are a fraction of infections.

Moreover, COVID-19 patients do not die the day they are diagnosed, but two to three weeks later, after completion of incubation period and after the disease becomes severe and fatal. Therefore, the denominator for cumulative deaths on June 4 ought to be total infected 23 weeks earlier – during May 14 to 21. The total during those eight days was 791,184, for a daily average of 98,898. So the current IFR is 6,363/98,898 = 6.43%. True, our infections include some COVID-19 patients

tested *de novo*, but we do not have those numbers. The majority tested prior to mid-May were for infection control through contact tracing. Therefore, the 6.43% is predominantly IFR, but also CFR in a minority of the total. Globally, IFR is about 1-3%; our death rate is higher than the global average. India's CFR is certainly much higher than 6.43%, but how much higher cannot be stated with accuracy and confidence.

D. T. JACOB JOHN,
Vellore, Tamil Nadu

Virus count

India was way down in the world tally during the first lockdown and it is distressing to note the report, "India's COVID-19 tally fifth highest in the world" (Page 1, June 7) Despite long lockdowns and enforcement of stipulated norms such as distancing and wearing masks, it should be analysed how

CORRECTIONS & CLARIFICATIONS:
The reference to Attorney-General of India in the Editorial page article titled "Beyond the legal counsel's predicament" (June 6, 2020) should be corrected to Attorney-General for India.

The Readers' Editor's office can be contacted by Telephone: +91-44-28418297/28576300; E-mail: readerseditor@thehindu.co.in

and what is going wrong with the adopted strategies. In the midst of the disease count, I wonder whether it is wise to unlock places of worship as going by the present situation, it appears that COVID-19 will be with us for quite a while.

D. SETHURAMAN,
Chennai



Addressing the elephant in the room

While there is outrage over the death of an elephant, there are no protests against environmental destruction



TARSH THEKAEKARA



"It's unfortunate that an action aimed at killing an animal that is classified 'least concern' ended up killing an endangered species." The elephant stands in the Velliyar river in Palakkad district, Kerala, moments before it died. ▶ AP

The news last week about a pregnant elephant having her mouth blown caused outrage on social media. It's impossible not to empathise with the pain of the elephant, which stood impassively in a river and died a slow death. But the wide narrative about the death of humanity is oversimplified. While people are demonising the farmer responsible for the incident, it is important to note that the elephant was an unintended target. Most crackers are aimed at wild boar that destroy small farmers' crop. A major failing of conservation in India is that the needs of farmers and wild animals do not go hand in hand.

Problems with the narrative

With the absence of large predators outside forests and the huge availability of easily accessible food crops, deer, monkeys, boar and other species inevitably fill this space. In almost all developed nations these species are kept in control so they don't destroy large crop areas. In less developed countries, local people take matters into their own hands. Studies show this "reciprocity" – boars eating crops, people eating boar – is what allows farmers tolerate these otherwise problematic animals. India does not allow rural people to hunt animals, but neither does the government cull animals regularly despite their numbers shooting up.

While the government has the provision to declare overabundant animals "vermin", and cull them under the Wildlife Protection Act, it very rarely does this. Vocal urban wildlife activist groups generally create a social media storm when such decisions are taken and challenge the order in court. These groups have no empathy for the farmers who struggle to make their ends meet while growing food for all of us. Kerala had declared boar "vermin", but very few have been killed over the years.

Given the widespread destruction of crop by these animals, farmers urgently need a safety net. Compensation schemes are one part of the solution,

but in India this is always only a fraction of the market value of the crop, which is already precariously low. Poor farmers spend a lot of time navigating bureaucratic processes to get it. And there is no end to this process – some animal numbers just keep going up, linked to the availability of agricultural food crops, and the government cannot sustain an exponential growth in compensation.

Second, this incident is far from new. The start of the monsoon is when animals move into human habitation more, partly on account of jackfruit and other crops/fruits. Incidents like this take place as it is notoriously hard to identify the culprits, since the event occurs much before the injured elephants are found. While there are dozens of calls to charge the culprits, it is far from easy for the forest department and police to do this.

The third problem with the narrative around this incident is that all humans are grouped together. While some people are indeed over-exploiting the planet, everyone is far from being equally culpable for the ecological disaster that we are now in. Modern, developed, urban humans are in fact disproportionately responsible since we consume infinitely more resources. It is our greed that has destroyed vast tracts of forests and thousands of elephants and other animals over the last few decades. The poor farmer who inadvertently kills one elephant in an attempt to feed us while making enough money for himself is much less responsible.

If arresting the person responsible is not going to be the solution, what can we do? This is best answered at

two levels: one, how do we make sure that elephants don't die in this way, and two, how do we reduce negative human-elephant interactions?

The first problem is relatively simpler to solve: we should control the population of wild boar to minimise the impact they have on farmers. This is untenable to most people, since conservation in India is arguably mixed up with animal rights. Boars are classified "least concern", and are in absolutely no danger of going extinct. If they are causing the death of much more threatened species like elephants, that gives us all the more reason to control their numbers. The modalities of this have to be worked out carefully to ensure there is no over-hunting and local extinction in some areas that have governance or enforcement problems. But the inability to enforce rules should not be used as an excuse for not taking decisive action about the expanding boar population.

What can we do about the problem of elephants destroying crops, damaging property and killing people in accidental encounters? The modern conservation movement aims to separate human and wildlife spaces. When there is an overlap, there is a mistaken assumption that "conflict" is inevitable. This is arguably at odds with the reality in India, where the majority of animal range is outside protected areas. For elephants only about 25% of their range is within protected areas. The extent of distribution of other species is not even fully known. One study in central India by Majgaonkar and others found that only 2.6% of the range of leopards, hyenas and wolves in cen-

tral India was within protected areas. So animals and people, particularly elephants, have always been interacting with each other. While there have always been problems, most interactions are peaceful, and there is a deep cultural tolerance not found in other parts of the world. However, as animals and human numbers grow and there is more pressure on land, the challenges of living together will also increase.

The way forward

At a policy level, a good starting point would be to reorient the forest department to do away with the wildlife-territorial dichotomy of management that currently exists, especially since nobody has managed to inform animals that they are only allowed to stay in wildlife divisions. Beyond that there are no universal solutions. Solutions vary based on the context, the kinds of crops grown, density of people, socio-economic status, etc. Farmers should be empowered and subsidised to better protect their land rather than wait for compensation or be forced to resort to these extreme, illegal measures out of desperation.

India has done well in saving nature given its high population density. But as it continues to develop, there is going to be huge pressure on the natural world. While it is heartbreaking to see everyone get upset about the death of the elephant, the hope is that there will also be large-scale protests about the large-scale destruction of the environment. The National Board for Wildlife and the Forest Advisory Committee are meant to scrutinise and minimise the large-scale diversion of forest land for development projects, but they have been reduced to rubber-stamping bodies. Even a coal mine inside an elephant reserve in Assam was recently cleared. The government is easing up environmental clearances and opening up forests for destruction to boost a post-COVID economy. When industrialists like Ratan Tata, who are angry and easily condemn the farmer, also start to protest about these bigger concerns on Twitter, we can pat ourselves on the back for being a truly environmentally conscious society.

Tarsh Thekaekara is a Post Doctoral Fellow at the National Centre for Biological Sciences

FROM THE READERS' EDITOR

Some lines are sacrosanct

Providing space for diverse opinions does not mean providing space for hate speech or the excesses of the state



A.S. PANNEERSELVAN

realm of acceptability, representing dangerous commentary in an explosive moment that should not have found a home in The Times, even as a counterpoint to our own institutional view." He promised to host an employee town hall to discuss a host of questions, including about the op-ed.

Limits to diversity of opinions

Mr. Mukundarajan wrote: "I suggest that The Hindu should emulate the NYT and provide space to right-of-centre political views. Except for solitary pieces by the right, The Hindu's columns are monopolised by left-leaning commentators and writers. Take the case of the Citizenship (Amendment) Act. The paper gave disproportionate coverage to anti-CAA protests and opinion pieces ignoring the sentiments of large sections of society that supported the CAA." His primary argument was that readers should listen to what the "other side" has to say.

The editorial values of the owning company of this newspaper are enshrined in a public document which clearly states that the company must "endeavour to provide in its publications a fair and balanced coverage of competing interests, and to offer the readers diverse, reasonable viewpoints, subject to its editorial judgment". While it is a policy to accommodate diverse opinions, including those that are critical of the newspaper's editorial stand, it would be a dereliction of duty if the editors chose to publish articles that fan bigotry and rupture our social fabric.

One of the criticisms against the media in the last decade is that in the name of providing space for contentious ideas, it has normalised hate. A responsible news organisation understands the crucial difference between editorial judgment and censorship. No article should be published simply because it espouses an opposite viewpoint. Every article, irrespective of its political or ideological affinity, should pass some crucial editorial tests. The questions editors ask are: Does the article normalise hate? Does it demonise the other? Does it weaken the institutional mechanism of checks and balances? Is it based on facts? Media scholars have argued for decades that space for diverse opinions does not mean space for hate speech or the excesses of the state.

Writing that tramples on people's democratic rights, yearnings and aspirations, and refuses to respect the dignity of every citizen, cannot invoke the idea of diversity to find a dignified space in a newspaper.

readerseditor@thehindu.co.in

Swarms of extremism

We need compassionate, thinking and inclusive locusts rather than swarms of political locusts

T. R. RAGHUNANDAN

As if the COVID-19 crisis were not enough, we now have swarms of locusts invading our lands. Clouds of locusts have overrun western India. As with COVID-19, country borders and barriers put up by proud sovereign nations have been crossed without difficulty, as the locusts have travelled from Africa to South Asia.

Swarm intelligence
Are locusts intelligent? Individual locusts are not. However, their swarms are swift, focused, responsive to stimuli and dangerously effective in their depredations. Biologists call this phenomenon 'swarm intelligence', where the individuals that make up a colony of living creatures are singularly unintelligent and are driven by programmed instinct, but their collective actions make their entire colony intelligent as an entity by itself. Swarm intelligence is common amongst insects; bees, ants and locusts demonstrate it amply. Yet, it is not unknown amongst higher animals as well. Migrating birds and shoals of fish display high degrees of swarm intelligence too.

How does swarm intelligence work? An important point to note is that they are leaderless. A queen bee is not a royal in our human sense; she is just a vast progeny-producing machine. It is fascinating to see how a shoal of fish, without a 'king' or 'queen' fish, when attacked at one flank by a predator, almost instantly displays an avoidance reaction.

Is there any political future for the critical, thinking mind then? At first sight, liberals who are ruggedly individualistic are especially unsuited for being a part of any swarm. They reject binary communications, and see their proximate supporters as competitors rather than as part of a larger, coordinated order. Yet leaderless movements are not unknown in the liberal, freedom-loving world either. Think Hong Kong, the Arab Spring, and you have the elements of swarm intelligence backing the flowering and upscaling of pro-freedom movements. Eliminating political locusts is neither practical nor desirable. What we need are more compassionate, thinking and inclusive locusts.

cial intelligence. If the human brain was considered a colony of independently alive neuron cells, then it can be imagined that all its nuanced thought emerges from simple, binary synapse-mediated conversations between individual neurons. The atomisation of complex thinking as emerging from binary signals also lies at the foundation of computer science.

So, what does all this have to do with the peculiar effectiveness of extremist political movements, whether of the right or of the left? They combine swarm intelligence with the more conventional leadership models shown by higher-level animals. We see all around us, for example, the resurgence of powerful right-wing movements, all fuelled by leaders who provide the focus of attention, then upscaled by swarms of followers, engaged in binary conversations. A leader signals something, whether it is the need to distort history, create a false sense of assurance in a faltering economy, fuel hate against somebody, or signal success when strategies fail. From then on, the swarms take over the creating of simple messages, fake news, sloganising and hate. Individuals down the ladder, shorn of individual capabilities for critical thinking, share messages, amplify them and make hashtags trend.

Is there any political future for the critical, thinking mind then? At first sight, liberals who are ruggedly individualistic are especially unsuited for being a part of any swarm. They reject binary communications, and see their proximate supporters as competitors rather than as part of a larger, coordinated order. Yet leaderless movements are not unknown in the liberal, freedom-loving world either. Think Hong Kong, the Arab Spring, and you have the elements of swarm intelligence backing the flowering and upscaling of pro-freedom movements. Eliminating political locusts is neither practical nor desirable. What we need are more compassionate, thinking and inclusive locusts.

T. R. Raghunandan is former Secretary, Rural Development and Panchayat Raj, Karnataka, and former Joint Secretary, Ministry of Panchayat Raj, Government of India



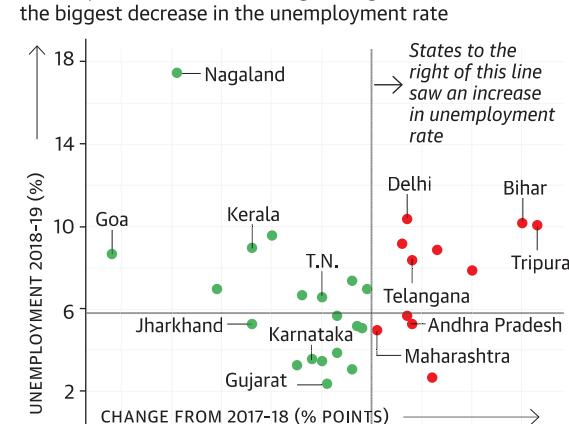
DATA POINT

Marginal gains

SLIGHT RISE The unemployment rate recorded a marginal decrease of 0.3% points in 2018-19 from 2017-18. The decrease in rural areas was higher than in urban areas

Year	Rural	Urban	Total
2018-19	5%	7.7%	5.8%
2017-18	5.3%	7.8%	6.1%

STATES OF UNEMPLOYMENT The chart plots the unemployment rate in 2018-19 against the change from 2017-18 across States. The rate increased in 11 States/UTs with Tripura and Bihar recording the highest rise. Goa saw the biggest decrease in the unemployment rate

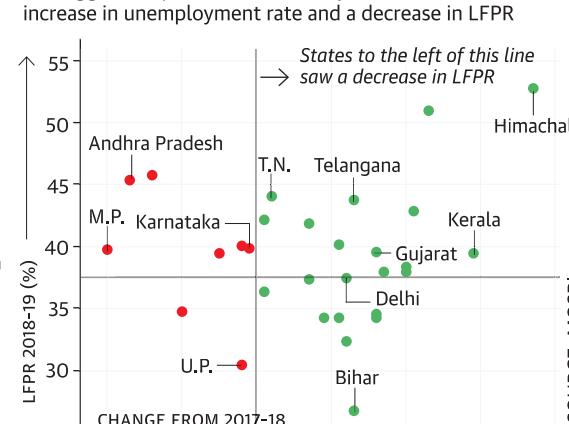


In A.P., fewer people were actively searching for jobs in 2018-19 (lower LFPR) compared to 2017-18. And of them, more people did not find jobs than before (higher unemployment)

PARTICIPATION IMPROVES The LFPR increased by 0.6% points in the period. Again, the increase was higher in rural areas, while urban areas recorded a slight growth

Year	Rural	Urban	Total
2018-19	37.7%	36.9%	37.5%
2017-18	37%	36.8%	36.9%

PARTICIPATION ACROSS STATES The chart plots the LFPR in 2018-19 against the change from 2017-18. LFPR decreased in eight States with M.P. and A.P. recording the biggest drops. A.P. was the only State which saw an increase in unemployment rate and a decrease in LFPR



These marginal gains in 2019 were nullified by the COVID-19 lockdown in 2020. According to the CMIE, the unemployment rate shot up to 23.5% in April 2020

The Archives

FROM THE ARCHIVES

FIFTY YEARS AGO JUNE 8, 1970

When man plays god

From Mendel who a century ago formulated his famous laws of heredity to Khorana who has just succeeded in producing a synthetic gene, the biochemical unit of inheritance is a long and exciting story. But the first, major breakthrough was achieved only in the past decade with the discovery and isolation of the mysterious D.N.A. (deoxyribonucleic acid) and R.N.A. (ribonucleic acid), the basic substances in the living cell, respectively carrying the predestined pattern of life (or the genetic code) and the means of its communication to final expression. The remarkable achievement of the team of scientists of the Wisconsin University, headed by Dr. H. G. Khorana, takes these probes into the very nature of life a big step forward. Whether it will also bring within man's grasp, in the foreseeable future, the means of tinkering with the genetic code to alter his very being to desired ends is too soon to say. And yet such possibilities of genetic engineering, thrown open by the virtuoso Khorana performance, can be both exciting and frightening.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO JUNE 8, 1920

Indians in the F.M.S.

(From an editorial)

A new and purified imperialism is said to have arisen from the flames of the war, but so far as one can judge from the propagandists of the new cult, full and honourable treatment of the Indian is not among its beatitudes. In spite of vehement assertions to the contrary, the fact still remains that the Imperialist's vision gives primacy to the white man and only a secondary place to the Indian. We have already seen how in Africa the Indo-European problem has simplified itself to a conflict between the will to remain and the wish to eject. In the Federated Malay States, on account of the variety and disproportion among the peoples, the problem does not appear to have developed into a question of existence. But the Indian there is the recipient of a sort of treatment which in essence reflects the same temper as the European shows elsewhere. Indians in the F.M.S. exceed two lakhs in number and are next to the Chinese. In their contribution to the progress and advancement of the country, they occupy a place of prominence second only to the Chinese. The labour employed in the rubber estates is preponderantly Indian.

FROM PAGE ONE

Restore April status along LAC, says India

The Indian delegation was led by Lt. Gen. Harinder Singh, 14 Corps commander and the Chinese side was led by Maj. Gen. Liu Lin, Commander of South Xinjiang military region.

Both sides agreed to peacefully resolve the situation in the border areas in accordance with various bilateral agreements and keeping in view the agreement between the leaders that peace and tranquillity in the India-China border regions is essential for the overall development of bilateral relations, the MEA stated.

Communications open

In a release indicating that the government is still hopeful of a resolution of the standoff that has lasted weeks, the MEA said both sides have "maintained communications" through diplomatic and military channels in recent weeks, and called for an "early resolution" to the situation at the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in Ladakh. The senior military commander level talks are at the highest level so far in the series of military and diplomatic communications that the two sides have held to address the standoff.

Tensions between the two sides have continued for more than a month, and

Delhi's hospitals only for its 'residents': CM

"Private hospitals covering special treatments and surgeries will be open for all. This will make a balance for both the residents of Delhi and the people from all over the country," he said.

Last week, Mr. Kejriwal had asked people of the city for suggestions. "The decision was taken after nearly 90% of people of the 7.5 lakh people said the Delhi hospitals should be reserved for the people of Delhi," the Chief Minister said.

The Chief Minister also said that a five-member expert committee, headed by Vice-Chancellor of Guru Go-

Monuments with places of worship to open

According to a list of 821 monuments released by the Ministry, 114 were in the north region, 155 in central, 170 in west, 279 in south and 103 in east.

While the Taj Mahal itself will continue to remain shut, the Fatehpuri Masjid on the south-west corner of its entrance, the mosque inside its premises and the Kali masjid near it will be opened. In Delhi, Friday

serious skirmishes were reported between the Indian Army and PLA soldiers at several points of the Line of Actual Control in Ladakh and Sikkim since May 5, where China is understood to have made significant incursions, and the Indian Army has also bolstered its positions. In its release, the MEA said the two sides will continue diplomatic and military engagements to resolve the "situation", without elaborating on developments on the ground.

Communications between senior military commanders will ensure that tensions don't flare up on the ground as talks continue at the highest levels to find a way to resolve the issue, an officer, who had served in the area in the past, said on condition of anonymity.

"Like we saw in Doklam and other standoffs in the past, troops on the ground will remain dug up till the issue is resolved at the diplomatic or political level," the officer said, adding that it could be a long haul. "Both sides also noted that this year marked the 70th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries and agreed that an early resolution would contribute to the further development of the relationship," the MEA statement added.

Fatalities spike in T.N., Telangana

A.P., Karnataka and Kerala also report deaths

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

HYDERABAD

In its highest single-day toll, Telangana reported 14 deaths from COVID-19 on Sunday. Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka reported two deaths each, while an elderly patient died of the disease in Kerala.

Andhra Pradesh also had 199 new cases, of whom 130 were local residents.

The two deaths were in Krishna and Kurnool districts. The overall toll rose to 75. With the new cases, the State tally went up to 4,659, and the number of recoveries to 2,660 following the discharge of 59 more patients. Active cases rose to 1,924. While there were no new cases among foreign returnees, 69 people from other States tested positive.

Nellore district reported 31 new cases. Krishna and Visakhapatnam districts reported 25 and 17 new cases respectively, followed by Anantapur and Kadapa (14 each); Kurnool (10), West Godavari and Vizianagaram (6 each); East Godavari (3), Guntur (2), Chittoor (1) and Srikakulam (1).

The 14 deaths recorded on Sunday in Telangana raised the toll to 137. The total cases too continued to rise as 154 more tested positive.

Of these, 132 were from

Souped up

With State governments set to further ease restrictions on June 8, business establishments are taking extra precautions to curb the spread of COVID-19



Back to work: Employees cleaning tables that have been partitioned at a restaurant on the eve of reopening, in Bengaluru on Sunday. ■ K. MURALI KUMAR

Greater Hyderabad, 12 from Rangareddy, three from Medchal, two from Yadadri, one each from Siddipet, Mahabubabad, Sangareddy, Nalgarkurnool and Karimnagar.

Of the total 3,650 cases in the State, 1,771 were active cases, 1,742 were discharged, and 137 were fatal.

Besides two deaths, 239 new cases were reported in Karnataka. With this, the toll rose to 61, apart from two

COVID-19

non-COVID-19 deaths, while positive cases were 5,452 in total. Both patients who succumbed to the infection were from Bengaluru and had co-morbidities. One of

them, a 61-year-old with Severe Acute Respiratory Illness

was on a ventilator died on Saturday, while the second patient, a 57-year-old man with filariasis and chronic myeloid leukemia, died on Sunday.

Maharashtra returnees were testing positive in large numbers, and 177 of the 239 new cases had a travel history to that State.

Sunday's cases also included 10 patients with Influenza-Like Illness, two with SARI, 22 primary contacts of previous positive patients, and 10 whose contact tracing was still on.

While Kalaburagi and Yadgir, with 39 cases each, recorded the highest number on Sunday, Belagavi fol-

lowed with 38. Bengaluru Urban saw 23 cases while Dakshina Kannada and Davangere had 17 cases each. Udupi reported 13.

While Shivamogga reported 12 cases, Vijayapura and Bidar saw nine each, Hassan reported five cases. Bengaluru Rural recorded five cases – all returnees from Kuwait.

In Kerala, an 87-year-old man from Engandiyur died on COVID-19 in Thrissur.

Also, 107 persons tested positive on Sunday. With the need for testing in the community becoming more evident, Kerala would launch antibody testing across districts on Monday.

(With inputs from Vijayawada, Bengaluru and Thiruvananthapuram bureaus)

63 doctors tested positive in Telangana

Health workers fear infecting kin

K. SHIVA SHANKER

HYDERABAD

At least 63 doctors in Telangana have tested positive for COVID-19 till June 6, raising concerns among healthcare professionals who are struggling to handle the rising number of cases in the State. Adding to the panic is the increasing number of cases among healthcare workers at unexpected treatment facilities.

Of the 63 cases among doctors, only four have been reported from Gandhi Hospital, the largest isolation centre in the State.



TELANGANA

The rest are from non-COVID government hospitals, according to sources.

With the rapid spread of the disease, the advice for citizens is to restrict their movement outside home. But for frontline workers, especially healthcare workers at government hospitals, it is a luxury they cannot afford. They expose themselves to a lot of risks every day while attending on COVID-19 patients.

Many post-graduate students, house surgeons and resident doctors and other senior doctors are also mentally prepared for any eventuality. "A few weeks into the pandemic made us realise that we will get infected at some point. We are thankful that we have not been infected till now and are able to still serve patients," says the house surgeon who works at Modern Government Maternity Hospital, Petlabur, and tested negative recently.

Panel slams murder of domestic help

STAFF REPORTER

VIJAYAWADA

Andhra Pradesh Women's Commission chairperson Vasireddi Padma on Sunday expressed concern over the alleged torture and murder of a 23-year-old woman in Visakhapatnam a couple of days ago.

The victim from East Godavari district was working as a domestic help at the house of G. Vasanta at Akkayapalem. Officers investigating the woman's death at her employer's house found multiple burn injuries on her private parts, Ms. Padma said. "The woman was allegedly forced into flesh trade and tortured severely by her employer," she added.

"The commission will soon visit Visakhapatnam and seek details of investigation from the police," said commission director R. Suez. The police had already picked up a few suspects, she added.

Durga temple to open to devotees from June 10

Trial run for two days from today

STAFF REPORTER

VIJAYAWADA

The Kanaka Durga temple in Andhra Pradesh's Vijayawada will be thrown open to devotees from June 10 after a gap of almost two months following relaxation in COVID-19 lockdown norms.



Safety first: A priest using sanitiser before entering the temple. ■ V. RAJU

Ahead of it, Sri Durga Malleswara Swamyvarla Devasthanam will undertake a trial run by allowing its employees to have darshan of the presiding deity for two days from Monday. The aim is to plug loopholes, if any, in the measures put in place to check the spread of the virus.



ANDHRA PRADESH

and offer the same to the presiding deity. The darshan timings would be from 6 a.m. to 11.30 a.m. and from 12.30 p.m. to 5 p.m., they said, and added that priests would neither offer 'satari' or 'theertham' to devotees. "Arrangements have been made to facilitate darshan for 250 people per hour in each queue," they said.

ishes to decide on reopening.

The Jacobite group of the Malankara church has asked the vicars of parishes to reopen only if they are able to conform to the conditions laid down by the government.

A circular from Catholicos Baselios Thomas I said the believers should take care

A circular from the headquarters of Ernakulam-Anamalai Archdiocese of the Syro-Malabar church said churches under its jurisdiction would remain closed till June 30 in view of the danger posed by the pandemic. The circular said the decision was taken in consultation with the parish vicars and others. The churches will remain open to individuals, who want to offer prayers. All have been advised to follow the restrictions imposed by the government.

Airfare hike a shock for expatriates

Repatriation flights in phase 3 of Vande Bharat Mission from June 10

S. ANIL RADHAKRISHNAN

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Hundreds of stranded Indians in West Asia have been hit hard by the hike in airfare for repatriation flights to be operated by the national carrier Air India in phase three of Vande Bharat Mission set to take off from June 10.

The one-way airfare in the economy class from the key three airports at Riyadh, Dammam and Jeddah in Saudi Arabia to the four airports in Kerala has gone up from ₹18,760 (950 Riyals) to ₹33,635 (1,703 Riyals) when the airline opened its booking for phase III.

Sources close to the family said he complained of breathlessness on Saturday night. He developed chest pain on Sunday afternoon and was taken to hospital, where he was declared brought dead. He tested negative for COVID-19.

Sarja was the grandson of well-known Kannada actor, the late Shakti Prasad, and nephew of actor Arjun Sarja. He made his debut with *Vayuputra* and acted in 22 films. He is married to actor Meghana Raj.



Finally home: Indians from Riyadh arriving at the airport in Kozhikode in May. ■ PTI

Air India Express, the low-cost arm of the national carrier Air India (AI), that is gearing up to operate 107 flights from West Asia and South East Asian countries in the phase III, has not gone down well with Air India. "Fares had gone up six to seven AED [United Arab Emirates Dirham]," airline sources said. AI officials were not available for comment on the hike.

Compared to the hike in the airfare in the Saudi Arabia-Kerala sector, there is only marginal increase in the airfare in the Qatar-Kerala sector. The one-way airfare has gone up only from 766 Riyals to 780 Riyals.

Bolt from the blue

For many in Saudi Arabia who had been awaiting ea-

gerly to return to the home soil, the hike in the airfare was a bolt from the blue as they came to know only after reaching the airline offices.

Testing times

"The flyers had no other option other than to borrow money and book the seats as bulk of the flights are handled by Air India from Saudi Arabia and uncertainty prevails over the commencement of the commercial flights," said Feroz Khan, a social worker from Riyadh. "There was marginal in-

crease in airfares during Phase II. We were told that everything is decided at Delhi. But, now the Union government has taken the non-resident Indians for a ride at these testing times," Mr. Khan said.

The Vande Bharat Mission was kicked off by the Centre on May 7 to bring back stranded Indians on a payment basis amid the COVID-19-induced lockdown. It also permitted foreign nationals and valid visa holders to book seats on these flights.

IN BRIEF



Probe panel meets gas leak-affected villagers

VISAKHAPATNAM Amid police bandoobust, the high-power committee set up to probe the styrene vapour leak incident in LG Polymers plant here in Andhra Pradesh, held talks with a few political party representatives and affected villagers on Sunday. The accident on May 7 claimed 12 lives. The CPI(M) and the BJP alleged that all the affected people were not allowed to meet the panel.

TV reporter dies of COVID-19 in Hyderabad

HYDERABAD A 33-year-old reporter from Hyderabad who contracted COVID-19, died on Sunday. He was employed with a Telugu TV news channel. He got married recently and is survived by his pregnant wife. He was admitted to Gandhi Hospital on June 4 on testing positive for coronavirus. He suffered from fever and cough for three days prior to admission. The patient had been suffering from a neuromuscular disorder and allied problems, said Hospital Superintendent M. Raja Rao.

Kannada actor Chiranjeevi Sarja dead

STAFF REPORTER

BENGALURU

side and strapped him to the bed," she said.

Describing the act "inhuman" and "barbaric", former Chief Minister Kamal Nath tweeted, "During this corona pandemic, inhuman behaviour, fleecing and arbitrariness is continuing in several private hospitals of the State. There is no one to listen to the public. The government should take strict action over the incident."

In order to secure his discharge, and get the case file, she was told another ₹11,270 would have to be paid. "They didn't give us the file, so when we started leaving the hospital, and father was coming behind me, they grabbed him, took him in-

forward for their identification. Incriminating material, including arms and ammunition, were recovered from the site of encounter, he said.

The spokesperson said in case any family claims the killed militants to be their kith or kin, they can come

Shah sounds bugle for Bihar election

Home Minister exudes confidence that NDA will win a two-thirds majority in the Assembly

AMARNATH TEWARI

PATNA

BJP leader Amit Shah on Sunday said the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) would get a two-thirds majority in the Bihar Assembly election.

While addressing a virtual rally, *Bihar - Jansamvad*, which Mr. Shah claimed was not an "election rally", he concluded his 45-minute speech listing the achievements of the Narendra Modi government in its first term and the present and its contribution to the development of Bihar.

"This virtual rally has nothing to do with upcoming elections in Bihar. The BJP believed in democracy ... this is to encourage everyone and reassure the confidence in corona warriors ... here I want to salute those crores of corona warriors battling against the virus by risking their lives ... I want to acknowledge their contribu-



In action: Amit Shah addressing the 'Bihar Jan Samvad' rally at the BJP headquarters in New Delhi. ■ PTI

tion," the Union Home Minister said.

Slams RJD

Mr. Shah took a jibe at the Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) for clanging plates and bowls ahead of his virtual rally. "I am glad that they finally followed Mr. Modi's appeal to show gratitude to those fighting against coronavirus," he said.

Earlier in the day, RJD leaders had observed *Garib Adhikar Diwas* by clanging plates and bowls to protest

against Mr. Shah's rally.

Mr. Shah spoke about politics and slammed the Opposition parties for doing "nothing for the development of Bihar". "The Modi government has given ₹20 lakh crore following corona pandemic for the development of the country and Bihar too will be benefited with this," he said.

"Earlier when the Modi government had allocated ₹1.25 lakh crore for Bihar's development, Opposition party leaders had made a

mockery of it, but here I will cite to you the facts where the money was spent," said Mr. Shah and dwelt upon the details. "Bihar has been the land where the first Republic was formed and where great leaders were born ... the people of Bihar had voted Modi to power first in 2014 and then in the second term too..." Mr. Shah said.

He also mentioned the removal of Articles 370 and 35 A, abolition of triple talak, surgical strikes, construction of the Ram temple, Ayushman Bharat, and the availability of LED bulbs and cooking gas to crores of households as achievements of the Modi government.

"It is because of Prime Minister Modi that India's position in world today has been recognised," he added. He also mentioned the success of Mr. Modi's appeal for Janata curfew. "Janata curfew will be listed in the country's gol-

den history for following a leader's appeal. After former Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri I have not seen any leader other than Prime Minister Narendra Modi on whose appeal the whole country got united," he said.

Concluding his speech, Mr. Shah thanked Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar and BJP leader and Deputy Chief Minister Sushil Kumar Modi for taking every step to battle the pandemic. "The Bihar government spent ₹8,538 crore in fighting against coronavirus and took every step for taking care of migrants and workers returning to the State," he said, adding "Under Nitish Kumar's leadership, the NDA will come to power with two-thirds majority in the coming elections in Bihar."

Meanwhile, Nitish Kumar too set off his "digital" interaction with party leaders and workers on Sunday.

'Centre can't pay train fare, but BJP splurges on phones'

Party doling out mobiles to watch Shah's rally, says Congress

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The Centre cannot pay for the migrant workers' train fare but the BJP can spend crores on distributing phones for Amit Shah's digital rally in Bihar ahead of the Assembly elections later this year, the Congress alleged on Sunday.

Concluding his speech, Mr. Shah thanked Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar and BJP leader and Deputy Chief Minister Sushil Kumar Modi for taking every step to battle the pandemic. "The Bihar government spent ₹8,538 crore in fighting against coronavirus and took every step for taking care of migrants and workers returning to the State," he said, adding "Under Nitish Kumar's leadership, the NDA will come to power with two-thirds majority in the coming elections in Bihar."

Meanwhile, Nitish Kumar too set off his "digital" interaction with party leaders and workers on Sunday.



RJD leaders Rabri Devi, Tejashwi Yadav and Tej Pratap Yadav observing 'Garib Adhikar Diwas' in Patna. ■ RANJEET KUMAR

use money power to get people. The Centre doesn't have money to ferry workers but the BJP has so much money ... Possibly one lakh phones have been distributed across districts," he alleged.

"At a time the country is fighting COVID-19, the BJP is holding such political rallies. They are trying to lure the people of Bihar with their money power," he said. Con-

gress spokesperson Jaiveer Singh said the voters are going to punish the ruling BJP-JD(U) alliance. "During 'online' Bihar rally, the BJP should have explained why till date the 'offline' promise of special package has not been fulfilled, why sons/daughters were made to wait in lines for over 60 days to return to their home," Mr. Singh said.

COVID-19 delays delivery of India's first VVIP planes

Boeing seeks two-month extension owing to delay in FAA approvals and manpower shortage

JAGRITI CHANDRA

NEW DELHI

The wait for the country's first-ever VVIP planes has become slightly longer due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Aerospace manufacturer Boeing has sought an extension of two months from Air India to finish renovating two of the airline's B 777-300 ER planes for use by the President, the Vice-President and the Prime Minister.

The two brand new planes joined the Air India fleet in early 2018 and returned to Boeing's headquarters in Dallas Fort-Worth in the U.S. six months later so that the passenger aircraft could be completely overhauled. The first of

these two planes was scheduled to return to India by June 30 and the other by July 30. But they will now return on August 30 and September 30 respectively.

"The retrofitment on the two planes is over but regulatory clearances from the U.S. aviation watchdog, Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), are pending. The State of Texas requires mandatory quarantine of 14 days for all incoming passengers, which has delayed these approvals.

There have also been some manpower problems and that is why Boeing has requested for an extension of two months.... There will also be three or four test flights conducted before the



So far, the government used Air India's Boeing 747 planes for dignitaries.

plane is delivered," said a government official familiar with these discussions.

The revamped aircraft will include a press conference room, a conference room for VVIPs, a suite com-

prising a bedroom and a bathroom. In order to protect the country's topmost dignitaries from aerial attacks, the aircraft will also be equipped with missile warning sensors and countermeasures dispensing defence system, which are part of the large aircraft infrared countermeasures (LAIRCM) self-protection suites (SPS) provided by the U.S. government for \$190 million. This will be the first time the top leadership of the country will have planes for their exclusive use.

Once these planes land in India, Air India will de-register them and hand them over to the Indian Air Force. The planes will then be entered into the IAF's registry and get a K-series registration number given to military aircraft.

overnment has paid ₹4,632 crore towards these planes and bought them from Air India.

Last week, a photograph of one of the two planes in its new livery went viral on social media. The photograph, attributed to Andy Egloff, showed the main body or fuselage of the Boeing 777-300 aircraft painted white and its undercarriage or belly painted grey.

Once these planes land in India, Air India will de-register them and hand them over to the Indian Air Force. The planes will then be entered into the IAF's registry and get a K-series registration number given to military aircraft.

After social media backlash, GoAir revokes trainee pilot's termination

He is suspended subject to a cyber crime cell probe: airline

ADITYA ANAND

MUMBAI

Three days after terminating a trainee pilot for allegedly failing to comply with the company's rules on social media conduct, GoAir on Sunday changed its decision and suspended him instead.

The decision came in the wake of the trainee pilot, Asif Khan, approaching the Saki Naka police with a complaint that someone had impersonated him to post objectionable comments on Twitter.

"The trainee pilot is suspended subject to a cyber

crime cell investigation," an airline spokesperson said.

On the night of June 4, GoAir terminated the trainee pilot's employment for allegedly failing to comply with the company's rules on social media conduct.

Following the backlash on social media, GoAir verified the details of his posts. In a statement, GoAir said it had a zero tolerance policy and it was mandatory for all to comply with the company's employment rules, regulations and policies, including social media behaviour.

However, in a letter dated

June 4, Mr. Khan said that an impostor had created a Twitter account, and a YouTube video that has since been taken down.

"The video was put out on a YouTube channel by the name Buzzing Trends Official, who stole all my pictures from my Facebook account and put them in his video with the intention of maligning my name and that of GoAir, and thus jeopardising my career," he said. Mr. Khan also released the letter on Twitter and demanded action against the imposter.

The two cover system tender is invited for 2.0MW Solar PV Power Plant. The conditions & other details are available in the tender documents. Tender No. PTIETC/DIPP/2019/20 - 5A : Design, Fabrication, Installation, Testing, Commissioning of 2.0 MW (AC side) capacity Solar PV power plant including all accessories & power evacuation facility. Cost of Doc.Rs.10,000/- EMD - Rs.12,000 lakhs. Sale period for Tender - On all working days from 15th to 23rd June 2020. Interested Tenderers may purchase Tender documents by submitting a written request to The PTIETC, Chennai-600 044 with Bank Demand Draft for Rs.10,000/- drawn in favour of "PTIETC-FLADP-PROJECTADMIN A/C" payable at Chennai. PTIETC reserves all rights on the above tender.

DIRECTOR, ICAR-IIOR

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INTERVIEW | JAYADEVA RANADE

'China's internal pressures are driving Xi's tough stance on border'

Given the domestic political situation inside China, can the leadership afford to go back to status quo, asks veteran Beijing watcher

ANANTH KRISHNAN

Facing pressure from the trade war with the U.S. and an economy hit by the pandemic, China's leadership appears to be taking a tougher line on issues related to sovereignty from Taiwan to the India border, says Jayadeva Ranade, a former Additional Secretary, Cabinet Secretariat, Government of India, and President, Centre for China Analysis and Strategy, who has been tracking China for three decades. Beijing is unlikely to change course and pull back, as doing so would hurt the credibility of the leadership which is already under pressure, he said.

How unusual is the current situation on the Line of Actual Control (LAC), given the number and scale of stand-offs since last month?

■ The situation is certainly different. Firstly, these have occurred at multiple points along the LAC, from Ladakh to Naku La in Sikkim. I also associate the activation of a new diplomatic front by Nepal against us as a part of this. It is a new kind of activity that the Chinese have created on our northern bor-

ders. Since Xi Jinping has taken over, the nature and kind of intrusions that we have been seeing have altered. They have become more firm, and appear to have been premeditated and planned.

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh has attributed the tensions to differing perceptions of the Line of Actual Control. Do you share that view?

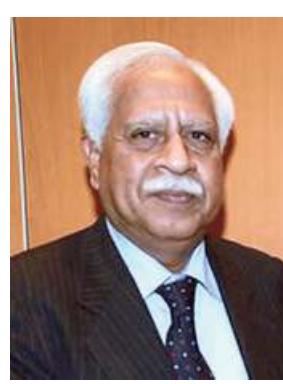
■ I would disagree with that,

for the simple reason that in quite a few of these places, there have been no such intrusions and there has been no instance of a difference in perception of the LAC. Galwan Valley, which is one of the main points of confrontation, has not witnessed an intrusion for the last 15 to 20 years.

Why is China opening a new front in Galwan?

■ The construction of the Darbuk-Shyok-Daulet Beg Oldi road certainly would have been one of the factors together with the upgrading of our defence logistics infrastructure. These are points of concern for the Chinese. In addition to that, what has occurred in the recent past is growing Chinese stakes in the region, particularly with the China Pakistan Economic Corridor.

After the revocation of Ar-



■ **The nature and kind of intrusions have become more firm, and appear to have been premeditated and planned**

ticles 370 and 5(A) of our Constitution, the Chinese got more apprehensive. Of course, the Pakistanis would have egged them on, which is why we have seen the Chinese taking the Kashmir is-

sue to the UN Security Council on four occasions so far. With their close ties with the Pakistanis, they may have decided that they need to safeguard their interests in these areas.

How do you see the current situation being resolved?

■ If we show not only our determination to hold ground but also maybe apply pressure in some areas on China, it could cause a rethinking in Beijing to come to some kind of an understanding with us. But that is unlikely in my point of view.

As far as the talks are concerned, they're not going to give in easily. Our position is we want status quo ante so that means everyone goes back to their earlier position. Which begs the question, why did the Chinese do this in the first place? Given the domestic political situation

inside China, can Xi Jinping afford to go back or to disengage or to withdraw, now, once again, having done that earlier in Doklam [in 2017], and not find people who are critical of his action?

How do you assess President Xi's position internally after the pandemic?

■ There are two factors that are causing concern. The first is the economic situation. The way the U.S.-China trade war is developing is aggravating that. Unless Mr. Xi is able to tackle that, domestic criticism will continue. Second, the sources of voiced discontent, the intellectuals, the academics and the students, I don't think they are reconciled to the situation. Neither are those Communist Party cadres, serving or retired, who don't want to return to one man rule.

A lot depends on the level of discontent within the Communist Party, particularly its middle and higher echelons, and I don't know how much of that has really been sorted out. Look at the fact that he has created a new central small group under Guo Shengkun, who is Secretary to the Central Political and Legal Affairs Commission, his right hand man, to look at the political stability and political situation in China. These indicate that President Xi Jinping himself knows that there are problems ahead, and that his own position is not 100% secure.

Do these internal challenges influence China's external postures, whether on Taiwan or with India?

■ I have no doubt that this tougher line has come about because of the perception

domestically that the two centenary goals as they call it – the China Dream and catching up, if not surpassing, the U.S. by 2049, are slipping out of the grasp of the leadership. I think the perception among the Chinese people that the leadership didn't have a firm grip of the situation is one of the real key factors why Mr. Xi has opted for a much tougher line. The U.S.-China factor is another.

So it has happened that with Hong Kong he has taken a tough line. With Taiwan, he is applying pressure. In the South China Sea, he has started sending PLA Navy warships there. I think what we are seeing on the borders with India is similar. So that does bring us to the question, can he afford to pull back and face criticism from within China, if he is doing this to shore up his credibility?

IN BRIEF



NGMA to hold online summer art workshop

NEW DELHI

The National Gallery of Modern Art in Delhi on Sunday said that it would hold its annual summer art workshops online. "Naimisar 2020" would be held from Monday till July 3, the NGMA said. The workshops would be on painting, sculpture, printmaking and 'indrajaal' – an interdisciplinary creative workshop.

Hospital apologises for anti-Muslim chat

JAIPUR

The owner of a private hospital in Rajasthan's Churu district has tendered an unconditional apology after some online chats among its staff members, which allegedly disparaged Muslim patients, went viral on the social media. The police have launched a probe. The WhatsApp chats allegedly suggested it was best not to attend to them, as the infection was spreading among the community.

Four Bhopal policemen booked in woman's death

NEW DELHI

The CBI has booked four policemen in connection with the death of a 30-year-old woman of Pardhi community due to self-immolation in Bhopal in 2017 over alleged harassment for a bribe of ₹20,000. A petition was filed in Madhya Pradesh High Court by the victim Indermal Bai's relatives. The petitioners had alleged that police continuously harassed her for bribe, following which she set herself ablaze.

China ratchets up media blitz on LAC

State media outlets have repeatedly showcased military exercises in high-altitude areas

ANANTH KRISHNAN

CHENNAI

For the second time in one week, China's State media outlets have showcased military exercises tailored to high-altitude regions, linking the drills to the ongoing tensions with India along the Line of Actual Control (LAC).

On Sunday, the Communist Party-run *Global Times* reported that the People's Liberation Army (PLA) organised a large-scale manoeuvre operation featuring thousands of paratroopers plus armoured vehicles to the country's high-altitude northwestern region over a long distance from central China's Hubei province amid border tensions between China and India.

The *Global Times*, a newspaper that plays a key role in external propaganda, said of the latest drill that "the entire process was completed in just a few hours, demonstrating China's capability of quickly reinforcing border defences when necessary". China has in the past used official media outlets to

showcase military drills amid territorial disputes, an approach that the Chinese military has described as a "struggle for public opinion".

Manoeuvres aimed at Taiwan are frequently shown on television, particularly when political tensions are high. On occasion, videos of earlier drills have been used for broadcast during times of tensions.

During the 72-day border stand-off with India at Doklam in 2017, state media broadcast regular images showcasing China's military capabilities, aimed at both the domestic and overseas audience. The official *PLA Daily* in an August 2017 article described the strategy as aimed "to fully integrate the publicity forces of public opinion, radio, TV, newspapers and social media, and carry out a multi-wave and high-density centralised publicity in a fixed period of time to form favourable public opinion situation to allow for a final victory".

The PLA's Western



In overdrive: Manoeuvres aimed at Taiwan are frequently shown on television, particularly when tensions are high. ■ AP

Theatre Command said in a 2017 analysis of the Doklam media strategy that "seizing the initiative was key in the struggle for public opinion."

Lessons for future

It said the aim was "to make India succumb without a confrontation between the two armies," adding that the approach served lessons "for future struggles".

The latest drills were also

broadcast on the official broadcaster China Central Television (CCTV), which reported "using civilian air-lines, logistical transportation channels and railways, several thousand paratroopers under a PLA Air Force airborne brigade recently manoeuvred from Hubei to an undisclosed location on the plateaus of northwestern China, thousands of kilometres away."

Major Colonel Mao Lei, head of the training department at the airborne brigade, told CCTV: "This manoeuvre mission saw significant breakthroughs not only in the scale of mobilised troops but also means of transportation. [Using civilian transportation] substantially expanded our means of transporting forces and increased efficiency in manoeuvring an entire organisation of troops."

On June 3, China's official media reported that another drill was held on the Tibetan plateau, which it described as "night-time high-altitude infiltration exercises behind enemy lines". Reports indicated the drills were held in the Tanggula Mountains, not close to the border with India but on the far side of the Tibetan plateau in the east, near the border of Tibet and Qinghai province. A report in the *Global Times* said the PLA Tibet Military Command recently sent troops to a high-altitude region at night for "infiltration exercises behind enemy lines and tested their combat capability."

Nepal may host PLA medical team

It helped combat COVID-19 in Wuhan

KALLOL BHATTACHERJEE
SUHASINI HAIDAR

NEW DELHI

Nepal is expected to host a large delegation of personnel from the medical unit of China's People's Liberation Army to deal with the threat of the COVID-19 pandemic, a source familiar with the discussion inside the Nepal Communist Party has said.

The decision is influenced by the leading role played by the PLA's medical teams in containing the pandemic in Wuhan and nearby areas which were the epicentre of the crisis in China.

The Hindu has learnt that Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli has discussed the possibility of hosting the medical delegation from China during a recent video call with the head of the international liaison department of the Chinese Communist Party, Song Tao.

"Nepal needs to stop the spread of the COVID-19 and an extensive operation to test and contain the virus is urgently required. It is not yet clear what will be the total number of personnel that Nepal will ultimately get as the testing will have to be done across the country.

As per current estimate such an operation will require at least a few thousands of workers," said a source familiar with the internal discussions in the Nepal Communist Party which maintains fraternal ties with its Chinese counterpart.

Nepal at present has 3,348 COVID-19 cases with 13 recorded deaths. Kath-



mandu is worried about the further spread of the pandemic as the government has begun repatriation of all Nepalese expat workers on humanitarian grounds. Nepal is likely to receive around two lakh citizens from India alone in the next few weeks apart from several others from other parts of the world.

"The Chinese team is likely to be stationed here for a week or so and carry out an extensive and fast operation of the kind carried out in the affected parts of China," said the source.

The deliberations in Kathmandu are significant, reflecting China's growing COVID-19 diplomacy.

Bangladesh is set to receive a major delegation of medical personnel from Beijing on Monday. The delegation, drawn from the National Health Commission of China, will travel to all the COVID-19 affected areas of the country. Beijing's global health diplomacy has covered Sri Lanka, Myanmar and the major COVID-19 affected countries in the west.

The Hindu Group's COVID-19 campaign wins global award

CHENNAI

The Hindu Group has won two awards at the International News Media Association (INMA) Global Media Awards 2020. This year, the competition received 922 entries for 16 categories from 262 news brands in 44 countries. Awards were given under Group 1 representing re-

gional/local brands and Group 2 representing global/ national brands.

The INMA reopened the competition in April this year to add the pandemic response category to highlight the structured initiatives by media companies to instil hope, inspire trust, bring communities together

and encourage interactivity and engagement during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The winners, chosen from 12 finalists across over 95 countries, were announced in a global broadcast recently.

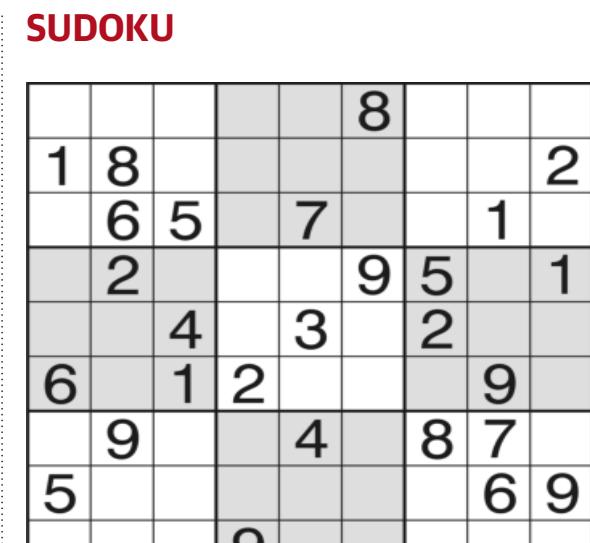
In Group 2, *The Hindu* secured the first place for its campaign 'Cadbury Sweet

Kondattam' for Client Mondelez India for 'Best Idea to Acquire or Retain Advertising Clients'. The Hindu Group secured the second place for its 'Stay home. Stay vigilant' campaign for 'Best Initiative in Response to COVID-19'.

Celebrating its 90th anniversary, the International

News Media Association (INMA) is a global community of market-leading news media companies reinventing how they engage audiences and grow revenue in a multi-platform environment. The INMA community consists of more than 12,000 members at 800+ news media companies in 70 countries.

SUDOKU



Solution to puzzle 12955 Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

A	C	C	U	R	A	T	E	C	I	F
H	M	D	U	N	I	O	P	G	S	T
K	A	P	V	R	O	T	A	E	T	Y
I	T	I	I	O	R	H	D	E	C	Z
N	A	T	U	S	T	L	E	F	G	W
A	C	E	A	V	G	E	I	H	J	X
C	E	E	U	Q	I	T	O	R	S	Z
D	O	R	K	E	P	A	S	T	T	Y
E	P	E	I	R	E	C	C	E	T	Y
S	Q	U	W	Y	O	N	G	T	R	W
C	I	T	E	O	L	G	T	S	A	Y
E	M	E	D	D	O	R	N	A	T	Y
N	I	N	E	E	U	O	L	T	A	Y
T	A	T	A	A	L	A	S	A	N	G

FAITH

Wizard of words

There are four types of poets: Asu kavi – the spontaneous poet; madhura kavi – one whose verses are pleasing; vistara kavi – one whose words come together to form an image. Thirumangai Azhvar could compose in all four genres and was, therefore called Naalu kavi Perumal. His Thiruvezhukoottrirukkai, in praise of Lord Aravamudhan, the deity of Kumbakonam, falls in the category of ratha bandham, and it is because of this work that he is considered a chitra kavi. In this work, he uses words that represent numerals, to form a chariot. He uses the numerals in ascending and descending order to build the ratha of words. Thirumangai Azhvar's ratha of words, can be represented in a figure as a ratha with seven decks. He cleverly describes and praises the auspicious qualities and amazing exploits of the Lord, while all the while using only words that refer to numerals from one to seven, said V.S. Karunakarachariar, in a discourse.

Often, he resorts to puns – the same word meaning a number but also meaning something else. In one case where he has to represent three, he talks of the three-fold fortification, which Ravana's capital city of Lanka had. A capital city should ideally

7 myths about online education

An effective transition to an online mode of teaching-learning requires the debunking of several false views

■ A. JOSEPH DORAIRAJ

COVID-19 has drastically affected all sectors including education and the world is searching for new strategies to cope with this pandemic and its aftermath. Higher educational institutions are now looking at online teaching-learning as a window of hope. But sceptics and cynics have created myths about web learning, which we need to debunk so that we can transition effectively.

1 Online teaching is meant for the young and tech-savvy

The fact is that everyone – young and old, and those who are conversant with and averse to technology – has to embrace technology and live with it. All teachers have to make a clear and conscious shift despite their age and attitude. Successful people in any walk of life are those who love and welcome change.

2 Online teaching is only a stopgap arrangement

Some feel that when normalcy returns, it will be back to chalk and talk. So, why bother to learn new teaching methodologies? The fact is that online teaching has already become an integral part of our educational system and irrevocable changes have been made in our teaching-learning process. The winners are those who embrace technology and look at online education not as a long-term game changer.

3 Online teaching is not egalitarian

Some argue that online teaching subtly favours those who have access to high technologies and turns down the disadvantaged sections of society. There may be some truth here but the larger fact is that online education is meant for all. In most cases, all that the students need is a smartphone and most have smartphones with Internet connectivity. It is true that in rural and semi-urban areas, high speed Internet may not be available around the clock. But online teaching, especially the asynchronous mode, will



A good teacher will always adjust the content and delivery according to the mode and will ensure that there isn't a big gap between input and intake

certainly help all students because of its flexibility.

4 Technology will eventually replace the teacher

There is an innate fear in teachers that technology will eventually replace them. Teachers need to be reassured that they cannot be replaced but also need to be told that their role has changed

significantly. Earlier, they were seen as the repositories of knowledge. But now they are seen as syllabus designers, content developers, knowledge sharers – all through the medium of technology. Therefore, they need to develop a different set of skills.

5 Students prefer face-to-face interaction, not online teaching

This stems from a wishful thinking that teachers are indispensable and, without them, the teaching-learning system would collapse. The youth are not only conversant with technology but are also willing to embrace change in any form. They constantly look

forward to new ideas and love to experiment and innovate and, therefore, will not have major issues in switching over to online education. To these students, it is not a question of either/or but both technology and teachers.

6 Online teaching-learning is not as effective as face-to-face mode

There are merits and demerits in both ways. But good teachers are always good, whatever the mode. A good teacher will always adjust the content and delivery according to the mode and will ensure that there isn't a big gap between input and intake. Therefore, the question of

which is a better mode doesn't arise.

7 Degrees and diplomas obtained through online education are not valid

In India, there is a reluctance to accept degrees and diplomas earned through the online mode, which are deemed inferior. Even in the job market, online degrees and diplomas are not treated on par with regular degrees and diplomas.

Two clarifications are required. The kind of online e-learning that we are discussing is, in fact, a blend of online and offline. Face-to-face interaction is supplemented with online

teaching. Second is that, technically, there is no distinction between the degrees and diplomas earned through online or offline education. Both are virtually the same.

In this new ecosystem created by this pandemic, teachers have to constantly reinvent themselves to address the exigencies born of this crisis and offer students whatever is relevant and helps them adapt to a crisis thereby making them resourceful and resilient.

The writer is the Dean, School of English & Foreign Languages, Gandhigram Rural Institute. Email: josephdorairaj@gmail.com

SCHOLARSHIP

■ CSIR Bhatnagar Fellowship

The Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR), New Delhi, announces a fellowship for outstanding technologists and scientists working for innovative technology development. The aim is to enhance technological competitiveness by mentoring young scientists within the system.

ELIGIBILITY: An Indian scientist/technologist working as an associate with a mission or thrust area programme of CSIR or an area of interest to CSIR, below the age of 67 years

PRIZES AND REWARDS: Selected fellows will get a consolidated fellowship of ₹65,000 per month, House Rent Allowance (HRA) as admissible, and a contingency grant of ₹3 lakh per annum.

DEADLINE: Round the year

APPLICATION: Apply online www.b4s.in/edge/NPE3

■ SERB Ramanujan Fellowship

The Science and Engineering Research Board (SERB), India, offers this fellowship for outstanding engineers and scientists who want to take up scientific research positions in India and especially for those who want to return to India.

ELIGIBILITY: Scientist or engineers below 40 years who holds a higher degree or equivalent, such as PhD in Science/Engineering, Masters in Engineering or Technology/MD in Medicine, and so on and have adequate professional experience.

PRIZES AND REWARDS: Selected fellows will get fellowship of ₹1,35,000 per month, a research grant of ₹7 lakh per annum, ₹60,000 per annum as overhead charges and other benefits.

DEADLINE: Round the year

APPLICATION: Apply online www.b4s.in/edge/CRB4

■ CSIR Nehru Science Postdoctoral Research Fellowship

The Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR), New Delhi, offers a fellowship for Indian PhD holders and young researchers with innovative ideas and provides them with training and research opportunities in science, engineering, agriculture and medicine.

ELIGIBILITY: Indian researchers below 32

PRIZES AND REWARDS: Selected fellows will get fellowship of ₹1,35,000 per month, a research grant of ₹7 lakh per annum, ₹60,000 per annum as overhead charges and other benefits.

DEADLINE: Round the year

APPLICATION: Apply online www.b4s.in/edge/RFA7

Courtesy: buddy4study.com

Teaching in the time of COVID-19

Parents and teachers must find and establish a new equilibrium and a new normal for learning amid the present challenges



■ SARASWATHY RAMAMOORTHY

tively and ensure that all students are indeed learning is paramount.

But more than anything, online classrooms have brought up the issues of classroom management. If teachers thought they had enough trouble keeping their classrooms in order earlier, that is nothing compared to the woes of remote classrooms. It is very sad to hear long-term educators asking for help with managing students online. How can I maintain discipline? How do I ensure students don't tamper with my presentation? How can I prevent students from disrupting the class? Can students disrupt my class? How?

This is not limited to teachers of higher grades. Those who teach the pre-primary and primary grades are worried, too. How can I keep the children attentive? What length of class is appropriate for them? They're so young, will online teaching even be effective for them? How can I ensure effectiveness?

For schools, training teachers to become adept at teaching online is a herculean task. Ensuring that they have the right hardware and good Internet connectivity is another. Helping teachers transition to virtual classrooms and essentially a brand-new way of doing things has virtually become a reality. No pain intended.

Many want to learn the right online teaching techniques and

strategies to keep their students engaged. Many want to know which platform to use. Is it Zoom? But aren't there privacy issues? What about Google Classrooms? Is that better than Zoom because it is an LMS? What's an LMS? What about Microsoft Teams? Others want to know how to keep uninited students, and trouble, out of their online classrooms. This is merely the beginning. Schools have to also give serious thought to planning and conducting online assessments and evaluating students online.

School readiness for online teaching is critical and schools are at varying levels in this journey. So, while parents are worrying about having the right hardware and set-up at home, let's remember that school management and teachers are sorting out larger and important issues.

We've always sent our children to school. Now, the teachers are coming home. Whether we – or they – like it or not doesn't matter. What matters is parents and teachers finding and establishing a new equilibrium and a new normal.

Teachers and school administrators need the support and partnership of parents to achieve this.

The writer is co-founder and Chief Marketing Officer at Learning Matters Pvt. Ltd, a Bengaluru-based ed-tech company. Email: contact@learningmatters.xyz

Do you feel uncertain about a career option? Do you lack the freedom to choose a subject that you want to pursue? Do you feel low on self-confidence? Are you constantly doubting yourself? A Q&A column to assuage your doubts.



OFF THE EDGE

NANDINI RAMAN

I graduated in B.E ECE and I am currently aiming to study abroad. I am looking to pursue my MS in Computer Engineering, and my GRE score is 295. I have heard that it is a low score. If I proceed to apply with my current score, can I get good quality education from low-tier universities? – Raja Surya

Dear Raja,
295/340 is a decent score. However, as a CS student, it becomes essential to score 315+ merely because of competition. What does your CV look like? Do you have exceptional research experience or academics to compensate your score? Also, what other achievements can you showcase in your profile? Other hobbies and interests, internships, credentials, sports? You should consider retaking the test and obtain a score of at least 315 if possible. With the current score you can apply at B+, B and B- universities. You could also start short-listing and engaging with admission counsellors across the colleges that you are keen on applying to and start a conversation. Best wishes to you!

I am 20 and currently pursuing my graduation in commerce from Pune university. I have developed an interest in Economics and Law. I also have a pretty strong base of French. Considering my strengths and interests, I have decided to pursue M.A. in Law and Diplomacy (International Affairs) from the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, the U.S., or any other reputed school. Please suggest a pathway and all the personal and professional experiences I should gain before applying – Ishwari C

Dear Ishwari,
You seem to have a lot of insight and also seem to be quite introspective. Professionally, you might want to connect with the school and start a conversation to help with your application process, to receive regular

updates on your admission chats, tips, and deadline reminders. Reading up on basics of international law, diplomacy and international advocacy will also help. A lot of resources and case studies are available online. Also sharpen your research and writing skills. Most importantly, enjoy the process. Personally, stay confident, calm and happy. Look after yourself and make sure you have some 'me' time to let your hair down too! Remember, you are in charge and I wish you all the very best.

I am 26 years old, have done my B.E. and now working in a public sector bank. I am interested in economics but can't leave my current job. Can you guide me through courses that allow for study along with a full-time job? Also, career options after that? – Anshul

Dear Anshul,

There are many massive open online courses available online that are aimed at unlimited participation and have open access via the web that you can sign up for. Most are free and some have certifications and credits available for a basic cost from premium colleges and universities in the country and abroad as well. You can complete these in your own time and they are very educational. The course titles can vary from Fundamentals of Economics to Fundraising for Non-profit, to Government Economic Policy, to a diploma in Economics, certification in Micro or Macro Economics. I would suggest that you research specifically on what and where your interest lies, the Internet has many solutions for you. Once you shortlist and get on with the course you will logically know the career choice for the same. Good luck!

Disclaimer: This column is not a substitute for long-term therapy. It is merely a guiding voice. Some issues may need medical intervention.

The writer is a practising counsellor and a trainer. She has worked extensively with students and young adults across a range of issues. Send your questions sent to eduplus.thehindu@gmail.com. The subject line should be: 'Off the edge'.

NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY WARANGAL – 560 004 (An Institution of National Importance)

Admission Announcement to Ph.D. Programs: 2020-21 (Session: July, 2020)

Applications are invited from highly motivated candidates for admission into Ph.D. Programs offered in all the disciplines of Engineering, Sciences, English and Management at NIT Warangal.

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2. Part Time Ph.D.: Admissions through Interview. Candidates working in National Laboratories, R&D organizations and Organizations, Academic Institutions etc. are eligible to apply.

Details of the programs, eligibility criteria, admission schedule and procedure to apply online application form are available at www.admissions.nitw.ac.in tentatively from 10th June 2020.

U.S. capital sees massive, peaceful protest

Tens of thousands of people shout slogans, march to the White House demanding racial equality

REUTERS
WASHINGTON/LOS ANGELES

Demonstrations were planned across the United States on Sunday to demand racial justice after George Floyd's death in Minneapolis police custody, with weekend rallies spreading to smaller communities including an east Texas town once a haven for the Ku Klux Klan.

The U.S. marches also inspired anti-racism protests around the globe, as demonstrators from Brisbane and Sydney in Australia to London, Paris and other European cities embraced the Black Lives Matter message.

In Washington, tens of thousands of people chanting "I can't breathe" and "Hands up, don't shoot" rallied at the Lincoln Memorial then marched to the White House on Saturday in the biggest protest yet during 12 days of demonstrations across the United States since Floyd died.

Broadening its scope

A common message of the day was a determination to transform outrage generated by Floyd's death last month into a broader movement seeking far-reaching reforms to the U.S. criminal justice system and its treatment of minorities.

The gatherings in Washington and dozens of other U.S. cities and towns – urban and rural alike – were also notable for a generally lower level of tension and discord than was seen during much of the preceding week.

There were sporadic instances in some cities of protesters trying to block traffic. And police in riot gear used flash-bang grenades in a confrontation with demonstrators in Seattle.

But largely it was the most peaceful day of protests



United voice: Demonstrators walking down Capitol Hill during a protest against racial inequality in Washington on Saturday, 12 days since George Floyd died in police custody. ■ REUTERS

since video footage emerged showing Floyd, an unarmed black man in handcuffs, lying face down on a Minneapolis street on May 25 as a police officer knelt on his neck for nearly nine minutes.

The intensity of protests over the past week began to ebb on Wednesday after prosecutors in Minneapolis had arrested all four police officers implicated in Floyd's death. Derek Chauvin, the officer seen pinning Floyd to the ground as Floyd repeatedly groaned "I can't breathe" was charged with second-degree murder.

On Sunday morning, New York Mayor Bill de Blasio announced he was lifting a city-wide curfew a day early. Still, anger in Minneapolis remained intense. The city's Mayor ran a gauntlet of angry, jeering protesters on Saturday after telling them he

opposed their demands for de-funding the city police department.

Nationwide call

Several dozen white and black protesters carrying "Black Lives Matter" signs demonstrated on Saturday in Vidor, once notorious as a Ku Klux Klan stronghold, highlighting the scope of renewed calls for racial equality echoing across the country five months before the November 3 U.S. presidential election.

In Floyd's birthplace of Raeford, North Carolina, hundreds lined up at a church to pay their respects during a public viewing of his body prior to a private memorial service for family members. Floyd's funeral is scheduled for Tuesday in Houston, where he lived before relocating to the Minneapolis area.

Multiple cities see anti-racism marches

REUTERS
ROME/LONDON

Demonstrators in Rome held their fists in the air and chanted "No Justice! No Peace!" on Sunday, while in London people defying official warnings not to gather lay down outside the U.S. Embassy as part of a rolling, anti-racism movement.

The second weekend of demonstrations showed the depth of feeling worldwide over the death of George Floyd.

"UK guilty too", read a banner held up by one of the protesters in London, where Health Minister Matt Hancock said earlier that joining the protests risked contributing to the spread of the virus.



A protester in Maastricht, the Netherlands. ■ REUTERS

U.S. embassies were the focus of protests elsewhere in Europe, with more than 10,000 gathering in the Danish capital Copenhagen, hundreds in Budapest and thousands in Madrid, where they lined the street guarded by police in riot gear.

Brazil stops publishing running total of COVID-19 cases, deaths

Website now shows only numbers for previous 24 hours

ASSOCIATED PRESS
RIO DE JANEIRO

Brazil's government has stopped publishing a running total of COVID-19 deaths and infections in an extraordinary move that critics call an attempt to hide the true toll of the disease in Latin America's largest nation.

Saturday's move came after months of criticism from experts that Brazil's statistics are woefully deficient, and in some cases manipulated, so it may never be possible to understand the depth of the pandemic in the country.

Brazil's last official numbers showed it had recorded over 34,000 deaths related to COVID-19, the third-highest number in the world, just ahead of Italy. It reported nearly 6,15,000 infections, putting it second, behind the United States. Brazil, with about 210 million people, is the globe's seventh most populous nation.

were exaggerating the toll.

A council of State Health Secretaries said it would fight the changes by Mr. Bolsonaro, who has dismissed the gravity of the COVID-19 pandemic and tried to thwart attempts to impose quarantines, curfews and social distancing, arguing those steps are causing more damage to the economy than the illness.

"The authoritarian, insensitive, inhumane and unethical attempt to make the COVID-19 deaths invisible will not prosper," the Health Secretaries council said on Saturday.

While precise counts of cases and deaths are difficult for governments worldwide, health researchers have been saying for weeks that irregularities with Brazilian statistics were making it impossible to get a handle on an exploding situation.

Around the world, COVID-19 deaths are being undercounted to varying degrees due to lack of universal testing. Academic groups in dozens of nations have tried to figure out the magnitude



Taking all steps: Health workers from Doctors Without Borders visiting a locality in Sao Paulo, Brazil, to conduct medical examinations. ■ AP

of the undercount by studying the total number of deaths in a set period compared to the average of prior years in a nation, State, province or city. Where they find unexplained surges in deaths, it is likely due in large part to undiagnosed cases of COVID-19.

In Brazil, such efforts have been handicapped by problems with the government statistics that serve as a baseline.

It is very difficult to make predictions that you think are reliable," said Fabio Mendes, an adjunct professor in software engineering at the federal University of Brasilia, who studies coronavirus statistics. "We know the numbers are bad."

The gravity of the problems with Brazil's data became clear last month when academics reviewing death certificates compiled by the federal Civil Registration office – which compiles data from all Brazilian States – found drastic, unexplained fluctuations in monthly deaths in recent years, and puzzling discrepancies between States.

Killing of autistic Palestinian a tragedy, says Netanyahu

Police suspected Hallak to be armed

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
JERUSALEM

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said on Sunday that the recent police killing of an autistic Palestinian man was unjustified and a "tragedy", offering his condolences to the bereaved family.

Israeli police shot 32-year-old Iyak Hallak in Jerusalem on May 30 while he was walking to his special needs school, after officers mistakenly thought he was armed. "What happened with Iyak Hallak is a tragedy. This is a man with limitations – autism – who was under suspicion, we know, wrongly, of being a terrorist in a very sensitive location," Mr. Netanyahu said at the



Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. ■ AP

start of the weekly Cabinet meeting. The killing happened near Lions' Gate in the alleys of the walled Old City, where Hallak had attended school for six years.

Thousands of mourners massed for Hallak's funeral, while online the hashtag #PalestinianLivesMatter echoed the fury being seen at mass protests against police violence and racism in the United States.

China exonerates self in white paper

It refutes allegations of delay in reporting, says virus was first noticed on Dec. 27

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
BEIJING

A beleaguered China on Sunday exonerated itself from the global allegations of delay in reporting the COVID-19 outbreak, saying the virus was first noticed in Wuhan on December 27 as a viral pneumonia and human-to-human transmission was discovered on January 19, after which it took swift actions to curb it.

A white paper released by the Chinese government gave a lengthy explanation to refute the allegations of cover-up and delay by Beijing on reporting the COVID-19 outbreak last year in Wuhan.

Spread from Wuhan

According to the white paper, after the COVID-19 was identified by a hospital in



Report card: Chinese Vice Foreign Minister Ma Zhaoxu attending a briefing on the white paper in Beijing. ■ REUTERS

Wuhan on December 27, the local government called experts to look into the cases through an analysis of the patients' condition and clinical outcome, the findings of epidemiological investigations, and preliminary laboratory testing results. "The conclusion was that they were cases of viral pneumo-

nia," it said. Researchers from a high-level expert team organised by the National Health Commission (NHC) confirmed that the virus was transmissible among humans for the first time on January 19, hours before they notified the public, and less than a month before the experts were alerted by the

newly discovered disease, it said. Before January 19, there was not sufficient evidence to indicate that it could be transmitted by humans, said Wang Guangfa, a leading Chinese respiratory expert who was among the first group of experts dispatched by the NHC to Wuhan in early January.

According to the white paper, the NHC on January 14 required Wuhan and the whole Hubei province to enhance their preparation against the virus as there were great uncertainties.

China will make its COVID-19 vaccine a global public good when it is ready for application after successful research and clinical trials,

Wang Zhigang, Minister of Science and Technology, told reporters in Beijing.

Japan not to condemn Beijing over Hong Kong law

Tokyo had expressed concern earlier

REUTERS
TOKYO

Japan has decided not to join the United States, Britain and others in issuing a statement scolding China for imposing a new security law, Kyodo news agency reported on Sunday, citing officials from countries involved.

The United Kingdom, the U.S., Australia and Canada condemned China on May 28 for imposing a law that they said would threaten freedom and breach a 1984 Sino-British agreement on the autonomy of the former colony.

There was no immediate response to Reuters e-mail inquiries to Japan's Foreign Ministry and the U.S. embassy in Tokyo.

Tokyo separately issued a statement May 28, the day China's Parliament approved the national security legislation, saying the nation was "seriously concerned" about the move, which observers fear could endanger Hong Kong's special autonomy and freedoms.

Visit by Xi
Tokyo is in a complicated position amid tension between China and the U.S. over the Hong Kong issue as Japan plans Chinese President Xi Jinping's state visit, which was planned for early April but has been postponed because both have agreed to priorities to contain the virus outbreak.

FB needs stricter policies on misinformation'

Scientists, including those funded by Zuckerberg's group, write to Facebook CEO

ASSOCIATED PRESS
BOSTON

Dozens of scientists doing research funded by Mark Zuckerberg said Facebook should not be letting President Donald Trump use the social media platform to "spread both misinformation and incendiary statements."

The researchers, including 60 professors at leading U.S. research institutions, wrote to the Facebook CEO on Saturday asking Mr. Zuckerberg to "consider stricter policies on misinformation and incendiary language that harms people," especially during the current turmoil over racial injustice.

Taking the side of truth
The letter calls the spread of "deliberate misinformation and divisive language" contrary to the researchers' goals of using technology to prevent and eradicate disease, improve childhood education and reform the criminal justice system.

Their mission "is antithet-



Under scrutiny: Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg and colleague Joel Kaplan in Washington in 2018. ■ NYTIMES

and Parkinson's disease.

They said the letter had more than 160 signatories. Mr. Shepherd said about 10% are employees of foundations run by Mr. Zuckerberg and his wife, Priscilla Chan.

The letter objects specifically to Mr. Zuckerberg's decision not to at least flag as a violation of Facebook's community standards Mr. Trump's post in response to unrest in Minneapolis. The letter's authors called the post "a clear statement of inciting violence." Twitter had both flagged and demoted a Trump tweet using the same language.

In a statement, the Chan Zuckerberg Initiative noted that the philanthropic organisation is separate from Facebook and said "we are grateful for our staff, partners and grantees" and "respect their right to voice their opinions, including on Facebook policies." Some Facebook employees have publicly objected to Mr. Zuckerberg's refusal to take down or label misleading or incendiary posts by Mr. Trump and other political figures. But Mr. Zuckerberg has so far refused.

On Friday, Mr. Zuckerberg said in a post that he would review "potential options for handling violating or partially-violating content aside from the binary leave-it-up or take-it-down decisions". "Our current policy is that if content is actually inciting violence, then the right mitigation is to take that content down – not let people continue seeing it behind a flag. There is no exception to this policy for politicians or newsworthiness."

Sri Lanka keeping a close watch on locust situation

The threat is thousands of miles away

MEERA SRINIVASAN
COLOMBO

Sri Lanka is keeping a close watch on the locust situation in India, as it prepares to battle an increased population of local grasshoppers this season.

"At the moment, the threat is thousands of miles away. We don't think the locusts in India are heading this way yet, though we are keeping a close watch," W.M.W. Weerakoon, Director General of the Department of Agriculture, told *The Hindu* on Sunday.

More grasshoppers
Meanwhile, agriculture authorities have asked farmers across the island to alert them if they spot an unusual rise in local grasshoppers in their fields.

"We get local grasshoppers this time of the year, but there appears to be an increase. So we have asked farmers to monitor the sit-

uation and update us. But this is not the desert locust," Mr. Weerakoon said. In May, the Department of Agriculture reported a large population of local grasshoppers in Mawathagama, in Sri Lanka's North Western Province. They were preparing to contain the infestation with chemicals. "Now, we fear there may be similar grasshoppers in other parts as well," he said, adding that the change in climatic patterns may have contributed to it. According to Mr. Weerakoon, the local grasshoppers are more likely to attack home gardens and small fields, than large cultivable areas.

Last year, Sri Lanka's farmers were badly affected by the fall army worm – from the moth species, known by the scientific name *Spodoptera frugiperda* – said to have been carried here by strong winds from India.

U.S. plan on troop cut sparks concern

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
FRANKFURT AM MAIN

Germany on Sunday voiced concern at reports that President Donald Trump plans to cut the number of U.S. troops stationed in Germany, amid fears it could weaken a key pillar of NATO defence in the region. German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas said both countries stood to gain from close cooperation even if the transatlantic relationship had become "complicated" under Mr. Trump.

The Wall Street Journal reported on Friday that Mr. Trump had ordered the Pentagon to slash the number of U.S. military personnel by 9,500 from the current 34,500 permanently assigned in Germany.

ELSEWHERE



Guaido reappears after claims on disappearance

CARACAS

Venezuelan Opposition leader Juan Guaido reappeared in the street in videos distributed on Saturday by his team, after Foreign Minister Jorge Arreaza claimed he had taken refuge in the French embassy in Caracas. "They are the ones who are hiding... \$15 million reward for them, I am showing my face," said Mr. Guaido in a video. ■ AFP

Pompeo offers help to Russia in cleaning spill

WASHINGTON
The U.S. on Saturday offered to help Russia clean up a vast fuel spill that has fouled an Arctic river in Siberia. "Despite our disagreements, the United States stands ready to assist Russia to mitigate this environmental disaster," tweeted Secretary of State Mike Pompeo.

CM

ASK US

ARATI KRISHNAN

Q. My neighbour, aged 75, has deposited all his life savings in a fixed deposit with a small finance bank (SFB). He is worried about the safety of his money as he feels a collapse of banks is imminent. Should he transfer his money to the SBI which is offering just 5.7% interest? Are SFB deposits safe? Should he diversify his savings across other SFBs?

MUTHYA KANNAN

A. While it is unlikely that the RBI or the government will allow any commercial bank to collapse in India, your neighbour is quite right to worry about his deposits, if he has all his savings parked in a single small finance bank. Small finance banks, or SFBs, are a new category of banks licensed by the RBI that provide loans to small-ticket and less-affluent borrowers, who are usually not favoured by big banks. SFBs are required to lend at least 75% of the loans to priority sectors as defined by the RBI and at least 50% of the loans need to be below ₹25 lakh. This makes their loan books riskier than those of mainstream commercial banks.

However, these banks are regulated stringently by the RBI. SFBs, like commercial banks, need to follow Statutory Liquidity Ratio and Cash Reserve Ratio rules, which means setting aside 22.25% of their deposits. They are required to maintain a capital adequacy ratio of 15% and cannot lend more than 10% of their capital to a single borrower. SFBs are covered by deposit insurance, just like other banks, for up to ₹5 lakh per account holder.

While these safeguards make these banks a reasonable parking ground in normal times, these are abnormal times. Financials of most banks in India are expected to come under stress owing to COVID-19 and the lockdown that has brought businesses to a standstill. Apart from the bad loans resulting from the cash crunch, the RBI has also required banks to grant a moratorium (facility to defer repayments) to their borrowers for six months from March 1, 2020 to August 31, 2020, which can lead to businesses and individuals skipping or delaying repayments. SFBs, which lend to low-income and self-employed folks, have seen the highest proportion (70-80%) of borrowers availing of this moratorium, as self-employed folks have seen the most job losses. The resulting bad loans may require these banks to create higher provisions, denting their profitability and capital ratios in the coming months.

In light of the above, your neighbour should certainly not be putting all his eggs in one basket by depositing all his life savings in one SFB. To avoid risk, it would be best for him to use SFBs for diversifying (by investing 10%), while parking the bulk of his savings in systemically important banks or post office schemes. Large, systemically important banks today offer very low deposit rates, it is true, but given the risky times we live in, it would be best to prioritise safety over returns. You can stick to 6-month to 1-year deposits so that you can switch to better rates later. Post office schemes such as Senior Citizens Savings Scheme and the Monthly Income Account offer better rates than top banks; he can maximise his deposits in those.

Q. My monthly savings are ₹25,000 and I want to invest in an option where I can get monthly returns. I can add to the investment every month so that my returns increase. What would be the best investment option?

RANJEET SINGH

A. There are several options. If safety is your priority, you can consider investing in the Post Office Monthly Income Account. This government-backed scheme has a five-year lock-in period with maximum investment limit of ₹4.5 lakh and pays monthly interest at 6.6% per annum. Many banks and NBFCs offer fixed deposit schemes with monthly interest payouts. Opening FDs every month, though, may be troublesome as it will entail keeping track of multiple deposits. You could invest regularly in a 6-month recurring deposit and switch the accumulated lumpsum to an FD at regular intervals. NBFC deposits are riskier than banks' or post office schemes and you will need to check the financial/ratings of the NBFC before investing. Your final, and most risky option is debt mutual funds, which invest your money in bonds from companies. You can invest in debt funds through monthly SIPs and use systematic withdrawal plans to receive regular cash flows. Returns tend to be volatile and your capital value can fluctuate based on market movements.

Readers can send in queries on personal finance and investing to moneywise@thehindu.co.in. Our experts who write on personal finance will answer these queries. Moneywise will not give specific recommendations for investment in a particular mutual fund scheme, share or fixed deposit.

Don't lose money when INTEREST RATES DROP

There are some pockets within debt mutual funds which offer hope for investors

JOYDEEP SEN

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has been reducing interest rates to fight the economic slowdown. Accordingly, bank deposit rates are coming down. Rates on other instruments are also following suit so that the entire interest rate structure falls in line. Falling interest rates is a global phenomenon as every country is struggling with growth. While low rates are good for those who want to avail loans, it is not so good for savers. We discuss here some pockets within debt mutual funds, which would be interesting in the current scenario.

Let us see what options you have for fixed income / debt investments. For bank deposits, the rate on a State Bank of India deposit of 5-10 years maturity is 5.4%. The rate on Kisan Vikas Patra is 6.9%, National Savings Certificate, 6.8% and Monthly Income Account, 6.6%. Public Provident Fund (PPF) pays 7.1% currently, but there is an upper ceiling on investment i.e. ₹1.5 lakh per year. The 7.75% RBI Savings Bonds have been discontinued. They may be re-launched but the interest rate would be lower. Yields (annual-

ised returns) of tax-free PSU bonds in the secondary market are only 4.6% to 4.7%. Against this backdrop, we will discuss certain debt mutual fund investment options. Portfolio credit quality is important as you do not want any default risk. We will mention only those funds that have a AAA-oriented/Government Security-oriented portfolio. In this context, it is relevant to understand the concept of debt fund portfolio maturity roll-down.

Let's say there is a Fixed Maturity Plan (FMP) with a 3-year maturity. As per the rules, the maximum maturity of securities in the portfolio can be 3 years. After one year, the remaining maturity of bonds in the portfolio runs down to two years. After 3 years, all the bonds in the portfolio mature and you get your money back. Since the bonds are maturing, there is no volatility risk; it does not matter to you, on the date of maturity, whether bond prices in the market are going up or down.

The difference between FMPs and open-ended debt funds is that open-ended funds will always have portfolio ma-

turity. As an example, if a Short Duration Fund has a portfolio maturity of say 3 years today, it will have a portfolio maturity of 3 years even after the passage of 3 years, or little bit here and there e.g. 2.8 years or 3.1 years. The point is, it does not behave like an FMP.

Now, the concept. There are a few open ended funds which have a strategy of portfolio maturity roll-down. It is a decision taken by the AMC to run a fund with that positioning. In an FMP, there is no redemption facility available with the AMC; in open-ended funds you can redeem i.e. liquidity is available to you.

The advantage here is, your volatility risk is progressively coming down with every passing day. There would be some volatility as of today, but you need not worry; you just have to hold on to the fund.

Since every investor would not be aware of open-ended funds run with a strategy of portfolio maturity roll-down, we have mentioned these funds briefly. Axis Dynamic Bond Fund has a portfolio comprising AAA-rated bonds. Portfolio maturity and portfolio duration

is 9.5 years and 6.3 years. Similarly, L&T Triple Ace Bond Fund has a AAA-oriented portfolio. Portfolio maturity and duration is 7.7 and 5.4 years.

If you have money with a longer term objective e.g. son's education, daughter's marriage or want to pass on a legacy for the next generation and want to deploy it for, say, 15 years and are looking for an alternative to PPF, then you may look at Nippon India Nivesh Lakshya Fund. This fund has a portfolio comprising Government Secur-

ties only i.e. there is no credit risk. With a portfolio maturity of approximately 25 years and a modified duration of approximately 11 years, this is for the long haul.

The advantages of investing in funds with this strategy are:

1) Volatility or price movement risk is taken care of, provided you hold on for the time horizon required, which is indicated by the portfolio maturity;

2) If the interest rates come down over your holding period (i.e. bond prices move up), you would get that benefit as well in these funds. Valuation for NAV is done at market-based prices;

3) There is tax efficiency in debt mutual funds, which is not

there in other taxable investments. For a holding period of more than three years in debt funds, you are eligible for indexation. By virtue of indexation, price appreciation roughly equivalent to inflation for that period is allowed as deduction for tax purposes.

If your fund gives say 7% per year for the holding period and inflation is say 4% per year, then (7% minus 4%) 3% is taxable at 20%. That is, effective tax payable is only 0.6% and your net return is (7% minus 0.6%) 6.4%.

Other investments like bank deposits are taxable at your slab rate, which is 30% for most people. If you get 7% on a deposit for illustration (which is actually lower nowadays), tax payable is (30% of 7%) i.e. 2.1% and your net return is 4.9%.

The author is founder, weiseinvestor.in

COVER NOTE: THE NEXT STEP

Starting point of an insurance journey

It is only after the form is submitted does the insurer take the underwriting decision

K. NITYA KALYANI

The proposal form is just one starting point of your journey to protect yourself with insurance. There are many measures built into the legal and regulatory systems for insurance which, if followed diligently, will be the insurance for your insurance policy to work optimally.

The Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority (Protection of Policyholders' Interest) Regulations, 2002 lays down the framework in this regard. Complementing and supplementing these are many other regulations that touch upon more specialised areas in detail.

For example, there are regulations about certain covers such as health insurance and unit-linked insurance policies (ULIPs), about intermediaries such as brokers, web aggregators and agents and service providers such as third-party administrators and loss surveyors relating to their training, competency and code of conduct.

There are even regulations about advertisements and disclosure by insurance companies and other stakeholders in the insurance industry.

There are regulations relating to insurance companies' corporate governance, financial reporting, prudential norms or investments, or the regulations mandating that rural and social sectors should receive a certain percentage of



Fine print: A policy prospectus must state the scope of benefits and the extent of insurance cover. ■ GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCK

each company's products.

Though seemingly unrelated to you and me, the individual policyholders, these too have the final objective of protecting policyholders' interests. We will take brief look at them later and see how we stand to benefit.

When you are ready to fill a proposal form, you would have been briefed about your policy options, maybe read the policy brochure or prospectus to get to know the benefits, what is covered, what is not and under what terms and conditions.

The Protection of Policyholders' Interest Regulations have something to say about this part of the process too.

Incidentally, the regulation encourages forms and documents to be made available in

languages recognised under the Constitution of India.

As per the regulations, an insurance policy prospectus should clearly state the scope of benefits and the extent of insurance cover.

It should explain explicitly the warranties, exceptions and conditions of the insurance cover.

If it is a life insurance policy, it should state if it is participating / with-profit or non-participating / without-profit, which determines whether or not you will share the benefits of investment income related to this policy.

Riders spelt out

Any riders that can be purchased with the policy should also be spelt out in detail.

The above details are in

keeping with utmost good faith on the part of the insurance company and disclosure of material facts.

If the proposer misrepresents or suppresses any material fact (unless it is a fraud), the insurance company can repudiate claims on this basis. But this right is limited to the initial three years of a policy. This is stated in Section 45 of The Insurance Act, 1939, and the regulations state that this information should be explicitly stated in the proposal and that the proposer should be guided by it.

Nomination facility

Most insurance policies can be nominated and this is a basic necessity and convenience for the beneficiary to receive the claim money.

Failing to make a proper nomination defeats the very purpose of an insurance policy and holds up the receipt of claim money in a tedious legal processes.

The regulations underline the importance of this stating that wherever the benefit of nomination is available, "the insurer shall draw the attention of the proposer to it and encourage... to avail the facility".

Once the proposal form is submitted, the insurer makes his underwriting decision. All such decisions have to be communicated to you in writing and within 15 days.

(The writer is a business journalist specialising in insurance & corporate history)

BLACK BOARD: TECHNICAL GLITCH

Speed breaker on bourse

It can lead to suspension of trading

ASHISH RUKHAIYAR

What is a technical glitch?

■ Simply put, a technical glitch in the context of a stock exchange is any event that affects normal trading in equities – be it in the cash segment or the derivatives market.

It can affect the market in many ways and lead to investors not getting proper price quotes; or trades not getting executed promptly; or even issues such as margins not getting reflected properly. That, in turn, affects the ability to place trades.

What causes a glitch?

■ It can be caused by many factors. Indian exchanges are one of the fastest in the world in terms of speed of trade execution – BSE claims it is the fastest with a speed of six microseconds – and hence, involve a lot of technology that comes with its share of glitches. Technology is ever evolving and at times, a new update or patch that is released could lead to certain issues.

To be fair to stock exchanges, they follow a rigorous testing process before going live with it. Further, brokers have leased line connections with the exchange servers and any issue with the connectivity can also lead to a glitch.

Can it halt trading?

■ Not always. The recent past

has seen instances wherein a glitch affected only a certain segment of the market or only a certain aspect affected trading. Last week, brokers alleged that prices of Bank Nifty options contracts were not getting updated properly, thus affecting trading in those contracts.

It can affect the market in many ways and lead to investors not getting proper price quotes; or trades not getting executed promptly; or even issues such as margins not getting reflected properly. That, in turn, affects the ability to place trades.

Incidentally, the most high-profile glitch occurred on July 10, 2017 when the NSE was forced to suspend trading for more than three hours. So, while a technical glitch may not always lead to trading suspension, it will affect investors as trade execution gets hit.

Is it common globally?

■ It's not that only Indian exchanges face such issues. Most of the leading global bourses have faced similar issues in the past. In August 2015, the New York Stock Exchange had to halt trading due to a glitch.

Prior to that, Nasdaq faced a similar issue, being forced to suspend trading for three hours on account of an alleged broken price feed. Last year, the London Stock Exchange saw the start of a trading session getting delayed by almost two hours, which it attributed to a "technical software issue."

LOOSE CHANGE

RAVIKANTH



"Take the mask off for a second, sir. Then the mango won't smell like detergent"

Bank Fixed Deposit Rates				
Bank Name	Interest Rates (%)			
	Highest Slab	1-year tenure	3-year tenure	5-year tenure
SMALL FINANCE BANKS				
Utkarsh Small Finance Bank	9.00	8.25	8.25	8.25
Suryoday Small Finance Bank	9.00	7.50	7.50	7.50
Jana Small Finance Bank	8.00	7.50	8.00	7.50
Finicare Small Finance Bank	7.75	7.15	7.50	7.00
ESF Small Finance Bank	7.50	7.00	7.50	6.50
Equitas Small Finance Bank	7.35	7.10	7.15	6.75
AU Small Finance Bank	7.25	6.50	7.25	7.00
Ujjivan Small Finance Bank	6.95	6.95	6.50	6.25
Capital Small Finance Bank	6.65	6.50	6.50	6.25
PRIVATE SECTOR BANKS				
RBL Bank	7.50	7.20	7.50	7.15
DCB Bank	7.35	6.75	7.35	7.35

Thinking caps on after the saliva ban

Ballmaker SG ready to give bowlers some advantage; Dukes insists no tweaking needed for the cherry

N. SUDARSHAN

The perceived loss of swing in the wake of ICC Cricket Committee's temporary recommendation to prohibit the use of saliva to polish the ball (to tackle COVID-19) and not allow any artificial material as a substitute has divided opinion sharply.

The ball manufacturers, whose responsibility it will ultimately be to ensure that the cherry behaves as it should, seem to be taking divergent stands too, but only slightly.

Different approach

"A few days ago Anil Kumble spoke about how instead of playing around with the ball you should rework the pitches. I think that's a great suggestion. This way I won't have to do much (laugh)," said Paras Anand, director in Sanspareils Greenlands (SG) that supplies the SG balls for Ranji Trophy and Test cricket in India.

"On a serious note, we are looking at all ways to give bowlers some advantage. Without saliva, I doubt fast



Change in tactic: With the use of saliva on the cricket ball banned for now, leading manufacturers have expressed divergent views on the way forward. ■ FILE PHOTO

bowlers will be able to reverse swing. So we've made the seam more prominent to help in lateral movement; create a harder core so that the ball will bounce more; add one more layer of lacquer to extend the lifespan."

Dilip Jajodia, the owner of British Cricket Balls Limited that manufactures the Dukes ball used in England and the West Indies, is adamant that no changes are required.

"Swing is not just about the shiny side; the ball has to

keep its shape and hardness," he explained.

"In the hand-stitched Dukes ball, the shoulders drop down much more like a circle than other balls which go out like an apple. The latter is not the right shape for

swing. Dukes doesn't need saliva because we already have grease in the leather. Perspiration is allowed and if you give it a vigorous polish, it should be fine."

Immediate needs

Jajodia felt that the initial call for introduction of artificial substances and the ensuing debate appeared to be responding to immediate requirements.

"The fast bowlers are like 'oh we can't swing the ball...' Why don't you ask if there is a spinner who will be better off and might get wickets? Playing conditions shouldn't be changed that easily. It's okay if it is a universal problem, but it's not!"

Paras, on his part, said that he would wait for the BCCI to spell out its requirements.

"Obviously, we can't change the dimensions of the ball but we can tweak the making of it. But this is just us preparing for what 'might be'. We will have to wait for the BCCI to come to us before we 'standardise' anything."

Using saliva won't pose any risk once you are in a bubble: Pollock

'No one you come into contact with will have coronavirus'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
JOHANNESBURG

Cricket can resume normally and even use of saliva to shine the ball won't pose any health risk if the matches are played in a bio-secure environment, reckons South African great Shaun Pollock.

The ICC Cricket Committee recently recommended a ban on the use of saliva to shine the ball, but allowed sweat as an interim measure to counter the coronavirus threat.

No ban needed

England will make bio-secure arrangements to host the West Indies behind closed doors for a proposed three-Test series, and Pollock said such environment would not require banning any activity. "I think the environment that'll end up being created is almost going to be like a bubble."

"People will get tested, they'll go into a two-week camp where they're just going to sit and monitor how the conditions of their bo-



Nothing to fear: Shaun Pollock believes players can 'get on with normal proceedings'. ■ FILE PHOTO: S. SUBRAMANIAM

dies change," Pollock told the 'Following On Cricket Podcast' "And if there are no symptoms, it doesn't really matter about shining the ball then, because you're in the bubble and no one you come into contact with will have coronavirus. So you can just get on with normal proceedings."

The England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) is planning to put up safety measures to prevent spread of the disease. It includes limiting travel by picking venues with on-site hotels, manda-

tory 14-day quarantine period for the visiting team, doing regular check-ups.

"I'd presume that there'd be no crowds in place, every single environment they go into would be cleaned down and sprayed, and everything along those lines," said Pollock, who has played 303 ODIs and 101 Tests for South Africa.

West Indies pace great Michael Holding has echoed similar sentiments, saying it is illogical to ban saliva when cricket will be played in a bio-secure environment.

Fortunate to have played with Kohli, says Kane Williamson

They started around the same time in the 2008 U-19 WC

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MUMBAI

New Zealand captain Kane Williamson considers himself "fortunate" to have played the game along side Virat Kohli, and said he has been closely following his Indian counterpart's journey from a young age.

Both Williamson and Kohli featured in the 2008 ICC U-19 World Cup in Malaysia, which was lifted by India and since then went on to become modern day greats of the game.

"Yes, we are fortunate to play against each other. It has been great to meet at a young age and follow his (Kohli's) progress as well as his journey," Williamson said on Star Sports show



Straight talk: Kane Williamson says that he and Virat Kohli have shared honest opinions over the last few years. ■ REUTERS

'Cricket Connected'

In fact, it was Kohli's India that beat Williamson's New Zealand in a close semifinal of the 2008 U19 World Cup, which also featured players like Ravindra Jadeja, Trent Boult and Tim Southee.

Williamson, who led New

Zealand to the 2019 ICC World Cup final, said he and Kohli have shared honest opinions about the game over the last few years.

"It's been interesting, we've had to play against each other for a long period of time," he said.

Williamson, who led New

It will help if Pandya is available for India: Ian Chappell

Says he will give the team an extra bowling option in the Test series against Australia

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MELBOURNE

Australian great Ian Chappell feels India should pick Hardik Pandya in the Test side when it makes the trip down under later this year as the temperamental all-rounder would be crucial in handling the challenge posed by a strong home batting line-up.

Back injury

Pandya hasn't featured in Tests since 2018 and has only recently recovered from a career-threatening back injury. The big-hitting medium-pacer is a vital cog in India's limited-overs set-up.

India and Australia are set to clash in a full series, including four Tests, beginning October and lasting till January 2021.

"It will help if Pandya is



Adding teeth: Ian Chappell feels that Hardik Pandya can play a key role against the strong Aussie batting line-up. ■ REUTERS

available. He gives India an extra bowling option to maintain the pressure when the leading fast bowlers

need a rest," Chappell wrote his column for ESPN Cricinfo. Pandya had recently spoken about the challenge that

C Having Pandya at No. 7 would necessitate Rishabh Pant keeping and batting at six

IAN CHAPPELL

Test cricket is for him now, given his injury-prone back which needed surgery last year. He said that he understands his importance in limited-overs format.

Third seamer

"This is Pandya's chance to gradually build up overs in the three Tests before the SCG match, where he could act as the third seamer so that a second spinner can be included," Chappell said.

"Having Pandya at No. 7 would necessitate Rishabh Pant keeping and batting at six."

Chappell said India's big-

gest challenge in the Test series will be navigating through a strong Australian batting line-up, which now doesn't rely too heavily on David Warner and Steven Smith.

Under Virat Kohli, India scripted history when it earned its maiden Test-series triumph down under in 2018-19, after trying for seven decades.

Potent attack

Chappell feels Australia's potent bowling attack will keep a check on the dangerous Kohli and Cheteshwar Pujara, who was the star of India's breakthrough 2-1 series win over last time.

"Australia's strong attack should restrict India's scoring to reasonable levels despite the daunting presence of Kohli and Pujara."

Umesh was terrified to bowl to Dravid, Laxman

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

India fast bowler Umesh Yadav, on Sunday, revealed he was terrified when he got to know that he would be bowling to batting greats Rahul Dravid and VVS Laxman in a domestic match early in

his career.

Umesh recalled the Duleep Trophy 2008-09 match between Central Zone and South Zone in which he was up against Dravid and Laxman.

"When I went to play the Duleep Trophy match and got to know the team I would be playing against and I would be bowling against the likes of (Rahul) Dravid and (VVS) Laxman... I was terrified," Umesh said on Cricbuzz's YouTube chat show 'Spicy Pitch'.

In the match, Umesh, playing for Central Zone, dismissed Laxman for 13 and Dravid for seven in the first innings and bagged a five-wicket haul.

The hosts got off to a strong start and had carved out three good chances before Robert Andrich was sent clear by Anthony Ujah in the 11th minute to beat keeper Alexander Nuebel.

Union still had Schalke on the backfoot when the visitors equalised thanks to a low drive from Everton's on-loan full-back Jonjoe Kenny.

The results: Werder Bremen 0



Battling duo: Robert Andrich, who scored Union Berlin's opener, jousts with Schalke's Rabbi Matondo. ■ REUTERS

lost to Wolfsburg 1 (Weghorst 82); Union Berlin 1 (Andrich 11) drew with Schalke 1 (Kenny 28).

Saturday: Borussia Dortmund 1 (Can 57) bt Hertha Berlin 0.

Manages to salvage a point against Union Berlin

IN BRIEF

BUNDESLIGA

REUTERS
BERLIN

Schalke 04 scored for only the second time in its last five Bundesliga games to rescue a 1-1 draw at Union Berlin on Sunday but equalled a club record by going 12 consecutive league games without a win. The Royal Blues have now failed to win since January 17 and stayed in 10th place on 38 points. Union climbs up to 13th on 32.

The hosts got off to a strong start and had carved out three good chances before Robert Andrich was sent clear by Anthony Ujah in the 11th minute to beat keeper Alexander Nuebel.

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IN BRIEF

INDIA

Umesh Yadav. ■ FILE PHOTO: G.P. SAMPATH KUMAR

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