



Govt. not hearing cries  
of migrant workers,  
says Sonia Gandhi  
page 9



Centre's decisions have  
led to a spike in virus  
cases: Hemant Soren  
page 11



Sensex extends gains,  
reclaims 32,000-mark;  
Nifty tops 9,450  
page 13



China approves plan  
to impose security law  
in Hong Kong  
page 12

PRINTED AT • CHENNAI • COIMBATORE • BENGALURU • HYDERABAD • MADURAI • NOIDA • VISAKHAPATNAM • THIRUVANANTHAPURAM • KOCHI • VIJAYAWADA • MANGALURU • TIRUCHIRAPPALLI • KOLKATA • HUBBALLI • MOHALI • MALAPPURAM • MUMBAI • TIRUPATI • LUCKNOW • CUTTACK • PATNA

## NEARBY



### Not amending labour laws, says Minister

MUMBAI  
The Maharashtra government is working out a proposal to provide direct assistance to micro, small and medium enterprises, as opposed to the additional loans offered by the Centre as part of its stimulus package to offset losses triggered by the pandemic-induced lockdown. Speaking to *The Hindu*, State Industries Minister Subhash Desai also said the State is not in favour of amending existing labour laws, like some other States are pursuing. New investors could be granted some concessions, if needed, he said.

REGION ▶ PAGE 5

### Unani doctor attached to 108 ambulance dies

MUMBAI  
A 51-year-old Unani doctor attached to the State-run 108 ambulance service has succumbed to COVID-19. The doctor had travelled with COVID-19 patients across the city, stabilising them before they reached hospitals, over the past several weeks. But when he contracted the virus, he had to travel to five hospitals in an autorickshaw before he could get a bed. He is the fourth doctor in the city to die of COVID-19.

REGION ▶ PAGE 3

FRIDAY REVIEW ▶ 4 PAGES

# Working with China to resolve LAC issue peacefully, says MEA

Countries 'engaged' via diplomatic, military channels; no traction for Trump's offer

SUHASINI HAIDAR  
NEW DELHI

Indian and Chinese sides remain "engaged" through diplomatic and military channels in Delhi and Beijing and at the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in order to resolve the situation along the boundaries in Ladakh and Sikkim, the government said on Thursday.

Indicating that India would not accept U.S. President Donald Trump's offer to mediate between the two countries, it said the matter was being discussed bilaterally.

"We are engaged with the Chinese side to peacefully resolve the issue," said Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) spokesperson Anurag Srivastava when asked about Mr. Trump's assertion that he had conveyed to India and China his willingness to "mediate or arbitrate" on the "raging border dispute" between them.

**Position of PLA troops**  
While giving no details of the nature and extent of the standoff, which has been going on for weeks, the MEA said the contact between both sides on the issue included talks in "Delhi and Beijing". The spokesperson did not respond to questions about whether Chinese



**Adding muscle:** An Army convoy moving towards the Zoji La Pass in Drass on Thursday. ■ ANI

troops remained in areas patrolled by India, particularly in the Galwan valley.

"India is committed to the objective of maintenance of peace and tranquillity in the border areas with China and our armed forces scrupulously follow the consensus reached by our leaders and the guidance provided. At the same time, we remain firm in our resolve to ensuring India's sovereignty and national security," Mr. Srivastava said.

The MEA's comments came a day after the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs said the situation at the LAC was "stable and controllable". While declining to comment on the Chinese state-

ment, the MEA spokesperson said the issues would be resolved according to five agreements on border management signed by India and China between 1993 and 2013.

"Indian troops take a very responsible approach towards border management and strictly follow the procedures laid out in various bilateral agreements and protocols with China to resolve any issue that may arise in the border areas," said Mr. Srivastava in the most extensive comments made by the government thus far.

**CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8**  
**CHINA BANS PORK IMPORTS FROM INDIA ▶ PAGE 9**

## Infra work in border areas to continue

DINAKAR PERI  
NEW DELHI

There will be no let up in the infrastructure development on the border with China despite the continuing standoff along the Line of Actual Control, a defence source told *The Hindu* on Thursday.

Earlier in the day, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh was briefed by Army chief Gen. Manoj Naravane on the current situation, it has been learnt. Mr. Singh had also reviewed the overall situation with the Chief of Defence Staff Gen. Bipin Rawat and the three Service Chiefs on two occasions, earlier this week on Tuesday and also last Friday, the source said.

On both occasions, it was conveyed to the Services that the ongoing infrastructure development activities have to continue uninterrupted, the source said, adding that it has also been conveyed that there have to be enough troops on the ground.

**CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8**

# Centre reviews situation in 13 regions hit hard by virus

Country records 7,227 fresh cases, fatalities rise by 175

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

As Lockdown 4.0 nears an end, Cabinet Secretary Rajiv Gauba held a meeting on Thursday with Municipal Commissioners and District Magistrates of 13 regions which account for 70% of the total COVID-19 cases in the country.

The areas of focus are Mumbai, Chennai, Delhi, Ahmedabad, Thane, Pune, Hyderabad, Kolkata/Hooghly, Indore, Jaipur, Jodhpur, Chengalpattu and Tiruvallur.

Earlier in the day, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh was briefed by Army chief Gen. Manoj Naravane on the current situation, it has been learnt. Mr. Singh had also reviewed the overall situation with the Chief of Defence Staff Gen. Bipin Rawat and the three Service Chiefs on two occasions, earlier this week on Tuesday and also last Friday, the source said.

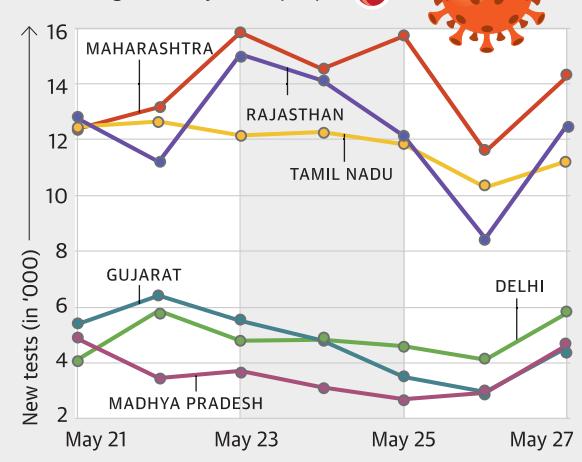
India now has the highest number of cases in Asia, surpassing the tally of Turkey.

A statement issued by the government noted that the Cabinet Secretary's meeting had significance as the 13 regions are considered to be the worst affected.

In the meeting, the Centre stressed that containment zones should be geographically defined based on factors such as mapping of cases, contacts and their

## The test count

The graph shows the no. of new COVID-19 tests conducted every day in the past week in six States, which together form 78% of India's cases. Gujarat, despite a high case load, recorded consistent fall in tests conducted, in this period. Delhi and M.P. too are testing relatively fewer people



geographical dispersion and demarcate a well-defined perimeter to enforce strict lockdown protocols.

"The measures taken by officials and staff of municipal corporations for cases management were reviewed at the meeting. The Central government has already issued guidelines on COVID-19 management in urban settlements. Highlights of this strategy include work on high-risk factors, indices

such as confirmation rate, fatality rate, doubling rate, tests per million people, etc.," the statement said.

In the day, Union Home Minister Amit Shah spoke to all Chief Ministers to ascertain their views on extending the lockdown, scheduled to end on May 31, and the current COVID-19 situation.

**CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8**  
**MORE REPORTS ON ▶ PAGE 9**

# Don't charge migrants bus or train fare, says SC

Originating State to give shelter, food

KRISHNADAS RAJAGOPAL  
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Thursday forbade the Railways and the State governments from exacting train or bus fares from stranded migrant workers waiting to return home amid the national lockdown.

The court directed that the State from where workers started their journey and the State where they were headed should pool their travel expenses between them. Workers waiting for transport should be provided shelter, food and water by the State responsible.

**There are lapses**  
A three-judge Bench observed in an 11-page order in the *suo motu* case: "State Governments/Union Territories are taking steps to do the needful but there are several difficulties and lapses which are being noticed in the process of registration, transportation and in providing water, food, shelter to these migrant workers."

**Speed up the process**  
During train journey, Railways would be in charge of providing drinking water and meals. In case of bus journey, the State where they started from had to take care of their food and water.

The court said that those found walking should be escorted to the nearest camps

where they should be looked after. States should simplify and speed up the process of registration of migrant workers. After registration, they should be allowed to board buses or trains at the earliest. The receiving State, after the workers reached their native place, shall provide transport, health screening and other facilities free of cost.

The court ordered States to set up help kiosks at places where migrant workers were stranded.

**A LONG WAIT ▶ PAGE 10**

## Dash for safety



**Taken by surprise:** A man running for his life while fishing in floodwaters after a rhinoceros suddenly appeared from a nearby reserve forest in search of food, on the outskirts of Guwahati on Thursday. ■ RITU RAJ KONWAR

# Security forces avert car-bombing in Pulwama

Over 40 kg of explosives defused

PEERZADA ASHIQ  
SRINAGAR

A 2019 Pulwama-style car-bombing by a suicide bomber was prevented in south Kashmir on Thursday, with security forces spotting the vehicle and later defusing over 40 kg of explosives. The militant, however, managed to escape.

"Timely action by security forces averted a major tragedy. A suicide attacker

jumped two checkpoints before leaving a vehicle behind late on Wednesday in the Ayeungud area of Rajpora, Pulwama," said Kashmir Inspector General of Police Vijay Kumar.

"Explosives were fitted in the vehicle jointly by Hizbul-Mujahideen and Jaish-e-Muhammad militants. Experts will study them."

**CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8**

**Out of the total laboratory tests done in the country – 32,42,160 – about 12.4% tests were done in Maharashtra**

DR. PRADEEP AWATE  
State Surveillance Officer

the number of cases, with only 35 new ones being reported on Thursday to take the district's cumulative case tally to 1,375 in contrast with a daily surge of 60 cases in the last week.

"Till date, of a total 41,94,171 laboratory samples, 59,546 have tested positive. Out of the total laboratory tests done in the country – 32,42,160 – about 12.4% tests were done in Maharashtra," said Dr. Awate, informing that there were 3,142 tests per million of the population being done in the State against the national figure of 2,363 tests per million of the population.

Dr. Awate said there are 2,816 active containment zones in the State.

85 more deaths and 2,598 cases reported

SHOUMOJIT BANERJEE  
PUNE

Maharashtra's COVID-19 cases inched close to the 60,000-mark on Thursday, with 2,598 new cases being recorded in the State, while 85 new fatalities pushed the death toll to 1,982.

Of the 59,546 total cases, 38,939 are active cases, while 18,616 have been discharged so far, including 698 patients who had recovered and were allowed to go home on Thursday.

Mumbai city accounted for 1,044 of the day's new

cases – it has now reported 35,485 cases, of whom 24,507 are active. The city also reported 38 deaths, taking its toll to 1,135.

Ten deaths were reported from Pune district. Thane and Vasai-Virar each reported four fatalities, taking their death tolls to 155 and 20 respectively.

State Surveillance Officer

Besides Mumbai, the surge in fresh cases in Thane in the Mumbai Metropolitan Region continued unabated, with over 200 new Covid-19 cases taking the district's tally to 3,763. Navi Mumbai reported 96 new cases as its tally reached 2,390.

Aurangabad district in Marathwada continued to see a relative reduction in

that his party was not a key decision maker in the State.

"Look at the Maharashtra government where the epidemic has assumed a frightening form and the State government is battling with it. Instead of helping it, you are trying to bring it down and destabilize it," Ms. Vadra said in a six-minute-long video message that was part of the Congress's *Speak Up India* campaign on several social media platforms.

Ms. Vadra's reference to Maharashtra comes just a day after her brother and former Congress chief, Rahul Gandhi, had spoken to Shiv Sena chief and Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray's son, Aaditya, in an attempt to do some damage control.

On Tuesday, addressing an online press conference, Mr. Gandhi seemed to have distanced his party – a coalition partner in the Maharashtra government – from the State's high number of COVID-19 cases by stating



Priyanka Gandhi Vadra

ters to run them. Then you claimed that 12,000 buses would be used to ferry migrants but those buses are plying on paper," she said.

In an emotional speech, Ms. Vadra urged the government to focus on the plight of the migrants and referred to some of the painful examples of hardship like a 'toddler trying to wake up his dead mother at a railway platform in Bihar or a daughter who cycled hundreds of kilometres carrying

her sick father or a young son ferrying his parents in a bullock cart".

"We are always indebted to our people. In your victory, they cheered you and in our moment of defeat, they stood by us....Bharat Mata is crying today but you are silent, not coming forward to help," Ms. Vadra said in an emotional appeal but didn't name any leader.

**'Help small businesses'**  
As part of the *Speak Up India* campaign, the Congress is demanding the Centre to offer a monthly cash assistance of ₹7,500 to needy families from Centre

# Now, almost 2,000 dead from COVID-19 in State

85 more deaths and 2,598 cases reported

SHOUMOJIT BANERJEE  
PUNE

Maharashtra's COVID-19 cases inched close to the 60,000-mark on Thursday, with 2,598 new cases being recorded in the State, while 85 new fatalities pushed the death toll to 1,982.

Of the 59,546 total cases

# 'No Army deployment in Mumbai, Pune'

Home Minister rubbishes messages shared on social media, warns strict action against rumour-mongers

**ALOK DESHPANDE**

MUMBAI

Home Minister Anil Deshmukh on Thursday said strict action will be taken against people creating panic in the State by spreading rumours on social media of the Army being deployed in Mumbai and Pune.

Mr. Deshmukh clarified that the rumours were "wholly and completely fake news". He said, "First of all, I want to underline that as Home Minister I am fully confident of the Maharashtra Police's wherewithal and capabilities in tackling any emergency. I exhort citizens not to believe such messages or share them as this unnecessarily creates panic in society. The State government is committed to its battle against COVID-19 and has been open in its communication with citizens on policy decisions with regard to combating the pandemic."

The Home Minister warned rumour-mongers of penalties and punishment under provisions of the Information Technology Act and the Indian Penal Code. Mr. Deshmukh said, "The Maharashtra Cyber Department is looking closely at this issue and has initiated action against rumour-mongers."

Mr. Deshmukh said miscreants are running a concerted campaign to create fake news and spread rumours across social media platforms to create a sense of panic and dissatisfaction among people. "One of the more worrying rumours that has been spread even while

India is in the grip of one of its worst public health emergencies due to the pandemic is about enforcing a complete lockdown in Mumbai and other cities by deploying the Army," he said. The messages also asked people to hoard provisions like vegetables, grocery and milk.

## 12 offenders identified

An inquiry by the Maharashtra Cyber Department found that 12 prominent user IDs on social media platforms have been spreading the rumours and fake news since May 8. Notices in the form of a legal warning have been issued to these users under Section 149 of the Code of Criminal Procedure.

The platforms have been asked to take down these posts and suspend the accounts of the errant users.



**Stepping up security:** Central Industrial Security Force personnel enforce lockdown rules in Madanpura in Mumbai. • SALMAN ANSARI

## BJP city chief challenges police order on fake news

Order is unreasonable, violative of fundamental rights of citizens: Lodha

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA**

MUMBAI

Mangal Prabhat Lodha, BJP MLA and the party's city unit chief, has approached the Bombay High Court against an order issued by the Mumbai Police that stipulates criminal action against any person spreading incorrect, false and fake information on social media platforms.

Mr. Lodha, in his petition filed on Tuesday, said the police order of May 23 is mala fide and passed

with the sole intention to ban any criticism of the government's inaction in the present situation of COVID-19 pandemic.

The petition further said the order was arbitrary, unreasonable and violative of the fundamental rights of all citizens.

The order issued by Deputy Commissioner of Police (Operations), to be in effect till June 8, said action would be taken against any person who spreads incorrect, fake information on

social media platforms.

It also said admins of social media groups shall be held personally liable for dissemination of any false or incorrect messages circulated in the group.

The inability of the State government to correctly control the situation in Maharashtra has been highlighted in the past few weeks. Since then, there has been an outpouring of criticism against the government's mishandling and inability to curb the spread of COVID-19, Mr. Lodha said.

The petition, which has sought for the order to be quashed, will be taken up for hearing on Friday.

The petition said citizens have now started voicing their opinion and views on social media platforms.

Mr. Lodha further claimed that as per the impugned order, such misinformation is likely to cause panic, confusion and mistrust against government and its functionaries.

## COVID-19 claims 14th victim in Mumbai Police

**GAUTAM S. MENGLE**

MUMBAI

A 52-year-old head constable posted with a police station in the northern suburbs became the 14th personnel in the Mumbai Police to succumb to COVID-19 on Thursday.

According to his colleagues, the head constable was on leave since May 20. He had started feeling feverish and was admitted to Shivam Hospital in Kandivali on May 23. On Wednesday, his swab samples were tested at JJ Hospital and his reports returned positive on Thursday.

**Wife tests positive**  
His colleagues then took him to Yashavati Hospital in Charkop, where he passed away at 3 p.m. He is survived by his wife, who has also tested positive for COVID-19, and two sons, officials said.

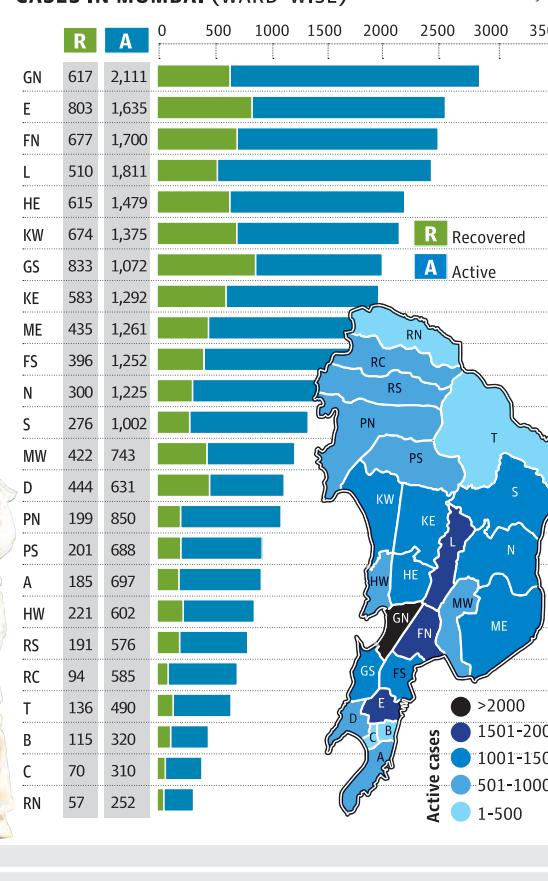
## G NORTH WARD TOPS TABLE

G North ward has recorded 2,728 COVID-19 cases, the highest in the city, according to ward-wise data released by the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) on Thursday. The last time the BMC released the figures was on April 26.

Six wards – G North, E, F North, L, H East and K West – have crossed 2,000 cases each, but their case growth rate is less than 5%. T, B, C and R North wards continue to record the lowest cases.

The case growth rate in the city is 5.17%.

### CASES IN MUMBAI (WARD-WISE)



**HIGH GROWTH RATE WARDS** 9.6% 8.5% 8.3% 8.2%    **LOW GROWTH RATE WARDS** 3.1% 3.6% 3.6% 3.9%

**Active cases**

>2000  
1501-2000  
1001-1500  
501-1000  
1-500

**Recovered**

R  
A

**Recovered**

R  
A

**Active**

R  
A

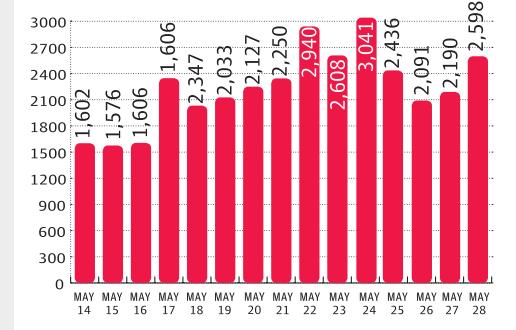
**Recovered**

**Maharashtra COVID-19 tracker**

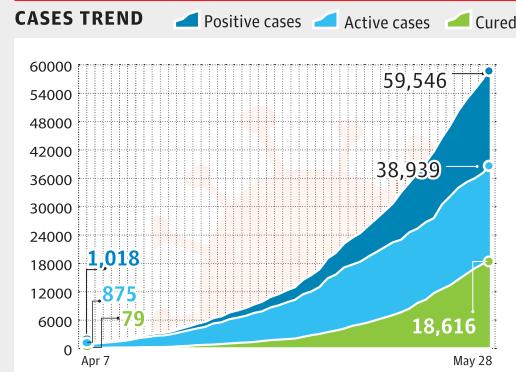
TOTAL CASES	NEW CASES	ACTIVE CASES	RECOVERED	DEATHS
59,546	2,598	38,939	18,616	1,982

**DISTRICTS AFFECTED: 35**

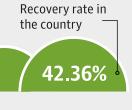
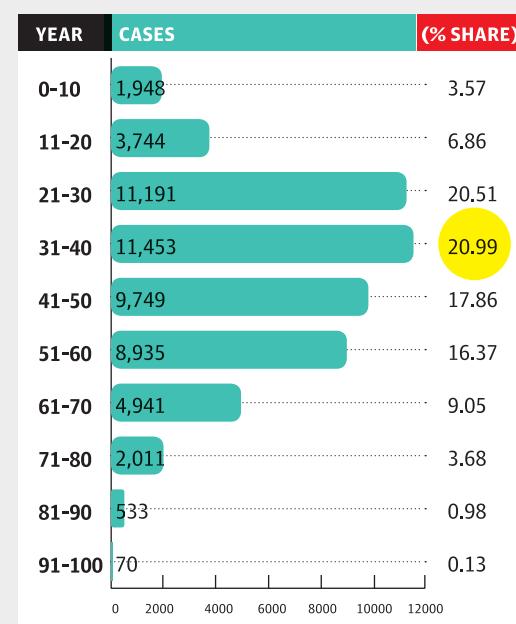
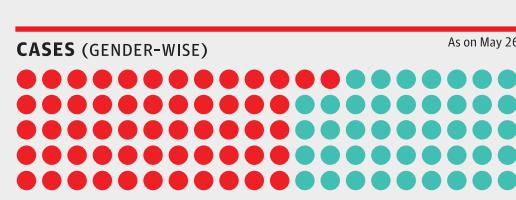
DISTRICT	CASES	DEATHS	DISTRICT	CASES	DEATHS
Mumbai	35,485	1,135	Nanded	108	6
Thane	8,220	155	Sangli	101	1
Pune	6,896	301	Ahmednagar	92	6
Aurangabad	1,370	60	Latur	107	3
Nashik	1,043	52	Jalna	87	0
Raigad	944	26	Buldhana	55	3
Palghar	825	23	Gondia	51	0
Solapur	711	59	Osmannabad	54	0
Nagpur	484	9	Nandurbar	32	3
Jalgaon	526	52	Beed	41	0
Akola	529	28	Gadchiroli	28	0
Kolhapur	351	1	Parbhani	40	1
Satara	429	16	Chandrapur	25	0
Amravati	197	14	Sindhudurg	19	0
Ratnagiri	204	5	Bhandardara	20	0
Hingoli	143	0	Washim	8	0
Dhule	129	9	Wardha	10	1
Yavatmal	116	0			

**POSITIVE CASES OVER LAST 15 DAYS**

1,467 (56%) of Thursday's cases are from Mumbai



31.26% is the State recovery rate

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

70% of deaths due to co-morbidities

**CITY-WISE HELPLINE NUMBERS**

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

Source: Public Health Department, Maharashtra, BMC

# COVID-19 claims Unani doctor attached to 108 ambulance

Fourth medical practitioner to succumb; found bed only after visiting 5 hospitals

**JIYOTI SHELAR**  
MUMBAI

A 51-year-old Unani doctor attached to the State-run 108 ambulance service succumbed to the SARS-CoV-2 infection on Wednesday.

The doctor had travelled with COVID-19 patients across the city, stabilising them before they reached hospitals, over the past several weeks. But when he contracted the virus, he had to travel to five hospitals in an autorickshaw before he could get a bed.

He is the fourth doctor in the city to die of COVID-19.

The Unani practitioner was a resident of Cheetah Camp near Trombay, where he also ran his own clinic at night. According to his 17-year-old son, he developed mild fever and cough on May 12. The next day, he informed his seniors he would not be reporting for work.

"He was taking medicines at home. My mother kept insisting that he go to a hospital, but he thought his symptoms were mild and he would get better," said the doctor's son.

On the night of May 22, exactly 10 days after he developed symptoms, his condition worsened.

"He had been feeling chest discomfort and began getting breathless. We decided

**Hazardous:** Doctors and healthcare workers have been tirelessly working on the frontlines. ■ FILE PHOTO

ed to go to a local hospital," the son said. While most doctors in the area knew him, securing a bed and getting immediate treatment was still not easy. In an autorickshaw, the father and son went to four hospitals, including the civic-run Shatabdi Hospital in Govandi, finally finding a bed at the fifth facility they visited.

In the first private hospital they went to, the doctor was told his condition was serious and he should go to a higher grade centre. The second hospital said they were taking only COVID-19

patients and his status was unknown, even though he had the classic symptoms of the infection, while the third private hospital said they had no doctors available.

At Shatabdi Hospital, there was no bed and he was referred to the civic-run Sion Hospital.

"We reached Sion hospital around 1 a.m. on May 23. By then, my father could not even walk. He was taken into the casualty department and put on oxygen support. Since there were many patients, he was sharing a bed with another person

son," said the son.

His father was treated in the casualty department till the next day before being shifted to a ward. By then, his COVID-19 test report had returned positive. "His condition continued to worsen, but there was no intervention except for the oxygen mask. Doctors only came for rounds once a day in the evening," the son said.

He was later put on a non-invasive ventilator, but succumbed to the infection on Wednesday afternoon. It was only after his death that his family learnt that he had diabetes, which had till then been undiagnosed.

The son said that while out in the ambulance, his father would get the entire PPE kit. After returning home, he would wear mask and gloves and examine patients at his clinic from 9 p.m. to midnight. His clinic was attached to his home in Cheetah Camp, which falls under the M East ward, from where many COVID-19 cases have been reported.

On May 22, a homoeopath from Chembur died of the infection.

Earlier, a 37-year-old Unani practitioner from Govandi died on April 23, while the virus claimed an 85-year-old surgeon from Saifee Hospital on March 22.

## Six more deaths take toll in Pune to 306

District adds 236 fresh cases

**SHOUMOJIT BANERJEE**  
PUNE

Despite a robust recovery rate, the rise in COVID-19 cases continued unabated in Pune district, with 236 new cases and six fatalities reported on Thursday. Its case tally now stands at 6,879 and death count at 306, according to the district administration.

"As many as 236 cases were reported since Wednesday night till Thursday evening, with 220 of these from Pune city, seven from Pimpri-Chinchwad and nine from the Pune rural region," said District Health Officer Bhagwan Pawar.

Divisional Commissioner Dr. Deepak Mhaisekar said that of the district's total case tally, 2,912 were active cases, while 3,661 people had been discharged till date. Around 210 cases were critical. He said Satara district has reported two more deaths and Solapur one more, to take their respec-

tive death counts to 15 and 65. "Along with Pune's total fatalities, the death toll in Pune division – which includes Satara, Sangli, Kolhapur and Solapur districts along with Pune – has now surged to 391. Satara, which has reported 422 cases till date, has 281 active cases, while the rural areas have around 250 active cases. While the death rate may have come down, the fatalities have yet to stop. We have started audits and analysis of the fatalities, besides counselling patients at Sason General Hospital," Mr. Ram said. He said 103 mobile vans have been engaged

ago, new deaths and cases were a worry, especially with 1.48 lakh people who had returned from Mumbai to the district's rural parts.

"At present, Pune city has 2,419 active cases, Pimpri-Chinchwad has 290 active cases, while the rural areas have around 250 active cases. While the death rate may have come down, the fatalities have yet to stop. We have started audits and analysis of the fatalities, besides counselling patients at Sason General Hospital," Mr. Ram said. He said 103 mobile vans have been engaged

ago, new deaths and cases were a worry, especially with 1.48 lakh people who had returned from Mumbai to the district's rural parts.

"At present, Pune city has 2,419 active cases, Pimpri-Chinchwad has 290 active cases, while the rural areas have around 250 active cases. While the death rate may have come down, the fatalities have yet to stop. We have started audits and analysis of the fatalities, besides counselling patients at Sason General Hospital," Mr. Ram said. He said 103 mobile vans have been engaged

ago, new deaths and cases were a worry, especially with 1.48 lakh people who had returned from Mumbai to the district's rural parts.

"At present, Pune city has 2,419 active cases, Pimpri-Chinchwad has 290 active cases, while the rural areas have around 250 active cases. While the death rate may have come down, the fatalities have yet to stop. We have started audits and analysis of the fatalities, besides counselling patients at Sason General Hospital," Mr. Ram said. He said 103 mobile vans have been engaged

ago, new deaths and cases were a worry, especially with 1.48 lakh people who had returned from Mumbai to the district's rural parts.

"At present, Pune city has 2,419 active cases, Pimpri-Chinchwad has 290 active cases, while the rural areas have around 250 active cases. While the death rate may have come down, the fatalities have yet to stop. We have started audits and analysis of the fatalities, besides counselling patients at Sason General Hospital," Mr. Ram said. He said 103 mobile vans have been engaged

ago, new deaths and cases were a worry, especially with 1.48 lakh people who had returned from Mumbai to the district's rural parts.

"At present, Pune city has 2,419 active cases, Pimpri-Chinchwad has 290 active cases, while the rural areas have around 250 active cases. While the death rate may have come down, the fatalities have yet to stop. We have started audits and analysis of the fatalities, besides counselling patients at Sason General Hospital," Mr. Ram said. He said 103 mobile vans have been engaged

ago, new deaths and cases were a worry, especially with 1.48 lakh people who had returned from Mumbai to the district's rural parts.

"At present, Pune city has 2,419 active cases, Pimpri-Chinchwad has 290 active cases, while the rural areas have around 250 active cases. While the death rate may have come down, the fatalities have yet to stop. We have started audits and analysis of the fatalities, besides counselling patients at Sason General Hospital," Mr. Ram said. He said 103 mobile vans have been engaged

ago, new deaths and cases were a worry, especially with 1.

## REVIEWS

# The extraordinary mind of Hannah Gadsby strikes again

*Douglas*, a rom com about autism, starts slow but is outrageously funny and heartfelt

DEBORAH CORNELIOUS

For the first 15 minutes of her new special *Douglas*, Hannah Gadsby gets into a lengthy and detailed explanation of her set. Admittedly, she has had to trim material to fit the hour-and-a-half show. There's a peppering of a couple of lectures, some humour about Americanisms, a bit of healthy needling of the patriarchy and a lone Louis C.K. joke among other subjects. However, through it all, while she's setting expectations, Gadsby promises her audience they're in for a treat.

You see, Gadsby 'is all out of trauma' after her wildly successful prior special, *Nanette* (2018). She then quit comedy, but the 42-year-old Australian didn't anticipate the show's meteoric popularity. She had put all her 'trauma eggs in one basket' and had she known better, she'd have budgeted it. There could have been a trilogy! *Douglas*, named after her dog, starts off shaky. It's a far cry from *Nanette* where the Australian comedian quickly wormed her way into millions of hearts. That's not to say her initial diatribe bored. It was, as Gadsby deliberately intended to encourage people to go beyond the surface. Diagnosed in 2015 with autism, the 42-year-old wanted to reward audiences for sticking around. Just like you'd do with someone on the spectrum. A self-declared, romantic comedy about autism, the comedy special - it's safe to say - more than compensates viewers.

There are scores of comedy



**Stage presence:** Hannah Gadsby makes a return to the stage after *Nanette*. ■ ALI GOLDSTEIN/NETFLIX © 2020

specials floating on the interweb. But Gadsby's charisma lies in her ability to be excruciatingly vulnerable to an audience with a swagger that's both self-assured and relatable. She repeatedly returns to her punchlines, ensuring continuous rapt attention. There are 'puffer fish' moments - things that annoy her - which includes paleo diets, the white male privilege of *Where's Waldo?* (he should have to find himself just like the rest of us!). Other times, she recounts hilariously poignant me-

## Douglas

**DIRECTOR:** Madeleine Parry

**CAST:** Hannah Gadsby

**STORYLINE:** The Australian comedian returns to the stage after her farewell show *Nanette*

mories of being undiagnosed on the spectrum. And that single joke about the red-haired misogynistic comedian is every bit the mic drop moment she guarantees. *Nanette*, much loved

and loathed for its intense truth bombs, was more a farewell filled with pathos than comedy special. Still, it was hilarious and a tight set that couldn't have been better if it tried. The comedian couldn't possibly do better. And yet *Douglas* - also named for the recto-uterine pouch in a 'biologically female body' - did just that. With her new show, Gadsby has returned and hopefully, she won't ever think about leaving again. *Douglas* is currently streaming on Netflix

# The way HOME

Actor Sonu Sood has been helping thousands of migrant workers from Mumbai return to their hometowns

■ SANGEETHA DEVI DUNDOO

"Migrant workers have helped build our roads, homes and offices. We cannot stand and watch them be homeless," says actor Sonu Sood. Each day since the COVID-19 lockdown began, the actor has been organising buses for migrant workers to travel from Mumbai to their respective hometowns.

As part of his 'Ghar Bhejo' cam-



**Doing their best** (Top) Actor Sonu Sood arranging for buses for his 'Ghar Bhejo' campaign in Mumbai ■ TWITTER

paign, he has helped approximately 12,000 migrants reach home, and arrangements have been made for another 45,000. He responds to questions over a voice note, amid what he calls a 'crazily busy schedule'. Each day, at least around 45,000 people are provided food and water as well.

## Hands-on effort

Popular for his antagonist roles in

blockbusters such as *Dabangg* (Hindi), *Arundhati* and *Dookudu* (Telugu), and *Chandramukhi* (Tamil), among other films, off-screen, Sood has the reputation of being amiable. His team has set up a toll-free number (18001213711), and he also looks into requests that pour in through social media.

"Initially, I spoke to some of the migrants here. They were in tears, and their kids were in bad shape. I request-

ed some of them to wait for a day or two, stating that I will try to help," he recalls. He contacted friends who could help him reach out to the transport authorities, police officials and State Governments of Maharashtra and Karnataka to get the required permissions. "The logistics and paper work took effort; we obtained clearances and with all medical safety precautions in place, we managed to send 350 migrants to Karnataka. That was the first step," the actor elaborates.

Since then, buses from Mumbai have plied to Karnataka, and permissions were also obtained for migrants to travel to Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand, Odisha, and Rajasthan. Requests to travel to other states are also coming in. Sood is eager to help those who want to travel to Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, but complies with the rules of the respective State Governments. "Since the number of cases is very high in Maharashtra, some Governments like Telangana haven't been very forthcoming. We have been plying buses only to those States that have given us permissions," he says.

The Shramik trains that ply migrant workers across the country, agrees Sood, have helped address the crisis to an extent. But there is still demand for buses. "A lot of small things require

coordination, like deciding who travels on which bus at what time. Some of my friends also pick up migrants stranded in different areas of Mumbai and drop them off at the buses," he says.

The actor calls it a team effort and says the film fraternity has also pitched in to help. He mentions how director Farah Khan calls on a daily basis to know the requirements and helps with organising water for everyone involved.

Though Sood does not disclose how much he has spent over the last few weeks, reports indicate that buses cost anywhere from ₹65,000 to ₹2 lakh for hire. Sood began hiring them at his own expense, and as the word spread, people have come forward to do their bit for food, water and other requirements.

In the meantime, Sood also opened the doors of his family-owned Shakti Sagar Hotel in Juhu, Mumbai, named after his father, to shelter paramedical staff and doctors.

"Health workers are the wall between us and the virus. We are happy to provide them food and a place to rest, before they resume their work the following day," says the actor.

It is a huge challenge and responsibility, admits Sood. "God is making it happen and we have been chosen as tools. There are miles to go and the journey will continue," he concludes.

## POOCH CAFE



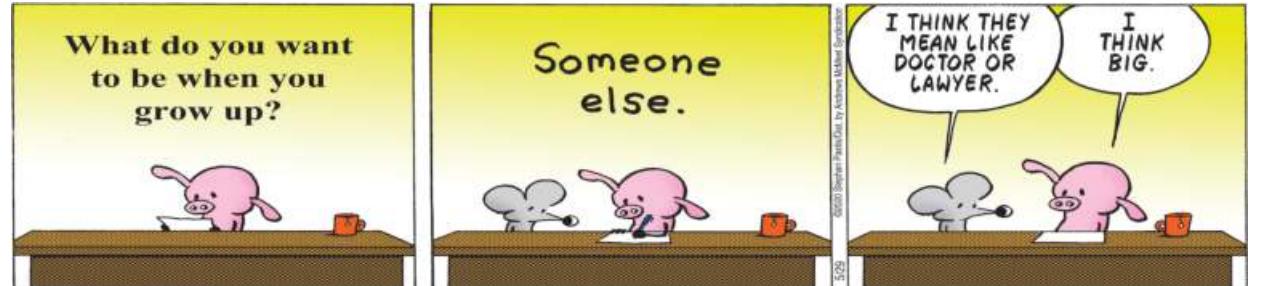
## HAGAR THE HORRIBLE



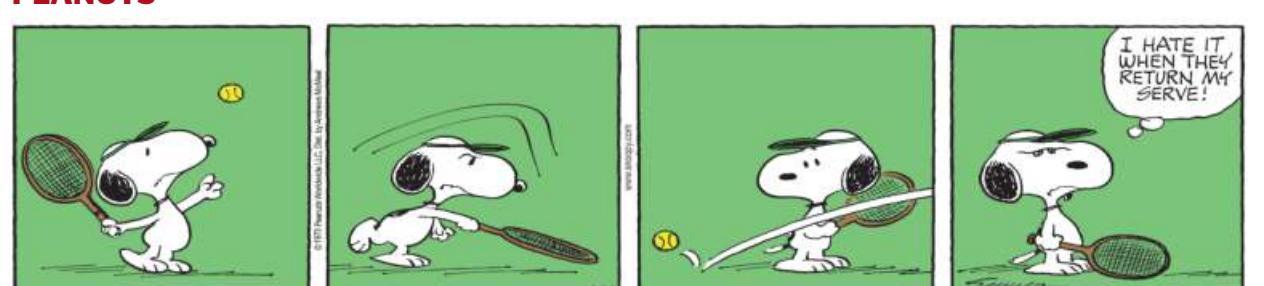
## TIGER



## PEARLS BEFORE SWINE



## PEANUTS



## CALVIN AND HOBBES



# 'Not amending labour laws, prefer direct aid over loans to MSMEs'

Industrial nodes to come up along Mumbai-Nagpur super expressway

ALOK DESHPANDE  
MUMBAI

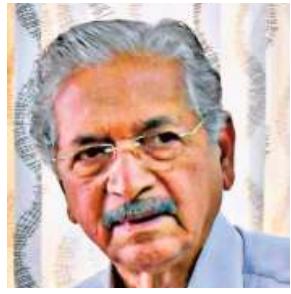
The State government is setting up 10 industrial nodes along the under-construction Mumbai-Nagpur super expressway to promote decentralisation of industries in Maharashtra, said Industries Minister Subhash Desai on Thursday.

Speaking to *The Hindu*, Mr. Desai said the State has also prepared a proposal for medium, small and micro enterprises (MSMEs) under which actual financial help will be provided to the owners, unlike the loans offered by the Centre.

The minister said that the State is not going to change the existing labour laws, but can consider giving certain concessions for new investments, if asked for.

Mr. Desai said since the State government is constantly in dialogue with the industries, there are no complaints about the labour laws and hence there is no question of changing them. "Had labour laws been unreasonable, industries would not have grown so much in Maharashtra. Yes, they do want certain concessions. If new foreign investors speak to us about their need of particular concessions, then we are open to discussions," he said.

**Mumbai-Nagpur corridor**  
The 700-km-long expressway from Mumbai to Nagpur will pass through 10 districts and indirectly provide connectivity to 14 others. "We have decided to develop one industrial node in each district along the road. This node could be the centre of industrial activities in that particular district due to the connectivity, and availability



Subhash Desai

standstill due to COVID-19. The minister said the Industries Department has prepared a proposal for the MSMEs and it will be presented before the State Cabinet for approval. "In view of the lockdown, the owners had to pay workers for two months, besides the water and power bills, when their businesses were closed. We are not working to make loans available to them, instead we want to provide them with direct aid," he said.

The Shiv Sena leader also said none of the big industries have sought assistance from the government yet,

but have recommended that smaller businesses dependent on them be helped.

#### Labour bureau

The Industries Department is also coming up with a web portal of the labour bureau, he said, where unemployed youth can register as unskilled, semi-skilled, and skilled.

"Those in need of skills will be provided training by the department. Companies will get a pool of talent from this bureau based on skills and education," he said, adding that locals will benefit from it.

## Pawar seeks PM's intervention to revive real estate sector

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
MUMBAI

Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) chief Sharad Pawar has written to Prime Minister Narendra Modi saying the real estate sector is in a state of "complete breakdown" amid the lockdown and Mr. Modi should look into the issue personally.

In the letter dated May 27, Mr. Pawar urged the PM to take measures to revive the sector which has been hit hard. "Amidst unprecedented pandemic Covid-19 and consequent nationwide lockdown, the Real Estate Sector is in a state of complete breakdown," Mr. Pawar said in the letter, which he shared on Twitter on Thursday.

The massive "outflux" of labourers, stoppage of work and sales for almost three months, stagnant demand,



Sharad Pawar

and impaired economic activities have taken a toll on this industry "which contributes substantially to the national GDP", he said.

The Confederation of Real Estate Developers Association of India (CREDAI) has also written an open letter to Mr. Modi about the crisis and requested his immediate intervention, the former Union minister said.

CREDAI has made a few

recommendations such as one-time (loan) restructuring, additional institutional funding, waiver of penal interest, policy innovations for triggering consumer demand, controlling cartelisation of raw material, changing criterion of affordability for the Goods and Services Tax applicability, and operationalisation of the Special Window for Completion of Construction of Affordable and Mid-Income Housing (SWAMIH) fund to help the sector, he said. The SWAMIH fund was created to complete over 1,600 stalled projects with 4.5 lakh housing units.

"I shall be grateful if you personally look into the matter and initiate necessary measures for revival of one of the most important sectors of the economy – real estate sector," he said.

## + Dead patients' kin allege apathy at Ahmedabad Civil Hospital

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
AHMEDABAD

The relatives of some patients, who died during treatment at Ahmedabad Civil Hospital recently, have alleged that the apathy and negligence on the part of doctors and nursing staff there were responsible for the death of their loved ones.

These allegations come days after the Gujarat High Court criticised the civil hospital over its functioning amid the COVID-19 crisis.

One Hardik Valera has alleged that he was asked by hospital staff to manually pump air to keep alive her 81-year-old grandmother, before her death on Wednesday. Mr. Valera also claimed that the doctors did not even bother to take samples of her grandmother to ascertain if she was COVID-19 positive or not.

"Our house is in Dandi Limda, which is a containment zone. We took our grandmother to the civil hospital on Tuesday night after she

felt uneasy," he said.

"She was first kept on the ground floor of the hospital and put on ventilator support during midnight. But despite my repeated requests, doctors did not collect her samples to check if she was coronavirus positive," he alleged.

According to Mr. Valera, when she was being shifted to another ward on the third

#### COVID-19

floor on Wednesday morning, the on-duty doctor handed him a bag and asked him to keep pumping air manually till a ventilator was attached again after reaching the ward.

"When I requested them that it was a professional's job and someone from the hospital should do it, no one listened. Some of them even laughed at me. I even noticed that the air filter was

choked. But nobody cared to listen. When we finally reached the ward on the third floor, the doctors there declared her dead and did not even make any effort to save her life," he alleged.

When asked about Mr. Valera's allegations, civil superintendent Dr. M.M. Prabhakar claimed ignorance, saying he does not recollect if such incident has occurred at the hospital.

In another incident, a relative of a COVID-19 patient circulated a video claiming that doctors of COVID-19 ward at the civil hospital did not inform him that his mother, who died on May 24, would be put on ventilator support.

Commenting on this incident, Prabhakar said the woman was a COVID-19 patient and died a few days ago. "As per the rules and guidelines, doctors are empowered to do everything necessary to save a patient's life," Prabhakar said.

## BMC rubbishes rumours of 'locust swarm'

TANVI DESHPANDE  
MUMBAI

After social media was abuzz on Thursday with rumours of locusts (part of the locust swarm) being sighted in Mumbai, the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) clarified that the pictures are not from the city, and that the swarm is around Vidarbha. Several people took to social media to share pictures of locusts being sighted in and around Goregaon and Vikhroli.

Rajan Naringrekar, insecticide officer, BMC, said none of the pictures are from Mumbai. "A few locusts are seen in urban areas around monsoon but the swarm of locusts in question right now is around Vidarbha, and headed east. Locusts do not pose any threat to humans. They may rest in urban areas during the day and find crops to feast on at night," he said.

## HC directs registrar general, judge to be parties in plea to convert Kolhapur court into hospital

PIL says it can be used to create additional isolation beds and segregate patients

SONAM SAIGAL  
MUMBAI

The Bombay High Court recently directed the registrar general and the principal district judge, Kolhapur, to be made parties in a plea seeking to use the old district and sessions court in Kolhapur as a government-run hospital for COVID-19 and non-COVID-19 patients.

A Division Bench of Chief Justice Dipankar Datta and Justice K.K. Tated was hearing a public interest litigation (PIL) filed by Dilip Desai, a social worker, through advocates S.B. Talekar and Madhavi Ayyapan.

The PIL sought a direction for requisition of the premises



of the old district and sessions court to be used as an extension of Chhatrapati Pramila Raje District Hospital, Kolhapur, to create additional isolation beds and segregate COVID-19, non-COVID-19, and suspected patients in accordance

with the Disaster Management Act and the Maharashtra COVID-19 Regulations.

The plea said as per the guidelines issued by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, it is important to create and maintain isolation wards with a gap of at least 2,000 square feet between them. "Chhatrapati Pramila Raje District Hospital is the only district government hospital with special features accessible for the poor. The old district and sessions court is in close proximity of the hospital and shall be convenient to ensure segregation of patients," the PIL said.

"This is despite the fact that the district magistrate and president of the District Disaster Management Authority is not bound to obtain any prior permission of the owner or possessor of the property as per the provisions of the Disaster Management Act and the Epidemic Diseases Act," the PIL said.

The matter will be heard on May 29.

## Chemical leak from tanker sparks panic

Tyres of vehicle got air-locked and it could not be moved from road

SHOUMOJIT BANERJEE  
PUNE

A chemical leak from a tanker near Pune's Chandni Chowk on Wednesday night led to brief moments of panic in the area, said officials from the fire brigade. However, the situation was brought under control soon.

According to sources, the tanker was believed to be coming from Panvel and headed for Satara district in western Maharashtra.

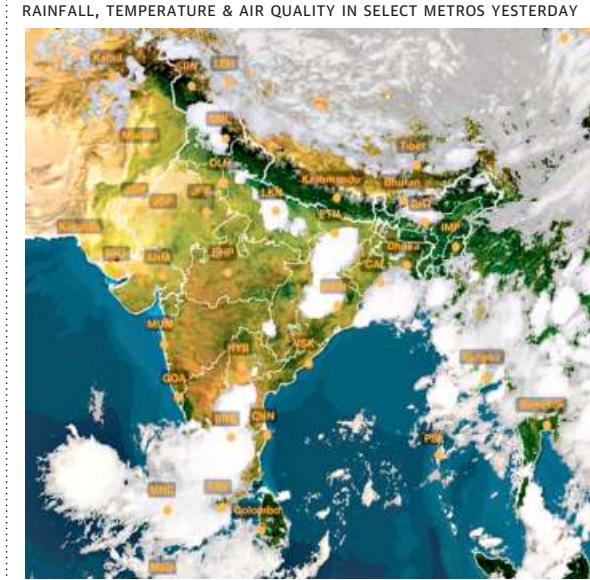
"When it reached near Chandni Chowk on the Mumbai-Bengaluru highway on Wednesday night, its tyres got air-locked and could not be moved from the road. Fumes of chemical

tanker, which sent people on the road nearby into a panic after it led to sore throats and watery eyes. The stench of the acid, which wafted to the adjoining areas, sparked further consternation among people in the neighbourhood," said a fire brigade officer.

This prompted circulation of messages on social media, advising people to close their windows and not venture out in the vicinity of the leak. "To stop the acid spreading across the highway, we diverted its flow towards the roadside. Authorities of the chemical firm concerned were called to bring another tanker to transfer the acid," he said.

Soon after the situation was brought under control, Bharatiya Janata Party legislator Siddharth Shirode took to the micro-blogging platform Twitter to re-started leaking from the

#### WEATHER WATCH



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

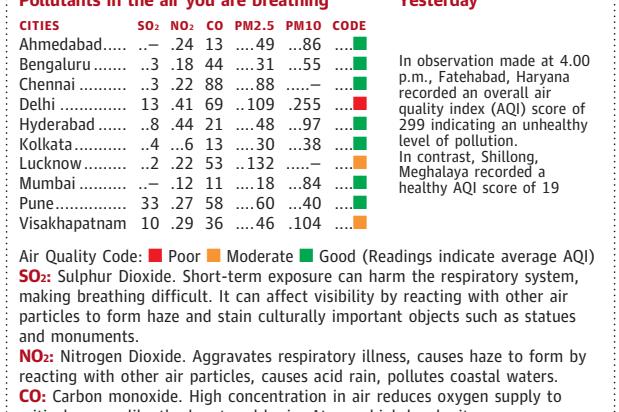
**Forecast for Friday:** Heavy/very heavy rainfall likely at isolated places over south interior Karnataka, Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram, Tripura, Tamil Nadu, Puducherry, Kerala, Lakshadweep, Assam and Andaman & Nicobar Islands. Heat wave conditions likely at isolated pockets over Vidarbha and Telangana

CITY RAIN MAX MIN CITY RAIN MAX MIN

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	66.1...	32.8...	21.2	Kozhikode	—	35.8...	27.3
Ahmedabad	—	43.2...	28.8	Kurnool	—	42.6...	30.4
Aizawl	30...	23.2...	18.1	Lucknow	—	35.6...	25.2
Allahabad	—	38.9...	26.5	Madur...	—	40.0...	28.1
Bengaluru	5.4...	34.2...	21.2	Mangaluru	—	34.2...	27.6
Bhopal	—	43.5...	29.9	Mumbai	—	34.5...	28.4
Bhubaneswar	—	36.3...	29.8	Mysuru	—	35.4...	22.0
Chandigarh	—	38.5...	26.5	New Delhi	—	40.3...	29.6
Chennai	—	38.7...	29.8	Patna	—	38.5...	24.2
Coimbatore	3.5...	36.6...	24.4	Port Blair	0.4...	32.7...	26.8
Dehradun	—	40.1...	23.7	Puducherry	—	38.5...	29.0
Gangtok	0.3...	21.5...	13.3	Pune	—	38.0...	23.0
Goa	—	35.5...	27.4	Raipur	—	45.4...	31.5
Guwahati	0.3...	32.2...	21.4	Ranchi	0.2...	33.8...	22.6
Hubballi	—	36.0...	23.0	Shillong	—	21.2...	—
Hyderabad	—	42.9...	30.1	Shimla	18.3...	26.3...	13.1
Imphal	5.1...	24.2...	18.5	Srinagar	—	29.4...	14.4
Jaipur	—	44.1...	32.0	Thiruvananthapuram	—	32.6...	26.4
Kochi	12...	32.4...	26.0	Tiruchi	—	40.4...	28.8
Kohima	—	23.8...	15.3	Vijayawada	—	41.2...	29.6
Kolkata	54.4...	26.3...	21.6	Visakhapatnam	—	33.8...	30.0

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)

**Pollutants in the air you are breathing Yesterday**



Raj Bhavan until further orders, the proposal to purchase a new car has been deferred. The practice of offering gifts and mementos to VIPs and welcoming VIP visitors with bouquets will be discontinued. Besides, guest house rooms at Raj Bhavan will not be decorated with vases and flower pots.

Meetings and interactions with vice-chancellors and various officers will be conducted via videoconferencing to avoid expenses on travel.

The Governor's office said there will not be any new major construction and repairing works at Raj Bhavan. Only ongoing works will be continued and completed. Mr. Koshyari has also cancelled the Independence Day reception on August 15 at Raj Bhavan in Pune.

While there will be no new regular recruitment at

**One English course to help you sail through the 3 stages of UPSC**

**STEP for Competitive Exams** is a tailor-made course that trains you for all 3 stages of UPSC exam.

#### Objective Test

- Practice sets on reading comprehension
- Video lessons on para jumbles and word reordering
- Lessons on idioms, phrases, antonyms/synonyms
- Fill in the blanks (Cloze Test) - Lessons focusing on all aspects of such questions
- Grammar lessons on active/passive voice, direct/reported speech, etc.
- Vocabulary - Words in the Indian Constitution, words relevant for exam preparation, etc.

#### Written Exam

- Precis Writing
- Essay Writing
- Advanced Grammar

#### Interview

-



## Export blocks

India mustn't miss out on the rise in world trade on the back of stimulus packages

Official trade data for April, released at the midpoint of the Finance Ministry's five-tranche package to salvage the economy in the throes of a pandemic-induced lockdown, was the grimmest in over two decades. Merchandise exports had collapsed by over 60% and imports contracted only slightly less. Only two of India's 30 biggest export products clocked positive growth – iron ore and pharmaceuticals, the latter by just a quarter of a percent. Thanks to the sharp dip in global oil prices, higher volumes of petroleum exports didn't help much in value terms. The trade collapse was not surprising as the spate of national lockdowns around the world have not only dented demand and investment, but also severely disrupted global supply chains and shipping routes. India's exports, however, were already in a free fall. The government's economic stimulus package in totality offered several reform commitments, improvements in the ease of doing business along with some forbearance and a few sops for micro, small and medium enterprises (many of which are also export-oriented units). However, there was no explicit respite offered for exporters. The Reserve Bank of India, on May 22, did unveil a few measures, including a special ₹15,000 crore liquidity facility for the Exim Bank of India and a six-month extension for importers to complete outward remittances. For exporters, the maximum permissible credit period from banks was extended from 12 months to 15 months, for disbursements made up to July 31, 2020.

The three-month credit extension for exporters was, in fact, not a new measure and had already been announced by the central bank on March 23. So its repackaging two months later as a fresh move suggests policy makers are running short of ideas to prop up a key employment-generating bulwark of the country's economy post-liberalisation. In an employment-intensive sector such as textiles, garment exports, which fell 16% between January and March, fell 91% in April. The outcome for May is unlikely to be any better and the World Trade Organization expects trade flows to slip by between 13% and 32% over 2020. The prognosis gets even murkier when one adds to this the new barriers on trade in medical and food supplies imposed by over 90 countries, and an increasing tendency to look inward for essential supplies (as India is doing too with its emphasis on self-reliance). The country is again pitching to become an alternative investment destination for big global businesses in the hope that the COVID-19 pandemic would prompt them to hedge their China-dependent supply chains. But investment moves are a longer-term play. Meanwhile, Indian exporters shouldn't be caught on the back foot as bigger stimulus packages, announced by other countries, kick in to revive demand and give a minor fillip to international trade.

## A brewing storm

Twitter did well to call out Trump, but fake news is an ecosystem by itself

As political ironies go, U.S. President Donald Trump's tirade against social media platforms is a class apart. After Twitter flagged two of his posts as factually inaccurate, the President threatened to "strongly regulate" or "close down" all social media platforms. Like most of his statements, this one too appeared on Twitter where he has 80.4 million followers. When Mr. Trump entered the race for the Republican presidential nomination in 2015, critics scorned him as a mere, inconsequential Twitter handle, for his acerbic posturing on the platform. But outrage is richly rewarding on digital platforms, as he went on to prove. Twitter too was a beneficiary in the process. The crafty use of social media for incendiary politics the world over scraped the shine off these decentralised and unregulated platforms that were initially hailed as prodigiously democratising. Controversies erupted in quick succession, including their role in genocides and election rigging. The misuse of social media to spread falsehoods that often incite violence has been a particularly tricky question. These platforms have often declared their commitment to stop fake news, but any attempt to enforce content regulation comes with additional complications, as Twitter's attempt to fact-check the President shows. The intention to ensure all political discussions are fact-bound and shorn of inflammatory rhetoric is laudatory, but no one body can be the enforcer in this.

The current conflict between the President and social media platforms is only a component of the ongoing wider debate in the U.S. on the nature of large tech companies. Big tech companies such as Google, Facebook, Amazon, Microsoft and Apple have given rise to concerns of privacy, data misuse, political bias, monopoly behaviour, tax avoidance and national security. In the U.S., there is a common ground among the Democrats and the Republicans that these tech companies need to be reined in. Republicans say social media platforms are anti-conservative. Democrats believe some of these platforms are easily manipulated by enemies of the nation and accuse them of unfair trade and labour practices, and call for breaking them up. Facebook's attempt to launch a digital currency, Libra, has triggered sovereignty concerns among nations. It had to pay \$5 billion in fines to settle investigations into its misuse of data in the Cambridge Analytica controversy. These companies boast of being global and able to fly above the eyes of government. Some reordering of that arrangement appears to be on the horizon. But it would be a pity if the trigger for the overhaul is one social media platform's attempt to call out the irresponsible statements of the world's most powerful leader.

# For a reset in India-Nepal relations

The urgent need today is to pause the rhetoric on territorial nationalism and lay the groundwork for a quiet dialogue



RAKESH SOOD

Once again, relations between India and Nepal have taken a turn for the worse. The immediate provocation is the long-standing territorial issue surrounding Kalapani, a patch of land near the India-Nepal border, close to the Lipulekh Pass on the India-China border, which is one of the approved points for border trade and the route for the Kailash-Manasarovar yatra in Tibet. However, the underlying reasons are far more complex. Yet, Nepali Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli's exploitation of the matter, by raising the banner of Nepali nationalism and painting India as a hegemon, is part of a frequent pattern that indicates that relations between the two countries need a fundamental reset.

### Kalapani and the maps

India inherited the boundary with Nepal, established between Nepal and the East India Company in the Treaty of Sugauli in 1816. Kali river constituted the boundary, and the territory to its east was Nepal. The dispute relates to the origin of Kali. Near Garbyang village in Darchula Tehsil of the Pithoragarh district of Uttarakhand, there is a confluence of different streams coming from north-east from Kalapani and north-west from Limpiyadhura. The early British survey maps identified the north-west stream, Kuti Yangti, from Limpiyadhura as the origin, but after 1857 changed the alignment to Lipu Gad, and in 1879 to Pankha Gad, the north-east streams, thus defining the origin as just below Kalapani. Nepal accepted the change and India inherited this boundary in 1947.

The Maoist revolution in China in 1949, followed by the takeover of Tibet, created deep misgivings in Nepal, and India was 'invited' to set up 18 border posts along the Nepal-Tibet border. The westernmost post was at Tinkar Pass, about 6 km further east of Lipulekh. In 1953, India and China

identified Lipulekh Pass for both pilgrims and border trade. After the 1962 war, pilgrimage through Lipulekh resumed in 1981, and border trade, in 1991.

In 1961, King Mahendra visited Beijing to sign the China-Nepal Boundary Treaty that defines the zero point in the west, just north of Tinkar Pass. By 1969, India had withdrawn its border posts from Nepali territory. The base camp for Lipulekh remained at Kalapani, less than 10 km west of Lipulekh. In their respective maps, both countries showed Kalapani as the origin of Kali river and as part of their territory. After 1979, the Indo-Tibetan Border Police has manned the Lipulekh Pass. In actual practice, life for the locals (Byansi) remained unchanged given the open border and free movement of people and goods.

After the 1996 Treaty of Mahakali (Kali river is also called Mahakali/Sarda) further downstream that envisaged the Pancheshwar multipurpose hydel project, the issue of the origin of Kali river was first raised in 1997. The matter was referred to the Joint Technical Level Boundary Committee that had been set up in 1981 to re-identify and replace the old and damaged boundary pillars along the India-Nepal border. The Committee clarified 98% of the boundary, leaving behind the unresolved issues of Kalapani and Susta (in the Terai) when it was dissolved in 2008. It was subsequently agreed that the matter would be discussed at the Foreign Secretary level. Meanwhile, the project to convert the 80-km track from Ghatbagar to Lipulekh into a hardtop road began in 2009 without any objections from Nepal.

The Survey of India issued a new political map (eighth edition) on November 2, 2019, to reflect the change in the status of Jammu and Kashmir as two Union Territories. Nepal registered a protest though the map in no way had changed the boundary between India and Nepal. However, on November 8, the ninth edition was issued. The delineation remained identical but the name Kali river had been deleted. Predictably, this led to stronger protests, with Nepal invoking Foreign Secretary-level talks to resolve issues. With the Indian Am-



bassador Manjeet Puri in Kathmandu retiring in end-December and Foreign Secretary Vijay Gokhale retiring a month later, the matter remained pending despite reminders from Kathmandu.

### Nepali nationalism

By April 2020, Mr. Oli's domestic political situation was weakening. Under the Nepali Constitution, a new Prime Minister enjoys a guaranteed two-year period during which a no-confidence motion is not permitted. This ended in February unleashing simmering resentment against Mr. Oli's governance style and performance. His inept handling of the COVID-19 pandemic added to the growing disenchantment. Within the Nepal Communist Party (NCP) there was a move to impose a 'one man, one post' rule that would force Mr. Oli to choose between being NCP co-chair or Prime Minister.

The re-eruption of the Kalapani controversy, when Defence Minister Rajnath Singh did a virtual inauguration of the 80-km road on May 8, provided Mr. Oli with a political lifeline. A subsequent comment by the Chief of the Army Staff (COAS), General Manoj Naravane, on May 15 that "Nepal may have raised the issue at the behest of someone else" was insensitive, given that the Indian COAS is also an honorary general of the Nepal Army and vice-versa, highlighting the traditional ties between the two armies.

Mr. Oli had won the election in 2017 by flaunting his Nepali nationalism card, the flip side of which is anti-Indianism. This is not a new phenomenon but has become more pronounced in recent years. Mr. Oli donned the nationalist mantle vowing to restore Nepali

and its concerns were primarily related to keeping tabs on the Tibetan refugee community. With the abolition of the monarchy, China has shifted attention to the political parties as also to institutions like the Army and Armed Police Force. Also, today's China is pursuing a more assertive foreign policy and considers Nepal an important element in its growing South Asian footprint.

The reality is that India has ignored the changing political narrative in Nepal for far too long. India remained content that its interests were safeguarded by quiet diplomacy even when Nepali leaders publicly adopted anti-Indian postures – an approach adopted decades earlier during the monarchy and then followed by the political parties as a means of demonstrating nationalist credentials. Long ignored by India, it has spawned distortions in Nepali history textbooks and led to long-term negative consequences. For too long India has invoked a "special relationship", based on shared culture, language and religion, to anchor its ties with Nepal. Today, this term carries a negative connotation – that of a paternalistic India that is often insensitive and, worse still, a bully.

This brief account illustrates the complexity underlying India-Nepal issues that cannot be solved by rhetoric or unilateral map-making exercises. Such brinkmanship only breeds mistrust and erodes the goodwill at the people-to-people level. Political maturity is needed to find creative solutions that can be mutually acceptable.

### Rewriting the fundamentals

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has often spoken of the "neighbourhood first" policy. He started with a highly successful visit to Nepal in August 2014. But the relationship took a nosedive in 2015 when India first got blamed for interfering in the Constitution-drafting in Nepal and then for an "unofficial blockade" that generated widespread resentment against the country. It reinforced the notion that Nepali nationalism and anti-Indianism were two sides of the same coin that Mr. Oli exploited successfully.

In Nepali thinking, the China card has provided them the leverage to practise their version of non-alignment. In the past, China maintained a link with the Palace

Rakesh Sood is a former diplomat and currently Distinguished Fellow at the Observer Research Foundation

# From a stand-off to a stalemate

While the flare-up in Ladakh is likely to be resolved peacefully, there may be increased deployments along the LAC



M. VINAYA CHANDRAN

India's construction of a road to Daulat Beg Oldie (DBO) in the Galwan Valley has been suggested as one reason for the recent stand-off between India and China along the Line of Actual Control (LAC). China has said India was "attempting to unilaterally change the status quo" on the LAC. The Durbuk-Shyok-DBO road was under construction for more than 15 years. As per protocol, local commanders kept informing each other about the construction activities. China never raised any objection against it. In fact, construction work on China's side of the LAC has been of a much higher scale. It appears that current activities by China are meant to put pressure on India, and are not

based on any perceived transgression by Indian troops.

### Changing lines

China has a history of changing lines. In the late 1950s, the lines kept moving westward, and ultimately led to the 1962 war. More recently, in 2002, when maps were exchanged during the Expert Group meetings, China showed a claim line in the western sector which was different from what existed on the ground since 1962. Again in 2007, China's perception of the border in Depsang in the Ladakh sector, in Sikkim, and in many other places appeared to change. In 2017, China wanted to unilaterally change the boundary and the trijunction with Bhutan and India, which sparked the Doklam stand-off. Until 2006, Chinese troops were positioned a few kilometres behind the LAC, except for a few places where they were deployed eyeball to eyeball with Indian troops. From 2007 onwards, we have seen a surge in defence infrastructure development along



the LAC. At many locations, troops have been moved to forward areas.

At the same time, bilateral military relations have improved, with annual defence dialogues and joint training. Patrol face-offs have been resolved with existing protocols, and issues resolved at the local commanders' level. After the 1986-1987 Sumdorong Chu incident, it was only more than 30 years later, at Doklam, that Chinese transgression led to both sides moving up a brigade-sized force (around 5,000 troops) to the LAC. The Border Peace and Tranquility Agreement of 1993 has helped limit the number of troops deployed near the LAC by both sides, and necessitates a mutual appraisal of any change in num-

bers. In Ladakh, both sides have, according to reports, moved up at least a brigade-sized force.

### Problems with hotlines

Such disputes should be peacefully resolved, as was done at Sumdorong Chu and Doklam. As a rule, cases of violation are resolved through a meeting of local commanders, which may be arranged through a conversation on hotlines established for that purpose. This arrangement has not been without problems. When a transgression is initiated by China, often the Chinese side does not answer the call on the hotline, as may have happened in this case. During the 2013 stand-off at Depsang, and the 2014 incident at Chumar which took place when President Xi Jinping was visiting India, the local Chinese commander did not pick up the hotline. It took several days to resolve the crisis, leaving some to ask if President Xi's hold on the People's Liberation Army was not as strong as assumed to be. Now, the situation is diffe-

rent. Named the 'hexin' or core, Mr. Xi has assumed total control. It will be unlikely that Mr. Xi will go against the spirit of Wuhan and Mamallapuram, in which he has been personally invested.

The stand-off in Ladakh is likely to be resolved peacefully. Given the conventional strength of both sides, any skirmish will lead to a stalemate. China will not gain anything. On the contrary, it has much to lose. China is aware it cannot push India to a strategic alliance with the U.S., which will tilt the balance of power against Beijing. This current crisis may, however, have at least one lasting impact. We may see increased permanent deployments by both sides along the LAC, and a further erosion of trust in the agreements that both sides have built, with great effort, since 1993, which has for so long helped keep the peace.

Major General M. Vinaya Chandran (retd), who has 36 years of service in the Indian Army, is a PhD Research Scholar at the University of Madras

## 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.

### Wandering trains

The government has woefully failed in providing a speedy and comfortable journey, with adequate water and food, for the migrants in their worst hour of crisis ("5 persons on Shramik Special trains die in U.P.", May 28). It's bizarre that some trains were halted for long hours or diverted to totally unrelated locations. The Railways says the trains were diverted due to "congestion". I fail to understand how there is no congestion when more than 18,000 long-distance and suburban trains are running in the country in normal circumstances, but there is high traffic when

there are such few trains on the tracks. This only shows the lack of meticulous planning.

KAMAL LADDHA,  
Bengaluru

How can a country that performs rescue operations in the neighbourhood and exports medicines and food to various countries be so apathetic in dealing with its own? India must focus more on rescue efforts on its own soil. Poor logistics and planning in a country with a large population has led to a totally avoidable man-made crisis when there was already a health crisis to deal with.

HARSH VARDHAN SINGH,  
Bijnor

The suffering of the migrants shows that people get respect on the basis of their economic value, not their human worth. Our moral indifference has been revealed during this pandemic ("The heavy burden of social suffering", May 27).

VANDANA,  
New Delhi

Offer to mediate  
It is ironic that President Donald Trump has offered to mediate between India and China when U.S.-China relations are worsening by the day ("Now, Trump offers to mediate between India and China", May 28). India has always placed great faith in bilateralism.

Even on the Kashmir issue, it firmly rejected all third-party interventions. It is high time the U.S. desisted from playing the 'big brother' role and left arbitrations to bodies like the UN that have the mandate to mediate between member nations.

C.V. ARAVIND,  
Chennai

To little, too late  
It is disheartening to note that the plight of migrant labourers has come to the Supreme Court's notice only after the deaths of so many ("Supreme Court gets stinging letter from senior lawyers", May 28). The court should have taken cognisance of the issue in

March-April when the migrant workers began their long journeys home. The court has functioned even at midnight in the past, but could not deliver justice to the poor. Instead it adjourned their petitions or refused to admit them. It looks as though only when pressure was mounted on the court, by sections of

S.K. NARULA,  
New Delhi

MORE LETTERS ONLINE:  
[www.thehindu.com/opinion/letters/](http://www.thehindu.com/opinion/letters/)

**CORRECTIONS & CLARIFICATIONS:** --> The headline of a Sports page story (May 28, 2020) on the nomination of the former World weightlifting champion, S. Mirabai Chanu, for the Arjuna Award, erroneously said that she had been recommended for the Rajiv Gandhi Khel Ratna Award. Actually, she bagged the *Khel Ratna* award in 2018 itself.

It is the policy of The Hindu to correct significant errors as soon as possible. Please specify the edition (place of publication), date and page. The Readers' Editor's office can be contacted by Telephone: +91-44-2851297/28576300 (11 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday to Friday); Fax: +91-44-2855263; E-mail: readerseditor@thehindu.co.in; Mail: Readers' Editor, The Hindu, Kasturi Buildings, 859 & 860 Anna Salai, Chennai 600 002, India. All communication must carry the full postal address and telephone number. Personal visits. The Terms of Reference for the Readers' Editor are on [www.thehindu.com](http://www.thehindu.com).



# Can India's workforce have a safe return to business?

PARLEY

The goal should be to flatten the mortality curve, while allowing normal activities to resume

**Dr. T. Jacob John and Prof. Arun Kumar, discuss with G. Ananthakrishnan the priorities to mobilise the economy during the pandemic.**  
Edited excerpts:

**As the lockdown phase comes to a close, can workers return to their jobs safely?**

**Dr. Jacob John (JJ):** The idea is to restart normal life, but at the same time mitigate the problems of the epidemic. There are some things that people have not understood. One is that this epidemic cannot be prevented. It will happen as [it gets] transmitted during ordinary social contact. What we can do is slow down the spread. People talk about 'flattening the curve'. Even that, for a country like India, with multiple epidemics all started at different times, can only work in some places at some times, not all places at all times. Our goal should actually be to flatten the mortality curve, reduce the deaths as far as possible, and allow the epidemic to grow but at a slower pace than nature would have it.

The [date] to expose workers safely was April 15. We knew then, the downturn [from the lockdown] was very obvious but the epidemic was not slowed down perceptibly. Between March 25 and April 15, the numbers grew 20 times. That was the time we had to go back to the war room and change our strategy. But that was not done.

**Arun Kumar (AK):** As Dr. John pointed out, a lockdown is needed to slow the pace of increase. We have to use the time to build the capacity for health to cope with the emergency that is going to come.

We need testing, more hospitalisation capacity, more doctors etc. In a lockdown, production completely stops, demand also correspondingly falls because of income decline. So what you have is a situation where both supply and demand are affected, the economy comes down, and only essentials are produced. In my judgment, only 25% of the economy was working, so you had a minimum 75% rate of growth, about 200

million people lost work because 94% of the employment is in the unorganised sector. Those in agriculture could continue, and those in mining and rural areas could work.

The imperative of the lockdown was that the unorganised sector should have been provided with food, allowed to migrate, those left behind should have been [accommodated in] school buildings, tents etc. Unorganised businesses should have been supported with working capital. This is what I call a 'survival package'... You are in a situation where you have to support the consumption of essentials for 800 million people, boost capacity for testing, boost the capacity of hospitals, and prevent businesses from collapsing. As long as you don't do this, lifting the lockdown would be dangerous.

**There are interesting questions here on testing, the potential infections and mortality. What can we do now?**

**JJ:** I agree with the [need for] physical distancing. [But] our density of population is so huge that physical distancing is virtually not possible. Back to the lockdown... if it was successful in slowing down the epidemic in the first three weeks, there was justification in extending it by two weeks or three weeks. But the three weeks showed the lockdown [did not slow] the epidemic – the numbers increased 20 times... That is because a lockdown in India is not the same as [that in] South Korea or some other place where population density is lower and discipline of people is better.

In early April, I came up with the logic, and now it is fully supported by science in other countries, that universal mask wearing enforced for every man, woman and child outside home is better than a lockdown. That should have been our immediate strategy... the technical answer to that is we have a lot of asymptomatic people who are spreading the infection. If they wear a mask, they are blocking the respiratory droplets... With universal mask wearing you don't have to be



strict about all socio-economic activities coming to a standstill.

Our goal has to be to flatten the mortality curve. We know who is vulnerable – those over 60 or 65 years of age, those with chronic diseases, lung diseases, heart disease, hypertension, diabetes... We have to have a policy of protecting them from infection, not everybody. Younger people have no risk to life. So if you can reverse quarantine these vulnerable people, you could allow the real world outside to continue with the epidemic and protect people who are vulnerable, until the epidemic turns downward. That I predict is going to be between July first week and August second week. Reverse quarantine of the vulnerable should continue until the epidemic reaches the bottom line, which will probably be November-December [2020] or early 2021.

**What are the concerns for the economy on productivity?**

**AK:** We don't know enough about this virus. We thought children will not be affected but in New York City children are being affected. We thought the young will not be affected but data is coming in that those between 25 and 50, they are also dying in large numbers. We thought heat may prevent it, BCG may prevent it, but none of that has happened. So we should be careful about lifting the lockdown because it would affect a large number of people. If deaths take place in large numbers, there will be a societal

**C Districts can have their own task forces representing major players that decide on the reopening process**

DR. JACOB JOHN,  
Virologist

breakdown... The economy is down because supply is disrupted, and demand is gone. The unorganised sector is down and the organised sector is closed. RBI data in October last had suggested that consumer sentiment was already down. Capacity utilisation in industry was down to below 70% as per October data and now it is down to 25%. Indicators like the Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) show that activity is way down compared to nothing else before. So you are not going to have investment, consumption rising, and the unorganised sector cannot start work. Even if you lift the lockdown, it is not going to revive economic activity immediately because consumption will not revive, so demand will not. Investment will not revive, therefore demand will not revive. Only the government is spending, but it is going to lose massive tax revenue. My estimate is that the economy will not recover to January 2020 levels for several years because we are into a deep depression. It is not going to be a V-shaped recovery, it is going to be a shallow U-shaped recovery.

**JJ:** On the health problems of the young, they are extremely uncommon... We have an occasional exam-

ple of a child getting infected and dying, but by and large, our mortality [among those] below 45 or 50 is extremely low, something that we can live with, and we have to accept that reality. Mortality will be very high in the upper age group and many of the business leaders, manufacturing company leaders are people who may be obese, may have diabetes, may have chronic diseases, and they and the senior citizens are the most vulnerable. Their mortality goes into 10%, 15% or 20% whereas childhood mortality is going to be 0.1%. We have to strike a balance. Let the poor people be socially interactive and productive. Manufacturing should be on such things. Today, why are masks not available widely? We could repurpose all cottage industries to make millions of masks to ensure that everybody has half a dozen masks – of cloth.

**We don't have infrastructure to test who all have the infection and who had it in the past. How can you assess who has the antibodies?**

**JJ:** If you want to be technically correct, yes. You can do IgG antibody, ICMR has approved NIVs kit, Biocon in Bengaluru has made a kit two or three weeks ago, and we hope that will be approved. You can do mass-based surveys or individual antibody detection and anybody with IgG antibodies should be released from restraint but they should wear a mask. You cannot exempt anybody, but those individuals can boldly go around and do whatever economic activities they have to do without risk of infection or transmitting.

**Retail, malls, cinemas, hospitality, are badly hit. From a health standpoint, is there a reasonable time frame when they can get back on their feet?**

**JJ:** I see great potential in red, orange and green zoning of districts, not because of zoning but to manage their own relaxation of lockdown. Districts can have task forces representing major players, industry, agriculture, institutions available and can they open up, [with] standard operating procedures that they should develop for themselves and know exactly what

to do if some person has fever etc. We do need long-term plans and the health system has been broken for 60 years.

**Sectorally and in terms of economic philosophy, how do we go forward, for growth, employment and social development?**

**AK:** I agree with Dr. John on giving districts greater opportunity to decide, but we [also] need to tighten governance. We need to tighten up public delivery of services. Regarding travel and tourism, it will come down dramatically for the moment, it may not take place for two years; incomes will be down, and so people will spend on essentials. The airline industry is facing huge problems, the hotel industry, restaurants, malls... therefore property prices will fall. About 30% of businesses could fail. Their property will come into the market. The stock market is going to decline and the wealth effect will mean real estate prices will decline. Consumption of well-off sections will decline. It will have a widespread impact.

I keep saying we have to disaggregate between the organised and unorganised sectors. The unorganised sector does not have the incomes to buy high value added items. We need to give them food first. We need to have an extended procurement and extended PDS. Whatever farmers are producing should be procured and supplied in urban areas. We can use public buses, Army trucks to do that.

**Mobility is essential to the economy. How can we provide safe transport in the future?**

**JK:** Once a vaccine becomes available, then vaccinations should be taken more seriously. Until then, the opening up of the travel sector has to be very carefully planned and slow growth allowed. I would strongly recommend that everyone wears cloth masks on trains and in buses. If everybody has a mask, physical distancing is not very important. There must be hand hygiene available, as you get into the bus, someone gives you hand sanitiser, and when you get out, again you hand-sanitise.



**T. Jacob John**  
is retired Professor  
of Virology,  
Christian Medical  
College, Vellore



**Arun Kumar**  
is the Malcolm  
Adiseshiah Chair  
Professor at the  
Institute of Social  
Sciences

## Beijing's Ladakh brinkmanship

The India-China confrontation along the LAC should not be seen as a standalone event

MOHAMMED AYOOB

The current intensification of tension between China and India following the escalation of Chinese troop build-up in Ladakh is but one sign that Beijing is increasingly feeling beleaguered. In response, it has embarked on a strategy of brinkmanship with several goals in mind. External adventurism, when cloaked in the garb of ultra-nationalism, can shore up a regime's legitimacy at home. This is particularly the case when an authoritarian regime whose legitimacy rests primarily on its economic performance is faced with a situation where growth is expected to plummet.

Simultaneously, it can act as a diversionary measure to escape international opprobrium, similar to what China is facing currently because of Beijing's attempt to cover up the spread of the coronavirus during the crucial early weeks when it could have been more easily contained. Many countries hold China responsible for the huge cost in human lives and suffering as well as the unprecedented economic distress. In the face of such criticism, the Chinese regime is increasingly using jingoistic jargon to build up domestic support. President Xi Jinping's recent speech to the PLA is an outstanding example of this strategy. He exhorted the Chinese armed forces to "prepare for war" in order to "resolutely safeguard national sovereignty" and "the overall strategic stability of the country".

**Bilateral ties with U.S.**  
This is a sign that the Communist Party of China (CPC) feels increasingly threatened both domestically and externally. China's relations with the U.S. have been going downhill almost since the beginning of the Donald Trump presidency. Washington has periodically imposed economic sanctions on China and Beijing has retaliated in kind. Trade talks have faltered because of growing protectionist sentiments in the U.S. and Chinese inability to adequately respond to them.

Tensions between the U.S. and China have also increased for other reasons. The chipping away at Hong Kong's autonomous status by Beijing and the suppression of the pro-de-

mocracy movement in Hong Kong has led to severe criticism by the U.S. administration and in the Congress. Differences over the issue of Taiwan have added to tensions, with China viewing the U.S. as the primary impediment preventing Taiwan's integration. The Trump administration has significantly increased support to Taiwan with arms sales that have added to China's concern.

Above all, the U.S.-China rivalry in the South China Sea acts as the potential flashpoint that may well lead to a shooting war. In the past decade, China has vigorously advanced its territorial claims in the South China Sea by militarising islands it controls, vociferously contesting claims by other regional states and impeding their attempts to access territories they claim. So far, it has been careful that these moves do not trigger a serious confrontation with the U.S.

However, it is quite possible that a Chinese leadership that feels besieged could adopt a more provocative strategy, thus increasing the risk of a military confrontation with the U.S. Washington has a strong interest in preventing China from asserting control over the South China Sea as maintaining free access to this waterway is important to it for economic reasons. It also has defence treaty obligations to the Philippines, which has vigorously contested Chinese territorial claims. Further, China's control of the South China Sea would be a major step toward replacing the U.S. as the foremost power in the Indo-Pacific region.

Increased Chinese adventurism could result in an escalation of U.S.-China confrontation in the South China Sea. If that happens, the India-China face-off in Ladakh could become part of a much larger "great game", with the U.S. trying to preserve the status quo and China attempting to change it to further its objective of regional dominance at the U.S.'s expense. The current India-China crisis should, therefore, be seen in its proper context and not as an isolated event.

Mohammed Ayoob is University Distinguished Professor Emeritus of International Relations, Michigan State University



### NOTEBOOK

#### Then the chef broke a coconut

Chefs and diners connect online, share recipes and send each other care packages

SHONALI MUTHALALY

In the beginning, I cooked. Washing my hands incessantly seemed like an inadequate response to the ominous, looming pandemic. As the city paused into an uneasy lockdown silence, broken only by bird song and the distant scream of ambulances, I needed to distract myself from obsessively tracking COVID-19 statistics. So I mopped, scrubbed and vacuumed between baking, grilling and basting. And washing dishes of course. So many dishes.

On Zoom, Facebook and Instagram, familiar faces began to go Live, as talented chefs awkwardly got acquainted with their home kitchens, devoid of clean-up crews, professional equipment and fancy ingredients. Responding to followers, many adrift in their own kitchens, these chefs have generously taught home cooks how to do everything from breaking open a coconut to making complex curries over the past two months. Their restaurants may have been closed, but their food and recipes could still be shared. After all, we were all craving some semblance of normalcy.

**A coping mechanism**  
Food became a coping mechanism to deal with the suddenness of loss. In early March, we were congregating in raucous bars over chilled beers, listening to live bands play. Dragging our laptops to cafés at night, to work in a calming buzz of conversation and caffeine. Today, we stand in our kitchens alone (with that inevitable, lurking pile of unwashed dishes) attempting to recreate the magic of community dining, amid the scent of baking bread and music playing from our phones. Of course, it is not the same. We were living our lives

between starters and dessert. After all, eating out is about more than just the food. It is about the theatre, drama and romance of human connections: whether you are celebrating an anniversary or sharing a table with a stranger at an airport bar. In my pre-COVID life, I dove into ghee podi dosas at the little restaurant down my road with the same enthusiasm I had for dressed-up, designer dinners. Admittedly, I also rolled my eyes at crowds. Now, all I want to do is drink coffee in a crowded café, soaking in the sound of people talking and laughing over the hiss of espresso machines.

Meanwhile, the chefs are still cooking, and so am I. Intent on sharing food, we are 'Dunzo-ing' warm, fragrant care packages to friends and neighbours. The gourmands, restaurant-hoppers who are tired of their own cooking are experimenting with food ex-

changes. I participate giddily: it is nerve-wracking to cook for chefs. But, opening up a container of home-made chicken curry from a friend is like giving, and receiving a hug. So worth it, even if I get professional notes later on how to improve my signature coconut buns.

As restaurants slowly reopen across the world, the greatest challenge is recreating the magical atmosphere of a packed dining space despite mandatory physical distancing. In Bangkok, lonely diners can sit opposite a stuffed panda. In Lithuania, vacant chairs are being occupied by mannequins, while the capital city Vilnius has been turned into a big open-air café.

To say we are in this together is the greatest cliché. It is also the most comforting truth. Because it means that we will also collaborate to find inventive ways to get through.

### The Hindu

#### FROM THE ARCHIVES

FIFTY YEARS AGO MAY 29, 1970

#### Ceylon's Choice

(From an editorial)

What was one of the closest fought elections in Ceylon's history has not only given a landslide victory to the United Front of three parties – led by Mrs. Sirimavo Bandaranaike, but has returned her own Sri Lanka Freedom Party with a clear-cut majority. By becoming again Ceylon's Prime Minister, she will be raising the world tally of women holding such high office to three, in the company of Mrs. Indira Gandhi and Mrs. Golda Meir of Israel. The heavy polling – as high as 85 per cent – testifies to the keen interest of the population in the outcome, while the peaceful voting is an index of its maturity as a people wedded to democracy. The rout of the U.N.P., in spite of its excellent five-year record in office, may be the price that a government in office has often to pay for just being that. The break-through in agricultural production that it achieved, bringing Ceylon within sight of self-sufficiency in rice, has evidently cut little ice with the voters. The shortages that are inescapable of notice in a developing economy, the sizable unemployment among educated youth and rising prices seem to have served as effective ammunition in the hands of the main rival party to discredit those in power.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO MAY 29, 1920

#### The Indian Ports.

(From an editorial)

The ports of India have not received as much attention and support from the Government in years past as their central position in the world's trade demands. Overseas commercial expansion presupposes the existence of good and safe ports and other shipping facilities. Major Indian ports are gradually asserting their commercial importance with the increase of overseas trade and their conditions require considerable improvement to enable Indian trade to flourish in a manner worthy of her central position and ancient greatness as the emporium of world trade. The administration of affairs of the larger ports of India, Calcutta, Bombay, Madras, Karachi, Rangoon and Chittagong, is vested by law in bodies specially constituted. They are invested with wide powers but they are subject to greater control of Government than the municipal bodies. Under such circumstances it is nothing strange that the administration of ports should be more in conformity with the policy of the Government than in accordance with popular needs and trade requirements.

FROM PAGE ONE

## Working with China to resolve LAC issue: MEA

"The two sides have established mechanisms both at military and diplomatic levels to resolve situations which may arise in border areas peacefully through dialogue and continue to remain engaged through these channels," he added.

The issues with China are likely to be a part of other diplomatic discussions for the government as well. Speaking at the weekly briefing for journalists, the spokesperson confirmed that the Prime Minister will hold a virtual summit with Australian Premier Scott Morrison

on June 4, where a number of bilateral and regional issues would be discussed.

The two leaders will also discuss strengthening the Indo-Pacific partnership, where sources said China's recent moves in the South China Sea, as well as the ongoing standoff at the LAC are likely to be discussed.

Meanwhile the MEA is also preparing for another virtual summit between Mr. Modi and the leaders of the European Union, which had to be put off in March this year due to the coronavirus pandemic.

## Infrastructure work in border areas to continue

Prime Minister Narendra Modi too had reviewed the situation with the National Security Advisor and Gen. Rawat on Tuesday. China has been objecting to Indian road construction at several points along the LAC.

The almost month long standoff began when Chinese troops moved inside Indian areas with vehicles and equipment in some of the four standoff points at the LAC, including Pangong Tso, Demchok, Galwan Valley and Naku La in Sikkim, where PLA soldiers also blocked Indian patrols and pitched tents. In response, India too moved troops forward and also redeployed additional troops to the Ladakh region.

While both India and China asserted that discussions were on through military and diplomatic channels, the stalemate on the ground continued.

**PLA ingress**  
However, for India the matter of particular concern is

Chinese troops moving back from the positions they moved to inside Indian territory.

"The issue to be resolved is moving back to earlier positions where Chinese troops have moved inside Indian territory. Otherwise it will change the status quo," one officer said on condition of anonymity.

**Two instances**  
There have been atleast two instances of major scuffles at Pangong Tso in Eastern Ladakh on May 5 and Naku La in North Sikkim on May 9 in which there were serious injuries on both sides. Sources said that at Naku La, Chinese troops had moved couple of kilometres inside Indian territory and after the issue was resolved between the local commanders on the ground, they moved back, but not fully.

Both Galwan Nalah and Naku La have not been areas of contention in the past, as observed by several officials.

## Centre reviews situation in 13 worst-hit regions

Municipal corporations could decide on designating residential colonies, mohallas, municipal wards or police station areas, municipal zones, towns as containment zones, as required, the statement said.

The cities were advised that the area should be appropriately defined by the district administration and local urban body with technical inputs from the local level, it added.

**Use of goggles**  
Responding to queries by healthcare workers on reuse of protective eyewear, the Health Ministry said goggles were a crucial component of the Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), and issued an advisory on their reprocessing and reuse.

"Goggles may be issued to each healthcare worker, who will decontaminate them after every use. Goggles to be disinfected by users and reused at least five times each, whereby one

pair of goggles will suffice for six days. They may use them rationally till their transparency decreases or they get damaged. The ratio of issue of goggles to coverage is recommended at 1:6," said the advisory.

**Reprocessing, reuse**  
The advisory, however, pointed out that reprocessing and reuse of goggles must be done only when it was dedicated to each individual (write name over the band).

"Reprocessing must be done after every use before using it again, adherence to manufacturer's instructions for cleaning and disinfection of goggles wherever available is a must," it stated.

"Store clean eyewear in a paper bag/in a clean area to avoid recontamination and the eye protection must be discarded if damaged/reduced optically non-clear on repeated usage," the advisory added.

## Security forces avert car-bombing in Pulwama

The police suspect that at least 40 to 45 kg of explosive material were fitted in the vehicle and a blast could have been similar to the 2019 Pulwama explosion that killed 40 Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) personnel.

The explosives were defused by a bomb disposal squad team. "We concluded that 40 to 45kg of explosive material were used by militants after seeing that the vehicle went up 15 meters above the ground when the improvised explosive devices were being destroyed," the IGP said.

The police have initiated an investigation if the explo-

sives were procured locally or the RDX was managed through any cross-line of Control route.

The IGP said the security agencies, including police, the Army and the CRPF, were getting inputs about the 'fidayeen' (suicide) attack plan.

**Behind the act**  
A militant, identified as Adil, who works for the Hizb and the Jaish, and two other militants of these outfits were behind the act. "They were planning the suicide attack on 17th of Ramadan [Jang-e-Badr], but couldn't do it due to our intensified operations against militants," he said.

## Focus turns to Kerala as 84 test positive in a day

Expatriates, non-residents add most cases; fatalities in Telangana, A.P.

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**  
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

One more death and 128 fresh COVID-19 cases were reported in Andhra Pradesh on Thursday, but attention was focused on Kerala as the State reported one of the highest case numbers till date when 84 persons tested positive.

### COVID-19

Telangana's 117 new cases marked a record daily tally, after 107 on Wednesday. Four more COVID-19 patients succumbed to the virus.

All Kerala cases, except five, are imported infections, brought in by returning expatriates from abroad or non-resident Keralites.

Of the new positive cases, 48 people returned from other States, while 31 were expatriates. The remaining five cases were infections acquired through "contact",

from known or unknown sources of infection.

These cases apart, a Telangana native, who died in the capital last night was confirmed as COVID-19 positive. This person, along with his family, had boarded the wrong train from Rajasthan on May 22.

Kasaragod accounted for 18 cases, Palakkad (16), Kannur (10), Malappuram (8), Thiruvananthapuram (7), Thrissur (7), Kozhikode (6), Pathanamthitta (6), Kotayam (3), Kollam (1), Alapuzha (1) and Idukki (1).

Three persons were reported to have recovered from the disease on Thursday.

There were 526 COVID-19 patients under treatment. Of the 1,088 cases reported in Kerala, 555 had recovered.

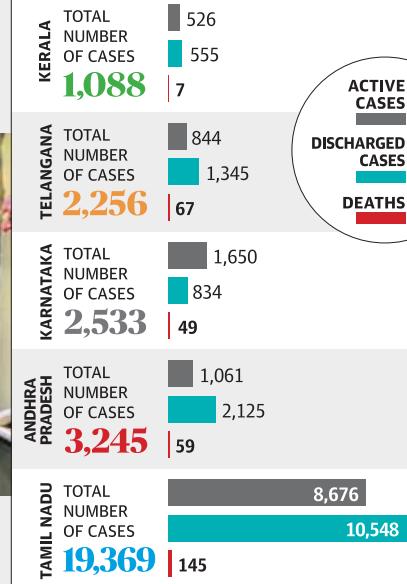
The State had 1,15,297 persons under surveillance, of whom, 1,14,305 were in home or institutional quarantine. A total of 992 per-

### Beauty tips

With the easing of lockdown restrictions, some States have given permission to salons and beauty parlours to resume operations, subject to certain conditions



**Good hair day:** A beautician wearing protective gear while attending to a customer at a parlour in Vijayawada on Thursday. ■K.V.S. GIRI



sons were in isolation wards in various hospitals for observation.

On Thursday alone, 210 persons were admitted to hospitals.

Palakkad had the maximum number of COVID-19 patients in treatment at 105, while Kannur (93), Kasaragod (63) and Malappuram (52) were other districts with

significant cases.

As part of sentinel surveillance, out of 9,937 random samples that were tested, 9,217 were negative.

In Karnataka, two days after issuing a circular permitting home quarantine of international and inter-State travellers after seven days of institutional quarantine, the

State did away with the previously mandatory COVID-19 test for asymptomatic individuals. An official circular was issued late on Wednesday night. The new guidelines were based on recommendations from the State's COVID expert committee. "There is not enough space in hotels and as more and more tra-

vellers are coming in, it may lead to overcrowding," the government said.

"All elderly people (aged above 60 years) and those with co-morbidities (such as diabetes mellitus, hypertension, asthma, heart ailment, renal disease among others) are required to be clinically evaluated diligently prior to shifting them for quarantine," the circular stated.

Meanwhile, 115 new cases were reported in the State on Thursday taking the total number of cases to 2,533.

Among the new cases, 95 were inter-State travellers and two were international passengers.

With another death and 128 fresh COVID-19 positive cases as of Thursday, the tally in Andhra Pradesh went up to 3,245 and the toll rose to 59. The new fatality was in Kurnool district, which had the highest number of cases and deaths. Of the 128 cases, 54 were of locals and 74 were migrant returnees. .

(With inputs from Bengaluru, Vijayawada and Hyderabad bureaus)

### Heralding monsoon



**Shower time:** A busy road during a downpour in Thiruvananthapuram on Thursday. The southwest monsoon is likely to arrive in Kerala on June 1, the India Meteorological Department said. ■S. GOPAKUMAR

## Tipplers refuse to raise a toast to virtual queue app

Glitches mar BevQ on first day

**M.P. PRAVEEN**  
KOCHI

BevQ, the much-anticipated virtual queue management app for hassle-free purchase of liquor with e-tokens in Kerala, got off to a disastrous start on Thursday.

The most common complaint was about the non-receipt of One Time Password (OTP) verification.

"Though I managed to register, the OTP never came," said Bhuvanesh.

Many users complained that though they received the message that the OTP has been sent to their mobile, they never received it.

The app, though live in Google Play Store, was still not available through direct search.

Faircode Technologies Private Limited, the startup that developed the

app, attributed it to the time taken to index the app by Google. Instead, users were asked to try searching the app with the command "pub:Kerala State Beverages Corporation". A large number of disgruntled users gave the app a low rating in Google Play Store.

Naveen George, the CFO of Faircode Technologies, said 15 lakh users registered on the app as on Wednesday evening. The app has a capacity to register 25 lakh users in a day while the number of tokens per shop remains restricted to 400 a day. "We have not detected any hitches... everyone with tokens got liquor," he said.

Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan said an estimated 2,25,000 consumers had used the BevQ application to purchase liquor.

## Swarm of grasshoppers leads to locust scare in A.P. district

But desert locusts may arrive, going by the wind direction

**RAMESH SUSARLA**  
ANANTAPUR

The sight of a large number of common Calotropis grasshoppers (*Poekilocerus pictus*) perched on all kinds of vegetation in Rayadurg town and surrounding areas in Anantapur district of Andhra Pradesh on Thursday created panic among people.

With speculations about desert locusts moving towards central coastal Andhra Pradesh encompassing Krishna and West Godavari districts aided by wind making the rounds, social media and electronic channels were abuzz with pictures of the swarms.

Desert locusts will move towards the two Andhra Pradesh districts after touching the Karimnagar, Jagityal and

## Karnataka wary of attack

**STAFF REPORTER**  
KALABURAGI

Bidar and Kalaburagi in Karnataka are bracing themselves for a possible attack by desert locusts, though the Agriculture department has said chances of it are low.

The swarms of insects

may enter the State through

Bidar and Kalaburagi from Maharashtra.

Raju Teggelli, entomologist and head of the Kalaburagi Krishi Vigyan Kendra, said it would largely depend on the current and the speed of the wind. He said the desert locust attack was last reported from the region in 1891.

Nalgonda areas in Telangana going by present indications such as wind direction, said agrometeorologist S. Malleswari Sadihneni at the Agriculture Research Station at Rekulakunta in Anantapur.

About the invasion of

grasshoppers in the Rayadurg area, Ms. Malleswari

said due to extreme heat followed by a spell of rain in that area this week, these insects had come out of their habitat and were devouring vegetation.

There was no danger to crops from grasshoppers unlike desert locusts as they are relatively very mild.

The Karnataka High Court said on Thursday that SMSs sent to lakhs of migrant workers, who had registered on Seva Sindhu portal for journey in Shramik Special trains, seeking confirmation for travel is prima facie an exercise to exclude a large number of them from travelling back to their States. Knowing fully well that workers registered on the portal only for travelling home, the government sent SMSs for confirmation in a most complicated manner, it observed.

### KIA Motors India to invest ₹409 crore in A.P.

**ANANTAPUR**  
The KIA Motors India will invest \$54 million (₹409.5 crore) in expansion project at its manufacturing facility at Erramanchi village in Andhra Pradesh, company Chief Executive Officer Kookhyun Shim announced on Thursday.

Mr. Shim said the KIA Motors India's success story would attract more foreign investors to A.P., adding that the company had achieved success in the market within 10 months of beginning manufacturing cars.

did not wish to be named. Charles Corfield, a retired forest officer from Tamil Nadu, who had participated in several rescue operations, questioned the attempts to tranquillise the leopard amid the cacophony of onlookers.

"Tranquillising is nothing but inducing sleep. Will anybody be able to sleep amid such noise? Unfortunately, this is the scenario everywhere. Police do not allot enough staff to control the crowds," Mr. Corfield says.

"Everywhere in the country they drag the animal than carrying. They get so much funding under Project Tiger. Can't they spend some on stretchers?" he asked.

## Leopard on rampage caught, but dies on way to Nehru Zoo

Experts criticise the 'crude and unscientific' rescue operation

**B. PRADEEP**  
**SWATHI VADLAMUDI**  
MARRIGUDA/HYDERABAD

A panicked leopard attacked two forest officials on Thursday during a rescue operation on the outskirts of Rajapet thanda in Telangana's Nalgonda district.

Though the seven-year-old male leopard was eventually tranquillised and shifted to Hyderabad, it died on the way to the Nehru Zoological Park (NZP).

Locals said the leopard was found trapped in a

barbed wire fence around 6.30 a.m. The police and forest officials arrived within an hour. "The leopard had preyed on a sheep and its hind legs were trapped in the fence when it tried to wriggle out," owner of the farm land, K. Suresh Naik said.

Tense moments unfolded after the rescue team got down to work around 11 a.m. A huge crowd had gathered to witness the rescue. The team first fired three shots from the tranquilliser gun, but the frightened leopard extricated itself from the trap

and ran amok. When the officials chased it with sticks, the big cat pounced on an official and mauled another person.

The injured duo, forest beat officer Osman and NZP official Shiva, are stable and out of danger.

## Yechury calls Centre out on health crisis

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

CPI(M) general secretary Sitaram Yechury has demanded that the Union government publish a "white paper" on how the lockdown was used to strengthen public health.

Mr. Yechury tweeted, "Modi gave an unplanned unilateral last-minute *firman* for Lockdown: has no idea on how to end it scientifically now... BJP govt compounded the misery of a public health emergency".

Mr. Yechury told *The Hindu* that lockdowns were resorted to by countries when they saw the pandemic rising and during that period they tried to flatten the curve. So, by the end of a lockdown, the number of cases must have shown a decline.

## India vaccine trials likely in Oct.

Preclinical studies have to be completed before human trials, says official

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

A novel coronavirus vaccine being developed in India will likely begin to be tested in people in October, K. Vijay-Raghavan, Principal Scientific Adviser to the government, said at a press briefing on Thursday.

"A group is working on a vaccine on a flu backbone. Preclinical studies are likely to be completed by October after which it is likely to move on to human trials," he said, without disclosing the identity of the company or group.

Another vaccine group had developed a promising protein that would be ready to be tested by next February. India was looking at both indigenous as well as foreign collaborations, he added.

NITI Aayog member V.K.



**In the making:** Six promising vaccine candidates are being developed from India. ■ AP

Paul said six promising vaccine candidates were being developed from India.

The Hyderabad-based Bharat Biotech announced in April that it was part of an international collaboration of virologists at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and U.S. vaccine company FluGen to develop 'CoroFlu,' a

van said it was a matter of interpreting the "glass as half full or half empty". The scale of the pandemic was such that it did not matter which company made a vaccine first, and there was enough room for promising vaccine candidates that would take a while to develop. Moreover, it was possible for vaccines to show limited efficacy in primates but be more protective in people.

"It's still early days," he added.

Dr. Paul, who is heading an empowered group on medical equipment and management plan to tackle the outbreak, said the results of a major sero-prevalence survey by the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) in 69 districts to estimate the level of infection in several districts were expected next week.

## ADB approves \$177m loan for Maharashtra road projects

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

MUMBAI

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) on Thursday signed a \$177 million loan to upgrade 450 km of State highways and major district roads in Maharashtra.

According to an official release, the projects would improve connectivity to national highways, inter-State roads, seaports, airports, rail hubs, district headquarters, industrial areas, enterprise clusters and agricultural areas.

"The project will improve connectivity between rural areas and urban centres in the State enabling rural communities to better access markets, employment opportunities and services," said Sameer Kumar Khare, additional secretary (Fund Bank and ADB), Department of Economic Affairs.

The project will also focus on training the Public Works Department staff to build their capacity in climate change adaptation.

## Govt. not hearing cries of migrant workers: Sonia

She urges Centre to pay ₹7,500 for six months to the poor

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

Congress president Sonia Gandhi on Thursday accused the Union government of not hearing the pain and the cries of poor migrant workers and appealed to the Centre to 'unlock its treasury' to tide over the difficulties faced by them because of the lockdown to flatten the COVID-19 curve.

Launching a "Speak Up India" campaign on social media platforms, Ms. Gandhi asked the government to transfer ₹7,500 to the poor families for the next six months, pay ₹10,000 immediately, ensure free transport of migrant workers, free ration and provision of 200 days of employment under Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA).

Ms. Gandhi alleged that while the entire nation could feel the agony and pain of the migrant workers, the Union government could not.



Sonia Gandhi delivering a video message on Thursday.

In a video message, she stated that after Independence, India had witnessed for the first time such a large-scale migration of people where workers were forced to walk thousands of kilometres without food, water or medicines. "Their pain, agony and sobs were heard and felt by every heart but not the government," she said.

Crates of jobs had been lost, lakhs of businesses destroyed, factories shut and farmers were running hassled to sell their produce, she said. "The whole country

has experienced this pain but the government perhaps does not have any idea about it." She urged people to 'speak up' as the party plans to generate over 50 lakh online petitions to mount pressure on the government.

Former party chief Rahul Gandhi said the COVID-19 storm had hit the poor, migrant workers and micro, small and medium business enterprises (MSMEs) the hardest. "Loans will not help, today people need money..." he said.

A host of Congress leaders, including Punjab Chief Minister Amarinder Singh and his Chhattisgarh counterpart Bhupesh Baghel took part in the campaign.

Senior party leader Anand Sharma tweeted, "India has let down its poor... The images of this struggle to stay alive shall forever remain a painful scar on the soul of the nation. #SpeakUpIndia".

## BJP plans 'digital rallies' for anniversary of Modi govt.

All seven wings of party to hold 500 digital campaigns

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has forced the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) to get creative over how to mark the first anniversary of the second successive Modi government, with the party deciding to hold a month-long campaign of "digital rallies" in every district in India beginning on June 1.

Party general secretary Bhupendra Yadav said this at a video presser, while reiterating that the BJP "stood with the general public in the fight against COVID-19".

"Our party workers have undertaken relentless relief work distributing 19 crore food packets and more than



The party will send a letter written by the Prime Minister to 10 crore families.

four crore dry ration kits," he said.

Giving details about the first anniversary of second Modi government, Mr. Yadav

said that the party will hold digital rallies across the country, and all the seven wings of the party will hold 500 digital rallies in their respective fields.

The party will reach out to people with a letter written by Prime Minister Narendra Modi talking about self-reliant India and the achievements of the government, and will distribute it to 10 crore families, Mr. Yadav said.

When asked about the upcoming Bihar Assembly elections, Mr. Yadav, who is also the party's in-charge for the State, said that it was for the Election Commission of India to decide when and how polls should be held.

## Noting past 'secession' cases, J&K HC upholds detention of Bar chief

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

SRINAGAR

The Jammu and Kashmir High Court on Thursday upheld the detention of High Court Bar Association president Mian Abdul Qayoom under the Public Safety Act (PSA), accepting the argument that past cases relating to his secessionist ideology continued to be relevant to justify his detention.

The court rejected an appeal against a single judge's order, upholding Mr.

Qayoom's detention. However, it observed that he could make a representation to the authorities for his release to the effect that he had shunned his "secessionist ideology". The court left it to the discretion of the government and the authorities concerned to consider such a representation.

Counsel for Mr. Qayoom, Z.A. Shah, had argued that the FIRs registered against him pertained to the period 2008-10, and the allegations

### Calendar of Events:

1. Last date for receipt of tenders : 08.06.2020 upto 16.00 hrs.

2. Date of Opening of Tenders (Technical Bids) : 10.06.2020 at 16.00 hrs.

The tender details can be downloaded from the e-procurement platform. Tenders shall be submitted electronically at [www.eproc.karnataka.gov.in](http://www.eproc.karnataka.gov.in) and Earnest Money Deposit and Tender Processing Fee shall also be paid electronically. Interested eligible contractors shall register on the e-procurement platform to participate in this tender.

**NOTE: 1. All the rights are reserved by the under signed for postponement or cancellation of entire tender process, rejection of bids /individual bid etc., without assigning any reason.**

**2. Henceforth, any changes in the schedule/contents will not be published through news papers and further changes will be updated only on e-procurement portal.**

**Sd/-  
Engineer-in-Chief,  
HFWD, Engineering Wing, Bengaluru.**

## India says open to dialogue with Nepal, ties on upswing

Modi, Oli failed to talk on Thursday, says Nepalese report

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

India is open to dialogue with all its neighbours, the External Affairs Ministry said on Thursday responding to sharp comments from Kathmandu on the Kalapani territorial dispute.

Ministry spokesperson Anurag Srivastava said dialogue with Nepal required "positive efforts" even as a Nepalese media outlet reported that an expected telephone conversation between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his counterpart K. P. Sharma Oli failed to materialise on Thursday.

"It's still early days," he added.

Dr. Paul, who is heading an empowered group on medical equipment and management plan to tackle the outbreak, said the results of a major sero-prevalence survey by the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) in 69 districts to estimate the level of infection in several districts were expected next week.



Anurag Srivastava

historical, cultural and friendly exchanges. The Ministry's statement came a day after Nepal's Foreign Minister Pradeep Kumar Gyawali urged India to restore "status quo" in the disputed territory of Kalapani and withdraw the Indian security forces from the Kalapani-Lipulekh region.

Mr. Srivastava pointed to the bilateral collaborations in South Asia to defeat the COVID-19 pandemic, and said India's ties with Nepal had been on an "upward trajectory".

The Indian statement continues to indicate a warmer approach to Nepal though there are serious issues that may require a quick diplomatic solution.

## Citing swine fever, China bans pork imports from India

State-run media, though, link the move to border tensions

ANANTH KRISHNAN

Chinese authorities have said they have put in place a ban on pork imports from India, a move that State media has linked to the ongoing border tensions.

A joint notice issued by the General Administration of Customs of China and the Ministry of Agricultural and Rural Affairs on Wednesday said China "is set to ban imports of pigs, wild boar and related products from India in an effort to prevent African swine fever (ASF) and ensure the safety of China's animal husbandry".

While the official notice

from the government made no mention of the ongoing border dispute, the *Global Times*, a Communist Party-run newspaper, reported that "the ban comes after tensions between the two countries flared up in Galwan Valley region", which it blamed on "India's recent, illegal construction of defense facilities on the border to Chinese territory".

The newspaper said India had reported its first case of ASF in May, and the disease had killed more than 14,000 pigs in the border state of Assam. The newspaper said the disease first broke out in China in August 2018.

## ICMR-NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF NUTRITION

INDIAN COUNCIL OF MEDICAL RESEARCH

Jamai-Osmania (P.O.), Tamaka, Hyderabad-500 007, Telangana State, India.

### ADMISSION NOTIFICATION

FOR THE ACADEMIC SESSION 2020-22

#### M.Sc. (APPLIED NUTRITION)

(Offered under MoU with Osmania University, Hyderabad)

Applications are invited from eligible candidates for admission into the two-year M.Sc. (Applied Nutrition) course at the ICMR-National Institute of Nutrition (NN), Hyderabad offered under MoU with Osmania University, Hyderabad, Telangana for the academic session 2020-2022.

**ELIGIBILITY:** Candidates seeking admission into the two-year M.Sc. (Applied Nutrition) course must have passed in one of the following Under Graduate courses viz. B.Sc. (Nursing), MBBS or B.Sc. with one of the following subjects namely Nutrition, Foods & Nutrition, Home Science (with specialization in Food & Nutrition), Bio-Chemistry, Zoology, Applied Nutrition and Public Health, Clinical Nutrition & Dietetics, Food Science or Nutrition & Dietetics. In addition, the candidate should possess a minimum of 55% aggregate marks in the qualifying examination and SC/ST candidates should possess a minimum of 50% aggregate marks in the qualifying examination. Students who are appearing for the qualifying examination in the year 2020 and are awaiting their results are also eligible to apply. However, the marks memorandum of the qualifying examination has to be produced at the time of counselling.

**OBTAINING APPLICATION FORMS:** Application forms along with prospectus can be downloaded from the website: [www.nin.res.in](http://www.nin.res.in) or can be obtained in person (if the COVID-19 Lockdown is lifted) from the Head, MYAS-NIN Department of Sports Science, ICMR-National Institute of Nutrition, Jamai-Osmania, PO, Opp. Tarnaka Metro Station, Hyderabad-500007 or on 25.06.2020 to 5:00 PM. The applications will be available from 10:00 AM on 27.05.2020 to 5:00 PM of 25.06.2020.

**LAST DATE FOR SUBMISSION OF APPLICATIONS:** The duly filled in applications, along with the demand draft of Rs. 300/- (for OC/BC/SC Candidates) and Rs. 270/- (for SC/ST Candidates) from any nationalised bank towards registration fee drawn in favour of "The Director, NIN, payable at Hyderabad-500007 or on or before 25.06.2020 by 5:00 PM. Considering the prevailing COVID-19 Lockdown, duly filled in application, and relevant documents may be sent through e-mail ([ninacademic.appliednutrition@gmail.com](mailto:ninacademic.appliednutrition@gmail.com)). The registration fee may also be paid online to Director, NIN, A/c No. 52020520463; IFSC: SBIN0020082; State Bank of India (SBI), NIN Branch, Lalgadda, SECUNDERABAD - 500017.

Applications received after the last date and time will not be accepted. NIN is not responsible for the postal delay or any loss in transit.

**NUMBER OF SEATS:** 20 students from India will be admitted to the course as per the GOI norms. The admission process will be as per the stipulated rules of GOI.

**LIST OF ELIGIBLE CANDIDATES & ENTRANCE TEST:** The list of eligible candidates to appear for the test will be uploaded on NIN's Website on 29.05.2020. The candidates should download their hall tickets from NIN Website ([www.nin.res.in](http://www.nin.res.in)) from 29.05.2020. Entrance Test will be conducted on 12.07.2020 (Sunday) at 2:00 PM. Results of the Entrance Test will be uploaded on the website ([www.nin.res.in](http://www.nin.res.in)) on 24.07.2020. First counselling session will be held on NIN on 12.08.2020 from 10:00 AM onwards. Classes will commence from 01.09.2020 as per the UGC guidelines. For further details and for important dates please refer to the prospectus and rules & regulations carefully.

**Note:** Last date for submission of application form, entrance examination and other important dates may be changed depending upon the circumstances in the wake of COVID-19 pandemic and any such information will be updated on the NIN website from time-to-time. Candidates are requested to check the website [www.nin.res.in](http://www.nin.res.in) for updates.

Date: 27th May, 2020, Place: Hyderabad Sd/- DIRECTOR

## All India Institute of Medical Sciences, Raipur

Tatibandh, G.E. Road, Raipur, C.G.-492099

Admin/Tender/ACE/2020-AIIMSRR

Date 26.05.2020

### E-Tender Notice

AIIMS, Raipur invites e-bid Tender for Conducting and Processing various Computer Based Examinations at AIIMS, Raipur from reputed firms. Detailed terms and conditions along with Tender Document can be viewed/downloaded from AIIMS, Raipur website [www.aiimsraipur.edu.in](http://www.aiimsraipur.edu.in) and through CPPP Portal [https://](https://eprocure.gov.in/eprocure/app)

## IN BRIEF



## Ticket booking period extended to 120 days

The Ministry of Railways on Thursday increased the advance reservation period for the special passenger trains to 120 days from the 30 days now. They include the 30 trains operational since May 12, as well as the 200 trains that will commence operations on June 1. The changed booking period will be effective from 08:00 hours on May 31, an official statement said. Booking of parcel and luggage will be permitted.

## DD News employees to be tested for infection

Nearly 50 personnel of the camera division of Doordarshan News will be tested for coronavirus infection after a 53-year-old video journalist who died of a "heart attack" on Wednesday tested positive posthumously. DD News has temporarily shut down the studio. "We have made contingency plans so that news operations are unaffected, by leveraging our pool of studios in Delhi," a top official at DD News said.

## Liquor baron hires Airbus 180-seater to fly four

A Bhopal-based liquor baron hired a 180-seater Airbus A320 to fly his daughter, two granddaughters and a nanny to New Delhi, to avoid the crowd aboard a regular passenger flight, airport officials said. "The flight, belonging to a private carrier, was the first to fly from Bhopal on May 25," said an official of the Raja Bhoj Airport here. "The family was stuck here since the lockdown kicked in."

# 'Runaway' trains haunt migrant workers

Viral video shows train from Vasai to Gorakhpur taking three days; Railways blame choked network

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

Amid severe criticism over the running of Shramik Special trains, another video went viral on Thursday, with travellers complaining about their train taking a longer route without prior intimation. The Railways, however, called the video "misleading".

In the video, the passengers travelling from Vasai, Maharashtra, to Gorakhpur, Uttar Pradesh, alleged that it was their third day of travel, with the train traversing several States, including Odisha, Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand. They also complained of lack of food and water.

The spokesperson of Western Railways said the Shramik Special mentioned in the video started its journey on May 21 and completed it on May 24.



**Basic need:** Scouts provide drinking water to migrant workers at Prayagraj station. ■ PTI

The train was diverted because of network congestion on the Uttar Pradesh-Bihar route.

Replying to the video post on Twitter, Western Railways said, "It is stated that as 80% Shramik Special trains were

headed to Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, the Jabalpur-Satna-Manikpur route got congested, owing to which some trains were run on diverted routes for two days only. Now there is no congestion and trains are running on

this route. Hence, it is misleading."

In a series of tweets on Wednesday, the Ministry of Railways said over 3,500 Shramik Special trains had so far been operated, and they had carried more than

48 lakh passengers. Nearly 80% of these trains were bound for various destinations in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar.

"Most of the destinations in Uttar Pradesh are around Lucknow and Gorakhpur and in Bihar around Patna. Convergence of trains on these destinations caused some congestion in a particular section of the network," it said.

In a separate release, the Railways said that since May 1, it had operationalised 3,736 Shramik Special trains, transporting 50 lakh migrant workers, and about 67 trains were in the pipeline.

After complaints of passengers suffering for lack of food and water, the Railways said it had distributed over 85 lakh free meals and 1.25 crore free water bottles to migrants since May 1.

# Migrants have to wait for long: SC

'They get no word after registration'

KRISHNADAS RAJAGOPAL  
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court, which on Thursday ordered that no fare be charged from migrant workers for travel, said that even after registration, they had to wait for a long period, ranging from a week to a month, for their turn to board a bus or a train.

"A large number of migrant workers are still seen proceeding on foot to different places," a three-judge Bench observed.



Families waiting to board special buses in Delhi. ■ SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

Prime Minister, were selflessly battling an "unprecedented crisis". He accused the "prophets of doom" and "armchair intellectuals" of stirring trouble and weakening the resolve. He questioned their patriotism. He said the court should not be allowed to be made into a political platform.

## Clear policy

The court asked why certain States had turned away migrant workers from their borders. There was a need for a concrete and uniform policy between the Centre and the States and among States as regard to the crisis. "Look to the future. How much time do you need to transport migrants workers? What is the monitoring mechanism to ensure food and basic necessities? It is not that the government is not doing enough but concrete steps need to be taken. Hard reality is that there is a need for a mechanism to tackle the crisis," the court observed.

The nearly three-hour hearing through video-conference witnessed the court question the government about its "lapses" in providing adequate food, shelter and transport to thousands of migrant workers, triggering an exodus during the lockdown.

Appearing for Congress leader Randeep Singh Surjewala, senior advocate A.M. Singhvi said the Centre still did not have a nationwide plan to tally the exact number of stranded labourers.

# PM-CARES grants meagre, says Jairam

Congress leader says fund not being used to alleviate the plight of migrants

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

Two months after the PM-CARES fund was announced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi for tackling the COVID-19 pandemic, senior Congress leader and Rajya Sabha member Jairam Ramesh on Thursday raised a host of questions on the utility of such a fund when millions of migrant workers are still struggling to reach home.

Quoting news reports, Mr. Ramesh said nearly ₹9,677 crore has been collected under the fund. And another ₹2,098.2 crore had been

pledged to the fund as of last week. Of this, only ₹3,100 crore had been released.

This at a time when millions of migrants were forced to walk home in the absence of assured transport. The workers were also being forced to pay exorbitant amounts for

tickets on special trains, he said.

"The 'Modi Fund' released only ₹1,000 crore for migrant workers 15 days ago. Why not? Why the delay," Mr. Ramesh asked. Another ₹2,000 crore was spent on purchasing "Made-in-India" ventilators in Ahmedabad, which many news reports had alleged were not functioning properly, he said.

The Congress leader further asked why the "Modi Fund" was not used to procure sufficient personal protective equipment when there had been desperate

calls from doctors, nurses and other essential workers for it.

"Testing is a key element of dealing with the COVID-19 crisis. Why is the 'Modi Fund' not being used to procure enough RT-PCR tests," he asked.

Mr. Ramesh reiterated the question that the Opposition has been asking on why was a new fund instituted when a PM National Relief Fund, Chief Minister Relief Funds and State Disaster Management Authority Funds existed. "Is it because none of them can be used for PR/P?" he asked.

## Brief us on Meerut status: Allahabad HC

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
LUCKNOW

The Allahabad High Court on Thursday directed the Meerut administration to apprise it of the prevailing COVID-19 status in the district after a petition alleged that the situation there was "critical, grievous and sensitive".

The court sought details from the government on the number of stranded workers and plans for their registration and transport. A hearing has been scheduled for June 5.

A Division Bench of Justices Ramesh Sinha and Siddhartha Varma directed the State counsel to seek instructions from the District Magistrate and brief the court of the "alarming situation" in Meerut. The petitioners had "brought to our notice that the adequate measures with regard to restraining the spread of COVID-19 are not being taken," the court observed.

The Centre maintained that workers were "locally instigated" to walk home. Mr. Mehta said the government machinery, from the "safai karamchari" to the

# NHRC issues notice to govt. on migrant deaths

## SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) issued notices to the Union Home Ministry, the Railway Board and the Bihar and Gujarat governments on Thursday in connection with the reported deaths of some migrant workers on Shramik Special trains and the lack of food and water for the passengers on these trains.

The NHRC took *suo motu* cognisance of media reports about the trains not only

starting late, but also taking many more days to reach their destinations. One of the reports claimed that many migrant labourers lost their lives during their journey due to the longer duration and the absence of arrangements for drinking water and food, an NHRC statement said. The government had started these special trains on May 1 to ferry migrant workers back to their home States after they were stranded in different parts of the country during the CO-

VID-19-induced lock-down from March 25.

**Gross rights violation'** The NHRC noted that two people died in Muzaffarpur and one each in Danapur, Sarsam, Gaya, Begusarai and Jehanabad in Bihar. "All of them reportedly died due to hunger. In another incident, a train reportedly started from Surat district in Gujarat for Siwan in Bihar on May 16 and reached Bihar on May 25 i.e. after 9 days. The Commission has observed that

the contents of the media reports, if true, amount to gross violation of human rights. The aggrieved families have suffered irreparable loss. The State has failed to protect the lives of the poor labourers on board the trains," the statement said.

Taking the reports into account, the NHRC issued notices to the Chief Secretaries of Bihar and Gujarat governments, the chairman of the Railway Board and the Union Home Secretary, seeking their reports within four

weeks. "...Train getting lost during journey, reaching unexpected destinations and taking more than a week to reach its scheduled station is hard to believe and requires a thorough investigation...", it said. The Commission observed that the Railways' attitude towards the migrant workers "borders on barbarism." "The labourers cannot be treated in such an inhuman manner, just because they are poor and the government has paid for their tickets," the NHRC said.

# Muzaffarpur rail station incident shocking: HC

Bench takes *suo motu* cognisance of report

## SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

PATNA

The Patna High Court on Thursday took *suo motu* cognisance of a video which on May 27 went viral on social media showing a baby playfully tugging at a sheet partially covering his dead mother at the Muzaffarpur railway station in Bihar, and termed the incident "shocking and unfortunate".

Chief Justice Sanjay Karol and Justice S. Kumar took note of a news report, and said "this warrants intervention by us in exercise of our jurisdiction under Article 226 and issue notice."

## Amicus curiae appointed

The court appointed advocate Ashish Giri as *amicus curiae* and directed S.D. Yadav, Additional Advocate General-IX, who was present in the virtual court, to obtain instructions on all issues. The Central government, the Railways and the Bihar government and various departments of the State government were added as respondents. The court also asked the Bihar government counsel to ascertain if this particular incident was being considered by the Supreme Court in the *suo motu* petition before it. In response to queries from the court, the Additional Advocate-General said that "no information could be ascertained as the matter listed on the board, had yet not reached." He said the "news report is partially incorrect. The deceased was mentally unstable and had died a natural death during the course of her journey from Surat [Gujarat]."



A screengrab from the video showing a child tugging at a sheet covering his dead mother at Muzaffarpur.

"The deceased, who had been deserted by her husband, had only one child. Md. Wazir [her brother-in-law - sister's husband] brought her death to the notice of the railway authorities and after recording of his statement, the body was allowed to be taken home," Mr. Yadav added.

He told the court that "no post-mortem was conducted and no FIR was registered. However, the district administration facilitated by providing an ambulance up to the place of destination. The orphaned child is in safe custody and guardianship of the sister of the deceased."

"Even though the child is safe and secure, yet he shall personally pursue the matter with the authorities who would again reach out to the family, enquiring any need of assistance," the Additional Advocate-General told the court. Later the court ordered that all the complete facts be submitted in the form of affidavits before June 3, the next date of hearing.

**KARNATAKA POWER CORPORATION LIMITED**  
(Raichur Thermal Power Station)  
CIN: U85110KA1970SGC001919  
No: KPCL/2020-21/EL/WORK\_INDENT10074 Date: 27.05.2020

**SHORT TERM e-TENDER NOTIFICATION**  
(Through e-Procurement Portal only) (Two Cover System)  
Bids are invited from the qualified bidders for the work of "Disassembly and removal of existing GVPI stator bars of rotor threaded over Generator, design, engineering, Manufacture & Quality surveillance, Testing at Works, Supply, Transportation & storage at site, re-winding of complete stator with new stator bars, Testing of completely rewound stator, Refurbishment of Rotor with required Transportation and Reassembly of generator and Exciter, Erection, Testing & commissioning of 250MW, THRI, BHEL make Generator of Unit-8 at Raichur TPS along with supply of listed essential spares". EMD: Rs.17,00,000/- Last date for submission of bid (both cover 1 & 2) along with documents to meet qualification criteria: 08.06.2020 up to 16:00 Hrs. Tender documents may be downloaded from GoK e-Procurement website: <https://eproc.karnataka.gov.in> under login for contractors. Further details can be had from Superintending Engineer (EM-2), RTPS, KPCL, Shaktinagar-584170, Raichur Dist. Mobile: 9449596529 email: seem2rtps@gmail.com, website: [www.karnatakapower.com](http://www.karnatakapower.com).

**WATCO**  
OFFICE OF THE MANAGING DIRECTOR, WATCO  
Ground Floor, Unnati Bhawan,  
H.B.Colony, Satyanagar, Bhubaneswar-751007, Odisha, India  
Telefax: +91-674-2391444; E-mail – mail@watcoodisha.in; md@watcoodisha.in

**INVITATION FOR BID (IFB)**  
Bid Identification No. WATCO(W)-07/2020-21, Dtd.26.05.2020  
WATCO No.2090, Date: 26.05.2020

1. Name of the work : 24 x 7 Water Supply to Puri Town under Drink from Tap Mission.  
2. Estimated Cost : Rs.2640.58 Lakh  
3. Period of completion : 12 (Twelve) Calender Months  
4. Date & Time of availability of bid document in the portal : From 12.00 Noon of Dt.01.06.2020 to 5.00 PM of 25.06.2020  
5. Last date / time of receipt of bids in the portal : 5.00 PM of 25.06.2020  
6. Date & Time of opening of technical bids : 12.30 PM of 26.06.2020  
7. Name and Address of the Officer Inviting Bid : Managing Director, WATCO  
Telefax: 0674-2391444, Email: maild@watcoodisha.in; md@watcoodisha.in  
8. The bidders have to participate in ONLINE bidding only.  
Further details can be seen from the web site [www.tendersodisha.gov.in](http://www.tendersodisha.gov.in)

Managing Director, WATCO  
OIPR-1083/11/0004/2021  
C-23.

## BRUHAT BENGALURU MAHANAGARA PALIKE

Office of the Executive Engineer, Byatarayanapura Division, No.2152/20, Defence Colony, BWSSB

Tank Road, Sahakaranagar, BBMP Office, Byatarayanapura, Bengaluru-92.

Date: 28.05.2020

### INVITATION FOR SHORT TERM TENDERS (IFT)

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

Tender for the following works on Item rate basis are invited as Standard Bid Documents KW-4 by the Executive Engineer, Byatarayanapura Division on behalf of the Commissioner, BBMP, from the registered Contractors of Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike or equivalent registration with CPWD/KPWD/Railways/MES or any State Government Organizations.

SL No	Name of the Works	EMD (in ₹.)
1.	Package-1, includes 4 works of Rs. 1100.00 Lakhs	
1.1	Improvements to Roads and Drains at Palanahalli and Surrounding Area in Ward No-05 Byatarayanapura Sub Division.	300.00
1.2	Improvements to Roads and Drains at Chokkanahalli and Surrounding Area in Ward No-05 Byatarayanapura Sub Division.	200.00
1.3	Improvements to Roads and Drains at Vinayakanagara and Surrounding Area in Ward No-05 Byatarayanapura Sub Division.	300.00
1.4	Improvements to Roads and Drains at Dwarakanagara and Surrounding Area in Ward No-05 Byatarayanapura Sub Division.	300.00
2.	Package-2, includes 3 works of Rs. 1100.00 Lakhs	
2.1	Improvements to Roads and Drains at Kogilu and Surrounding Area in	

## INTERVIEW | HEMANT SOREN

# 'Centre's decisions have led to a spike in COVID-19 cases in States'

States are unable to cope with unscheduled train movements ... not letting workers return is a major reason for rise in infection rate, says Jharkhand CM

SATYASUNDAR BARIK  
AMIT BARUAH

**Jharkhand Chief Minister Hemant Soren**, grappling with the twin crises posed by lakhs of returning migrants and COVID-19, says the Centre should have consulted the States before allowing the Home Ministry to run trains. The Centre's decisions have led to a spike in COVID-19 cases in the States, he says.

Tackling COVID-19 is a big challenge for States. What are the challenges Jharkhand is facing?

■ We have just started facing the challenges COVID-19 poses. With the number of returning migrant workers increasing, the challenge is going to get tougher for us. As of now, only 450 COVID-19 positive cases have been detected in Jharkhand. Of them, four have died. The case fatality rate has been nominal.

So far, Jharkhand has only conducted 53,000 tests. Is

this the reason the number of positive cases in your State remains low?

■ Absolutely not. Those who had been infected prior to the arrival of migrant workers have almost all recovered in Jharkhand. Now, a majority of infections are being detected among returnees. That's why we are giving priority to test migrant workers.

We have only four functional [COVID-19 testing] laboratories. Earlier, the situation was much worse — we were getting our samples tested in Kolkata. Now, things have improved. Test-

ing capacity has been augmented in the State.

How many migrant labourers from Jharkhand are stranded outside and how many of them want to return home?

■ About 4.5 lakh migrant labourers have come by buses, trains and own arrangements. More than eight lakh migrant labourers from our State are stranded outside. We want all our workers stuck outside to be sent back to Jharkhand with safety and dignity.

I was the first Chief Minister to advocate that migrants had the right to return. As of now, 166 trains carrying migrant workers have already reached Jharkhand, another 70-80 trains are scheduled.

The Centre's decision to go for a series of lockdowns has



**We want all our workers stuck outside to be sent back to Jharkhand with safety and dignity**

triggered one of the biggest internal migrations since Partition. Do you think the decision to impose the first lockdown was taken in a hurry?

■ I have said earlier that it is not the right time to do a post-mortem. We have to fight COVID-19 first.

However, I believe the Centre's decisions are responsible for a spike in the number of positive cases in the States.

Confining migrant workers outside their home States and not letting them return is a major reason behind the rise in the rate of infection.

Besides, allowing labourers to return without putting a proper plan in place added to the confusion. Earlier, workers were being sent by Shramik Special trains with a proper schedule and States had plans in place to deal with returnees.

Now, the situation has come to such pass that a train scheduled to reach Kodarma reaches Ranchi [about 200 km south]. States are unable to cope with un-

scheduled train movements. Earlier, two States used to send and receive migrant workers systematically. Now,

the Central government suddenly took a decision that it would make trains available to States.

What is solution to this problem?

■ The Centre should have consulted States before taking such a drastic step. First, the process of facilitating the return of migrant labourers should have been completed.

Subsequently, other steps should have been thought of. Now, that process has been disrupted.

Had the Railways run trains at full capacity and allowed people to return to their homes before lockdowns, do you think infections

triggered by migrants would have been lower?

■ That is an open secret. Many countries have allowed their citizens buffer time to return home. But in our country, States had to stop migrants from going home. The situation got worse. Now, many fronts have been opened for States to grapple with.

We have to keep an eye on people quarantined, send incoming migrant labourers to quarantine, fix the healthcare system and address growing unemployment. These factors have unsettled State governments.

Thankfully, we [Jharkhand] had prepared in advance. You won't find any migrant workers walking on the road. We are running community kitchens every 20 km on National Highways to ensure no one stays hungry.

How will you mobilise funds to provide jobs to migrant labourers when all of them return home?

■ During consultations, I have emphasised that States should be given power to mobilise resources on their own and boost their finances.

We are now seized of the matter, but it will take time. We have tried to provide jobs to all migrant workers by adding 10 lakh more to the workforce.

Lockdown 4 is going to be over on May 31. What is your view on extending the lockdown?

■ We have not taken any decision on this as yet. Our priority is to prevent people from dying from hunger as well as disease. This is an evolving situation.

## Drones deployed for controlling locusts

Trial in a Jaipur village proved their utility as additional support in reaching difficult terrains

MOHAMMED IQBAL  
JAIPUR

The Civil Aviation Ministry has given permission to the Agriculture Department of the Rajasthan government to use remotely piloted aircraft systems for anti-locust operations in the large areas where the insect swarms have landed.

The locust attack has affected about 90,000 hectares in 20 districts of the State.

**Conditional exemption**  
In an order, the Ministry said that the conditional exemption to use drones would be limited to equipment deployed by the nodal agency for aerial surveillance, aerial photography, public announcements and aerial spray of insecticide.

Details of the drone flights



**Flying menace:** A person trying to drive away swarms of locusts from a mango tree in Jaipur. ■ AFP

and pesticide sprayed will be provided to the Directorate General of Civil Aviation.

The drones will not be flown over eco-sensitive zones around national parks and wildlife sanctuaries, according to the order.

missioner Om Prakash told *The Hindu* on Thursday that the deployment of a drone on a trial basis in Jaipur district's Samod village had proved the utility of the equipment in reaching difficult and inaccessible terrains.

"Drones can spray insecticide from heights, and in places, where regular sprayers cannot reach. They can kill locusts which are perched on high trees," he said.

**Additional support**  
Dr. Prakash said though the drones were not as effective as sprayers, which are usually mounted on tractors and fire tenders, they would be useful as an "additional support" for sprinkling the chemicals on the locust swarms at places like foothills and sand dunes. A drone can spray pesticide on a nearly 2.5-acre area during a flight of 15 minutes.

The Agriculture Department has floated tenders for engaging 30 drones for locust control in the State. Dr. Prakash said the insects were landing on trees and foraging on leaves primarily because of lack of vegetation in agricultural fields after the rabi crop harvesting. They are likely to come down when they find greenery on the land.

Over 800 sprayers-mounted tractors and 50 fire tenders have been pressed into service for locust control. Dr. Prakash said that about 200 teams were involved in daily survey of the affected areas and the farmers were being supplied with high-intensity insecticide free of cost.

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI**  
Former Union Finance Minister P. Chidambaram on Thursday said the decision to do away with Reserve Bank of India (RBI) bonds was a "cruel blow" to citizens as it had been one of the "risk-free" savings instruments since 2003.

On Wednesday, a government notification said the 7.75% Savings (Taxable) Bonds, 2018, also known as RBI bonds or government bonds, shall "cease for subscription with effect from the close of banking business on Thursday, the 28th of May, 2020".

In a series of tweets, Mr. Chidambaram said citizens must demand that they be restored immediately



P. Chidambaram

this once before in January 2018.

"I protested vehemently. Next day they re-introduced the bond but reduced the interest rate from 8% to 7.75%. Effectively, after tax, the bond will yield only 4.4%. That is now taken away. Why? I deplore this action."

He said, "Every government is bound to provide at least one safe, risk-free investment option to its citizens. It was the RBI bond since 2003. After lowering the interest rates in PPF and small savings instruments, the abolition of the RBI bond is another cruel blow. All citizens must demand that the 7.75% RBI bonds," he said. The government had done

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI**  
Former Union Finance Minister P. Chidambaram on Thursday said the decision to do away with Reserve Bank of India (RBI) bonds was a "cruel blow" to citizens as it had been one of the "risk-free" savings instruments since 2003.

On Wednesday, a government notification said the 7.75% Savings (Taxable) Bonds, 2018, also known as RBI bonds or government bonds, shall "cease for subscription with effect from the close of banking business on Thursday, the 28th of May, 2020".

In a series of tweets, Mr. Chidambaram said citizens must demand that they be restored immediately. "Government has dealt another blow to citizens who save, especially senior citizens. It has discontinued the 7.75% RBI bonds," he said. The government had done

this once before in January 2018.

"I protested vehemently. Next day they re-introduced the bond but reduced the interest rate from 8% to 7.75%. Effectively, after tax, the bond will yield only 4.4%. That is now taken away. Why? I deplore this action."

He said, "Every government is bound to provide at least one safe, risk-free investment option to its citizens. It was the RBI bond since 2003. After lowering the interest rates in PPF and small savings instruments, the abolition of the RBI bond is another cruel blow. All citizens must demand that the 7.75% RBI bonds," he said. The government had done

## Now, get PAN allotment through your Aadhaar

Facility promised in the 2020 Budget

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI**

Instant PAN allotment is now available for anyone who has a valid Aadhaar number and a mobile number registered with that Aadhaar. The facility, promised in the 2020 Budget speech, was formally launched by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Thursday.

The trial version of the facility has been available since February 2020, and almost 6.8 lakh instant PANs, with a turnaround time of about 10 minutes, have al-

## Lockdown hits access to sanitary hygiene

Access to menstrual products is either challenging or nil, says a survey

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI**

The ongoing lockdown to contain the COVID-19 pandemic is severely challenging women's and girls' access to menstrual hygiene products and toilets for managing menstruation, especially given the presence of male and older family and community members, the Menstrual Health Alliance India (MHA) observed in a recent survey.

The survey found that post COVID-19, and given the physical distancing measures in place, 67% of parti-

er organisations have had to pause normal operations, while before COVID-19, 89% of the organisations were reaching the community through community-based networks. 61% were distributing menstrual products through schools, 28% through door to door retail, 26% through online retail channels and 22% through traditional retail stores.

The alliance, which is a network of NGOs, researchers, manufacturers and practitioners working on menstrual health and hygiene in India and surveyed

organisations in the network, found: "62% respondents stated that in the communities they work with, access from regular channels for consumers has become challenging and 22% organisations report that there is no access to menstrual products".

With production becoming constrained, availability of menstrual hygiene products at the last mile rural retail points was most affected. Consumers who could access the products at block or district level markets were unable to do so due to lack of

public transport. "Various State and district governments have school-based distribution of sanitary pads. With schools closing down, many such girls had no access to sanitary pads. This has forced them to shift from disposable sanitary pads to cloth pads. Cloth pads can be a hygienic means of managing menstruation, if accompanied with information and facilities for hygienic management," the MHA noted.

A total of 67 organisations, including 45 from India, were surveyed.

## Hindi as official language in Haryana courts challenged

Lawyers file plea in Supreme Court

**LEGAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI**

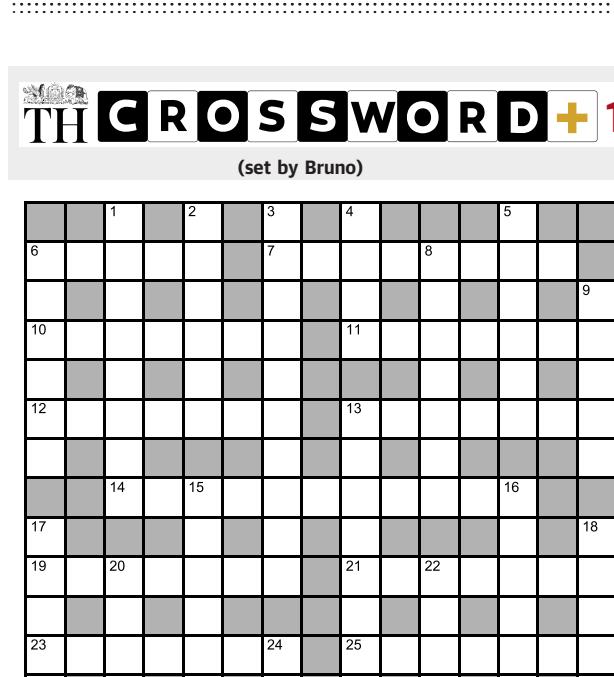
Lawyers have challenged in the Supreme Court a law which makes Hindi the official language in courts in Haryana.

Their petition contends that the Haryana Official Language (Amendment) Act of 2020 has unconstitutional and arbitrarily imposed Hindi as the sole official language to be used in lower courts across the State.

Advocates Sameer Jain, Sandeep Bajaj, Angad Sandhu, Suvigya Awasthi and

Anant Gupta have jointly challenged the new Section 3A incorporated into the Act. The lawyers have argued that English is widely used by advocates in lower courts in justice administration work.

The imposition of Hindi as the sole language would result in an unreasonable classification between lawyers who are fluent in Hindi and those who are not. The proficiency in language required to argue a case is much more than in the ordinary use of a language.



**ACROSS**

- 6 Pale climber carrying gold (5)
- 7 Dangerous very large rattler's head cut off (8)
- 10 More distant brother finally embraced by one parent (7)
- 11 Old island pass (7)
- 12 Spiny plant's each cut hurt (7)
- 13 Odd that world body and America adopted (7)

**DOWN**

- 1 Nasty odors in front of household animal running up entrance (8)
- 2 Setter's mostly stupid? That's not real! (6)
- 3 Inverted, open and under construction (10)
- 4 Cry pulling up end of broken joint (4)
- 5 Business's backup procuring fertilizer (6)
- 6 Dirty sink — Frank punches out John (6)
- 8 Plans for prisons starting to get 20-fold bigger (4-3)
- 9 Traded salted nuts after skipping last class... (5)
- 13 ... covering work plus theory (10)
- 15 Device with which informer secret-agent finally trapped revolutionary (7)
- 16 These days in San Francisco — perfect cold weather (8)
- 17 After work time for play (5)
- 18 Senior faculty hid engineer's disgrace (6)
- 20 Supplier's petition breaks one's right (6)
- 22 Couple composed lacked poem's essential elements or form (6)
- 24 Core of stone's hot (4)

## SUDOKU

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

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★☆

Solution to puzzle 12947

S	B	F	I	V	E

<tbl\_r cells="6" ix="1" max

# China passes controversial Hong Kong law

It will empower Beijing to draft national security laws for the city; pro-democracy groups slam move

ANANTH KRISHNAN

China's Parliament on Thursday passed new legislation for Hong Kong that will for the first time empower Beijing to draft national security laws for the Special Administrative Region (SAR).

At the closing session of the annual National People's Congress (NPC) in Beijing, the draft legislation was passed overwhelmingly, with 2,878 votes for, one against and six abstentions in the Communist Party-controlled legislature.

The law, called the "NPC Decision on Establishing and Improving the Legal System and Enforcement Mechanisms for the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region to Safeguard National Security", essentially empowers the NPC to draft new national security laws for Hong Kong. That could happen as early as June, when the NPC Standing Committee, which convenes every two months, holds its next sitting.

The draft legislation said the scope of the laws could cover any activity that "seriously endangers national security". It said it was aimed at enabling "measures to counter, lawfully prevent, stop and punish foreign and overseas forces' use of Hong Kong to carry out separatist, subversive, infiltrative, or destructive activities".

#### Basic law

The NPC decision has been criticised by pro-democracy parties and some in the legal community in Hong Kong as undermining the "one country, two systems" model. Since 1997, Hong Kong has been governed by the Basic Law, which gives the SAR "executive, legislative and independent judicial power, including that of final adjudication". Only matters of de-



**Power point:** Delegates applaud as Chinese President Xi Jinping arrives for the closing session of China's National People's Congress in Beijing on Thursday. ■ AP

## U.S. House passes Uighur rights Bill

REUTERS

WASHINGTON

The U.S. House of Representatives overwhelmingly approved legislation on Wednesday calling for sanctions on Chinese officials responsible for oppression of Uighur Muslims, sending the Bill to the White House for President Donald Trump to veto or sign into law.

The tally was 413-1. The near-unanimous support in Congress puts pressure on Mr. Trump to impose

human rights sanctions on China.

Although Trump's fellow Republicans in Congress said they expected he would sign the Bill, the White House has not yet indicated whether he will do so.

The Bill calls for sanctions against those responsible for repression of Uighurs and other Muslim groups in China's Xinjiang province, where the United Nations estimates that more than a million Muslims have been

detained in camps.

It singles out the region's Communist Party secretary, Chen Quanguo, as responsible for "gross human rights violations" against them.

"Congress sent a clear message that the Chinese government cannot act with impunity," said Republican Senator Marco Rubio.

The Bill also calls on U.S. firms operating in Xinjiang region to ensure their products do not include parts using forced labour.

fence and foreign affairs are handled by the central government.

While the law says the state would "fully, and accurately implement the principles of one country, two systems", it also enables organs of the central government "for the protection of national security" to set up "institutions in the HKSAR", a provi-

sion that has been a particular source of concern.

"It is entirely unclear how the proposed agencies set up in the HKSAR will operate under the laws of the HKSAR, whether they will be bound by the laws of the HKSAR, whether they have the power of enforcement, and whether such powers as exercised will be limited by

the laws currently in force in the HKSAR", the Hong Kong Bar Association said in a statement reported by the *South China Morning Post*.

The law could also block foreign judges from sitting on national security cases, following the example of Macau, which has done so since 2018, Reuters reported. Hong Kong's court of final

## + Trump 'order' to target social media

Firms could be held legally responsible for content posted by users, a draft says

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

WASHINGTON

U.S. President Donald Trump is expected to sign an executive order on Thursday after threatening to shutter social media platforms following Twitter's move to label two of his tweets misleading.

After long resisting calls to censure Mr. Trump over his truth-defying posts, Twitter on Tuesday accused the President of making false claims for the first time.

Mr. Trump had tweeted – without any evidence – that more mail-in voting would lead to what he called a "Rigged Election" this November.

Twitter's slap on the wrist was enough to drive Mr. Trump into a tirade on Twitter, in which he claimed that the political right in the U.S.



**Fact check:** Twitter on Tuesday accused the President of making false claims. ■ AFP

was being censored.

Mr. Trump would sign an executive order "pertaining to social media" on Thursday, his aides said, without offering any details.

But an undated draft version of the order obtained by *The Washington Post* on Wednesday said "we cannot allow a limited number of online platforms to hand-

pick the speech that Americans may access and convey online."

The order would make it easier for federal regulators to argue that the companies are "suppressing free speech when they move to suspend users or delete posts," *The New York Times* reported, citing two senior administration officials.

Both newspapers also reported that the order, which they said had not yet been finalised, could see companies such as Twitter, Facebook and Google held legally responsible for content posted on their platforms.

Twitter's move to tag the President's tweets comes after years of being accused of ignoring the President's violation of platform rules with his daily tweets.

Twitter founder and CEO Jack Dorsey fired back on Wednesday night, saying that his platform's effort to point out misinformation did not make it an "arbiter of truth."

"Our intention is to connect the dots of conflicting statements and show the information in dispute so people can judge for themselves," he tweeted.

Details about the project have not been released, but two officials told AFP that intelligence services are using geo-fencing and phone

monitoring systems that ordinarily are employed to hunt high-value targets including homegrown and foreign militants.

A lack of awareness, stigma and fear have contributed to some people with



**In solidarity:** Billboards went dark in Times Square in a show of support for restaurants and the hospitality sector. ■ AFP

## U.S. virus toll crosses 1,00,000; pandemic grips Latin America

Experts advocate caution even as businesses reopen

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

WASHINGTON

The U.S. COVID-19 death toll passed 1,00,000 as the pandemic tightened its grip on South America, which is outpacing Europe and the U.S. in daily infections.

At his annual press conference following the NPC, China's Premier Li Keqiang said China "will still follow the principle of Hong Kong people governing Hong Kong". He said "one country, two systems" is China's "basic state policy" and Beijing would continue to ensure Hong Kong had "a high degree of autonomy".

On Thursday, U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo certified to Congress that it was the administration's view that Hong Kong could no longer enjoy the special economic privileges it had received from the U.S. because of the erosion of its autonomy, a move that could hurt the SAR's economy.

Deaths in Brazil topped 25,000 on Wednesday, and its caseload is second only to the U.S., where authorities have moved to ease lockdowns and help the battered economy, despite experts recommending they remain on guard for a resurgence of the disease.

"Don't start leapfrogging over the recommendations of some of the guidelines because that's really tempting fate and asking for trouble," Anthony Fauci, a top U.S. health advisers, told CNN.

Nearly 1.7 million Americans are known to have been infected with the disease, according to a Johns Hopkins University tally.

"Those cuts prevented

causes more damage than the disease itself.

But infections in Brazil have surged past 41,000, and similar bad news continues to emerge from other South American countries.

"I want to talk to a doctor and they don't let me know," said Liset Villanueva, granddaughter of a COVID-19 patient. "They don't say anything, they don't call, they don't explain anything... What is he suffering from?"

many people from accessing the healthcare that they needed."

According to WHO, public spending on healthcare per capita fell in about half of European countries between 2008 and 2013. Healthcare needs that could not be met increased in 19 of 28 EU countries, with three million more people affected in 2013 than in 2008, it said.

Also, up to 9% of households were pushed into poverty as a result of having to pay for healthcare.

the Sabogal Hospital in the capital Lima were unable to enter to see loved ones suffering from COVID-19, with some begging the guards for information.

"I want to talk to a doctor and they don't let me know," said Liset Villanueva, granddaughter of a COVID-19 patient. "They don't say anything, they don't call, they don't explain anything... What is he suffering from?"

## Pak. uses militant-tracking tech to locate virus patients

Under PM's plan, ISI is using geo-fencing, listening in on calls

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

ISLAMABAD

Pakistan's intelligence services are deploying secretive surveillance technology normally used to locate militants to instead track COVID-19 patients and the people they come into contact with.

In a programme publicly touted by Prime Minister Imran Khan, the government has turned to the powerful Inter-Services Intelligence agency (ISI) for help in tackling the virus, which still is spreading at an accelerating rate across Pakistan.

Details about the project have not been released, but two officials told AFP that intelligence services are using geo-fencing and phone



Security personnel patrolling the streets of Karachi. ■ AFP

symptoms not seeking treatment or even fleeing hospitals, while others who've had contact with virus patients have flouted self-isolation rules.

Speaking on condition of anonymity, a senior security official said that agencies are "quite effectively" using the technology to track patients.

Geo-fencing, a discreet tracking system that alerts authorities when someone leaves a specific geographic area, has helped officials monitor neighbourhoods on lockdown.

Authorities are also listening in to the calls of COVID-19 patients to monitor whether their contacts are talking about having symptoms.

## ELSEWHERE



**Former Tehran Mayor elected Iran Speaker**

TEHRAN

Iran's Parliament on Thursday elected former Tehran Mayor Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf as its speaker, consolidating the power of conservatives ahead of next year's presidential election. The vote further shifts the political balance toward ultra-conservative opponents of the relatively moderate President Hassan Rouhani at a time when Iran is engaged in a standoff with the U.S. AFP

**Rwandan genocide suspect set to be tried**

THE HAGUE

The alleged financier of the 1994 Rwandan genocide, arrested this month in France after 25 years on the run, will be transferred to the war crimes tribunal in Arusha, Tanzania, once conditions allow it, a Judge in The Hague has ruled. Described as Africa's most wanted man, Felicien Kabuga is accused of creating the Interahamwe militia that carried out massacres in Rwanda. AFP

**'Johnson's aide made minor lockdown breach'**

LONDON

British police said Prime Minister Boris Johnson's senior adviser Dominic Cummings may have breached lockdown rules by driving 26 miles to a castle with his wife and son but they said they would take no further action. Mr. Cummings has been fighting for his job after revelations about his trip. REUTERS

**50 world leaders call for cooperation**

NEW YORK

World leaders on Thursday called for resilience and cooperation after the pandemic recedes, during a UN videoconference in which the United States, China and Russia did not participate. Canada and Jamaica organized the conference, in which Germany, U.K. and Italy also participated. AFP

## Violent protests rock U.S. city for second night

Clashes broke out between police and protesters over the death of a black man in custody

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

MINNEAPOLIS

Demonstrators clashed with police, looted stores and set fires as a man was fatally shot during a second night of protests in the US city of Minneapolis Wednesday over the killing of a black man by a police officer.

Police fired tear gas and formed a human barricade to keep protesters from climbing a fence surrounding the Third Precinct, where the officers accused of killing George Floyd worked before they were fired on Tuesday.

They pushed protesters back as the crowd grew, a day after firing rubber bullets and more tear gas on thousands of demonstrators angered by the latest death of an African-American at the hands of US law enforcement.

Minnesota State Governor



**Escalating tensions:** Police removing barricades set up by protesters during a demonstration in Minneapolis. ■ AFP

Tim Walz urged people to leave the area around the precinct where several fires were burning, warning of the "extremely dangerous situation" in a tweet late Wednesday.

President Donald Trump in a tweet called Floyd's death "sad and tragic", and all four officers have been fired, as prosecutors said they had called in the FBI to investigate the case.

Calls for justice came from around the country.

"I would like those officers to be charged with murder, because that's exactly what they did," Bridgett Floyd, the victim's sister, said on NBC television. "They murdered my brother... They should be in jail for murder."

Police continued to hold the crowds back from scaling a fence into the precinct's parking lot, where their cruisers contain guns.

As the violence escalated, with more businesses looted, a man was shot near the protests and later died, police said. A person has been arrested.

Protesters remained peaceful at two other locations in the vicinity.

At the place where Floyd was first taken into custody, people chanted and carried placards and sent out bouquets were set out as tributes to Floyd.

Calls for justice came from around the country.

"I would like those officers to be charged with murder, because that's exactly what they did," Bridgett Floyd, the victim's sister, said on NBC television. "They murdered my brother... They should be in jail for murder."

Police continued to hold the crowds back from scaling a fence into the precinct's parking lot, where their cruisers contain guns.

As the violence escalated, with more businesses looted, a man was shot near the protests and later died, police said. A person has been arrested.

Protesters remained peaceful at two other locations in the vicinity.

At the place where Floyd was first taken into custody, people chanted and carried placards and sent out bouquets were set out as tributes to Floyd.

## 14 Afghan officials killed in 'Taliban attacks'

First deadly assaults since end of truce

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

KABUL

Fourteen members of the Afghan security forces were killed in two separate attacks on Thursday in the first deadly assaults officials have blamed on the Taliban since the end of a three-day ceasefire.

Protesters marched on downtown Los Angeles and briefly blocked the 101 Freeway.

Some demonstrators smashed the windows of two police highway patrol cruisers, clambering on the hood of one of the vehicles. One of the protesters was injured when they fell off the vehicle as it sped away.

Taliban fighters attacked a checkpoint in Parwan, north of the capital, early Thursday, said Waheeda Shahkar, spokeswoman to the provincial Governor.

"The Taliban have also suffered casualties," Ms. Shahkar told AFP, saying se-

ven members of the Afghan forces died.

District police chief Husain Shah said Taliban fighters set fire to the checkpoint, killing five security force personnel. Two more were shot dead.

## MARKET WATCH

	28-05-2020	% CHANGE
Sensex	32,201	-1.88
US Dollar	75.76	-0.07
Brent oil	34.70	0.96

## NIFTY 50

	PRICE	CHANGE
Adani Ports	331.80	5.15
Asian Paints	1643.60	24.15
Axis Bank	390.95	3.95
Bajaj Auto	2600.00	19.45
Bajaj Finserv	4285.95	27.90
Bajaj Finance	1947.70	11.25
Bharti Airtel	562.75	-0.35
BPCL	326.45	-3.00
Britannia Ind	3323.25	102.95
Cipla	628.35	-4.70
Coal India	133.90	3.10
Dr Reddys Lab	3887.75	4.75
Eicher Motors	16236.50	1269.55
GAIL (India)	89.10	0.50
Grasim Ind	576.50	9.85
HCL Tech	542.65	11.70
HDFC	1623.70	53.30
HDFC Bank	945.25	41.60
Hero MotoCorp	2298.10	122.45
Hindalco	138.40	5.10
Hind Unilever	2009.95	11.85
ICICI Bank	326.85	8.00
IndusInd Bank	386.85	17.90
Bharti Infratel	223.85	7.15
Infosys	707.40	1.95
Indian Oil Corp	77.70	0.15
ITC	190.65	-1.50
JSW Steel	184.15	-0.65
Kotak Bank	1229.45	11.90
L&T	905.50	54.65
M&M	440.40	7.90
Maruti Suzuki	5468.35	223.95
Nestle India Ltd.	16989.15	272.65
NTPC	95.70	1.00
ONGC	78.85	0.90
PowerGrid Corp	157.25	0.10
Reliance Ind	1472.25	26.70
State Bank	158.20	-0.40
Shree Cement	20808.90	331.35
Sun Pharma	459.10	8.20
Tata Motors	87.00	2.45
Tata Steel	295.50	7.55
TCS	2004.30	-1.00
Tech Mahindra	529.70	5.95
Titan	899.45	13.60
UltraTech Cement	3809.20	81.80
UPL	391.10	3.30
Vedanta	89.95	2.05
Wipro	199.35	-1.90
Zee Entertainment	180.70	16.25

## EXCHANGE RATES

CURRENCY	TT BUY	TT SELL
US Dollar	75.55	75.87
Euro	83.14	83.50
British Pound	92.50	92.93
Japanese Yen (100)	70.10	70.42
Chinese Yuan	10.55	10.60
Swiss Franc	77.88	78.22
Singapore Dollar	53.20	53.44
Canadian Dollar	54.87	55.12
Malaysian Ringgit	17.33	17.42
Australian Dollar	49.95	50.17

Source: Indian Bank

# 'Google eyeing 5% Voda Idea stake'

Move follows Facebook, other PE investors pouring \$10 billion into Jio Platforms

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
LONDON

Tech titan Google is said to be exploring taking a minority stake in British telecom group Vodafone's struggling India business.

The investment in Vodafone Idea will pit the search giant against Facebook which has picked up a stake in Jio Platforms, the firm that houses India's youngest but biggest telecom company, Reliance Jio.

Alphabet Inc's Google is looking to buy about 5% stake in Vodafone Idea Ltd., the Financial Times reported on Thursday.

Both companies refused to comment.

The move by Google follows Facebook and other private equity investors pouring in \$10 billion in Jio Platforms, which holds bil-



The intent assumes significance as Vodafone Idea is staring at nearly ₹58,000 crore in pending statutory dues. ■REUTERS

lionaire Mukesh Ambani's telecom firm, jio.

The move assumes significance as Vodafone Idea Ltd. (VIL), where Vodafone holds just over 45% stake, is staring at nearly ₹58,000 crore in statutory dues.

These dues arose after the Supreme Court, in October last year, upheld the government's position on including

revenue from non-core businesses in calculating the annual AGR (Adjusted Gross Revenue) of telecom companies, a share of which is paid as licence and spectrum fee to the exchequer.

The Department of Telecom (DoT)'s as per its own submission to the apex court earlier this year seeking relief in payment tenures, had

put dues of three telecom companies – Bharti Airtel, Vodafone Idea and Tata Group – at ₹1.19 lakh crore.

Against this, Bharti Group had calculated its dues at ₹13,004 crore, Vodafone Idea at ₹21,533 crore and the Tata Group of companies at ₹2,197 crore.

In March, following an approval by the Cabinet, an application was moved before the Supreme Court (on March 16, 2020) seeking its permission for the licensees impacted by the AGR judgement to pay the unpaid amount of the DoT-calculated dues in annual instalments over 20 years.

Vodafone Idea has been under severe financial pressure, and analysts time and again have cautioned that the telco's longer-term viability remains under cloud.

## Investors peeved as Zerodha's trading app goes kaput again

Traders face login issues on days when market is volatile'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
MUMBAI

Discount broking firm Zerodha was once again the subject of investor grievances on Thursday as many of its clients took to social media alleging that orders could not go through due to a technical issue.

This is the second such instance this month. Investors took to Twitter – #zerodha

was among the top trends on Thursday – to highlight the issue, with many alleging that Zerodha's trading application Kite, which is also one of the largest downloaded trading apps in India, frequently suffers from login is-

sues, especially on days when there is high volatility in the market. Others alleged that trades were not going through, while some faced issues related to their position in the derivatives segment. The discount broking entity, on its part, said that there were some issues in the first 10 minutes of the trading session and it was looking into it.

"The first 10 mins a small

group of our customers faced an intermittent issue when logging in. Multiple attempts would have allowed it. We are investigating, sorry for the inconvenience," the official handle of Zerodha

tweeted at 9:44 a.m. The latest development comes close on the heels of similar complaints on May 13, when many investors alleged that a server crash delayed trade execution, leading to significant losses. That day, the number of tweets was so high that #zerodha' was among the top trends on that day.

"Today is our most active trading day till date. Apart from a delay in order execution for the first two minutes for a small fraction of our customer-base, everything else has been working as normal," Zerodha had tweeted on May 13.

Former Reserve Bank Governor Bimal Jalan on Thursday described the initiatives taken by the government to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 as "very positive" and hoped that these would help in containing the decline in growth.

He further said that unlike in 1991, when the country faced a balance of payments crisis, today India has resources as well as forex reserves to deal with any eventuality.

"All the measures announced by her (Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman) are very positive.

"But as you have rightly

## Paracetamol API exports to resume

N. RAVI KUMAR  
HYDERABAD

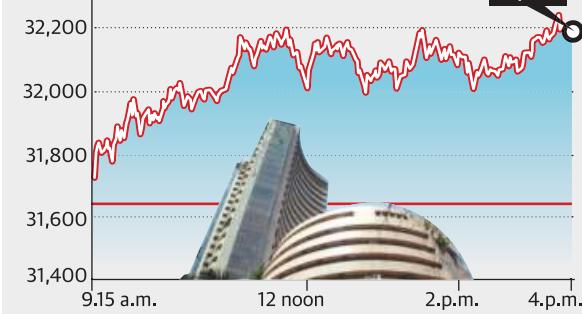
Export of active pharmaceutical ingredient (API) of paracetamol from the country is all set to resume with the Centre on Thursday moving it out of the 'restricted for export' list.

In a notification on Thursday, Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT) said the March 3 notification is "further amended to remove restriction on export of paracetamol APIs, making its export free with immediate effect."

Pharmexcil Director General Uday Bhaskar said about 40% of the paracetamol API manufactured in the country is consumed in the domestic market, while the rest is meant for exports.

## Buying spree

FPIs were significant buyers with net buying at ₹2,354 crore. Domestic institutions also net bought albeit at a much smaller ₹145 crore



## Sensex surges on short covering

Banking, financials continue to shimmer

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
MUMBAI

Indian equity benchmarks rose for the second straight session on Thursday with the benchmark Sensex closing above the 32,000-mark as banking and financials continued to witness buying interest.

The 30-share Sensex gained 595.37 points, or 1.88% to close at 32,200.59. The index had last closed above the 32,000-mark on May 13.

The broader Nifty settled the day at 9,490.10, up 175.15 points or 1.88%. The India VIX index, looked upon as a barometer of near-term volatility, dropped a little over 4% on Thursday.

Market participants attributed the rally to short covering – Thursday was the expiry of derivative contracts – and a positive trend in most of the Asian markets.

## FPIs net buyers

Foreign portfolio investors were significant buyers on Thursday with net buying worth ₹2,354 crore.

Domestic institutions were also net buyers albeit at a much smaller level of ₹145 crore.

Among the Asian markets, the benchmarks of Japan, Indonesia, China, Australia, Malaysia and Philippines all gained on Thursday.

## Federal Bank Q4 net falls 21% to ₹301 crore

Higher bad loan provisions drag profit

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI

Federal Bank on Thursday reported 21% decline in standalone net profit at ₹301.23 crore for the 2019-20 March quarter on higher provisions for bad loans and contingencies arising out of COVID-19 crisis.

The lender had posted a profit of ₹381.51 crore for January-March 2018-19.

Income during the latest March quarter, however, increased to ₹4,107.95 crore as against ₹3,444.04 crore in the year-ago period, Federal Bank said in a regulatory filing.

Gross NPAs of the bank fell to 2.84% of the gross advances as on March 31, 2020, from 2.92% in the same period a year earlier.

## SBI slashes FD rates by up to 40 bps

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
MUMBAI

Days after the RBI reduced the repo rate by 40 bps to 4%, State Bank of India reduced the interest rate on deposits below ₹2 crore by up to 40 bps.

The new rates came into effect from May 27. The new rates for 1 year to less than two years maturity, and two years to less than three years, will be 5.10%. Senior citizens will be offered 50 bps higher rate, that is, 5.6%. The deposit rate for 3 years to less than 5 years will be 5.30%, while for 5 years and up to 10 years it will be 5.4%.

During last 10 days of March 2020, retail sales suffered due to the nationwide lockdown on account of the

## TVS Motor profit plunges to ₹73.87 crore

Total income contracts as sales drop

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
CHENNAI

TVS Motor Co. Ltd., a leading manufacturer of two- and three-wheelers, saw standalone net profit for the fourth quarter ended March 2020 slipping to ₹73.87 crore from the ₹133.83 crore a year earlier.

The fourth quarter net profit included a one-time discount of ₹17.3 crore and an exceptional item of ₹25.4 crore, the company said in a regulatory filing.

The total dividend paid for the year ended March 2020 aggregated to ₹3.50 per share.

pandemic. Besides, it incurred ₹32.33 crore towards COVID-19 related expenditure and it was reported as an exceptional item in the financials.

For the fourth quarter, TVS Motor's total income contracted to ₹3,506.53 crore from ₹4,387.60 crore on declining sales volume.

Revenue stood at ₹23.64 crore against ₹34.13 crore, the company said in a regulatory filing. The segmental revenue of super abrasives dropped to ₹17.73 crore from ₹24.66 crore and that of machine, accessories and components to ₹4.45 crore from ₹7.17 crore.

## Second interim dividend

## IN BRIEF



## Kobe's induction to Hall of Fame postponed

LOS ANGELES  
The late Kobe Bryant's induction into the Naismith Basketball Hall of Fame, scheduled for August 29, has been postponed to 2021, US media reported. Former NBA stars Tim Duncan, Kevin Garnett and six others are also slated to be enshrined next year due to the ongoing coronavirus pandemic. AFP

## Dutch Formula One GP shifted to 2021

THE HAGUE  
The Dutch Formula One Grand Prix, due to return to the calendar for the first time since 1985, has been postponed until next year because of the coronavirus pandemic. The GP was set to be held at Zandvoort on May 3, but was initially postponed in March amid the COVID-19 outbreak. AFP



## Saqain, Bradburn get high performance roles

LAHORE  
Spin great Saqain Mushtaq and fielding coach Grant Bradburn were on Thursday appointed as Pakistan Cricket Board's Head of International Player Development and Head of High Performance Coaching respectively, as part of a restructuring of its premier training facility. Bradburn's replacement in the national team will be announced in due course. PTI

## Batra in self-quarantine after father tests positive

NEW DELHI  
The IOA president Narinder Batra has gone into self-quarantine at home for 17 days after his father, two attendants and two security guards at his house tested positive. "My father has been found to be COVID-19 positive and we got him admitted in Batra Hospital on 25th May," Batra informed. AFP

## Kerala Rugby Warriors wins TRY Series Cup

MUMBAI  
Kerala Rugby Warriors won the TRY Series Rugby Cup defeating Young Rugby Club 10,531 votes to 7,994 votes in the final. The virtual tournament organised by Rugby India was decided on the basis of online votes. Third place in the 32-team event went to Black Dot Punjab which beat Delhi Lions 9,246-3,800. Rugby fans, players and coaches voted their choice on social media platforms in this unique popularity competition, organised by the national federation to keep the sport's followers engaged during the pandemic.

## Decision on T20 WC deferred

Discussion on BCCI's inability to get tax exemptions for 2021 T20 WC on waitlist too

AMOL KARHADKAR  
MUMBAI

The International Cricket Council (ICC) Board has deferred all major decisions, including the fate of the T20 World Cup in Australia later this year, at least till June 10, owing to the COVID-19 pandemic.

"The ICC Board met via teleconference today with all agenda items deferred until June 10, 2020, following a discussion, led by Chairman Shashank Manohar, around the issue of confidentiality," read a statement from the ICC on Thursday.

"...The Board also requested the ICC management to continue its discussions with stakeholders in exploring various contingency options in light of the rapidly changing public health situation caused by the coronavirus."

## No mention

The statement made no outright mention of the marquee event, scheduled to be played in Australia from October 18 to November 15, but

the fact that it stressed on continuing discussions indicated that the T20 World Cup was far from being postponed or called off.

Cricket Australia has also stuck to the original FTP schedule while announcing the itinerary for its home summer.

## Two parts

India's tour of Australia has been divided into two parts: T20I series pre-T20 World Cup, and Test and ODI series to be played after the global event.

Besides the T20 World Cup, the meeting was supposed to finalise the election process for appointing Manohar's successor as ICC chairman, and deal with the issue of BCCI's inability to secure tax exemption from the government for next year's T20 World Cup.

**'Leaked' communication**  
The Hindu understands that much of the discussion during Thursday's meeting revolved around how some of the internal communication between the ICC and its

Shashank Manohar.  
FILE PHOTO: VIVEK BENDRE

member boards was getting 'leaked' to the media.

BCCI president Sourav Ganguly, based on a media report, is understood to have objected to the BCCI being kept in the dark over a communication between Cricket Australia and a few other member boards over the likely postponement of the T20 World Cup.

Over the last week, there have been media reports about the ICC Ethics Officer dismissing Manohar's complaint of unethical practices against former England and Wales Cricket Board chief Colin Graves (an aspirant for the ICC chief's post) while

**G** The Board also requested the ICC management to continue its discussions with stakeholders in exploring various contingency options

ICC STATEMENT

granting loan to Cricket West Indies, and the stand-off between BCCI and ICC over tax exemptions for ICC events.

## Needs attention

"A number of Board members had raised their concerns over this issue recently and felt it required immediate attention to ensure the sanctity and confidentiality of Board matters in line with the highest standards of governance," the statement read.

"There was unanimous agreement to immediately initiate an independent investigation, led by the ICC's Ethics Officer and supported by global experts.

"The Board will be updated on this by the ICC CEO at its next meeting."

## CA confirms India's tour

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
MELBOURNE

Ending weeks of speculation, Cricket Australia, on Thursday, confirmed that India will make the trip Down Under starting October this year for an assignment comprising four Tests, three ODIs and as many T20Is.

Cricket Australia announced its summer schedule, which will begin with the tour of Zimbabwe from August 9.

"We know that circumstances or events beyond our control could mean that the final schedule potentially may look different to the one released today, but we'll be doing everyth-

ing we can to get as much international cricket in as possible this summer," Kevin Roberts, Cricket Australia CEO, said in a statement.

"We will communicate any changes to the schedule if or when they are required," he added.

## Itinerary of India's tour of Australia:

**T20Is:** Oct. 11: 1st, Brisbane; Oct. 14: 2nd, Canberra; **Oct. 17:** 3rd, Adelaide.

**Tests:** Dec 3-7: 1st, Brisbane; Dec 11-15: 2nd, Adelaide; **Dec 26-30:** 3rd, Melbourne; **Jan. 3-7, 2021:** 4th, Sydney.

**ODIs:** Jan. 12: 1st, Perth; Jan. 15: 2nd, Melbourne; **Jan. 17:** 3rd, Sydney.

## ECB: No domestic cricket till Aug.

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
LONDON

The England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) on Thursday delayed the start of the professional domestic cricket season with no activity to take place before August 1 but is likely to host West Indies in July, as scheduled.

The ECB had earlier suspended all its domestic cricket activities till July 1 in the wake of COVID-19 pandemic.

## Indian Open golf stays in 2020 schedule

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI

The Hero Indian Open, the country's premier golf tournament, has been placed tentatively on the European Tour's schedule for the 2020 season, and final dates will be confirmed soon, an official said on Thursday.

## Dubov dumps Karjakin

RAKESH RAO  
NEW DELHI

In less than 24 hours, Daniil Dubov made amends for letting fellow-Russian Sergey Karjakin off the hook by handing out a 3-0 drubbing in their third mini-match for a place in the semifinals of the \$150,000 Lindores Abbey Rapid Challenge on Wednesday.

Dubov, the 2018 World rapid champion who crushed Karjakin 3-0 in their first mini-match too, now takes on Ding Liren. The Chinese No. 1 bounced back from 0.5-1.5 to level the match against compatriot Yu Yangyi and eventually won 3-2.

The other semifinal features World champion Magnus Carlsen and Hikaru Nakamura.

**The results (Quarterfinals, third mini-match):** Daniil Dubov (Rus) bt Serjey Karjakin (Rus) 3-0; Ding Liren (Chn) bt Yu Yangyi (Chn) 3-2.

## FI's cap on spending ratified

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
PARIS

Spending by Formula One teams will be capped at \$145 million in 2021 with a subsequent limit of \$135 million by 2023, as governing body FIA's World Motor Sports Council ratified the amendments to FI's rules.

"A major step forward for @F1 and motor sport's sustainability. Thanks to all@fia, @F1 and the teams," tweeted FIA president Jean Todt.

## Premier League to restart on June 17: BBC

REUTERS  
MANCHESTER

The Premier League season will restart on June 17, the BBC reported on Thursday.

A spokesman for the Premier League, which stopped play in March due to the coronavirus pandemic but teams returned to small group training last week.

On Wednesday clubs agreed to move to Phase Two of the comeback with players working in larger groups and closer to each other. The next step would be full contact training and preparation for the return to action.

The season will get underway with Aston Villa v Sheffield United and Manchester City v Arsenal, which are both games in hand.

A full fixture list would then be played on the wee-

kend of 19-21 June, the report said. All games will be behind closed-doors.

The Premier League was suspended on 13 March due to the coronavirus pandemic but teams returned to small group training last week.

On Wednesday clubs agreed to move to Phase Two of the comeback with players working in larger groups and closer to each other. The next step would be full contact training and preparation for the return to action.

The result left Leipzig third on 55 points from 28 games, nine behind leader Bayern Munich and two adrift of second-placed Borussia Dortmund, while Hertha moved up one place

## Ten-man Leipzig held by Hertha Berlin

Costs it the chance to move up to second; Hoffenheim snaps a winless run

BUNDESLIGA

REUTERS  
LEIPZIG

Ten-man RB Leipzig fought out a 2-2 home draw with Hertha Berlin after it came from behind and conceded a late penalty in a see-saw Bundesliga encounter on Wednesday.

The result left Leipzig third on 55 points from 28 games, nine behind leader Bayern Munich and two adrift of second-placed Borussia Dortmund, while Hertha moved up one place



Equaliser: Krzysztof Piatek, left, slots in a late penalty to help Hertha Berlin share points with Leipzig on Wednesday. ■ AFP

to 10th on 35 points. Coach Julian Nagelsman later slammed the team for de-

fending like "a school team" as the loss which cost it the chance to go second

in the Bundesliga.

In another match, Hoffenheim snapped a seven-game winless run with an entertaining 3-1 victory over visitor Cologne as both teams ended with 10 men.

**The results:** RB Leipzig 2 (Klostermann 24, Schick 58) drew with Hertha Berlin 2 (Grujic 9, Piasek 82-pen); Hoffenheim 3 (Baumgartner 11, 46, Zuber 48) bt Cologne 1 (Kainz 60); Fortuna Duesseldorf 2 (Hennings 63, Karaman 68) bt Schalke 04 1 (McKenzie 53); Augsburg 0 drew with Paderborn 0; Union Berlin 1 (Ingvartsen 33) drew with Mainz 05 (Baku 13).

## Poonacha aims to get into ITF panel

Charts out set of points; includes reduction in entry fees

KAMESH SRINIVASAN  
NEW DELHI



Niki Poonacha.

qualifying to have best of three sets format.

He is also seeking a better coordinated tournament calendar for easier travel, as there are about 550 tournaments worldwide in a season.

Poonacha also wants a reduction in entry fee to \$20 for qualifying events, and no entry fees for the main draw; unlimited water, energy drink and bananas to be supplied free to players by all

tournament organisers.

Owing to the current crisis, one of the demands will be for a specific grant from ITF every six months for players ranked from 400 to 1000 in singles and 200 to 800 in doubles.

## Results by June

There are 13 nominations for the men. The Asian Oceania region has three nominations in Ti Chen and Jason Taylor, apart from Poonacha.

The ITF will announce the results by the middle of June. "The voting will start today. I have tried to reach out to maximum players," said Poonacha.

On a personal front, Poonacha said he may need an inter-State pass to travel as he trains at the Rohan Bopanna Academy in Bengaluru but that he was not sure about the 14-day quarantine rule.

Verma switches to 'heavier' bow

Decision comes after thorough analysis of gamestyle

Y.B. SARANGI  
KOLKATA



Abhishek Verma.

heavier bow requires greater strength. Now I have to work on that," he said.

With important events like the World championships, Asian championships, Commonwealth Games and Asian Games scheduled in the next two years, now was the best time to make the changes, he said.

## Fighting corona

Verma has also found time to be associated with an online initiative to raise funds to provide PPEs to doctors treating coronavirus patients.

"Many archers are expected to join this initiative. We are encouraging people to contribute. Our partner www.impactguru.com gets in touch with hospitals and provides PPE kits to doctors in Maharashtra and Delhi," said Verma.

## Criteria amended for NIS coaching diploma

UTHRA GANESAN  
NEW DELHI

In an attempt to draw younger athletes to coaching, even while continuing their sporting career, the Sports Authority of India has decided to revamp the admission policy at the National Institute of Sports, Patiala, allowing for direct induction of eminent athletes to the flagship Diploma Course in Sports Coaching.

## Reservation

As per the draft admission criteria approved by the academic council, athletes who have either participated at the Olympics, won any medal at World Championships or gold at the Asian/Commonwealth Games would be given direct admission to the course, without any written test or interview.

## Assam varsity develops fungal powder to boost immunity

Scientists say the product was made by freeze-drying a 'super mushroom' cultivated in Bodoland University



Untiring effort: The Bodoland University's Department of Biotechnology team display their innovations and, right, lab-grown Cordyceps militaris. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT



complex, close to western Assam's Kokrajhar town.

- the fungal immunity booster, a membrane mask that costs less than ₹4 per unit, herbal and alcohol-based sanitisers, laser and LED-assisted unmanned sanitisation tunnel, a low-cost physical-chemical sanitisation box and a PPE kit with an aquarium aerator.

Kokrajhar district's former Deputy Commissioner P.P. Mazumdar issued them a special travel pass while Inspector-General of Police Anurag Agarwal facilitated access to alcohol and an assortment of herbs for their research.

"We made small paper pouches, each containing 150 mg of the super mushroom powder and distributed it free to about 500 people, many from nearby villages