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Tamil Nadu emerges as the country's top investment destination
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Stokes and Sibley slam tons, forge a huge partnership
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NEARBY

Maharashtra tally crosses 2.9 lakh with 8,308 cases

PUNE Maharashtra reported 8,308 new COVID-19 cases on Friday, its second-highest single-day jump yet, taking its tally to 2,92,589. A surge of 258 deaths was also recorded, pushing its toll to 11,452. This is the third time in a week that a single-day spike of over 8,000 cases has been recorded in the State. Mumbai's case load has risen to 99,164, with 1,214 new cases, while 62 more deaths have raised its toll to 5,585. Maharashtra's tally of recoveries has surged to 1,60,357, with 2,217 patients being discharged. State Surveillance Officer Dr. Pradeep Awate said, "The State's recovery rate stands at 54.81%, while its case fatality rate is 3.91%."

WEST ► PAGE 5

Gonsalves, Teltumbde move HC for COVID-19 testing

MUMBAI After P. Varavara Rao, 81, tested positive for COVID-19, Vernon Gonsalves, 61, and Anand Teltumbde, 68, co-accused in the Elgaar Parishad case, have moved the Bombay High Court seeking permission to undergo COVID-19 tests. The duo has been in close proximity to Mr. Rao at Taloja Central Jail. The petition said the duo is at grave risk. Meanwhile, authorities at St. George Hospital said that they are conducting neurological tests on Mr. Rao and he might have dementia.

WEST ► PAGE 5

RELATED REPORT ► PAGE 9

Rajasthan SOG files FIRs after tapes emerge on horse-trading

Congress accuses Union Minister; HC relief to Pilot on disqualification process

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
JAIPUR



Crisis update: Congress leader Randeep Surjewala, second left, and others arriving to address a press conference in Jaipur. ■ PTI

sides, it said.

In the wake of the tapes that surfaced on Thursday night, the Congress announced the suspension of Bhanwarlal Sharma, representing Sardarshahar Assembly constituency in Churu district, who was allegedly in conversation with the Union Minister.

Abhishek Singhvi, senior counsel for the Speaker, offered to extend the time to respond to the notices till 5.30 p.m. on July 21.

After a Division Bench headed by Chief Justice Indrajit Mahanty passed the order, the Speaker's office stated that Mr. Joshi had deferred the hearing on notices issued to the 19 MLAs after taking into account the "dignity of judiciary" and in view of the matter being sub judice. The decision was taken with the consent of senior advocates representing both

Discussion on bribes

Addressing a press conference, Congress chief spokesperson Randeep Surje-

wala said the tapes had revealed the role of Mr. Sharma and Mr. Shekhawat in the conspiracy that involved payment of bribes, exchange of black money and hawala transactions. The horse-trading of MLAs was being done through middleman Sanjay Jain, who was a BJP leader, he said.

Mr. Surjewala demanded an investigation and the arrest of Mr. Shekhawat if the SOG's probe confirmed the misuse of office by him, which he said was "prima facie clear". While alleging a conspiracy by "influential people" in the Union government and its agencies to topple the State government, he demanded that Mr. Pilot, dis-

Not my voice, says Shekhawat

Union Minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat denied the Congress's allegation that he was part of a conspiracy to topple the Ashok Gehlot government. The allegation came after audio clips surfaced pertaining to an alleged conspiracy. "This is not my voice... Let there be an investigation, I am ready to face any probe," the Minister said. ► PAGE 9

missed as the Deputy Chief Minister, clarify his position vis-a-vis a specific allegation that he had provided a list of MLAs to the BJP.

The FIRs registered by the SOG under Sections 124-A (sedition) and 120-B (criminal conspiracy) of IPC, named Mr. Sharma, Mr. Shekhawat and Mr. Jain.

SOG Additional Director-General Ashok Rathore said the matter would be under investigation until the persons said to be conversing in the audio tapes were identified. The SOG, which had called Mr. Jain for interrogation on Thursday night, arrested him on Friday.

CONTINUED ON ► PAGE 8

No one can touch an inch of India's territory: Rajnath

He hopes talks will resolve border stand-off with China

DINAKAR PERI

NEW DELHI

No country in the world can touch or occupy even an inch of India's territory, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh said in Ladakh on Friday.

Mr. Singh's comments came in the aftermath of the stand-offs with China on the border, including the killing of 20 soldiers by Chinese troops in the Galwan Valley.

"The progress in the talks [with China] should lead to a resolution of the issue". However, there was no guarantee to what extent the issue would be resolved, he told troops at the Lukung Border Observation Post (BOP) near Pangong Tso. Mr. Singh was accompanied by Chief of the

Defence Staff General Bipin Rawat and Army chief General Manoj Naravane.

Mr. Singh said India desired peace, not conflict. "But it's in our character that we have never tried to hurt the self-respect of any other country. However, if anyone tries to hurt India's self-respect, then we will not tolerate this in any circumstances and give them a fitting response."

He is on a two-day visit to Ladakh and J&K to review the situation along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) and the Line of Control (LoC).

CONTINUED ON ► PAGE 8



Fire power: Defence Minister Rajnath Singh inspecting a machine gun at a forward base in Ladakh on Friday. ■ PTI

'Chinese troops are yet to fully move out'

VIJAYA SINGH

NEW DELHI

Chinese troops are yet to fully move out of Patrolling Point (PP) 15 of Hot Springs area in eastern Ladakh and continue to occupy positions within 1.5 km of India's perception of the Line of Actual Control (LAC), a second assessment of the ground

situation by security agencies has revealed.

Chinese troops had at one stage entered around 5 km on the Indian side of PP-15 in May, and as per a disengagement plan, moved back 2.5 km and another 1 km in subsequent phases and around 1.5 km was yet to be vacated, a senior go-

vernment official told *The Hindu*. In this area, Indian troops have also moved back around 2.5 km.

As reported by *The Hindu*, there is a moratorium on foot patrol for 30 days and a strength of not more than 80 (50+30 at two intervals) troops at all the friction points where disengagement has been implemented. After the Galwan Valley incident, the Corps Commanders of the Indian Army and the People's Liberation Army (PLA) had agreed to disengage and withdraw fully from other face-off sites along the LAC.

CONTINUED ON ► PAGE 8

Congratulations to Alim, Fazil and High Madrasah

students for successfully qualifying the examinations.



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Mamata Banerjee
Chief Minister, West Bengal

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Mamata Banerjee
Chief Minister, West Bengal

In the ensuing season, the State Government appeals to all to follow the direction and guidelines issued by the local administrative authorities for smooth and orderly management.

Government of West Bengal

In the ensuing season, the State Government appeals to all to follow the direction and guidelines issued by the local administrative authorities for smooth and orderly management.

Government of West Bengal

WEB SERIES REVIEW

Indian Matchmaking: the big fat desi wedding stereotype

Under a glossy look, Netflix's latest original show peddles some atavistic ideals of marriage and tradition

KENNETH ROSARIO

A couple of episodes into Netflix's latest original show, *Indian Matchmaking*, I was convinced that it was a satire or parody of crazy rich desis fantasising over weddings and finding a life partner through a neighbourhood aunty. But more episodes in, the docu-series-cum-reality-show continues to take itself seriously, at points frustratingly so, advocating for some archaic ideas of marriage, while white-washing all inherent flaws.

What could have been ironically fun and an enjoyable archetype of trashy television, begins to feed into the various stereotypes, and borders on being didactic. The characters say and believe in some of the most atavistic ideals of marriage, and the show, in its glossy demeanour, endorses it.

The high level of cringe is not even the worst aspect of the show. Created in the U.S., the series follows a Mumbai-based matchmaker Sima Taparia ("I'm Sima from Mumbai," she introduces herself to every new client), who flies between India and the U.S., bringing upper-class and upper-caste singles together. We see her several clients in various parts of the States and three in Mumbai. Parental pressure, issues of compatibility, love vs career, ageing and past relationships are a few recurring themes. Terms like 'adjustment', 'compatibility', 'good nature', 'compromise' and 'traditional' are thrown around in abundance. In one of the episodes, the show highlights some faux feminist ideas of 'modern' woman and 'liberation' and low-key endorses



Sima Taparia, the narrator of *Indian Matchmaking*, embodies a long-standing tradition of older relatives finding a suitable spouse for an eligible bachelor or spinster. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Indian Matchmaking

NUMBER OF EPISODES: 8

RUN TIME: 26-42 minutes

STORYLINE: Mumbai-based matchmaker Sima Taparia travels between India and the U.S. finding suitable options for single millennials who want to get married

classist and casteist behaviour, and discrimination disguised as 'preference'.

It's interesting to see that the Indian diaspora and upper-class Mumbai share similar pressures, expectations and value systems. Or so the show tells us. While capturing Mumbai, the series – as expected – has an exotic gaze, almost making the city and its inhabitants unrecognisable. It's shot like a person from the West capturing Mumbai from the airport to their fancy hotel. While the creators may argue that the format and content are meant for fluffy entertainment, it is hard to overlook the latent messaging and mainstreaming of problematic conservatism.

Even in the 'entertainment' department, barring a few snide remarks in the first three episodes and unintentional humour, the structure of the show meanders and arbitrarily includes and excludes its subjects. The series has picked prota-

gonists who are naturally fascinating and some frustrating, but the telling is haphazard and scattered, lending *Indian Matchmaking* a distracted tone.

Sima, the narrator of *Indian Matchmaking*, is the purpose of this series. She embodies a long-standing tradition of older relatives finding a suitable spouse for an eligible bachelor or spinster. Although her clients call her 'Aunty' (even the Indian diaspora youth), she is a professional who charges a fee for her services. Although she occupies centre stage and one would be very curious to know her fees, the series never reveals it, and one is kept wondering how she flies around the world setting people up. As compared to her Delhi-based colleague, Geeta, she is more traditional and subscribes to astrology, face-reading and the age-old ideology that marriage is better for two families.

The series tells you that the wedding industry in India is ginormous, and fairly clinical in the way two people decide to get married. We see couples who have stuck around together for decades, and the series tries hard to demonstrate that 'arranged marriage' may not be a bad idea after all. There are moments when the show makes some pertinent observations about desire and companionship among millennials, but those are fleeting. Under all the gloss, fluff, and mush, the series panders to the age-old stereotypes of Indian weddings, customs, and traditions, which may not be untrue, but are surely incomplete.

SPEECH
MELBA

VAISHNA ROY
is an Associate Editor with
The Hindu



A little cancel goes a long way

The recent open letter to *Harper's Magazine* condemning the online 'cancel culture' is itself in danger of being 'cancelled'

books are withdrawn for alleged inauthenticity; journalists are barred from writing on certain topics; professors are investigated for quoting works of literature in class..."

As during the #MeToo movement, there's been some attempt to portray the conflict as one between old and new gen influencers; one columnist describes the letter as a reaction to "political narratives being wrested away from traditional actors". I doubt the explanation is so facile. Nor do I agree with the letter-writers dismissing all cancel culture as leading to "panicked damage control".

Were it not for Twitter outrage, the white woman in New York who threatened to call the police on a black man because he wanted her dog leashed would not have been forced to apologise. Unfortunately, she also lost her job, but had her threat worked, the black man would have likely lost much more. In India, Twitterati did not just con-

+

demn Shubham Mishra's foul rape threats against a stand-up comedian but also tagged the Vadodara police repeatedly, leading to his quick arrest.

From customers turning away delivery staff because of their religion to policemen assaulting vegetable vendors, when an incident is uploaded on social media, cancel culture has taken over and ensured action against the offender. It's by no means a universal or magical solution but for many people on the margins – like delivery boys and domestic workers – an apology or an oppressor's takedown would not have come so swiftly in a pre-cancel era.

The problem begins when cancel culture becomes as oppressive as anything it seeks to replace. It recognises no degrees – ignorance or lapses are tarred by the same brush used for grievous crime. 'Cancellers' insist that 'punishments' must be for a lifetime when the law awards even a murderer parole.



■ MIHIR BALANTRAPU

They refuse to support urgent causes because a 'cancelled' person also supports it. They crush people for using wrong terminology.

Politically correct phraseology changes every day. When does one replace 'women' with 'people who menstruate'? When do you use womyn or womxn? We have moved from LGBT to LGBTQ to LGBTQ+ to LGBTQIA+. When people err with these terms, it doesn't necessarily indicate an absence of empathy, so why not be more tolerant? Why not create awareness and take people along slowly rather than cancel them out altogether?

This intolerance was highlighted recently when a three-year-old talk by dancer Aranyani Bhagav on the origins of Bharatanatyam became the target of a furious attack, with Bhagav being called a 'savarna apologist' and an 'appropriator' of marginalised voices'. Bhagav's failure to use the currently correct phrase – 'hereditary courtesan dance community' – didn't come from malice but oversight. She has consistently fought the upper-caste appropriation of Bharatanatyam and to attack her is to attack a supporter. More importantly, why attack when she could have simply been asked to update the terminology.

And that is my problem with cancel culture – it tends to shoot first. And it shoots more people on its own side than on the other. As the names on that letter show. A little less cancel and a little more compassion could win it far bigger battles in the long run.

Uncorked: India's wine teachers online

Move over WSET and UC Davis, India's top wine professionals have their own online wine courses, especially made for the local audience



■ RUMA SINGH

During the extended lockdown, online has been the one way to go. But what do wine aficionados and hospitality students do once they have done clocking countless virtual wine tastings, daily wine webinars and round-the-clock Insta wine chats? The answer is move on to something productive and career-oriented online, like expanding their wine learning.

While many educational biggies worldwide have successful online wine courses, the big lockdown news is that top Indian wine pros have now jumped on the bandwagon: Sonal Holland has launched her own online course, while sommeliers Magandee Singh and Gagan Sharma have launched the IWBS (Institute of Wine & Beverage Studies) course. Both are affordable and great for beginners and budding professionals.

Sonal Holland's 60-Minute Wine Pro

Duration: 1 hour; **cost:** ₹2,200 inclusive of taxes

For Holland, jumping into creating an online crash course on wine was "a natural progression" of her teaching and consultancy career. India's first and only Master of Wine, Holland has spent 10 years training classrooms full of hospitality professionals, but "groups like ITC have properties all around the country, and classroom teaching isn't easy to access due to distances and travel times," she says.

While the course had been in prep for a while, Holland took her time releasing it, to build a "global curriculum suited to the Indian market". She says, "Developing content takes time. Quality, format, design and the technology content don't happen overnight." She launched last month and saw an immediate, enthusiastic response: 72 courses were registered for on day one.

The beauty of the course, she explains, is that "it says 60 minutes [yes, it is short and zippy] but it is intense". I agree. The information is clearly laid out, concise and easy to follow. The level of learning can be benchmarked against the venerable WSETs (Wine & Spirit Education Trust, the world's most authoritative wine school) Level 1 and some of Level 2, for a fraction of their cost.

The course is divided into 10 modules, consisting of images, graphics and Holland's voiceover explanations. She expounds on the concept of terroir and what

Of reds, whites and rosés: Magandee Singh and Gagan Sharma. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

makes a good wine great, explains the difference between New and Old World wines, describes the eight dominant grape varieties, discusses wine and food pairings, service and storage, and busts some common myths. The content is clear and concise, with good production values. She is also not afraid to call things to account: in the section on Indian wines, besides listing top producers, she mentions how they "struggle with consistency over vintages". In the much-needed section on myths, she explains how not every wine is age-worthy – 95% have a two-three year shelf life, and that screwcaps do not indicate inferior quality.

After completing the modules, participants must take and pass a multiple-choice quiz based on the course content, after which they are awarded a certificate.

Details: sonalhollandwineacademy.com

IWBS' Learn From Home Series - Wine with Magandee Singh and Gagan Sharma

Duration: 7.5 hours; **Cost:** ₹2,500 inclusive of taxes

Sommeliers Magandee Singh and Gagan Sharma have a solid 25 years of wine knowledge between them and a long association with top Indian hotels. But when they decided to take their teaching online, they looked at the course from a unique perspective. Primarily targeting the hospitality industry, they realised that most students were either below the

drinking age or came from backgrounds that did not permit alcohol at home. Taking learning online and thereby removing the physical tasting element made it universally accessible. Their 7.5-hour course, Learn from Home - Wine, devised and released last month and presented by both, serves to educate "budding professionals and curious amateurs" by providing content that is "simple and easy-to-absorb, but is intense, rather than a quick reckoner".

Given that international accredited courses are expensive (WSET starts at ₹8,000++ for Level 1, the French Wine Scholar and CMS accreditations from ₹60,000), this course is affordable and a snapshot of their lengthier, successful two-day classroom-based Certificate 1 course (₹8,000, including a tasting of 23 wines) conducted primarily for hotel staff.

It comprises 12 modules (three months of unlimited access) with downloadable study materials on viticulture and vinification, climate and international grape varieties, wine service and pairing (complete with banter between the 'two bald men', as the somms call themselves). There is also a 50-minute session on Indian wines, added after Sharma's trip this March to India's Nashik-based wineries. The tone is casual and relaxed, and the accent on wine service from pros in the business is much-needed for hotel students. Each section ends with a mini quiz. There is no final test; after 100% completion of the sections, a certificate is awarded.

The duo has plans to polish the material, change shoot locations, and add/subtract material post-lockdown, including Sharma's idea of style-specific wine modules by guest professionals. "The course is made by Indians for the Indian context," says Singh. "Even at seven hours, it is just a taste of what we can teach." Earlier, when the IWBS taught WSET courses, they found a gap in both their relevance and affordability for Indian students. Singh says, "At the end of the day, it all comes down to one thing – can I get a job? With our names on the certificate, I hope at least they get a seat at the interview table."

Details: courses.iwbs.in/home/courses

Modern Coach Factory, Raebareli
On behalf of President of India, Dy. Chief Mechanical Engineer/Bogie & Wheel, MCF/RBL is invited open tender based on Single packet system with Tender Notice No.: - MCF/RBL/Tender/Fabrication of Cross Section/2020-21/C430 dt. 14.07.2020 through IREPS portal www.ireps.gov.in for the following work:- Description of work Fabrication of Cross Section as per scope of work Approx Value (₹) 37,52,000.00 EMD (₹) 75,000.00 Cost of Tender document - ₹ 3,000.00 only

Quantity of work - 1000 C/S/Completion period of Work - 12 Months or earlier.

● Period of submission of tender document - From 22.07.2020 to 05.08.2020

● Date & time of closing of Tender - 05.08.2020 at 11.45 hrs. ● Date & time of opening of tender - 05.08.2020 at 12.00 hrs. ● Detailed Tender Notice, Eligibility criteria, Terms & conditions are available at [IREPS website](http://www.ireps.gov.in).

Dy. Chief Mechanical Engineer/Bogie & Wheel

On behalf of President of India, Dy. Chief Mechanical Engineer/Bogie & Wheel, MCF/RBL is invited open tender based on Single packet system with Tender Notice No.: - MCF/RBL/Tender/CNC Edge Milling/2020-21/C227 dt. 14.07.2020 through IREPS portal www.ireps.gov.in for the following work:- Description of work Machining of Bogie component on CNC Edge Milling machine as per scope of work Approx Value (₹) 29,29,829.50 EMD (₹) 58,600.00 Cost of Tender document - ₹ 3,000.00 only Quantity of work - As per schedule Completion period of Work - 12 Months or earlier. ● Period of submission of tender document - From 22.07.2020 to 05.08.2020

● Date & time of closing of Tender - 05.08.2020 at 11.45 hrs. ● Date & time of opening of tender - 05.08.2020 at 12.00 hrs. ● Detailed Tender Notice, Eligibility criteria, Terms & conditions are available at [IREPS website](http://www.ireps.gov.in).

Dy. Chief Mechanical Engineer/Bogie & Wheel

On behalf of the President of India, Dy. Chief Mechanical Engineer/Co-ord, Modern Coach Factory, Raebareli is inviting open e-tender (No.-M-200/MCF/RBL/FUR-ACTIVITIES/LWSCN/2020-21/F11, Date-14.07.2020 based on single packet system online through Indian Railway portal www.ireps.gov.in for following work:- Description of Work Works contract for interior Mechanical Furnishings & Fittings in LWSCN EOG LHB type non AC Coaches with FIAT Bogies as per scope of work for financial year 2020-21 Approx. Value (Rs.) 3,75,22,611.84, EMD (Rs.) 3,37,600.00 Cost of Tender document- Rs. 10,000.00 Quantity of work - 300 LWSCN Coaches Work completion period - 03 Months or earlier. ● E-Tender submitted through online up to 15:00 hrs. on 06-08-2020. Manual offer will be not considered. ● E-Tender shall be opened on 06-08-2020 at 15:30 hrs. through online on <http://www.ireps.gov.in>. ● Detailed E-Notice and Terms & conditions are available at [IREPS website](http://www.ireps.gov.in).

Dy. Chief Mech. Engg./Furnishing/Co-ord.

Open tender based on Single packet system Tender Notice No.: MCF/RBL/Tender/Activities of Stage-IV/2020-21/C326 Dt. 15.07.2020 is invited by Dy. Chief Mechanical Engineer/Shell, MCF/RBL through IREPS portal www.ireps.gov.in for and on behalf of president of India for the following work:- Description of work Stage-IV activities on shells, made from robotic shell assembly line as per scope of work. Approx. Value (₹) 28,61,989.20 EMD (₹) 57,200.00 Cost of Tender document - ₹ 3,000.00 only Quantity of work - 675 Coach. Coach. Completion period of Work - 12 Months or earlier. ● Period of submission of tender document - From 23.07.2020 to 06.08.2020 up to 11.45 hrs. ● Date & time of opening of tender - 06.08.2020 at 12.00 hrs. ● Detailed Tender Notice, Eligibility criteria, Terms & conditions are available at [IREPS website](http://www.ireps.gov.in).

Dy. Chief Mechanical Engineer/ Shell

On behalf of the President of India, Dy. Chief Electrical Engineer/Production, Modern Coach Factory, Raebareli is inviting open e-tender (No. MCF/RBL/DY, CEE/P/2019-2020-Date-15.07.2020) based on single packet system on prescribed tender format. Description of Work Power Banks of Battery Charging for power coaches as per scope of work Approx Value (Rs.) 1926307.57 - EMD (Rs.) 38500/- Cost of Tender document - Rs. 2000/- Quantity of Work - Battery Charging work of 201 Power Car Coaches. Work completion period : 12 Months or earlier. ● E-tender submitted through online up to 15:00 hrs. on 14.08.2020. Manual offer will not be considered. ● E-Tender shall be opened on 14.08.2020 at 15.30 through online on <http://www.ireps.gov.in>. ● Detailed Tender E-Notice and Terms & conditions are available at Indian Railway IREPS website <http://www.ireps.gov.in>

Dy. Chief Electrical Engineer/ Production

Open tender based on Single packet system Tender Notice No.: MCF/RBL/Tender/Activities of Stage-IV/2020-21/C326 Dt. 15.07.2020 is invited by Dy. Chief

Mechanical Engineer/Shell, MCF/RBL through IREPS portal www.ireps.gov.in for and on behalf of president of India for the following work:- Description of work Stage-IV activities on shells, made from robotic shell assembly line as per scope of work. Approx. Value (₹) 28,61,989.20 EMD (₹) 57,200.00 Cost of Tender document - ₹ 3,000.00 only Quantity of work - 675 Coach. Coach. Completion period of Work - 12 Months or earlier. ● Period of submission of tender document - From 23.07.2020 to 06.08.2020 up to 11.45 hrs. ● Date & time of opening of tender - 06.08.2020 at 12.00 hrs. ● Detailed Tender Notice, Eligibility criteria, Terms & conditions are available at [IREPS website</a](http://www.ireps.gov.in)

Timings
MUMBAI

SATURDAY, JUL. 18	RISE 06:11	SET 19:19
	RISE 03:45	SET 17:19
SUNDAY, JUL. 19	RISE 06:11	SET 19:19
	RISE 04:36	SET 18:16
MONDAY, JUL. 20	RISE 06:12	SET 19:19
	RISE 05:33	SET 19:12

Mumbai Weather max min
Mumbai Airport 30 25
Pune 30 22
Mumbai City 30 25

Mumbai Today
29°C Moderate rain will occur over the city. A warm morning. The sky will remain cloudy over the city.

Mumbai Tomorrow
29°C Moderate rain is possible over the city. The morning will be comfortable. A mostly cloudy sky is expected over the city.

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DU cultural societies stand against axing of ECA quota

SIDHARTH RAVI

NEW DELHI

Nearly 150 cultural societies belonging to various colleges of Delhi University signed an open letter and took to social media on Thursday evening calling for the restoration of the extracurricular activities quota scrapped in the admissions process this year.

"We the students of the pan-DU Extra Curricular Circuit stand together in solidarity against the university of Delhi's decision..." the open letter to the Vice-Chancellor reads. It argued that while challenges posed as a consequence of the pandemic were understandable, the university should have consulted stakeholders such as ECA aspirants and beneficiaries before revoking the quota.

"The move rips apart the university's cultural fabric and creates a void that engulfs any scope for artistic growth at the college level and beyond," the letter, signed by various societies from colleges such as Miranda House, Ramjas College, Sri Venkateshwara, Hindu College, LSR and others read.

Consider reopening lawyers' scheme registration: court

The portal was closed on April 19

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Friday told the city government to consider reopening the window for registration for lawyers, who are residents of Delhi and could not sign up for the Chief Minister Advocates Welfare Scheme, which includes medical and life insurance cover, for two weeks.

The court also asked the government to complete the process of receiving financial bids by insurance companies and award the contract to the successful bidder so that the firm can start issuing policy to those who have registered for the scheme.

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The High Court requested that young lawyers are facing difficulties as regular functioning of courts has been suspended and only urgent matters are being taken up.

It was hearing a batch of petitions, including a plea by Bar Council of Delhi (BCD), seeking grant of medical and term insurance for advocates registered with it.

Bar Council of Delhi (BCD) President K.C. Mittal said that as of June 30 this

COVID-19 recoveries nearing 1 lakh mark

Active cases in Capital stands at 17,235

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Capital on Friday recorded 26 deaths due to COVID-19 and saw more recoveries than new cases in the past 24 hours, according to a health bulletin issued by the Delhi government.

The number of new cases in the past 24 hours was 1,462, which takes the overall total to 1,20,107. More encouragingly, the number of recovered patients have inchéd towards one lakh mark (99,301 recoveries). A total of 1,608 of these happened in the past 24 hours. The number of people who have died due to the virus stands at 3,571.

Currently, there are 17,235 active cases, out of which 9,596 are in home isolation. Out of the 15,474 available hospital beds,

Virus spread

Total number of COVID-19 cases	Total deaths
1,20,107	3,571
New cases in the past 24 hours	New deaths in the past 24 hours
1,462	26

SOURCE: DELHI GOVERNMENT HEALTH BULLETIN

3,696 are occupied. The government said that Dedicated Covid Care Centres and Dedicated Covid Health Centres have 6,980 and 376 vacant beds.

The bulletin added that 6,270 RTPCR/CBNAAT/TrueNat and 14,194 rapid antigen tests were conducted in the past 24 hours. The total number of people tested in the Capital is at 7,77,125, which is 40,901 tests per million.



Under the Phase IV project, approximately 62 kilometres of new metro lines are projected to be added to existing network. ■ FILE PHOTO

pur," said Anuj Dayal, DMRC spokesperson.

Further, Mr. Dayal added, "The approximately two kilometre stretch will also have the Krishna Park Extension station in between as well as a 365 metre cut and cover ramp near Keshopur leading to the elevated section."

Approximately 7.74 kilometres of the Janakpuri West - RK Ashram corridor will

Doubling time of cases slows down in Gurugram

Infections are now doubling every 44 days in the region

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

GURUGRAM

The COVID-19 situation in Gurugram continued to improve with the doubling rate decelerating and positivity rate declining, said Chief Medical Officer Virender Yadav said on Friday. The cases of infection in the district are now doubling every 44 days.

He was addressing a weekly joint press conference with Divisional Commissioner Ashok Sangwan and Deputy Commissioner Amit Khatri.

Mr. Yadav claimed that around 3,000 rapid antigen and RT-PCR tests were being conducted in Gurugram every day, the highest in Delhi-NCR. He added that 26,125 rapid antigen and 14,133 RT-PCR tests were conducted in the large outbreak region



Around 3,000 rapid antigen and RT-PCR tests are being conducted in Gurugram every day ■ PTI

(LOR) over the past 16 days. He informed that only 697 people who took rapid antigen tests were found positive. Dr. Yadav said the administration aimed at conducting the maximum number of tests to identify the infected persons and

contain the spread of COVID-19.

Recovery rate

The Chief Medical Officer said that the recovery rate had been gradually increasing and was around 85% now. He added that there were 150 patients admitted in various hospitals for the treatment of COVID-19 and only 17 of them needed critical care.

The positivity rate had also declined from around 11% to 9.6% and was expected to fall further to 9% next week.

He said that 154 camps would be held inside the LORs over the next two weeks. Dr. Yadav said that special camps could also be organised inside the group housing societies to conduct tests in the evening.

court order, we will explore all options and try to find a permanent solution to the issue. We will also arrange temporary shelter for the people by either erecting tents on nearby land or providing lodging facilities in schools, where all necessary arrangements related to food, water, and sanitation will be made," the Chief Minister said.

The demolition drive was restarted on Monday in the light of the old directions of the High Court to remove encroachments on the service road, which is also known as the Master Plan Road in the Laxmi Market area.

Until now, more than 60 structures have been demolished which served as houses for the families in East Laxmi Market area, the statement said.

Kejriwal visits Laxmi Nagar demolition site

'Will arrange temporary shelter'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Friday visited east Delhi's Laxmi Market area where the Municipal Corporation of Delhi has been undertaking the demolition of illegally constructed buildings for over the last three days as per the East Laxmi Market Master Plan road.

All the buildings that are being demolished are residential and the demolition has been continuing since Wednesday.

"Many jhuggis have been demolished here on the directions of the Delhi High Court. I have directed the officials to begin an in-depth study of the order of the High Court, and on how a court order for demolition can be issued in the time of this pandemic," he said.

"After the analysis of the

Virus claims one more life in Noida

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NOIDA

Gautam Buddha Nagar on Friday reported one more death linked to COVID-19, while 84 more people were found to be infected. The death toll in the district reached 38 and the number of people who have so far tested positive for COVID-19 rose to 3,940, according to data released by the U.P. Health Department for a 24-hour period.

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CBSE students place govt. schools ahead of private ones

They attribute their success in Board exams to teachers

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

Garv Sachdev, a Delhi government school student who scored 95.2% in CBSE Class X examination, said that it was the concept of having tests every Monday at the School of Excellence, Dwarka Sector 22, that helped him stay updated and score high marks.

Garv wants to be an engineer and study at one of the IITs. He hopes that the practice of taking regular tests will help him prepare for engineering entrance examinations. "I studied in a private school till Class VIII and then my parents decided to shift me to my current school because the teachers were not regular," said Garv.

He said his teachers cleared his doubts even if it was over the phone after school hours. He added that entrepreneurship class every week is a lot of fun and many of his classmates switched from private

schools because the teachers at government schools were better.

Delhi government schools saw an improvement in pass percentage from 71.6% in 2019 to 82.61% this year, with the government attributing the same to better infrastructure being provided at its schools and a focus on teachers' training and learning techniques.

For Damini Thakur, who scored 84% with a perfect score in Maths, it was the guidance she received from her teachers when she moved from a private school in Class VIII to a government school that helped her. She said that personality development classes have also helped her speak English. "Coming from a poor family,

I have always dreamt of speaking in English, but never had the confidence. It was only after taking lessons to help develop personality skills when I switched to GGSS Mayur Vihar Phase 3 that I got the confidence," she said.

Damini wants to become a computer engineer and wants to stand by her parents who have struggled to support her studies.

Varun Kumar from the School of Excellence, Kalkaji, who scored 95.6% said that his results have given him the confidence to study science and prepare for JEE for admission at the IITs.

"My father is a driver and my mother is a housewife. Coming from a poor family, I never imagined that it would be possible for me to study science," he said.

He added that his parents and teachers have given him the confidence to work hard and his dream is to buy a house for his family in Delhi.

Consider reopening lawyers' scheme registration: court

The portal was closed on April 19

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Friday told the city government to consider reopening the window for registration for lawyers, who are residents of Delhi and could not sign up for the Chief Minister Advocates Welfare Scheme, which includes medical and life insurance cover, for two weeks.

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Bar Council of Delhi (BCD) President K.C. Mittal said that as of June 30 this

Those cured can now help Covid patients

With the inspiration of Chief Minister

Mamata Banerjee

Kolkata Medical College is all set with the State's first Plasma Bank.

You have won the fight against Covid. Now it's time to help others win their battle. Those who have recovered from the disease are requested to donate their plasma.

Important Information

- Those who have recovered at least 28 days ago, are aged between 18 and 55, weigh at least 55 kg and are currently completely physically healthy can be donors
- You should have the hospital discharge certificate and Covid-19 test report

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Email us at plasmabankmch@gmail.com

ICA-860(17)/2020

AMU firms up final-year exam marks scheme

New academic session of varsity to start from August 5 through online mode

ANUJ KUMAR
GAZIABAD

Aligarh Muslim University (AMU) announced on Friday that 70% marks for the final year examinations of undergraduate and postgraduate courses for the 2019-20 academic session have been evaluated by various means and the remaining 30% marks will be given on the performance of students in viva voce conducted through online modes.

According to Mujib Ullah Zuberi, Controller of Examinations, the tentative schedule of the examinations will be sent to the respective departments of studies, faculties and colleges for verification after which the schedule

will be uploaded. He added that the evaluation work of the viva voce will be done by the internal examiners.

"In case there are a large number of students appearing for a particular paper, the chairman of the departments can decide to have more examiners for smooth conduct," said Mr. Zuberi.

'Smartphones not must' Shafey Kidwai, the official spokesperson, said viva voce could also be conducted over an ordinary phone call if the student didn't have a smartphone.

Meanwhile, an official release said teaching for 2020-21 academic session will commence from August 5 through

online mode and students will not be allowed to stay in hostels for the time being. The university has also urged those students who are still residing in hostels to vacate and leave for their home towns in a safe manner to prevent the COVID-19 spread.

The university has also made arrangements for online teaching through Moodle Cloud for which teachers will be provided with hands-on-training by the Prof. M. N. Farooqui Computer Centre. "Notes of lectures will be uploaded, preferably in PPT form with an embedded voice on web pages and virtual teacher-student interactive sessions will also be conducted," said Prof. Kidwai.

No dress code'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GAZIABAD

In the ongoing controversy regarding alleged harassment of a girl student with comments on social media that suggest she will be forced to wear hijab, AMU clarified on Friday that there was no dress code in the university.

Spokesperson Shafey Kidwai said: "No official dress code was applicable on the campus."

On the harassment incident, Prof. Kidwai clarified that such incidents have no place in AMU and society".

Another Congress MLA resigns in M.P., joins BJP

String of exits rocks party, strength in Assembly down to 90

SIDHARTH YADAV
Bhopal

Yet another Congress MLA in Madhya Pradesh, Nepanagar legislator Sumitra Devi Kasdekar, resigned from the Vidhan Sabha on Friday continuing a string of exits that has rocked the party since March.

Assembly pro-tem Speaker Rameshwar Sharma accepted the resignation of the first-time legislator from Burhanpur district, said a Vidhan Sabha order, which further pulls down the Congress strength in the Assembly to 90. The BJP boasts a 107-member-strong band of legislators.

Hours later, she joined the BJP at the party office here in the presence of Chief Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia, resigned to bring down the 15-month-old Congress government. Currently, 26 Assembly seats remain unoccupied. Ms. Kasdekar didn't respond to phone calls despite several attempts.

On July 12, Congress MLA Kunwar Pradyumna Singh Lodhi joined the BJP within hours of resigning as a legislator. He was later appointed as



Cong. MLA Sumitra Kasdekar joining the BJP in the presence of CM Shivraj Chouhan on Friday. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Chairman of the State Civil Supplies Corporation Ltd. and accorded a Cabinet rank.

In March, 22 Congress MLAs, including 19 supporters of former Union Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia, resigned to bring down the 15-month-old Congress government. Currently, 26 Assembly seats remain unoccupied. Ms. Kasdekar didn't respond to phone calls despite several attempts.

Accusing the BJP of attempting to lure Congress MLAs to cross over, State Congress spokesman Abhay Dubey said, "The BJP is aware of the public perception it is against them. It has betrayed

Village head shot dead in Haryana

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHANDIGARH

A village head (sarpanch) was shot dead by unidentified assailants in Haryana's Rohtak district on Friday.

Police said 75-year-old Balkrishan, village head of Chidi, was killed on Thursday night after motorcycle-borne assailants shot him inside his house.

"At least two assailants opened fire at him. The sarpanch was taken to PGIMS in Rohtak, where he was declared brought dead," Superintendent of Police Rahul Sharma told *The Hindu*.

"We have a few leads, which point out that the killers were from the same village. So far, no one has been arrested but we hope of making early arrests," he said.

The Congress hit out at the ruling BJP-JJP government and accused it of being responsible for "complete breakdown of law and order" in the State.

Leader of Opposition Bhupinder Singh Hooda said the situation in the State has reached a point where criminals have lost all fear of the law.

Slums a worry in fight against virus

Increasing number of cases from such areas in Bhubaneswar

STAFF REPORTER
BHUBANESWAR

Punjab recorded 348 new COVID-19 cases on Friday and reported nine more deaths taking the toll to 239, according to an official statement.

Odisha capital's virus count crossed the 1,000 mark following 124 new cases on Friday – the biggest single day spike in for the city so far.

On June 30, the total positive cases in the city were 324. The COVID-19 cases increased by more than three times to reach 1,043 in the past 17 days. While 457 recovered from the disease, 574 were active cases.

Of the new 124 cases, 72 cases were detected in quarantine centres, 52 were from the community.

As per the Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC), community cases were reported from 10 major slums, including Salia Sahi, Halidipada, Maa Mangala Basti and Mahisakhai Basti.

The Unit-4 fish market – city's largest – has been shut down after some vendors stand at 5,752.



Masks for sale in Bhubaneswar. ■ FILE PHOTO: BISWARAJAN ROUT

which would help assess the extent of spread.

Strict surveillance continued in Bhubaneswar with focus on the slum areas. "Each person in the slum areas is being checked repeatedly in a phase-wise manner and if any symptoms are found they are being tested. Now, the team is into the sixth round of surveillance," said the BMC.

As many as 436 teams carried out surveys in Bhubaneswar. Meanwhile, the police announced to implement 14-days of lockdown in Bhubaneswar and Cuttack beginning from Saturday.

HP.PWD TENDER NOTICE

Sealed item rate tenders are hereby invited on behalf of the Governor of HP for the following works from the eligible contractor enlisted in the appropriate class in HPPWD. So as to reach in the office of the Executive Engineer, Shimla Division No-I. HPPWD Shimla-3 or before 07-08-2020 up to 1030 A.M. The tenders will be opened on the same day at 11:00 A.M. in the presence of the intending contractors or their authorized agents who may wish to be present. The applications for issue of tender forms shall be received 05-08-2020 from 10:00 A.M. to 4:00 P.M. alongwith FDR for the required amount. The tender form shall be issued on 06-08-2020 from 10:00 A.M. to 4:00 P.M.

The intending contractors shall bring their registration letter renewal of their enlistment and proof of CST/GST/ otherwise the tender documents shall not be issued to them.

The earnest money as shown below shall accompany the tender in the shape of NCS/Time deposit receipt or post office Saving Bank Account in H.P. duly pledged in the name of Executive Engineer. The contractors who do not deposit the earnest money in the prescribed manner, their tender shall summarily be rejected without assigning any reason. The tenders offer shall be kept open for 120 days.

Sr. No	Name of Work	Estimated Cost	Earnest Money	Time Allowed	Form Cost.
1.	Special repair to various GAD Qtrs at Kasumpi Shimla-9 (SH:- Repair work in toilet, kitchen and bath room in type-II set No.5 under Parimahal section).	17427/-	3500/-	60 days	350/-

Terms & Conditions:-

1. The contractor/firm shall have his GST No. and attested copy of the same be attached with the application for issue of tender form.
2. The contractor/firm should attach attested copy of registration/renewal.
3. Copy of PAN card be attached with the application form.
4. Copy of EPF be attached with the application form.

HP/1640/20-21

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**STATE COUNCIL OF EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH & TRAINING
VARUN MARG, DEFENCE COLONY, NEW DELHI-110024**

Public Notice for engagement of Change Makers in Education (CMIE) Fellows and Education Interns in SCERT

State Council of Educational Research & Training invites online applications from eligible candidates for Change Makers in Education (CMIE) Fellowship and Internship Programme 2020-2021.

CMIE programme is an opportunity for the dynamic youth who aim to contribute to society through a holistic transformation of the school education system in Delhi.

25 (Twenty Five) fellows and 25 (Twenty Five) interns shall be selected to be part of CMIE 2020-2021.

Fellows shall receive a stipend of Rs.60,000/- per month and Interns shall receive a stipend of Rs.20,000/- per month.

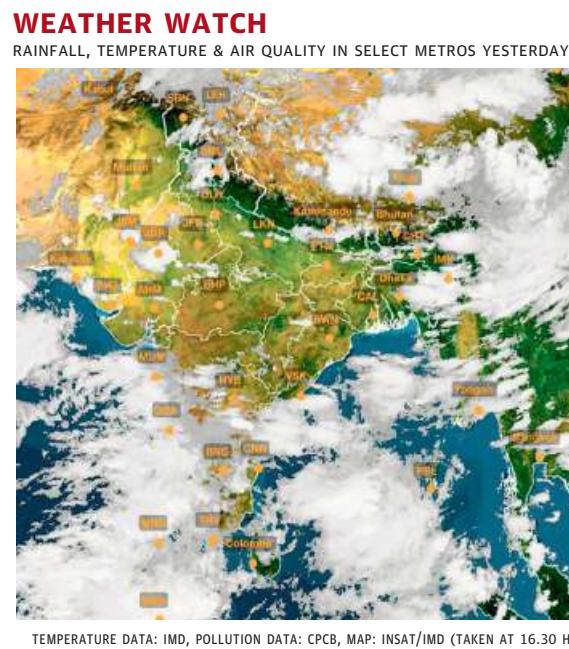
For Details of eligibility criteria, age limit and other terms and conditions of engagement log in to: <http://www.scertdelhi.nic.in>

The application deadline is 24.07.2020. Submission of application other than online mode shall not be entertained. Applicants are strictly instructed not to send any hard copy of the application to this Council.

DIP/Shabdharth/0163/20-21

Director, SCERT

CM
YK



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

Forecast for Saturday: Heavy/very heavy rainfall likely at isolated places over Assam, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram, Tripura, Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Haryana, Delhi, Bihar, Konkan & Goa, coastal Andhra Pradesh, Yanam, Telangana, coastal Karnataka, Kerala and Mahe

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	—	34.8	26.6	Kozhikode	62...	25.4...	23.4
Ahmedabad	11	33.4	25.7	Kurnool	—	32.3...	24.3
Aizawl	—	26.2	18.6	Lucknow	7.6...	36.6...	28.3
Allahabad	—	37.2	29.2	Madurai	—	34.6...	27.5
Bengaluru	—	25.4	20.4	Mangaluru	51.7...	28.0...	22.6
Bhopal	2.1	33.1	24.2	Mumbai	155.4...	29.8...	24.6
Bhubaneswar	—	35.0	26.0	Mysuru	—	27.0...	20.0
Chandigarh	—	35.7	28.6	Patna	—	37.3...	28.4
Chennai	—	34.6	26.1	Pond Blair	12.5...	29.0...	23.7
Coimbatore	4.6	32.6	22.2	Puducherry	—	33.7...	27.0
Dehradoon	—	35.0	25.6	Pune	0.9...	29.7...	22.5
Gangtok	27.4	22.1	17.5	Raipur	1.2...	33.0...	25.4
Goa	63	26.6	24.3	Ranchi	—	31.8...	24.2
Hubballi	—	25.0	22.0	Shillong	—	25.1...	18.8
Hyderabad	—	31.0	22.9	Shimla	0.8...	26.5...	20.7
Imphal	—	30.4	23.2	Srinagar	—	32.0...	17.8
Jaipur	—	39.2	28.2	Thiruvananthapuram	4.1...	30.0...	23.6
Kochi	54.6	29.0	23.8	Tiruchi	—	32.5...	26.4
Kohima	6.4	24.5	18.4	Vijayawada	23.4...	33.4...	24.9
Kolkata	6.2	35.2	27.4	Visakhapatnam	0.3...	31.0...	26.2

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)

Pollutants in the air you are breathing

CITIES	SO ₂	NO _x	CO	PM2.5	PM10	CODE
Ahmedabad	21	46	41	35...	52	■■■■■
Bengaluru	.8	13	.41	40	—	■■■■■
Chennai	12	28	106	96	—	■■■■■
Delhi	5	42	.87	.111	.66	■■■■■
Hyderabad	.7	50	.19	.7	.21	■■■■■
Kolkata	.7	10	.22	.10	.22	■■■■■
Lucknow	.3	21	.57	.125	—	■■■■■
Mumbai	61	35	.6	.25	.25	■■■■■
Pune	18	6	.51	.17	.18	■■■■■
Visakhapatnam	.8	51	.40	.67	—	■■■■■

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

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

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

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

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

Yesterday

In observation made at 4.00 p.m., Ballabgarh, Haryana recorded an overall air quality index (AQI) score of 174 indicating a moderate level of pollution. In contrast, Shillong, Meghalaya recorded a healthy AQI score of 8

The data is from the India State of Environment Report 2019. The report also says that the country's air quality has improved significantly over the past decade, with a 30% reduction in PM2.5 levels between 2010 and 2018.

Source: Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change

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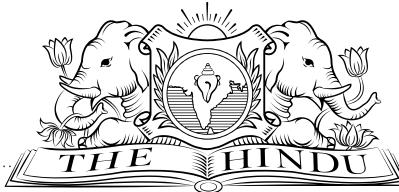
Source: Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change

India's air quality has improved significantly over the past decade, with a 30% reduction in PM2.5 levels between 2010 and 2018.

Source: Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change

India's air quality has improved significantly over the past decade, with a 30% reduction in PM2.5 levels between 2010 and 2018.

Source: Ministry of Environment



Beyond the pale

Ashok Gehlot has managed the crisis, but Rajasthan is in for a prolonged political drama

The emergence of purported evidence of horse-trading to engineer a split in the Rajasthan Congress and the subsequent moves by the camps of Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot and his former deputy Sachin Pilot have shown that there are always fresh tricks up the sleeves of Indian politicians. The opposing sides have presented varying accounts of what led to the political crisis that continues to play out, but some elementary facts appear increasingly self-evident. Mr. Pilot has been acting in tandem, if not in connivance, with the BJP, though there can be a dispute regarding the end-game. A charitable view of his actions is that he merely wanted to increase the pressure on the Congress central leadership to intervene in the prolonged turf war he has been fighting with Mr. Gehlot. And it is certainly not beyond comprehension, though a bit startling, that he and the BJP have been colluding to knock down the government he himself was part of until a few days ago. The pattern of activities and the characters all point to the overlap between his plans and the BJP's. Even before Mr. Pilot made public his displeasure with Mr. Gehlot, the MLAs supporting him were rounded up in a resort in BJP-ruled Haryana. Raising a grievance within the party, whether with the central leadership or in the legislature party, did not need such a step. His subsequent moves only reinforced the suspicion that Mr. Pilot had it all planned out, for a journey out of the Congress, though his destination may still appear foggy.

Unlike in Madhya Pradesh, where a similar sequence of events led to the collapse of the Kamal Nath government, the Congress managed to limit the damage. The State police filed an FIR against an alleged middleman, BJP Union Minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat, and an MLA who has since been suspended from the Congress. The Rajasthan police have set out to procure voice samples of MLAs housed in Haryana who allegedly feature in audio clips that apparently incriminate them in the conspiracy. The Speaker has issued notices to Mr. Pilot and 18 MLAs under the anti-defection law for defying the party whip and not attending legislature party meetings. In a plea by the Pilot camp, the Speaker has informed the High Court that the time to reply to the notice will be extended till July 21. Altogether, this has set the scene for multiple, potentially ugly, confrontations – between two States, a State and the Centre and the judiciary and the legislature. Regardless of the final outcomes of the legal and legislative processes, there is no moral or political justification for this unscrupulous attempt to dislodge a democratically elected government. That this is happening a second time in the midst of an advancing pandemic, a border conflict and an economic slowdown is beyond the pale. That this gets passed off as a fight for inner party democracy or recognition of talent is just preposterous.

Milestone of a million

Deaths remain low, but India must fight the virus, not manage the data

India was hoping that the extended lockdown alone might help it win the battle against the novel coronavirus, but the microbe has been spreading with renewed vigour. So much so that on July 16, the number of confirmed infections and deaths crossed grim milestones – one million and 25,000, respectively. If it took 109 days to reach 1,00,000 cases but just 15 days to double, the days taken to add each additional one lakh cases have been shrinking; the last two additions of one lakh cases to reach one million took just three days each. While the rising fresh cases reported each day could be ascribed to increased testing, the underlying reason for the case rise is undoubtedly the wide spread of the virus in the community. With surveillance not being commendable, the 10.3% test positivity rate nationally in the last few days shows that a very large pool of infections remains undiagnosed. Though the number of tests done daily has now crossed three lakh, the high test positivity rate underscores the need to increase the number of daily tests, by at least a few-fold. Any delay in tracing, testing and isolating the infected and their contacts will only lead to an unimaginable spread of the virus. As already seen in a few Indian cities, a cascade of events beginning with a delay in disease detection can overwhelm the health-care system to negatively impact the case fatality rate, which is currently very low.

Kerala, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh, which initially appeared to have contained the virus spread, have seen sharp surges. If Bengaluru bucked the trend in the early stage, it has become a standing example of how the cookie crumbles when cases spike and the system is not fully geared for the challenges. Aggressive tracing and testing helped Chennai reduce the surge. But the coming days will reveal if its 12-day lockdown in June had greatly contributed to this. While Delhi appears to have hammered down the test positivity rate in recent weeks, over-reliance on rapid antigen tests, which have low sensitivity, raises concerns about true case detection. Maharashtra appears to have pulled off a coup in Dharavi through outstanding work, but like Tamil Nadu and Karnataka, the State has been witnessing a spike in other districts. With a 9.1% test positivity rate, Gujarat has made no attempts to greatly increase daily tests but instead appears to be disingenuously limiting the number of daily tests to keep fresh cases per day under check. Telangana too, with a test positivity rate of 18.4%, has made no great effort to increase daily tests, which have crossed 13,000 only in the last couple of days. Telangana defies the trend of rising cases during the pandemic, raising serious concern about its numbers. Examples such as New York have shown that it is never too late to bend the curve. But for that, States need to fight the virus, not manage the data.

Iran ties need quiet diplomacy

India must continue to remain politically engaged with Tehran despite its partnership plan with China



RAKESH SOOD

Recent reports that Iran's Transport and Urban Development Minister Mohammad Eslami had launched the track laying programme for the 628 km long rail link between Chabahar and Zahidan last week sparked concerns that India was being excluded from the project. Iran has since clarified that it is not the case and India could join the project at a later stage. This keeps the door open for IRCON International Limited (IRCON) which has been associated with the project even as India continues with the development of Chabahar port.

Connectivity for Afghanistan
Providing connectivity for Afghanistan through Iran in order to lessen its dependence on Karachi port has enjoyed support in Delhi, Kabul and Tehran since 2003. Chabahar port on Iran's Makran coast, just 1,000 km from Kandla, is well situated but road and rail links from Chabahar to Zahidan and then 200 km further on to Zarjan in Afghanistan, need to be built. With Iran under sanctions during the Ahmadinejad years (2005-13), there was little progress. IRCON had prepared engineering studies estimating that the 800 km long railway project would need an outlay of \$1.6 billion. Meanwhile, India concentrated on the 220 km road to connect Zarjan to Delaram on the Herat highway. This was completed in 2008 at a cost of \$150 million.

Things moved forward after 2015 when sanctions on Iran eased with the signing of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, or the Iran nuclear deal. A memorandum of understanding (MoU) was

signed with Iran during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Tehran in 2016 to equip and operate two terminals at the Shahid Beheshti port as part of Phase I of the project. Another milestone was the signing of the Trilateral Agreement on Establishment of International Transport and Transit Corridor between Afghanistan, Iran and India. In addition to \$85 million of capital investment, India also committed to provide a line of credit of \$150 million for port container tracks. Phase I was declared operational in 2018 and India's wheat shipments to Afghanistan have been using this route. A special economic zone (SEZ) at Chabahar was planned but re-imposition of U.S. sanctions has slowed investments into the SEZ.

India was given a waiver from U.S. sanctions to continue cooperation on Chabahar as it contributed to Afghanistan's development. Despite the waiver, the project has suffered delays because of the time taken by the U.S. Treasury to actually clear the import of heavy equipment such as rail mounted gantry cranes, mobile harbour cranes, etc.

With regard to the rail-track project, a financing MoU was signed under which India undertook to provide \$500 million worth of rolling stock and signalling equipment including \$150 million of steel rail tracks. In fact, the railway tracks currently being laid are those supplied by IRCON. Iranian responsibility was for local works of land levelling and procurement. The MoU between IRCON and Iran's Construction and Development of Transportation Infrastructures Company (CDTIC) expired last year. Further, Khatab al Anbiya, the Iranian company undertaking some of the works, was listed by the U.S. as special designated entity, leading IRCON to suggest to the Iranians to appoint another contractor.

Meanwhile, Iran has ambitious



plans to extend the railway line from Zahidan to Mashad (about 1,000 km) and then another 150 km onwards to Sarakhs on the border with Turkmenistan. Another plan is to link it with the International North-South Transport Corridor towards Bandar Anzali on the Caspian Sea. In 2011, a consortium of seven Indian companies led by Steel Authority of India Limited had also successfully bid for mining rights at Hajigak mines in Afghanistan that contain large reserves of iron ore. However, developments at Hajigak remain stalled because of the precarious security situation in Afghanistan continues.

Why Iran needs China
In January 2016, just as sanctions were eased, Chinese President Xi Jinping visited Tehran and proposed a long-term comprehensive, strategic partnership programme that would involve Chinese investment in Iranian infrastructure and assured supplies of Iranian oil and gas at concessionary rates. Reluctant to be tied into too close a Chinese embrace, Iran kept the negotiations going for years. China patiently permitted a limited barter trade; China Petroleum & Chemical Corporation (SINOPEC) prolonged its negotiations on developing the Yadavaran oilfield while China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC) pulled out of the South Pars gas project last year, after initially promising to take over the French company Total's stake.

Meanwhile, tensions in the region have been growing since last year with missile strikes in Saudi Arabia claimed by the Houthis and a U.S. drone strike in January killing Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) chief Gen. Qassem Soleimani. During the last four weeks, there have been more than half-a-dozen mysterious explosions including at the ballistic missile liquid fuel production facility at Khojir, the advanced centrifuge assembly shed in Natanz and the shipyard at Bushehr. Reports attribute these to U.S. and Israeli agencies in an attempt to provoke Iran before the U.S. elections.

In May, the U.S. announced that it wanted the UN Security Council (UNSC) to continue the ban on Iranian acquisition of conventional weapons. UNSC Resolution 2231 was adopted in July 2015 by consensus to endorse the JCPOA and contains a five-year restriction on Iran's importing conventional weapons that ends on October 18. Even though the U.S. unilaterally quit the JCPOA, it is threatening to invoke the automatic snapback of sanctions provisions of JCPOA. The United Kingdom and France have criticised the U.S.'s duplicity but are unlikely to exercise a veto. At the same time, Iran hopes that November may bring about a change in the White House that opens options for dialogue.

Tehran's balancing act
Just as it has been a tricky exercise for India to navigate between the U.S. and Iran to keep the Chabahar project going, the Rouhani administration has found it a difficult balancing act to manage the hardliners at home while coping with Trump administration's policy of 'maximum pressure'.

Russia and China are the only countries to veto the U.S.'s moves in the UNSC. Even so, the Iran-China comprehensive, strategic partnership road map has run into opposition in the Majlis. After the

recent elections, the Reformists are down from 120 seats to 20 while the Principlists (Conservatives) are up from 86 to 221 seats in a house of 290 members. A former IRGC Air Force commander, Mohammed Bagher Ghalibaf, former Mayor of Tehran who ran unsuccessfully for president against Mr. Rouhani in 2013 and 2017 has been elected the new Speaker. Hard liners have accused Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif of undue secrecy surrounding the agreement amid rumours that China may be taking over Kish island and that Chinese troops would be stationed in Iran to secure Chinese companies and investments.

Advantages and a lesson
Iran may well be considering a long-term partnership with China, but Iranian negotiators are wary of growing Chinese mercantilist tendencies. It is true that China has greater capacity to resist U.S. sanctions compared to India but Iran realises the advantage of working with its only partner that enjoys a sanctions waiver from U.S. for Chabahar since it provides connectivity for land-locked Afghanistan. Iran and India also share an antipathy to a Taliban takeover in Afghanistan. This is why Iran would like to keep the door open. Nevertheless, India needs to improve its implementation record of infrastructure projects that it has taken up in its neighbourhood. There are numerous tales of Indian cooperation projects in Nepal, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Myanmar, etc suffering delays and cost overruns that only make it easier for China to expand its footprint in India's neighbourhood. The key is to continue to remain politically engaged with Iran so that there is a better appreciation of each other's sensitivities and compulsions.

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

University examination guidelines that score low

The UGC's insistence on conducting final year varsity tests could end up harming the future of students on many counts



FAIZAN MUSTAFA &
SUGHOSH JOSHI

The University Grants Commission (UGC) guidelines of July 6, 2020 on conducting final-year examinations for university students have created a storm. The commission's insistence on online or pen-paper or a blend of the two modes in conducting examinations, albeit with a much delayed timeline, has been widely criticised. Punjab, Maharashtra, West Bengal, Delhi, Odisha and Tamil Nadu have already raised objections. Uttar Pradesh has announced that its universities will hold examinations. Delhi University students have termed the decision arbitrary and discriminatory, and have challenged it in the Delhi High Court.

The guidelines state that performance in examinations is necessary for "reflection of competence, performance and credibility that is necessary for global acceptability". In the latest UGC communication, 182 universities have already conducted the examinations and 234 are planning to hold them in August and September.

Ground realities

It is a matter of concern that our education system continues to be examination-centric and these guidelines fail to take into account the fact that the validity of examinations fundamentally depends on their reliability. Most examinations in India merely test an ability to recall facts or information rather

than an understanding of those facts or an ability to use them in practical situations. Most teachers too are not trained in setting good papers particularly for online open-book examinations. Certification through examination is important but cannot and should not be the sole goal of education. Hundreds of our students every year take unfortunate steps because of examination stress. A size fit all cannot apply to our universities as we have all kinds of universities, i.e. unitary, affiliating, private and subject specific.

There is nothing like the UGC in the United States. The UGC was fundamentally meant to be the fund granting institution as is clear from its nomenclature. But the UGC Act 1956 does confer on it the power of 'coordination and determination of standards' in universities as well and, therefore, it has become the regulator of higher education.

Today, the higher education sector is overregulated and underfunded. The present government at the Centre wants to replace the UGC with a higher education commission. The United Progressive Alliance too had introduced a bill on similar lines. Since universities are autonomous bodies, in these testing times this autonomy can help us in finding solutions keeping in view the specific situation of each university.

In fact the first set of guidelines regarding examinations and academic calendar was issued by the UGC on April 29 and was demonstrative of UGC Chairman Prof. D.P. Singh's flexible and inclusive approach, allowing universities to promote students not in their final year, on the basis of a combination of internal evaluation and marks/grades in previous semesters. These guidelines gave much flexi-

bility to universities and were welcomed. However, this scheme was not extended to final-year students.

Before the new UGC guidelines were released, Rajasthan, Haryana and Maharashtra had already cancelled examinations for final-year students.

Let the cooperative federalism rather than ego guide us in this matter.

While the decision has been justified by reference to other universities across the world, the systems that these universities are following are largely accommodative of students' concerns. In fact in foreign universities, each teacher has the freedom to devise his own evaluation mechanism.

The shadow of the virus
India has just attained the dubious distinction of having one million cases of the novel coronavirus and a number of States are bringing back lockdowns of various types; so, the September 2020 deadline does not inspire much confidence. If the virus continues to spread, no university administration will be in a position to announce examinations, and students will continue to be in a limbo about their future.

While the guidelines state that the decision has been taken keeping in view the future of the stu-

dents – jobs and higher education – these prospects are, in fact, harmed by this decision. In normal circumstances, examinations would have been conducted and either results announced or provisional certificates given by this time. These help students who are graduating confirm their admissions in institutes of higher education or report at their places of employment by furnishing proof of them having completed the course. The current system does not provide for any such possibility.

Although universities which are smaller in size of student intake have started online classes, big traditional universities and the colleges affiliated thereto already lack the assurance of starting of the next academic year.

More discrimination possible

In case the infection does not subside (which seems to be the real prospect as per the World Health Organization's latest communication), it would mean that the UGC either extends the deadline further or universities are forced to conduct online exams. In the latter case, the UGC would have imposed a patently discriminatory policy on the students – issues with access to the Internet, electricity and study materials, as well as a lack of a study environment in homes would go unaddressed – and it would only manifest the disparity prevalent in the education system. In the former case, it only furthers the uncertainty, and even if the UGC decides to allow universities not to conduct examinations, this entire exercise would be pointless.

In any case, the period of four to six months would have impacted students differently. The elite, with the privilege of being unaf-

fected by the crisis caused by the infection as well as its economic ramifications will be much better placed than their peers without the same level of assuredness. The whole purpose of university acting as an equaliser will be lost. Students from a humble background, from remote areas and those with doctors/health workers as parents or are coronavirus positive in families would be at a disadvantage.

Finally, what is baffling is the idea that just one semester of examinations will be determinative of the integrity and value of a degree for which students would have worked hard for six to 10 semesters, and have also appeared for internal examinations for the sixth or 10th semester. It is difficult to understand why the last semester examination is so sacrosanct when our curriculum follows the cumulative rather than the hierarchical system.

We expect that better sense will prevail and the UGC will eventually take the decision that would be equitable, fair, pragmatic and beneficial and not one that is risky and exclusionary of any set of students. Unprecedented times call for bold steps and unprecedented decisions, and the UGC must act accordingly. Let the voices of sanity be taken into account and results be declared taking into account student performance in earlier semesters and internal evaluation of the final semester. Let the mental health of students and their anxieties be taken into account. Heavens are not going to fall if we discard the examination-centric view, at least in this emergency for just one semester.

Faizan Mustafa is Vice-Chancellor of NALSAR University of Law. Sughosh Joshi is a student at NALSAR. The views expressed are personal.

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.

State of the INC

What is happening in Rajasthan right now, and what happened prior to that in Madhya Pradesh, indicate that the Congress Party no longer has public-service minded individuals – its trademark during the freedom struggle and the initial years of Independence. Now, there are only selfish individuals hankering after power and self and in pursuit of their goals even at the expense of

harming the party. Unless there is a thorough overhaul, there may be no hope left for the party.

V. PADMANABHAN,
Bengaluru

Kerala Act
As far as the report, "SC to examine Kerala Act on animal, bird sacrifices" (July 17), is concerned, readers should know that the progressive Regent, Maharan Lakshmi Bai of Travancore, had banned

animal sacrifice in temples as early as 1929 (Travancore State Manual, Vol.II). The 1968 Act must have been for extension to Malabar too.

ABRAHAM ARAKAL,
Alappuzha, Kerala

New chairperson
The elevation of Ms. Malini Parthasarathy as the new chairperson of The Hindu Group is a milestone. As a long-time reader of the daily, I recollect her focus and writings on Sri Lanka

and Pakistan. I hope that she will guide the paper to the highest standards of journalism.

C.A.C. MURUGAPPAN,
Kothamangalam, Tamil Nadu

■ Members in my family have been loyal readers of *The Hindu*. As Chairman, Mr. N. Ram must be complimented for his courageous, bold and objective stand on many an issue, without deviating from professional standards. He leaves behind a legacy of

great leadership and independence. Our best wishes to the new chairperson as she prepares to steer the ship.

S. GEORGE,
Thiruvananthapuram

■ Though the appointment of Ms. Parthasarathy her new role is an internal issue, the outpouring of greetings from various political leaders and political parties suggests *The Hindu*'s strong sway over the political class, and its core

asset – ubiquitous readers who look forward to its mesmerising coverage of events and of reflecting the collective voice of the people through its impactful Editorials. In such a backdrop, it becomes incumbent upon the new Chairperson to carry forward this rich legacy to even greater heights.

V.S. JAYARAMAN,
Chennai

To read more letters online, scan the QR code



Telangana's COVID trials and tribulations

Crowded hospitals, lack of transparency of data, and inadequate testing are some of the problems that mark the State's response to the virus. **K. Shiva Shanker** and **Abhinay Deshpande** report on how Telangana seemed to be in control of the situation, but is now fumbling



Ambulances parked in front of Gandhi Hospital, Hyderabad. (Below): Junior doctors from Gandhi Hospital stage a protest after a post-graduate student was allegedly attacked by the attendants of a patient who died of COVID-19. ■ NAGARA GOPAL

At round 8 a.m. on June 27, a distressed health volunteer sat next to his sick younger brother outside the Government General and Chest Hospital in Hyderabad. The brother, a software engineer, had had nine days of fever and shortness of breath. Suspecting COVID-19, the family rushed him to hospital. Two hours had passed since they reached the hospital, which had 308 beds, including 105 designated for those suspected of having COVID-19. But there was no information on whether he could be admitted. "He desperately needed oxygen support, but no one from the hospital told us how much time it would take to admit him," the health volunteer said. The family spent several hours in agony. Finally, the 34-year-old techie was admitted a little after 10 p.m. Many other patients and attendants who wanted to get admitted at other government hospitals in the capital reported similar complaints.



despite the fact that there is no scientific basis for this claim.

Coming under flak for his comments, Rao later said on record in the Assembly that it was a scientist who had told him that paracetamol would cure fever induced by COVID-19. He added that the statement had been blown out of proportion.

Police high-handedness

Soon after appealing to the people to remain calm, Rao announced a complete lockdown in the State from March 23 to March 31. Telangana was among the first States to announce a lockdown. The number of cases in the State then stood at 21. The government closed the inter-State borders during the period. No vehicles, except goods vehicles carrying essentials like medicines, were allowed into the State. The State government also suggested to the Union Health Ministry that all international passengers be stopped from entering as a majority of those who had tested positive until then had returned from abroad.

The decision to impose a lockdown was largely welcomed by everyone, but questions remained. During the initial days of the lockdown, a string of press conferences were held where some of these questions were raised. A reporter asked if the lockdown would resemble a curfew. Rao asserted that a lockdown was not a curfew, even as the Director General of Police issued new orders for a curfew-like bandobast. As day gave way to night, people began complaining about police excesses, especially in the three urban police commissionerates – Hyderabad, Cyberabad and Rachakonda – of the State capital. Over the next few days, videos and photographs of police personnel chasing people on the roads and beating them mercilessly emerged on social media. In Wanapathy, a man was assaulted by the police in front of his 12-year-old son, which forced IT Minister K.T. Rama Rao to intervene and direct the District Superintendent of Police, Apoorva Rao, to personally meet and apologise to the child.

On the first day of the lockdown, several journalists were roughed up by the police despite showing their identity papers. In Khammam, a woman doctor who was on her way to the hospital was abused and assaulted by an Assistant Commissioner of Police.

Police officers told *The Hindu* that they had received instructions from their seniors to use force and create an

atmosphere of fear. "The zonal officers were asked not to take calls from influential personalities. Our men were told to control any situation using batons," said a senior police officer.

"It was a tough time. Every senior officer gave us different instructions," an inspector with the Hyderabad City Police said. "We were very confused. We all did whatever we felt was right according to the situation on the ground. Some of our men used their batons to control the situation and keep people inside. Many people were injured in the process."

In a recent counter affidavit filed in the Telangana High Court on allegations that the Falaknuma police personnel had damaged vehicles parked outside homes in a residential area, the Hyderabad Police Commissioner, Anjani Kumar, submitted: "The police had checked the vehicles using police lathis in order to see whether coronavirus was present or not". Though this statement was widely condemned on social media, no action has been taken against the lathi-wielding policemen.

The migrant crisis

While contact-tracing of foreign returnees as well as those who had returned from the Tablighi Jamaat congregation in Delhi was being done, a new crisis began unfolding, like in the rest of the country. Abruptly left without any means of livelihood, food and money following the imposition of the lockdown, migrant workers began their exodus from Hyderabad. Over days and weeks, thousands of workers, clutching their belongings and their children, were seen walking in Hyderabad and other districts bordering Maharashtra and Chhattisgarh. They were all desperate to go home. Even a month later, the scene did not change. Workers walked hundreds of kilometres to reach homes as far away as in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. The Chief Minister's attempts to woo them back with 12 kg rice and ₹5,000 in cash for each family did little to stop them. According to officials, there were more than 7 lakh migrants in the State. While some of them did choose to stay back after receiving help from the police, members of civil society and NGOs, the rest left.

Those who chose to stay back were

not happy either. On April 29, for instance, more than 2,000 migrant construction labourers stationed in the premises of IIT-Hyderabad erupted in agitation against their employer, the construction firm L&T, for forcing them to live in poor conditions during the lockdown. They claimed that they were left to fend for themselves, without any pay or help. Clashes with the police caused injuries to at least one police officer and damage to one police vehicle. The incident changed the State government's policy towards the workers.

Two days later, on May 1, the Telangana government started sending back the workers home in special trains. Till June 10, the South Central Railway in coordination with the State government ran 146 special trains to send back more than 1.88 lakh migrants to their hometowns in Bihar, Odisha, Uttar Pradesh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, West Bengal, Assam and Manipur. On May 23-24 alone, 41 trains took workers to five different States. The workers began going back, but many of them also carried the virus with them to the districts.

Lack of transparency

Though it was among the first States to impose a lockdown immediately after the Janata Curfew, Telangana started conducting fewer and fewer tests. Worse, it stopped sharing information on cases and samples tested, in its daily medical bulletin, from March 25 to June 15. Doctors attending to COVID-19 patients in the State started comparing the State medical bulletin with the medical bulletins of other States on WhatsApp groups or on Twitter to ask why the Telangana health department was not releasing day-wise data on tests conducted.

Telangana Health Minister Eatala Rajender and officials in the health department responded to the criticism by saying that the tests were being conducted according to the guidelines issued by the Indian Council of Medical Research. "When we strictly follow ICMR guidelines, we get more cases. Our accuracy of tests is greater. More tests can be conducted, but what purpose will it serve if tests are not focused and less positives are detected," asked officials in the health department.

As criticism for conducting fewer

tests mounted, the State government, on June 14, decided to conduct 50,000 tests in 10 days in 30 Assembly constituencies of Hyderabad, Rangareddy, Vikarabad, Medchal-Malkajgiri and Sangareddy districts. Tests and treatment at private laboratories and hospitals were allowed. On the Chief Minister's directions, charges for tests at private establishments were capped at ₹2,200. For samples collected from homes, the rate was fixed at ₹2,800. A huge surge in positive cases was observed after the initiative was launched, from June 15. Besides RT-PCR tests, rapid antigen tests too were used from around July 8 to detect COVID-19 cases.

The health department's June 16 and June 17 bulletins published information about the number of tests conducted, but this information again disappeared from the June 18 bulletin only to reappear the next day. After the health department started to conduct rapid antigen tests, questions were raised again about the break-up of tests and cases between RT-PCR and the antigen tests, which was not mentioned.

Reasons for spread of virus

The lack of data was especially a problem given that by the end of May, there was a spike in cases. Though people had their theories for this, they sought answers from the government. On May 30, the State's Director of Public Health, Dr. G. Srinivasa Rao, said increased movement of people following lockdown relaxations in May had led to the spike. Officials blamed the people for the surge in cases.

The numbers in rural Telangana also went up rapidly when workers who had migrated for work to Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh and other States started coming back home. "The influx of migrant workers was very high, especially in the Yadadri-Bhuvanagiri, Mancherial and Jagtial districts. Thousands of them were coming back every day, many with the infection. But cautious villagers and the strategy of the police department helped us in containing the spread of the virus," said an IPS officer.

According to the officer, the infection came to Telangana in three waves: first, with the foreign returnees; next with the Markaz returnees; and then with the migrant workers, before community spread started. "Many people who went to Cancer Hospital and other hospitals in Hyderabad for their regular treatment also returned with the infection. A few workers died within days of coming back to their native places," the officer said.

While harsh measures were used to control the pandemic, politicians continued with their meetings. "A large number of politicians, party workers and officials gathered together when the Chief Minister launched the sixth phase of Haaritha Haram, the tree plantation programme, in Medak recently. There was no physical distancing and many were not even wearing masks," the officer said. Whether that made any difference to the number of cases or not, only time can tell. The Home Minister of Telanga-

na tested positive for COVID-19 and was under treatment in a private hospital. He has now been discharged.

Problems in private labs

The cumulative positivity rate till July 15 was 18.85%, one of the highest in the country. Health department officials said there were discrepancies in private laboratories which had led to the high test positivity rate. Four teams inspected 16 private laboratories in Hyderabad in the last week of June. They suspected that a few labs had been conducting pool sampling. Instead of testing each sample in a pool, if even one sample in a pool tested positive, all samples were declared positive. Other discrepancies too were observed in the private labs. However, the officials did not provide precise data on the number of samples tested at government and private labs, which helps determine whether private labs have contributed to the high test positivity rate.

The State government also came under criticism for another reason. From July 7, old Secretariat buildings began to be demolished in order to construct a new Secretariat. These buildings could have been used to accommodate more COVID-19 patients, people and Opposition parties said.

Struggle in hospitals

Four and a half months after the first COVID-19 case was detected in Telangana, 39,342 cases were detected as on July 15, the seventh highest number of cases in the country. Telangana has among the lowest test rates (tests per million people) in India and the lowest in south India (5,722 per million people). Hospitals are struggling not only with beds but also with other infrastructural and manpower-related issues.

On Wednesday, rainwater from storm water drains gushed into the in-patient block of Osmania General Hospital where patients were undergoing treatment (those suspected of having COVID-19 are treated in the out-patient block). Doctors said rather than recovering, patients were likely to contract new infections in such unhygienic conditions. They are worried that such a situation, if it were to occur in the out-patient block, might cause a grave health crisis. In Gandhi Hospital, over 600 outsourced staff comprising patient care providers, sanitation workers and others boycotted duties from Tuesday demanding regularisation of job and hike in salaries. They draw only ₹9,500 per month. They called off the protest on Wednesday after daily incentives and one week of quarantining after one week of work was assured to them. In the District Hospital, King Koti, people have complained that lack of a help desk or signboards has left them clueless, forcing them to spend time waiting for help among scores of other COVID-19 patients. Private hospitals are filling up; many are not admitting patients.

Meanwhile, in one of the private hospitals, the techie's brother is gasping for breath. The techie has fully recovered but his brother is now struggling.



FROM PAGE ONE

Rajasthan SOG files FIRs after tapes on horse-trading

Mr. Jain, allegedly heard in conversation with Mr. Shekhawat had moved to Jaipur from Lunkarsar in Bikander two decades ago and developed contacts with influential people in politics and bureaucracy through his hotel business.

Initial probe by the Special Operations Group (SOG) of Rajasthan police has revealed that Mr. Jain developed relations with politicians and regularly appeared with in photographs with high-profile persons. Mr. Jain's father was the Block Congress president of Lunkarsar. His proximity to the politicians in both the Congress and the BJP helped him grow over the years and he was consulted even for political appointments.

In the latest tapes, Mr. Jain is heard talking about money being delivered to legislators for switching sides

to bring down the Ashok Gehlot government. While the Congress alleged that Mr. Jain was a BJP leader, BJP State president Satish Poonia denied that he was party member.

Asked whether he knew Mr. Jain, Mr. Shekhawat said in Delhi that he knew many Sanjay Jains. "Let me know which one they are talking about. From which [phone] number was the purported call made?" he asked.

A five-member SOG team also left for Manesar in Haryana to question MLAs loyal to Mr. Pilot, who are staying in a resort. The SOG comes directly under Mr. Gehlot, who also holds the Home portfolio.

Congress Chief Whip Mahesh Joshi, who had lodged a complaint about the tapes with the SOG, told reporters that he could recognise the voice of Mr. Sharma talking to Mr. Shekhawat.

'No one can touch an inch of India's territory'

Upon arrival in Leh, Mr. Singh witnessed a high-altitude joint airborne exercise by troops, including some battle drills by troops of the Ladakh Scouts, a defence source said.

The exercise at Stanka near Leh showcased the application of integrated combined force in high-altitude terrain involving newer generation IAF helicopters and special forces in vertical envelopment and ground forces, including mechanised columns, effecting speedy link-up, the source stated.

Thereafter, Mr. Singh visited Lukung in eastern Ladakh, where he was briefed on the security situation and operational prepared-

ness along the LAC as well as along the LoC in Kargil and Dras sectors, the Defence Ministry said in a statement.

In the afternoon, Mr. Singh reached Srinagar from Ladakh where he was briefed in detail about the situation on the LoC, in the hinterland and successful counter-terrorist operations by 15 Corps Commander Lt. Gen. BS Raju.

Later in the evening, Mr. Singh chaired a security review meeting, which was attended by the Lieutenant Governor of J&K and other senior officials from the security forces, civil administration and intelligence agencies, the Ministry statement added.

'Chinese troops are yet to fully move out'

They have held four rounds of talks so far – on June 6, 22 and 30 and July 14 – to disengage and de-escalate from the build-up areas in Gogra-Hot Springs and Finger area along Pangong Tso (lake).

The official said that at some places, disengagement has not been as expected but considerable progress had been made after the talks were scaled up to the level of 'Special Representative on Boundary Question' on July 5. India was represented by National Security Adviser Ajit Doval and China by Foreign Minister Wang Yi.

"In all the four rounds of Corps Commander talks, it was vehemently impressed upon the Chinese that the pullback of troops as per the disengagement agreement does not mean the final settlement of the boundary.

U.P. govt. denies it killed Dubey in fake encounter

KRISHNADAS RAJAGOPAL
NEW DELHI

The Uttar Pradesh government emphatically denied before the Supreme Court on Friday that the gunning down of history-sheeter Vikas Dubey on July 10 was a "fake encounter".

The affidavit said a retired Allahabad High Court judge is heading the judicial inquiry. An SIT has also been set up. The U.P. government described Dubey as a dreaded gangster and leader of the "Bullet Gang".

"He has been a gangster since many decades, having 64 cases of serious offences like murder, dacoity, extortion, etc., against him," the U.P. government said.

Unlike the Telangana government, the U.P. government has *suo motu* instituted a judicial inquiry into Dubey's death within days.

Mr. Singh assured the court that, "The State has taken all steps to ensure that even a suspicion does not remain on the incident. It [the Uttar Pradesh government] has acted proactively."

The affidavit said a retired Allahabad High Court judge is heading the judicial inquiry. An SIT has also been set up. The U.P. government described Dubey as a dreaded gangster and leader of the "Bullet Gang".

"He has been a gangster since many decades, having 64 cases of serious offences like murder, dacoity, extortion, etc., against him," the U.P. government said.

It described the ambush and murder of eight policemen by Dubey and his gang in Kanpur as a "brutal massacre".

Karnataka ramps up testing as cases soar

Bengaluru contributes most to 115 fatalities, 3,693 cases; Kerala intensifies curbs in coastal hamlets; A.P. focus on 3 districts

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
BENGALURU

ed 157, Ballari 133, Vijayapura 118, and Belagavi 95.

With 33,205 active cases, Karnataka was third in the country after Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu.

Bringing cheer to the COVID-19 ward at the Trauma and Emergency Care Centre on Victoria Hospital campus, 100 COVID-19 positive women had given birth to babies; the 100th was born on Friday.

Fast transmission in Kerala's coastal belt, with entire fishing villages affected, put Thiruvananthapuram district in a sensitive situation. The government introduced more restrictions on fishing and movement of people.

Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan said that community transmission had taken place at Pulluvila and Poonchira and announced further curbs. Thiruvananthapuram accounted for 246 out of the 791 fresh cases. Local

from Bengaluru Urban. The total number of positive cases here touched 27,496 of which 582 succumbed to the infection. The total number of people discharged in the State touched 20,757 with 1,028 new recoveries.

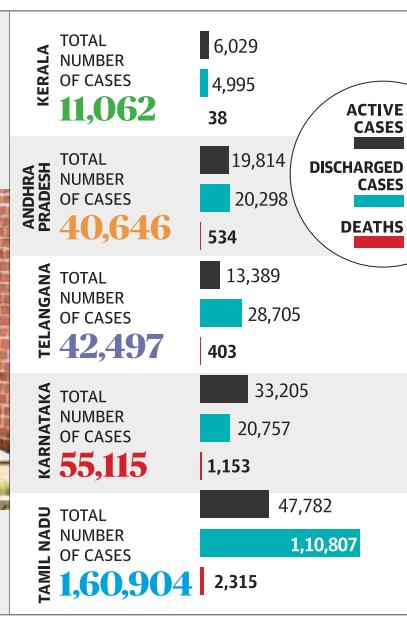
RT-PCR tests conducted in the State crossed 9.5 lakh with a record 24,700 tests in 24 hours. Apart from Bengaluru Urban, Dharwad report-

Be aware, be safe

The government is striving hard to contain COVID-19 by focusing on the safety measures. The graph shows the spread of the pandemic in the southern States



Twin purpose: Municipal staff setting up dustbins replicating the novel coronavirus in parks in Vijayawada on Friday. ■ K.V.S. GIRI



transmission resulted in 244 cases, 112 in coastal wards.

Of the State's 791 new cases, 557 were due to local transmission, with a missing epidemiological link in 42

cases. The cumulative case burden went up to 11,066 cases, and active cases were 6,029. The death of a 46-year-old in Thrissur on July 15, was confirmed as due to

COVID-19, taking the State's death toll to 38.

Andhra Pradesh reported 42 deaths and 2,602 fresh cases on Friday. The Health Department said the case tal-

ly was 40,646 and toll 534.

The first 10,000 cases were reported in 105 days and the second 10,000 cases in 12 days. It took only seven days for the third 10,000 and four for the fourth 10,000.

The new deaths were reported in 12 districts and Anantapur reported six deaths. It was followed by East Godavari, Chittoor and Prakasam with five deaths each and Guntur and West Godavari with four deaths each. Kadapa and Visakhapatnam witnessed three deaths each while Kurnool, Nellore and Vizianagaram saw two deaths each. Krishna reported only one death.

Over half of the new local cases were reported by just three districts. East Godavari had 643 cases while Guntur had 367 and Chittoor 328 in the past day.

(With inputs from Thiruvananthapuram and Vijayawada bureaus)

T.N. emerges as top investment destination'

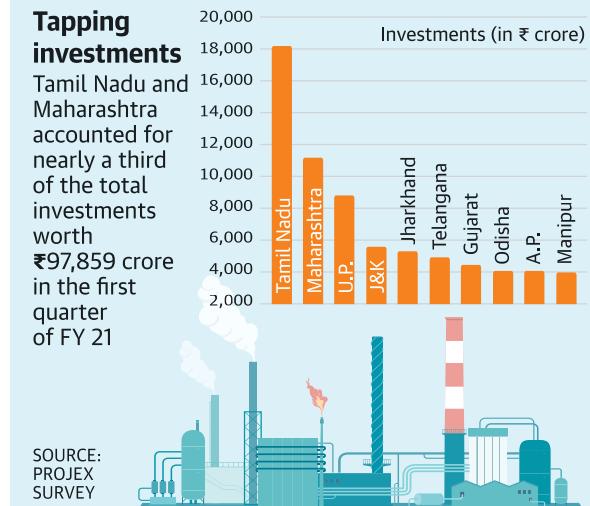
But overall fresh investment announcements in India slumped to the lowest in 5 years: Projects Today

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI

Tamil Nadu has emerged as the country's top investment destination in the first quarter of this financial year, even as overall fresh investment announcements in India slumped to the lowest in five years amidst a period marred by the extended pandemic lockdown.

The southern State accounted for 18.63% of the ₹97,859 crore of investments envisaged to execute 1,241 projects in the country in the first quarter, reckoned the latest 'Projex Survey' released by Projects Today, an independent firm that tracks investment projects in the country. In the same quarter last year, India had seen the announcement of 2,500 new projects worth ₹3,86,673 crore.

17 MoUs signed
The Tamil Nadu government had signed 17 MoUs (memorandums of understanding)



with investors on May 27, 2020, which gave a ₹18,236 crore fillip to its investment pipeline in the quarter between April and June.

While private sector investments on the whole collapsed to just 39.1% of total investments in the quarter, a ratio last seen in the first quarter of 2013-14, Tamil Na-

du attracted large players like Daimler India Commercial Vehicles for a ₹2,277 crore project at Oragadam and the largest power project in the quarter – a 750 MW gas-based plant with an outlay of ₹3,000 crore.

Two private sector projects worth ₹2,900 crore in the State for producing wind

mill equipment and semiconductor chips accounted for a bulk of the 16 machinery sector investment proposals worth ₹3,678 crore across the country.

Data centres

The State is also host to three of the five data centres envisaged to come up in the country at a total investment of ₹7,400 crore. The other two data centres are proposed in Maharashtra, which was second to Tamil Nadu with fresh investments worth ₹1,228.8 crore.

Maharashtra had signed 12 MoUs with firms from Singapore, South Korea and the U.S. through a virtual summit.

Suspension of work

"While States like Tamil Nadu and Maharashtra held investors meet and signed MoUs, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Karnataka reworked labour laws, started building land banks and

sent feelers to foreign companies for investing in their States," the Projects Today investment survey noted. In all, private promoters announced 266 new projects worth ₹38,242.9 crore.

The nationwide lockdown has also led to suspension of work on investment projects worth around ₹21.12 lakh crore due to critical factors such as shortage of labour, funds and equipment.

"We believe that India has all the potential to be the contract manufacturer of the world in several sectors, and has the required labour force. However, slow-moving official machinery, archaic land and labour laws are some of the things preventing foreign companies from bringing in their technology and capital to India. It is high time we address these issues at the earliest at the Central and State governments' level," said Shashikant Hegde, director and CEO of Projects Today.

IN BRIEF



Ramesh Kumar free to approach Governor: HC

VIJAYAWADA
The Andhra Pradesh High Court gave liberty to senior IAS officer N. Ramesh Kumar to approach the Governor seeking his restoration as the State Election Commissioner under Article 243-K of the Constitution and directed the government to file a counter-affidavit explaining its position vis-a-vis the implementation of its earlier order.

Foreign footballers await first flight home
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Around 150 foreign players, most from African countries, playing for Sevens football teams in various districts have been stranded in Kerala since March, according to the estimates of the Sevens Football Association.

"We have sent requests to the State and Central governments to arrange flights for these players," said Muhammad Mustafa, vice president of the Sevens Football Association.

Telangana to take 1,200 PG medics into service
HYDERABAD

Telangana Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao has ordered the absorption of 1,200 students who have completed their post-graduate medical courses in the State into government service. At a meet to discuss steps to curb COVID-19, Mr. Rao also ordered immediate filling up of 200 vacancies of medical officers in primary health centres.

Rare pangolin rescued from smugglers, 2 held

GUNTUR
A rare pangolin (*Mannis crassicaudata*) was rescued from suspected smugglers in an undercover operation by the Forest Department. Two persons, Uyyala Siva Koteswara Rao and Uyyala Siva, accused of poaching one of the most endangered mammals, were arrested. It was allegedly poached by the two accused at Yadlapurda area in Andhra Pradesh.

High Court clears demolition of Telangana Secretariat complex

No merits in contentions of petitioners: Bench

MARRI RAMU
HYDERABAD

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Friday refused to entertain an appeal to stop the Telangana government from demolishing State Secretariat buildings spanning 10 lakh sq ft set on 25.5 acres.

The new Secretariat building is estimated to cost

₹1,000 crore of public money.

A Bench led by Justice Ashok Bhushan declined a plea by Jeevan Reddy to stop the demolition by quoting reports that there were "several deficiencies in the buildings." Mr. Reddy had appealed against a High Court decision dismissing his plea on June 29.

of the petitioners. Initially, the petitioners' main contention was that the demolition taken up by the government was illegal since it did not adhere to rule 4 (3) of Demolition and Construction Waste Management Rules-2016.

Delivering the verdict, a Bench of Chief Justice Raghvendra Singh Chauhan and Justice B. Vijaysen Reddy observed that there were no merits in the contentions

No plan to extend lockdown: CM

It's not a solution, says Yediyurappa

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
BENGALURU

Amidst a demand by experts, officials and a section of political leaders to extend the lockdown in Bengaluru beyond a week, Karnataka Chief Minister B.S. Yediyurappa on Friday maintained that the lockdown was "not a solution" to contain COVID-19 and said there was no proposal before the government to extend it in the city.

The Chief Minister announced his stand at a meeting of the eight zonal in-charge Ministers for monitoring the situation in Bengaluru.

Bengaluru Mayor M. Goutham Kumar and BBMP Commissioner B.H. Anil Kumar, among others, had earlier expressed a view that it

would be better to have a longer lockdown to break the spread of virus.

Clip hints at Shekhawat's role

Cong. demands Minister's arrest for trying to dislodge the Rajasthan government

MOHAMMED IQBAL

JAIPUR

The Congress on Friday alleged the involvement of Union Minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat in the conspiracy to topple its government in Rajasthan and demanded his immediate arrest if a probe by the Special Operations Group (SOG) of the State police confirmed misuse of office by him, which it said was "prima facie clear".

Congress chief spokesperson Randeep Surjewala said at a press conference that audio clips of purported conversations between a rebel Congress MLA and Mr. Shekhawat had revealed the latter's role in the conspiracy, which involved payment of bribes, exchange of black money and hawala transactions. The SOG should regis-



Tough spot: Rajasthan police at a hotel in Manesar where the rebel Congress MLAs are staying. • SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

ter a first information report, he said.

The Congress leader also demanded registration of criminal cases against dissident MLA Bhanwarlal Sharma and BJP leader Sanjay Jain, who allegedly acted as a middleman, on the basis of their reported conversations

with Mr. Shekhawat. The audio clips were made public on Thursday night.

Mr. Surjewala announced the suspension of Mr. Sharma, who represents Churu district's Sardarshahar constituency, and Vishwenda Singh, who has been sacked as the Tourism Minister,

'BJP has raised ₹500 crore to topple government'

MUMBAI

The Congress on Friday alleged that the Maharashtra unit of the BJP had amassed about ₹500 crore from builders and businesspeople to topple the Rajasthan government. "I have discussed the issue with Home Minister Anil Deshmukh and he said his department has received sensitive info," said party spokesperson Sachin Sawant.

from primary membership of the Congress.

Later, the SOG registered a first information report against Mr. Shekhawat and others on a complaint filed by Congress chief whip Mahesh Joshi alleging their role in attempts to topple the Congress government.

Minister denies Congress charge of horse-trading

Not my voice, ready to face any probe, says Shekhawat

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

Union Minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat on Friday denied the Congress's allegation that he was part of a conspiracy to topple the Ashok Gehlot government in Rajasthan.

The accusation, levelled against him by All India Congress Committee (AICC) media-in-charge Randeep Surjewala, was on the basis of an alleged recording of horse-trading transactions between Mr. Shekhawat and Congress MLAs and was revealed in a press conference on Friday morning.

Mr. Shekhawat said, "This is not my voice... Let there be an investigation. I am ready



Gajendra Singh Shekhawat

to face any probe," he said after the Congress demanded his arrest.

Mr. Shekhawat is a member of the Lok Sabha from Jodhpur, Mr. Gehlot's area of influence. He also tweeted in Sanskrit, stating that "where there is dharma [righteousness], there is victory."

Sources close to Mr. Shek-

hawat said he would cooperate with the any investigation in the matter.

Mr. Surjewala also demanded the arrest of one Sanjay Jain, whom he described as a BJP leader. Mr. Shekhawat denied knowing Mr. Jain. The BJP has dismissed the audio clips as "manufactured". Its spokesperson Sambit Patra said Mr. Surjewala had said soon after the rebellion by former Deputy Chief Minister of Rajasthan Sachin Pilot that if there were many utensils in a house, then they collided and made noise at times.

"The Congress is now trying to suppress this noise through a manufactured audio," he said.

Police team made to wait at hotel

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

GURUGRAM

High drama unfolded outside a five-star hotel in Manesar here on Friday evening, after a Rajasthan Police team was not allowed inside by the local police and the staff for more than an hour.

More than a dozen Rajasthan Congress MLAs supporting former Deputy Chief Minister Sachin Pilot are believed to be inside ITC Grand Bharat. Bhanwar Lal Sharma, whose name figures in the FIR on conspiracy to topple the government, is believed to be inside.

Around 8 p.m., the staff allowed the police personnel inside.

The team left the hotel 45 minutes later.

IN BRIEF



61 RS members to take oath on Wednesday

NEW DELHI
Newly elected 61 members of the Rajya Sabha will be administered oath on Wednesday, and for the first time, the ceremony will be done inside the House chamber when Parliament is not in session. Subscribing to oath when Parliament is not in session is usually done in the Chairman's room. The ceremony had to be cancelled once before as members expressed inability to travel to Delhi.

J&K to notify 'areas' for infrastructure building

SRINAGAR
The J&K administration on Friday decided to designate locations inside the Union Territory as "strategic areas" to facilitate a time-bound development of infrastructure of strategic importance. The move, first of its kind, was approved by the J&K Administrative Council, which met under the chairmanship of Lieutenant-Governor G.C. Murmu. An official spokesman said the L-G granted his nod to the proposal of amending two Acts for the same.

9 parties against digital campaign in Bihar

Most voters will be left out, they say

SOBHANA K. NAIR

NEW DELHI

A day after the Election Commission (EC) reversed its decision to extend postal ballot facility to voters above 65 years of age, nine Opposition parties on Friday met in Delhi to oppose the panel's move to hold only a digital campaign for the upcoming Bihar Assembly election in view of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

Bihar in-charge for Congress Shaktisinh Gohil, RJD RS MP Manoj K. Jha, CPI (ML) general secretary Dipankar Bhattacharjee, RLSP president Upendra Kushwaha, CPI general secretary D. Raja, CPI(M) general secre-

At UN meet, Modi calls for 'reformed multilateralism'

PM says the system needs to be more representative

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

Calling on members of the United Nations to pledge for reform within the world body, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday said the multilateral system needed to be more representative, and India believed that "the path to achieve sustainable peace and prosperity" was through multilateralism.

He was speaking at a high-level dialogue of the UN's Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) on "Multilateralism after COVID-19: What kind of UN do we need for the 75th anniversary?"

"Only reformed multilateralism with a reformed United Nations at its centre can meet the aspirations of humanity," Mr. Modi said in his speech focusing on India's battle against the coronavirus pandemic.

The PM addressed the ECOSOC gathering virtually, along with UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, Norwegian Prime Minister Erna Solberg and Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi.



Narendra Modi speaking at the high-level dialogue of the ECOSOC.

Outlining India's fight against the pandemic, Mr. Modi said that India had extended assistance to more than 150 countries, and helped set up a SAARC (South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation) COVID-19 emergency fund in the South Asian neighbourhood.

\$300 bn package

He also detailed economic measures to manage the impact of the pandemic, including a government package of \$300 billion to "bring

the economy back on track, build modern infrastructure and put in place a technology-driven system".

India's recovery rate
"In the fight against COVID, our grassroots health system is helping India ensure one of the best recovery rates in the world," Mr. Modi said.

"The United Nations was originally born from the furies of the Second World War. Today, the fury of the pandemic provides the context for its rebirth and reform. Let us not lose this chance," Mr. Modi added, indicating India's push for a permanent seat in a more globally representative United Nations Security Council.

Earlier, addressing the gathering, Mr. Guterres said that the world was in the middle of a "deepening calamity" and that the COVID-19 pandemic had led to "an acute health and economic crisis, the severity of which has not been seen in nearly a century" with effects on food, trade, health, climate.

270 mn Indians lifted out of poverty by UPA

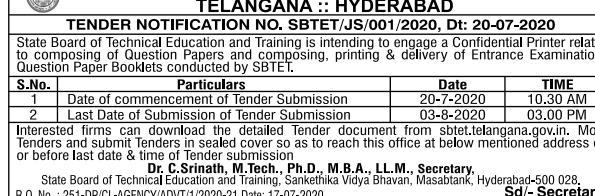
SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (OPHI) study finds that 270 million Indians were lifted out of poverty by the Congress-led United Progressive Alliance (UPA) and those who scoff at its record must know that economists laugh at their ineptitude, said former Union Finance Minister P. Chidambaram said on Thursday.

The parties said almost two-thirds of the electorate would be left out. The election, they argued, would end up being a mere formality and it would be a "travesty of democratic processes".

Mr. Chidambaram was reacting to a report on poverty data released by the United Nations Development Programme and OPHI that pointed out that 65 out of 75 countries studied significantly reduced their multidimensional poverty levels between 2000 and 2019. About 273 million Indians moved out of multi-dimensional poverty between 2005-6 and 2015-16, it claimed.



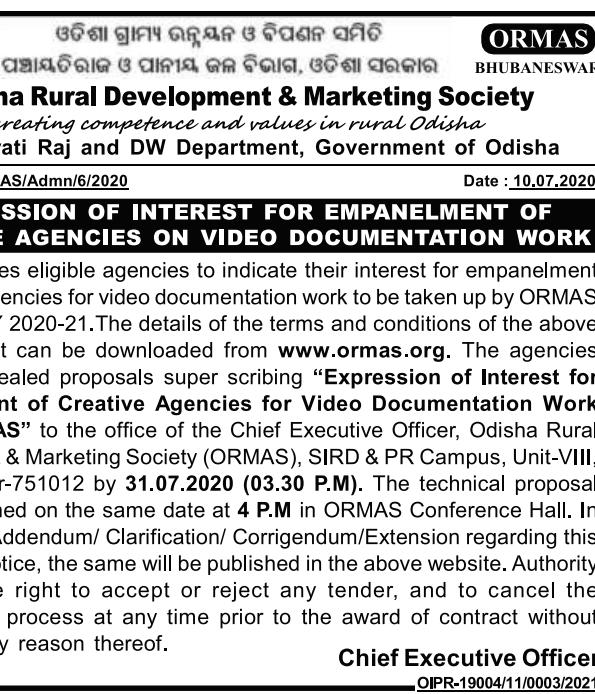
State Board of Technical Education and Training, Santhosh Vidy Bhavan, Masab tank, Hyderabad-500 028.
R.O. No.: 251-DPCLAGENCY/ADVT/1/2021 Date: 17-07-2020

No. 1833 / ORMAS/Admin/6/2020 Date : 10.07.2020

EXPRESSION OF INTEREST FOR EMANELMENT OF CREATIVE AGENCIES ON VIDEO DOCUMENTATION WORK

ORMAS invites eligible agencies to indicate their interest for empanelment of creative agencies for video documentation work to be taken up by ORMAS during the FY 2020-21. The details of the terms and conditions of the above empanelment can be downloaded from www.ormas.org. The agencies will submit sealed proposals super scribbling "Expression of Interest for Empanelment of Creative Agencies for Video Documentation Work under ORMAS" to the office of the Chief Executive Officer, Odisha Rural Development & Marketing Society (ORMAS), SIRD & PR Campus, Unit-VIII, Bhubaneswar-751012 by 31.07.2020 (03.30 P.M.). The technical proposal shall be opened on the same date at 4 P.M. in ORMAS Conference Hall. In case of any Addendum/ Clarification/ Corrigendum/Extension regarding this tender notice, the same will be published in the above website. Authority reserves the right to accept or reject any tender, and to cancel the procurement process at any time prior to the award of contract without assigning any reason thereof.

CAD-277



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CAD-277

EXPRESSION OF INTEREST FOR EMANELMENT OF CREATIVE AGENCIES ON VIDEO DOCUMENTATION WORK

ORMAS invites eligible agencies to indicate their interest for empanelment of creative agencies for video documentation work to be taken up by ORMAS during the FY 2020-21. The details of the terms and conditions of the above empanelment can be downloaded from www.ormas.org. The agencies will submit sealed proposals super scribbling "Expression of Interest for Empanelment of Creative Agencies for Video Documentation Work under ORMAS" to the office of the Chief Executive Officer, Odisha Rural Development & Marketing Society (ORMAS), SIRD & PR Campus, Unit-VIII, Bhubaneswar-751012 by 31.07.2020 (03.30 P.M.). The technical proposal shall be opened on the same date at 4 P.M. in ORMAS Conference Hall. In case of any Addendum/ Clarification/ Corrigendum/Extension regarding this tender notice, the same will be published in the above website. Authority reserves the right to accept or reject any tender, and to cancel the procurement process at any time prior to the award of contract without assigning any reason thereof.

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With fewer confirmatory tests, Delhi's testing strategy under fire

Low level of RT-PCR retesting in persons who are testing antigen negative will underestimate cases of COVID-19, says ICMR's task force member

JACOB KOSHY
NIKHIL M. BABU
NEW DELHI

Only one in 200 of those who tested negative in an antigen test in Delhi to detect possible novel coronavirus cases was retested, a fraction that epidemiologists say is too low. From June 25, daily cases appear to have peaked at 3,390 and steadily declined to 1,790 as of July 15.

Delhi formally began using antigen testing kits on June 18 and has accelerated their use since July. While these tests dominate daily testing, using them widely without following up with adequate retests contradicts Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) guidelines on use of the test, experts told *The Hindu*.

From June 18 to July 16, Delhi conducted 3,05,820 rapid antigen detection tests (RADT), a quicker complement to the standard RT-PCR (reverse transcription polymerase chain reaction) test

that while most accurate, takes 24 to 48 hours to give the result. Of these, 2,85,225 tests came 'negative'. Of them, 1,670 (or about 0.5%) were chosen for retest by RT-PCR and 252 of these were confirmed positive, according to the most updated figures as on July 16 confirmed by *The Hindu*.

RADT's limitation
The limitation of the RADT is that they may miss as many as half of those who are actually positive, which is why the ICMR recommends that these tests be administered in regions where the background prevalence of the disease is known to be high and those negatives "suspected" to be harbouring the virus be retested by the standard RT-PCR test.

When approving the RADT by SD Biosensor, a South Korean company, the ICMR underlined that the test ought to be used only in containment zones, hot-

spots, hospital settings and laboratories among those who manifested one or other symptoms of the disease, influenza-like illnesses, and people with co-morbidities who were asymptomatic, and direct and high-risk contacts of those confirmed positive. Under these settings, those who tested "negative" and whom clinicians "suspected" to be harbouring the disease ought to be "definitely tested sequentially by RT-PCR to rule out infection". Those who test positive don't need a retest and must be considered positive, the guidelines note.

Expanded ambit

On July 9, a Delhi government order as part of its "test, track, treat" strategy expanded the ambit of testing beyond containment zones. Symptomatic individuals would be identified via surveys and they would all need to be tested with RADT kits. "We consistently need

to test at least 20,000 people each day. Since the contacts can be in any part of the city, depending on the movement of the patient, the testing facility will be made available at all identified dispensaries and polyclinics," the order said.

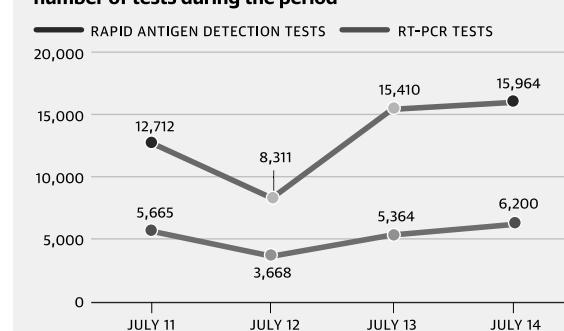
This initiative also underlines that "high-risk" per-



Rapid strides

From July 11 to 14, Delhi conducted 2.5 Rapid Antigen Detection Tests for every RT-PCR test in the period, according to data provided by the State in an affidavit to the High Court.

The graph shows a time-series of the number of tests during the period



sons who test negative in the RADT will have to undergo RT-PCR.

However, the low number of retests doesn't square with the ICMR recommendation regarding retests nor with previous research. ICMR scientists, in a national survey published in May in the *Indian Journal of Medi-*

cal Research

surveys but declined to be

identified said, "If the overall positivity is 15%-20%, it's very odd if only 0.5% samples are chosen for retesting."

Officials told *The Hindu*

that in Delhi, the tests were

being deployed widely and

there were camps being set up outside containment zones in various districts to facilitate testing.

A modified "revised CO-

VID response plan" was released on July 8. Some districts officials started holding camps for testing "special surveillance groups", including domestic workers, drivers and electricians in areas where they work and also stay, using RADTs.

Purpose defeated

"We retest a person using RT-

PCR if the doctor on the ground feels that the person has ILI (influenza like illness) symptoms. But not every negative case is retested using RT-PCR," a Delhi govern-

ment Health Department of

Rahul warns of 20 lakh cases by August 10

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Friday said the number of coronavirus or COVID-19 infections in the country will breach the 20 lakh mark by August 10 if the Union government does not take concrete steps to prevent the spread.

"10,00,000-mark has been crossed. If COVID-19 spreads at this pace, by August 10, more than 20,00,000 will be infected in the country," Mr. Gandhi said in a tweet in Hindi.

The former Congress chief has been very critical of Centre's handling of the pandemic and retweeted his earlier tweet where he had predicted about India breaching 10-lakh cases this week.

India is now ranked third in the COVID-19 tally after the U.S. and Brazil.

Air France allowed to resume flights

Passengers need to follow advisory

JAGRITI CHANDRA
SUHASINI HAIDAR
NEW DELHI

Passengers will be able to fly to and from Paris on Air France flights, provided they meet the mandatory medical and travel advisories laid down by the French government.

India has allowed Air France 28 flights from Saturday to July 31 from Delhi, Mumbai and Bengaluru. But severe restrictions imposed by both the governments for incoming passengers mean that only essential travel will be encouraged and India's proposal for a "travel bubble" with easier quarantine norms to ensure hassle-free travel has not come through.

Air France advises passengers on its website to carry a report of a negative COVID-19 test done 72 hours before a flight, as well as a

"Travel Certificate for access to French Territory detailing their travel plans, and a sworn statement that they do not have novel coronavirus". Upon their arrival in France, travellers from India will have to undergo 14 days of mandatory home or institutional quarantine.

Other countries
India is also in talks with the U.S., Germany and the U.K., who have been conducting repatriation flights from here but are yet to start regular commercial flights which will not only allow their airlines to ferry passengers into their countries and also bring passengers into India.

The U.S.-based United Airlines aims to start scheduled flights from August 1, which will allow it to fly passengers both ways, pending government approval.

Health infrastructure being ramped up: govt.

ICMR issues directive to States, UTs to identify govt., private facilities that can provide rapid antigen test

BINDU SHAJAN PERAPPADAN
NEW DELHI

The Union Health Ministry on Friday said medical infrastructure to ensure quality treatment for COVID-19 patients is being continuously augmented across the country, with India now having 1,383 'Dedicated COVID Hospitals', 3,107 'Dedicated COVID Healthcare Centres', and 10,382 'COVID Care Centres'.

"Together, they have a capacity of 46,673 ICU beds, 21,848 ventilators are deployed in the hospitals in all States/UTs. We are receiving no reports of shortage of N95 masks and PPE kits with the Centre having supplied 235.58 lakh N95 masks and 124.26 lakh PPE kits to States/ UTs/ Central institutions so far," said the Ministry.

It added that the strategy of home isolation for the mild and asymptomatic pa-

Viral tracker

With 33,685 new COVID-19 cases and 676 deaths recorded on Saturday, the cumulative tally rose to 10,39,216 cases and 26,295 deaths. The graphs depict new cases and deaths in the last 14 days in select States. States are classified based on where cases or deaths are rising (■), dropping (■), or flattening (■)

NEW CASES AND DEATHS IN INDIA

CASES	DEATHS
33,685	676
7 DAY-CHANGE +21.4%	7 DAY-CHANGE +24.5%

FIGURES ON THE GRAPHS DEPICT NEW CASES AND DEATHS RECORDED IN THE STATES ON FRIDAY

Correction: The graphs depicting deaths in Delhi and Gujarat on Thursday's tracker were coloured red instead of green

tients has ensured that hospitals beds remain unburdened, while the focus has been on the treatment of the severe cases and reduction of fatality.

In an effort to ramp-up testing, the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) has asked States and UTs to identify and approve all government and private facilities

for conducting Rapid Antigen Detection Tests (RADT) for COVID-19.

The ICMR, in its latest communication, has advised that States should ensure all

RADT testing points are appropriately linked with RT-PCR (Reverse Transcription Polymerase Chain Reaction) test facilities, where symptomatic 'negatives' will be tested. District-wise login credentials should be shared with all antigen testing sites, government as well as private, so that data can be entered into the ICMR portal on a real-time basis.

It added that with the use of antigen tests, more tests were being carried out, and that it was absolutely necessary that all such testing data are uploaded to the ICMR database and all positive cases were brought to the attention of district/ municipal authorities for isolation/ quarantine/treatment.

"Ramping up testing capacity has resulted in more than 3 lakh tests being conducted per day, 3,33,228 samples have been tested in the last 24 hours."

KERALA STATE TRANSPORT PROJECT
GOVERNMENT OF KERALA
INVITATIONS FOR BIDS (IFB)
Procurement (Output and Performance Based Maintenance Contract ("OPBRC") following Single Stage Two Envelope Bidding Process)

NATIONAL COMPETITIVE BIDDING

Dated: 18.07.2020

1. The Government of India has received financing as Development policy loans from the World Bank towards the cost of rebuilding climate resilient infrastructures in Kerala and Government of Kerala (GoK) intends to apply a part of the funds to cover eligible payments under the contract for construction of works as detailed below.
2. Bidding will be conducted through National Competitive Bidding procedures as per the World Bank & GoK guidelines. Bidding is open to all eligible bidders as defined in the World Bank's Guidelines: **Procurement of Goods, Works and Non-Consulting Services under IBRD Loans and IDA Credits & Grants by World Bank Borrowers**
3. The Project Director, Kerala State Transport Project, Public Works Department, Government of Kerala, now invites physical bids through OPBRC mode of execution for the maintenance of roads as detailed below:

State	Bid No.	Name of work	Length Km	Period of contract
Kerala	KSTP II / OPBRC - 1	Output and Performance Based Road Contract Package - I Chengannur - Angamaly - 122.069 km Mavelikkara - Chengannur - 9.514 km Kozhencerry - Chengannur - 11.67 km	143.253 Km	7 years

4. The complete bid document can be obtained from the O/o Project Director, Kerala State Transport Project, Project Management Team, T.C.11/339, SreeBala Building, Keston Road, Nanthancode, Kowdiar P.O., Thiruvananthapuram - 695003, e-mail: pdksstp@gmail.com, cepmtkstp@gmail.com from 27/07/2020 to 26/08/2020 (up to 16:00 Hrs. IST) on payment bid fee of Rs.16,800/- by DD in favor of Project Director, KSTP, Thiruvananthapuram.
5. Last date and time of submission of bid: **27/08/2020, 16.00Hrs.** Bid opening: **27/08/2020 (at 16.30 hours IST).**

Sd/- Project Director, KSTP

BRUHAT BENGALURU MAHANAGARA PALIKE

Office of the Executive Engineer, MPED - Central, N.R. Square, Bengaluru - 560 001.

No.: BBMP/EE (MPED-C)/TEND/07/2020-21 Date : 17-07-2020

TENDER NOTIFICATION (Through GOK e-Procurement Portal only)

The Executive Engineer (MPED-C), BBMP, Bengaluru invites tenders from eligible Contractors registered in BBMP or equivalent registration with CPWD / KPWD / Railways / MES or Any State Government Organisation for the Construction of work detailed in the table below.

Sl. No.	Name of the Work	Approx Amount put to tender (Rs. in Lakhs)	EMD (Rs. in Lakhs)	EMD (Online Payment)	EMD in the Form of Bank Guarantee
1.	Modernisation of Offices and Record Room in BBMP Head Office Premises, Bangalore.	87.00	1.74	0.50	1.34
2.	Modernisation of Toilet in BBMP Head Office Premises Building.	119.42	1.80	0.50	1.30
3.	Repairs & Renovation of Banashankari Referral Hospital Quarters.	8.95	0.23	0.23	--

(1) Tender documents can be downloaded from the e-Procurement portal of the Government of Karnataka from 18-07-2020. (2) Pre Bid Meeting is on 24-07-2020 at 3.30 pm at Office of the Superintendent Engineer (Project), BBMP, Bangalore - 560 002. (Pre Bid Meeting Sl.No. 01 & 02). (3) Last Date for Tender Submission Online through e-Procurement portal on or before 4.00 pm on 03-08-2020 and the Opening of tenders will be as per the e-Procurement portal guidelines. (4) Bids will be Opened on the Website: <https://eproc.karnataka.gov.in> in the Office of the Executive Engineer (MPED-C) on or after 05-08-2020 at 04.00 pm. The Details regarding participation for this tender can be obtained by logging on to: <https://eproc.karnataka.gov.in>.

Sd/- Executive Engineer, MPED-Central

Pay Development Charges, Help to Develop Bengaluru

Dilutes protections'
The Draft EIA 2020, Ms. Karat says, is contrary to its statutory requirement to "protect and improve the environment," instead it is designed to dilute existing protections through different means. She further alleged that the draft not only supersedes the EIA 2006 but also seeks to circumvent various rulings made by the National Green Tribunal and the Supreme Court.

Ms. Karat has demanded that the draft notification be withdrawn and redrafted after due consultations.

"The draft notification is in keeping with the pro-business agenda of the Central government in the name of development. People's interests or concerns of protection of environment are not the concern of Draft EIA 2020. In fact it gives licence for wrongdoing and violations," she wrote.

PM's blunders weakened India: Rahul

Modi govt. 'disrupted' all aspects and made the country vulnerable, he alleges

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

A fragile economy, troubled neighbourhood and weak foreign policy prompted China to act against India, former Congress president Rahul Gandhi said in a short video released by the Congress on Friday.

Mr. Gandhi, in the 3 minute 37 seconds video, alleged that in the past six years, the Narendra Modi government "disturbed and disrupted" all these aspects and made the country vulnerable.

The video is part of a newly launched series where Mr. Gandhi would discuss issues related to current affairs for those interested in knowing the "truth". This comes after his high-profile virtual inter-

views

IN BRIEF



Drink cow urine to fight virus: Bengal BJP chief

KOLKATA

West Bengal BJP president Dilip Ghosh has advocated the use of "cow-urine" to boost immunity in the fight against COVID-19. A video has surfaced on social media where Mr. Ghosh, while emphasising the importance of home remedies, is seen saying that people need to consume cow urine to stay healthy. The BJP leader made these remarks during a meeting in Durgapur on Thursday.

Bihar gang rape survivor granted bail

PATNA

Amid media outrage and concern from the legal fraternity across the country, the gang rape survivor from Araria in Bihar who was arrested on the orders of a judicial magistrate while giving her statement, was granted bail on Friday. The judicial magistrate had said the woman had disrupted court proceedings. However, bail was refused to two social workers who had helped the woman and were arrested with her on July 10. Many lawyers have denounced the arrest in a letter to the Chief Justice of Patna High Court.

Judge says she was once a victim of court delay

NEW DELHI

Retiring Supreme Court judge Justice R. Bhanumathi said at a virtual farewell on Friday that she was once a victim of prolonged and complex legal procedure. The judge, whose career on the Bench spans over three decades from the Tamil Nadu Judicial Services to Judge number five at the Supreme Court, said, "I lost my father in a bus accident at the age of two. We filed a suit for compensation. The court passed a decree but we could not get the amount due to complicated procedures... Myself, my widowed mother and two sisters were victims of court delay and procedural lags."

M.P. official suspended for helpline misuse

BHOPAL

The Bhind district administration has suspended an official whose account on the Chief Minister's helpline was used to inform a complainant that he was mad and the handpump that he had complained of would be fixed to his chest. The log-in credentials of an executive engineer of the Public Health Engineering Department were used, said Arun Sharma, assistant director, Bhind district administration. "Another official had sent the absurd response using it, which was taken into cognisance by the Collector," he said. Rahul Dixit, the complainant, told *The Hindu*, that he was hurt by the response. "We are just seeking our rights," he said.

Weak barriers cause Assam's sorrow

This is the major reason for floods in the State every monsoon, say water resources experts

RAHUL KARMAKAR
GUWAHATI

Ill-maintained or poorly constructed river embankments have added to Assam's flood woes this year.

The daily flood summary provided by the Assam State Disaster Management Authority (ASDMA) is a profusion of numbers.

Some 5.35 million people of 5,004 villages and localities across 30 of Assam's 33 districts have been affected and 76 died – five on Friday – in two waves of floods since May 22. Another 26 died in landslips.

So far, 1,606 roads and 164 bridges or culverts have been damaged.

The column also says 197 earthen embankments have been damaged or breached. This is the major reason Assam suffers every monsoon, water resources experts say.

"One major feature of flood management in Assam is total dependence on embankments. If the approach to a very complicated problem is on a mono strategy that is technically unsound, then you are in great danger and that is what's happening," said Partha Jyoti Das,



Escape route: People affected by a second wave of floods and landslips during the monsoon move to safer places in Dhubri district of Assam on Friday. ■ PTI

who heads the water, climate and hazard programme of Assam-based conservation NGO Aaranyak.

Last-moment schemes
ASDMA officials admit that the brittle embankments have often compounded flood management plans. A factor is the last-moment schemes submitted by the Water Resources Depart-

ment. "Embankments are repaired or constructed from the State Disaster Response Fund, but the schemes for release of money were submitted in May, when the flood season in Assam starts. The quality of work suffers obviously," an official said, declining to be quoted.

Water Resources officials blamed the delay on COVID-19 and the associated

lockdown.

Assam began constructing embankments in the 1960s and most of them have outlived their utility. Many of these started breaching or collapsing from the 1990s, more seriously from the 2000s.

"In two decades of study, we have found that human casualty, farm and infrastructure damage have been

proportionate to the breaching of embankments. In the absence of long-term alternatives, the government has to invest in sturdier, durable embankments to ensure that the situation does not deteriorate every year," Mr. Das said.

Task force

The worst flood struck Assam in 2004 when 497 people were killed.

This made the Centre set up a task force that came up with flood mitigation ideas involving States and countries in the upstream and downstream of the Brahmaputra and Barak rivers and their tributaries.

The suggestions were put in the cold storage.

Chief Executive Officer of ASDMA, M.S. Manivannan, said the breaching of embankments had complicated matters as much as periodic high-volume discharge of water from the adjoining hills of Bhutan, Arunachal Pradesh and Nagaland.

"But our planning based on the mapping of vulnerable areas has succeeded in rescuing many people," he told *The Hindu*.

5 Dalits attacked over land dispute

Madhya Pradesh police register case

STAFF REPORTER
Bhopal

The Madhya Pradesh police have registered a case against seven upper caste men for reportedly assaulting five Dalit men over a land dispute in Shivpuri district on Thursday night.

The incident comes two days after a Dalit couple reportedly consumed pesticide while resisting an anti-encroachment drive in neighbouring Guna district.

Members of both the communities cultivated parts of a land at Silra village in the Karera police station limits, R.S. Chandel, Superintendent of Police, said. "Our team has reached the spot to inquire into the matter. Some of the accused are being questioned," he said.

Mahendra Boudh, a social worker, who met the injured men at the district hospital, alleged that members of the Thakur community wanted to grab their land for which they were thrashed while showing resistance.

"At least two got their arms fractured, while one

suffered injuries on his head and got stiches," he said.

"They called people from outside who carried guns and lathis. They fired shots in the air, and landed lathis on us and hit us with the guns," said Jaswant Jatav, 50, who suffered a fracture.

"They came to our houses at night and assaulted us," he added.

Mr. Jatav said the Thakurs wanted to grab the five bigha patch the Dalit farmers cultivated.

"We told them it is our land, but they used tractors to dig out parts of our fields," he said.

Sunil Astav, formerly in charge of the State unit of Bhim Army, said atrocities continued against Dalits in the Gwalior-Chambal region.

"The bastion of BJP leader Jyotiraditya Scindia is where such atrocities are being reported frequently. Until when can we tolerate this," he asked.

Last year in September, two Dalit children were thrashed to death for defecating in the open.

SC refuses plea for single curriculum

Petitioner had sought 'one nation, one board' and merger of ICSE with CBSE

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI



The Supreme Court on Friday refused to entertain a plea for a uniform and common curriculum for school students in the age group of six to 14 across the country rather than have diverse ones such as the CBSE, the ICSE and State Boards. The court said it was a "matter of policy" and the judiciary could not "command" the government.

Justice D.Y. Chandrachud, leading a three-judge Bench, declined the petition by advocate Ashwini Upadhyay to set up a National Education Council/Commission and

follow a "one nation, one-board" system and merge the ICSE with the CBSE.

Mr. Upadhyay also urged a standard textbook with chapters on fundamental rights and duties, directive

principles and the golden goals set out in the Preamble, and make its study compulsory throughout the territory of India.

On this, Justice Chandrachud asked the advocate to spare a thought for the plight of the schoolchildren, who were already burdened by their books and heavy bags.

"Our children are so burdened now with heavy bags on their shoulders... You want to add one more book to their bag & burden them more. Let us not burden our children any further," Justice Chandrachud addressed Mr. Upadhyay orally.

"Presently, each educa-

tion board has its own syllabus and curriculum and entrance examinations are based on CBSE, so prevailing system doesn't provide equal opportunity to all students," the petition said.

"Uniform education system having common syllabus and common curriculum would achieve the code of a common culture, removal of disparity and depletion of discriminatory values in human relations. It would enhance virtues and improve the quality of life, elevate the thoughts, which advance constitutional philosophy of equal society," the petition said.

Nepal to explore archaeological site

Oli's remarks set off controversy

KALLOL BHATTACHERJEE
NEW DELHI



Nepal's Department of Archaeology is holding cross-ministerial meetings to explore an archaeological site in Thori near the border town of Birgunj, officials in Kathmandu have said.

The development comes four days after Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli said the real birthplace of Lord Ram is located in Thori village around Birgunj, a major border town.

Thori is known to have a cluster of ancient Hindu religious sites that draw pilgrims from different parts of Nepal.

"The department has been holding several meetings with different ministries to discuss the possibility of starting archaeological studies in Thori," Ram Bahadur Kunwar, spokesperson for the Department of Archaeology, was quoted by a news outlet as saying.

Nepalese historian Jagman Gurung, in a TV interview, said that according to the geographical descriptions in Valmiki's *Ramayana*, it appears that Lord Ram's Ayodhya was located nearer to Janakpur.

"The travel time in a chariot from India's Ayodhya in Uttar Pradesh is around seven days. But Ramayana says Ram arrived in Janakpur on

Nepal man tonsured in Varanasi

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
LUCKNOW

A Nepal-speaking person in Varanasi was tonsured and forced to shout "Jai Shri Ram" and slogans against Nepal Prime Minister K.P. Oli by members of a fringe group. They wrote "Jai Shri Ram" on his scalp.

Arun Pathak, convenor of the Vishwa Hindu Sena, was among the four booked in this connection on Friday under Sections 153A (promoting enmity between different groups) and 120 (criminal conspiracy) of the Indian Penal Code.

The Director-General of Police directed the senior-most officer in Varanasi to take strict action against those involved in the incident. One Santosh Pandey, a member of the Vishwa Hindu Sena, was arrested and efforts were on to nab the others, the DGP's office said.

A video of the incident was widely circulated on social media after Mr. Pathak recorded and shared it on his Facebook profile.

The incident came against the background of Mr. Oli stoking a controversy by stating that the "real" Ayodhya was in Nepal and not in Uttar Pradesh.

In the video, the unidentified man is made to shout slogans against Mr. Oli and Nepal, and praise India.

IITs to relax criteria for admissions due to cancelled board exams

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The Indian Institutes of Technology will relax their eligibility criteria dealing with Class 12 marks this year, as several board examinations were cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Earlier, a minimum 75% score in Class 12 was required; this year, a simple pass will be sufficient.

The decision was taken by the Joint Admissions Board of the IITs, Human Resource

Development Minister Ramesh Pokhriyal Nishank tweeted on Friday evening.

"For admissions to IITs, apart from qualifying the JEE (Advanced), the eligibility was to secure either a minimum score of 75% marks in class XII Board exams or rank among the top 20 percentile in their qualifying examinations," he tweeted.

"Due to the partial cancellation of class XII exams by several Boards, Joint Admissions Board (JAB) has decided

to relax the eligibility criterion for JEE (Advanced) 2020 qualified candidates this time. Qualified candidates who have passed class XII examinations will now be eligible for admissions, irrespective of marks obtained."

CBSE and the Council for the Indian School Certificate Examinations were two of the national school boards that were forced to cancel some papers when schools were closed in mid-March.

"Presently, the committee is

Appeal to pause work on legal reform

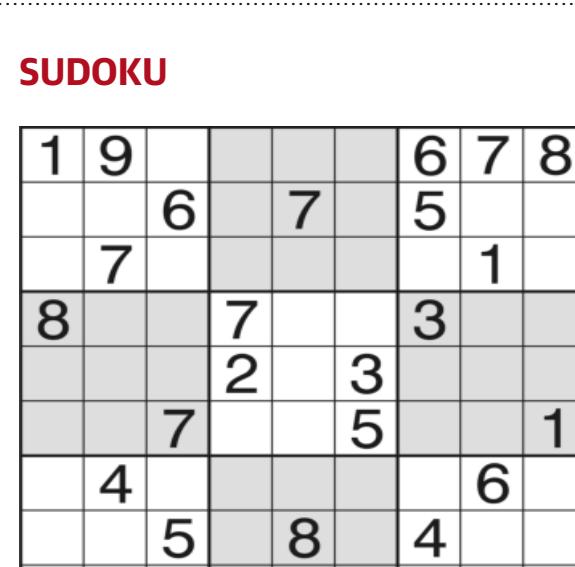
LEGAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

Indian criminal law cannot be overhauled in six months amidst a pandemic.

123 eminent personalities – including former Supreme Court judges, senior lawyers and academics – said in a letter to the national committee set up by the Ministry of Home Affairs to reform penal laws in the country. The July 16 letter advised the committee to pause its work.

SUDOKU



Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

3	5	7	1	6	9	4	8	2
8	9	2	7	4	3	1	6	5
1	4	6	2	8	5	9	3	7
7	2	3	5	8	4	6	1	9
5	7	4	1	3	6	2	8	0
9	3	1	5	2	7	4	6	8
6	8	7	9	1	3	5	2	4
2	1	4	6	8	5	7	3	9
0	5	3	7	2	4	1	6	8

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★☆

Solution to puzzle 12991

S	P	A	R	I	N	G	G	Y	R	A	T	E	D

<tbl_r

U.S. officials have 'lost their minds': China

Beijing responds to Attorney General William Barr's accusations on 'economic blitzkrieg'

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
ASSOCIATED PRESS
BEIJING

U.S. officials have "lost their minds and gone mad" in their dealings with Beijing, China's Foreign Ministry said on Friday, in the latest verbal salvo between the two superpowers.

Tensions between Washington and Beijing have run high this year and some of the most outspoken critics of China in American Congress were this week hit with sanctions, days after the U.S. imposed visa bans and asset freezes on several Chinese officials.

U.S. Attorney General Bill Barr added fuel to the fire on Thursday when he accused Beijing of mounting an "economic blitzkrieg" to replace Washington as the world's pre-eminent power and spread its political ideology around the world.

Comments that distract
But Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying said Mr. Barr and other American officials were criticising Chi-



Teaching politics: Chinese students attending a class about the Communist Party's history at a school in Lianyungang earlier this month. ■ AFP

na to distract from domestic political problems. "These people, for self-interest and political gain, do not hesitate to hijack domestic public opinion... to the point where they have lost their minds and gone mad," she said. Ms. Hua added that China had no intention of challenging or replacing the U.S. and said she hoped that Washington could "return to rationality" in its China policy. "A sparrow cannot understand the

ambition of a swan," she said. "This is a serious misjudgment and misunderstanding of China's strategic intent."

Mr. Barr accused hackers linked to the Chinese government of targeting American universities and businesses to steal research related to COVID-19 vaccine development, levelling the allegation against Beijing hours after Western agencies made similar claims against Russia.

"The People's Republic of China is now engaged in an economic blitzkrieg – an aggressive, orchestrated, whole-of-government (indeed, whole-of-society) campaign to seize the commanding heights of the global economy and to surpass the United States as the world's preeminent technological superpower," Mr. Barr said.

Mr. Barr's speech amounted to a wide-ranging condemnation of what he said

were Beijing's tactics to gain an economic upper hand in the 21st century, and to engage in influence campaigns touching diverse corners of American life, including business, politics and even entertainment.

Multiple accusations

Mr. Barr warned that universities which welcome Chinese-funded initiatives could unwittingly lose control of academic research.

Numerous Trump allies have issued strongly worded messages over China in recent days, coming at a time when bilateral relations have fallen to their lowest point in decades over issues from accusations of technology theft to China's claims in the South China Sea.

"Because everyone knows that China is in a leading position in the research and development of new coronavirus vaccines, we have first-class scientific research personnel, and we do not need to gain a leading position with theft," Ms. Hua said.

Taliban makes big changes ahead of talks with Kabul

Armed wing gets new head; 4 leaders added to talks team

ASSOCIATED PRESS
ISLAMABAD

The Taliban has put the son of the movement's feared founder in charge of their military wing and added several powerful figures to their negotiating team, Taliban officials said. The shake-up, one of the most significant in years, comes ahead of expected talks with Kabul aimed at ending decades of war in Afghanistan.



Taliban delegation in Doha, Qatar, in February, where it signed the peace deal. ■ AP

broad-based than they've used to date, or than might be strictly necessary for the opening stages of talks," said Andrew Wilder, vice president of the Asia Program at the Washington-based U.S. Institute of Peace.

When the U.S. signed the deal with the Taliban on February 29, after more than a year and a half of negotiations, it was touted as Afghanistan's best chance at peace in four decades of war. It was also seen as a road map for the withdrawal of U.S. troops from Afghanistan, ending America's longest war.

On Monday, four-and-a-half months since the signing, chief U.S. negotiator Zalmay Khalilzad tweeted that "a key milestone in the implementation of the U.S.-Taliban agreement" had been reached as American troop numbers dropped to 8,600 from about 12,000 and five bases were closed in Afghanistan.

Positive development

"I'd say it appears to be a

good news for negotiations with the Afghan leadership, and a sign of how seriously the Taliban are taking this step in a deal Washington signed with the insurgents in February.

The shuffle, overseen by Taliban leader Mullah Hibatullah Akhundzada, is meant to tighten his control over the movement's military and political arms, the officials

Security agencies can't have unfettered access to online data: German court

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
FRANKFURT AM MAIN

Germany's highest court on Friday said security services had too much unfettered access to people's online data and ordered legislation to be revised to set higher hurdles.

German intelligence services and police agencies currently have the right to ask telecom and Internet companies for user info ranging from names and birth dates to passwords and

IP addresses, to help their investigations.

But the Constitutional Court in Karlsruhe agreed with complaints brought by privacy activists that the access to data was excessive and an unconstitutional violation of citizens' right to telecoms privacy. In their ruling, judges said the current powers to retrieve data were "disproportionate".

Judges said they agreed that intelligence bodies sometimes needed to pull per-

sonal data from smartphones or other devices to maintain public security. But they said this should only be done in cases of "a specific danger" or "an initial suspicion of criminal conduct" in the context of an investigation, and not to facilitate investigators' work "in general". German legislators have until the end of 2021 to amend the telecommunications law to include "thresholds for the use of these powers".

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
UNITED NATIONS**
The Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) terror group's leader Noor Wali Mehsud has been designated as a global terrorist by the UN for participating in the financing, planning and perpetrating acts on behalf of and in support of entities associated with al-Qaeda.

The UN Security Council's 1267 ISIL and Al-Qaeda Sanctions Committee added Mehsud, 42, to the ISIL (Daesh) and Al-Qaeda Sanctions List on Thursday, subjecting the

Pakistani national to an assets freeze, travel ban and arms embargo.

Became chief in 2018

In June 2018, Mehsud was named the leader of Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan, following the death of former TTP leader Maulana Fazlullah. The TTP was blacklisted by the UN on July 29, 2011 for its association with al-Qaeda.

Under Noor Wali's leadership, TTP has claimed responsibility for numerous deadly terrorist attacks across Pakistan, including an

attack targeting Pakistani security forces in North Waziristan in July 2019 and a bomb attack against Pakistani soldiers in Khyber Pak-

htunkhwa in August 2019, the Sanctions Committee said.

The group had claimed responsibility for an attempted bombing in Times Square on May 1, 2010, and in April 2010, it had launched a multi-pronged assault against the United States Consulate in Peshawar, killing at least six Pakistanis and wounding 20 others, the Committee added.

Designated a terrorist
The U.S. State Department's Bureau of South and Central

UN blacklists Pak. Taliban leader Noor Wali Mehsud

Noor Wali Mehsud

attack targeting Pakistani security forces in North Waziristan in July 2019 and a bomb attack against Pakistani soldiers in Khyber Pak-

Asian Affairs (SCA) said in a tweet that it welcomes the addition of Mehsud by the UN to the sanctions list.

The TTP is responsible for many deadly terrorist attacks in Pakistan. The U.S. domestically designated Noor Wali as a terrorist in September 2019, it said in the tweet.

Blacklisting by the Security Council entails that all states are required to freeze without delay the funds and other financial assets or economic resources of designated individuals and entities.

Pompeo gives divisive speech at report's release

Secretary says the U.S. must ground its human rights policy in religious liberty

PRANSHU VERMA
WASHINGTON

Secretary of State Mike Pompeo delivered a divisive speech Thursday calling for the U.S. to ground its human rights policy more prominently in religious liberty and property rights.

Mr. Pompeo's speech, at the National Constitution Center in Philadelphia, came as he announced the release of a report created by a panel he commissioned last year to suggest how U.S. human rights policy could better reflect the "nation's founding principles."

"It's important for every American, and for every American diplomat, to recognise how our founders understood unalienable rights," Mr. Pompeo said. "Foremost among these rights are property rights and religious liberty."

Human rights scholars have criticised Mr. Pompeo's



Panel on rights: Secretary Mike Pompeo with Mary Ann Glendon, Chair of the Commission on Unalienable Rights in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, on Thursday. ■ AFP

panel since its inception, noting it was filled with conservatives who were intent on promoting views against abortion and marriage equality.

Critics also warned that it sidestepped the State Department's internal bureau responsible for promoting human rights abroad.

Experts have said that Mr. Pompeo's efforts to prioritise religion in particular above other ideals in U.S. diplomacy could reverse the

country's long-standing belief that "all rights are created equal" and embolden countries that persecute same-sex couples or deny women access to reproductive health services for religious reasons.

Culture war

At the event on Thursday, which opened with a religious invocation from Cardinal Timothy Dolan, the archbishop of New York, Mr. Pompeo also waded into the

culture war against what President Donald Trump recently called "a merciless campaign to wipe out our history, defame our heroes, erase our values and indoctrinate our children."

Since naming the Commission on Unalienable Rights, as his panel is called, Mr. Pompeo has expressed confidence that it would create a document that enshrines religious freedom as a central tenet of U.S. human rights policy.

But human rights scholars cautioned that this could set a global precedent for other nations to define human rights on their own terms.

The commission is led by Mary Ann Glendon, a Harvard Law School professor and a prominent anti-abortion activist. The commission's draft report will undergo a two-week public comment period before it becomes final. ■ NY TIMES

Hong Kong demands Taiwan officials sign 'one China' document

Move comes after Taipei criticised the new security law

REUTERS
TAIPEI

Taiwanese officials in Hong Kong have been told their visas will not be renewed unless they sign a document supporting Beijing's claim to Taiwan under its "one China" policy, said a person with direct knowledge of the matter. The move comes after Taipei criticised a new security law imposed on Hong Kong by Beijing, and opened an office in Taipei this month to help people who may want to leave the Asian financial centre.

Several Taiwanese officials at its de facto Hong Kong consulate, who were due to renew their visas, have been asked by the city's government to sign the document, said a senior Taiwan official with knowledge of the matter.



A pro-democracy protest in Taiwan in June. ■ REUTERS

The official said the move was unprecedented and presented an "unnecessary political obstacle" for Taipei-Hong Kong ties.

"They won't issue the visa if we don't sign the document," the official said. "We will try our best to defend our stance." The Hong Kong Immigration Department said it would not comment on individual cases, but ad-

ded that it acts in accordance with the relevant laws and policies when handling each application.

Taiwan's China policy-making Mainland Affairs Council urged Hong Kong to return to "existing consensus" to maintain normal exchanges between Taiwan and Hong Kong. "Hong Kong should follow mutual agreements to ensure the office is free from political interference, and should not establish unnecessary obstacles beyond those agreements," it said.

The source declined to say exactly how many Taiwan officials were asked to sign the paper but said its acting chief, Kao Ming-tsun, had returned to the island late on Thursday after he refused to sign the document upon his visa renewal.

Israel announces new COVID-19 restrictions

Businesses to be closed on weekends

ASSOCIATED PRESS
JERUSALEM

Israel announced sweeping new restrictions on Friday in response to a new surge in COVID-19 cases, including weekend closures of many businesses and limiting restaurants to take-out and delivery.

The government announced the restrictions after Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said "interim steps" were needed to avoid another lockdown.

Stores, malls, barber shops, beauty salons and tourist sites will be closed on weekends. Public gatherings will be limited to 10 people indoors or 20 outside. The Cabinet approved the new measures pending approval by Israel's Parliament, but said they would take effect on Friday.

By late May, Israel had lar-



A man checking his body temperature outside a shop in Jerusalem on Friday. ■ AFP

Iran vows to deal 'decisively' with mounting protests

Police fire tear gas to disperse demonstrators in Behbahan

REUTERS
DUBAI

Iran promised on Friday to deal "decisively" with further protests over economic hardship, a day after security forces fired tear gas to disperse demonstrators in the southwestern city of Behbahan.

Iran's clerical rulers have tried to prevent a revival of last November's anti-government protests, when over 1,000 people are believed to have been killed in the deadliest street violence since the 1979 Islamic revolution. Tehran says 225 people were killed, including members of the security forces.

On Tuesday, the judiciary said the death sentences of three men involved in that unrest had been upheld, despite the fact that they had been released.

Iran promised on Friday to deal "decisively" with these desperate moves," the statement added.

Videos posted on social media from inside Iran on Thursday showed protesters chanting, "Fear not, fear not, we are in this together!" Some chanted slogans against top officials.

Videos posted on Twitter showed a heavy presence of security forces in several cities. Reuters was unable to verify the videos, or reports of arrests.

"People are angry. The economy is so bad that we cannot survive," an Iranian man said by phone from Tehran on Thursday.

There were calls on social media for demonstrations across the country on Friday to protest against the three death sentences.

Suspect held in grisly killing of U.S. tech entrepreneur

Saleh's body was found dismembered

WILLIAM K. RASHBAUM
MICHAEL GOLD
NEW YORK

The personal assistant of a young tech entrepreneur who was found decapitated and dismembered in his Manhattan apartment this week was arrested early on Friday and is expected to be charged in the grisly killing, according to two officials briefed on the matter.

The entrepreneur, Fahim Saleh, 33, was discovered dead on Tuesday afternoon by his sister inside his \$2.25 million condo, police said.

She found a gruesome scene: Saleh's head and limbs had been removed, and parts of his body had been placed in large plastic bags. An electric saw was still plugged in nearby.

The personal assistant, Tyrese Devon Haslip, 21, was expected to be charged with second degree murder and other crimes.

Detectives believe that the motive for the killing stemmed from Saleh having discovered that the assistant had stolen tens of thousands of dollars from him, despite the fact that Saleh had not reported the man and had set up what amounted to a repayment plan for him to return the money, one of the officials said. ■ NY TIMES

CM YK

M-BM-BME

MARKET WATCH

	17-07-2020	% CHANGE
Sensex	37,020	+1.50
US Dollar	75.02	+0.21
Gold	49,729	-0.51
Brent oil	43	-1.53

NIFTY 50

	PRICE	CHANGE
Adani Ports	313.00	+1.80
Asian Paints	1717.90	+24.70
Axist Bank	433.10	-0.90
Bajaj Auto	2995.00	+52.70
Bajaj Finserv	6361.60	+96.70
Bajaj Finance	3301.30	+96.50
Bharti Airtel	566.75	+4.00
BPCL	443.80	+49.90
Britannia Ind	3785.00	+69.75
Cipla	689.10	+14.60
Coal India	130.60	+4.45
Dr Reddy's Lab	4118.75	+33.40
Eicher Motors	18810.80	+171.25
GAIL (India)	100.85	+4.10
Grasim Ind	592.10	+9.05
HCL Tech	623.15	+4.60
HDFC	1805.85	+18.05
HDFC Bank	1098.45	+35.90
Hero MotoCorp	2764.05	+49.25
Hindalco	162.15	+3.90
Hind Unilever	2334.55	+46.70
ICICI Bank	353.80	+9.15
IndusInd Bank	520.80	+2.20
Bharti Infratel	198.10	+8.10
Infosys	903.15	+7.85
Indian Oil Corp	86.90	+2.65
ITC	194.05	+0.20
JSW Steel	206.75	+5.60
Kotak Bank	1327.45	+4.80
L&T	925.55	+4.40
M&M	588.80	+17.90
Maruti Suzuki	5919.50	+44.15
Nestle India Ltd.	17229.95	+265.70
NTPC	88.30	+1.55
ONGC	80.35	+4.20
PowerGrid Corp	163.30	+1.10
Reliance Ind	1911.70	+68.30
State Bank	188.20	+1.95
Shree Cement	22269.95	+538.85
Sun Pharma	503.60	+3.90
Tata Motors	106.40	+3.45
Tata Steel	350.95	+9.30
TCI	2200.75	+34.00
Tech Mahindra	599.70	+0.30
Titan	997.85	+36.50
UltraTech Cement	3862.85	+46.60
UPL	436.45	+3.00
Vedanta	109.15	+0.25
Wipro	261.35	+0.55
Zee Entertainment	157.40	+0.00

EXCHANGE RATES	
Indicative direct rates in rupees a unit except yen at 4 p.m. on July 17	
CURRENCY	TT BUY TT SELL
US Dollar	74.82 75.13
Euro	85.39 85.75
British Pound	93.91 94.31
Japanese Yen (100)	69.80 70.10
Chinese Yuan	10.69 10.73
Swiss Franc	79.35 79.69
Singapore Dollar	53.80 54.04
Canadian Dollar	55.10 55.33
Malaysian Ringgit	17.53 17.63
Australian Dollar	52.27 52.53

Source: Indian Bank

IN BRIEF



Cyient Q1 net dips 10%, revenue drops 8.9%

HYDERABAD
Global engineering and technology solutions firm Cyient has posted a consolidated net profit of ₹81.4 crore for the quarter ended June 30, a 10.4% drop from the ₹89.9 crore a year earlier. Consolidated revenue from operations at ₹991.7 crore (₹1,089 crore) was lower by 8.93%. MD and CEO Krishna Bodanapudi said the results for the quarter were better than expectations.

NoBroker plans to hire 300 people

MUMBAI
NoBroker.com, a brokerage-free real estate tech platform, announced plans to hire 300 professionals. On the technology side, the company is looking for data scientists, engineers, robotic process automation experts, UX designers, architects, and front-end and back-end developers. The company is also looking for corporate sales, loyalty management and social media roles on the marketing front. Open positions in business and operations include vertical heads, business function heads, associate managers, and customer care executives, the firm said.

TDSAT stays TRAI order to Vodafone Idea

NEW DELHI
In an interim relief to Vodafone Idea, the telecom tribunal on Friday stayed TRAI's direction to the company to withhold a plan that promises priority 4G network to premium customers. However, the Telecom Disputes Settlement and Appellate Tribunal (TDSAT) said TRAI can proceed with its inquiry and pass a final order at the earliest. It should be done after ensuring that requirements of natural justice are satisfied and that VIL is given opportunity to explain any alleged contravention, it said.

HCL Tech profit jumps 32% to ₹2,925 cr.

IT firm names Roshni Nadar Malhotra as chairperson; forecasts 1.5-2.5% q-o-q revenue growth

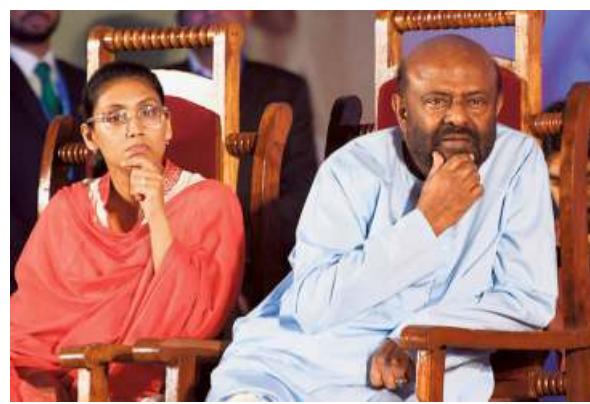
SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI
HCL Technologies on Friday reported first-quarter profit jumped 32% from a year earlier to ₹2,925 crore, and forecast that revenue would grow 1.5-2.5% quarter-on-quarter in constant currency terms over the rest of the fiscal year.

The IT services company also said that Shiv Nadar had stepped down as chairman, with his daughter Roshni Nadar Malhotra assuming office as chairperson with immediate effect. Mr. Nadar would continue as the MD while holding the designation of chief strategy officer.

The firm ruled out any salary increments this year.

Revenue rose 8.6% in the April-June quarter to ₹17,841 crore. However, on a sequen-



Role call: Mr. Shiv Nadar will continue as MD while holding the designation of chief strategy officer. ■ RAJEEV BHATT

tial basis, profit fell 7.3% from ₹3,154 crore in the January-March period, while revenue declined 4% from ₹18,590 crore.

"The adverse conditions during this quarter had an anticipated negative impact

on our revenue," said President and CEO C. Vijayakumar.

"We believe the worst is behind us. We will see an upward trend from here. Unless, of course, if there is a major impact of the second

wave of pandemic," he added.

"Given the bookings so far, and the confidence in our pipeline, the strength of our propositions, and the client relationships, we expect our revenue to increase quarter-on-quarter by an average of 1.5-2.5% in constant currency for the next three quarters. All of this is organic growth," the CEO said.

'Minimal impact'

HCL Tech signed 11 net new deals in the quarter with the total contract value being higher compared with the same quarter last year. Renewals were also robust, Mr. Vijayakumar said.

On the U.S. suspension of H-1B visas, the CEO said the move, though "unfortunate", would have a minimal

impact in the short term.

"If you look at HCL we started investing in centres in the U.S. 10 years back... we were one of the first to increase localisation. We see a very minimal impact due to the current change in policy, at least in the near term. If it were to continue for the long term, then we may have to relook at how we can address the demand," Mr. Vijayakumar added.

Observing that close to 67% of its employees in the U.S. were locals, the CEO said the firm currently had adequate people in the U.S. on visas to fulfill demand.

The Americas region accounts for about 64% of HCL Tech's revenue, followed by Europe (28%).

The firm also announced a dividend of ₹2 per share.

Air traffic plunges to 16.5% of June 2019: DGCA

Airlines fill only about 60% of seats

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI
The number of air passenger trips last month plunged to just 16.5% of June 2019's volume, DGCA data show.

Domestic airlines altogether flew 19.8 lakh passengers in June 2020 compared with the 1.2 crore a year earlier. In the first six months, airlines recorded 3.5 crore passenger trips, or 50% of the traffic registered in the year-earlier period.

India banned scheduled international and domestic flights after the third week of March. While domestic air travel restarted from May 25, international operations are yet to resume barring repatriation flights being operated by some countries.

While airlines had de-

Passenger Load Factor

	Jun-20	Jun-19
SpiceJet	68.0%	93.7%
IndiGo	60.7%	90.1%
GoAir	57.9%	94.0%
Air India	56.5%	81.2%
Vistara	56.6%	83.3%
AirAsia	56.5%	90.7%

SOURCE: DGCA

Stocks rise as energy, infra, financials shine

RIL, ONGC among top gainers

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

MUMBAI
Energy, infrastructure and financial sector stocks helped benchmark indices rise on Friday with the S&P BSE Sensex and Nifty gaining 1.5% each.

The Sensex added 548.48 points, or 1.5%, to close at 37,020.14. ONGC led gains, climbing 5.5%, while Titan, RIL and HDFC Bank all rose about 3.5% and M&M gained 3.2%.

The Nifty advanced 161.75 points, or 1.51%, to 10,901.70. The top gainers included BPCL, up 12.4%, while Bharti Infratel and GAIL rose more than 4%.

S. Ranganathan, head of research, LKP Securities, said PSU stocks buoyed sen-



timent as privatisation talks gained ground.

"Reliance and select financial sector stocks lent good support to the bulls on a day which saw hectic activity in the broader market with several stocks on the rural theme too participating," he said.

Analysts said the ongoing earnings season and global cues would dictate the market trend going forward.

Yes Bank's follow-on offer subscribed 95%

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

MUMBAI
Yes Bank's follow-on public offer (FPO) to raise ₹15,000 crore was subscribed 95% at the issue's close on Friday, data from the stock exchanges show.

The QIB portion was subscribed 1.9 times while the non-institutional portion was subscribed 0.63%.

The issue received bids worth ₹14,266.97 crore. Most bids were received at the lower end of the ₹12-13 per share price band. The anchor investor book of ₹4,098.46 crore was subscribed at ₹12.

Analysts said the FPO had met the minimum subscription of 90%. The unsold portion will devolve on the issue's underwriter.

scribers in first quarter FY21 were 30% more than the 79,230 subscribers added in the first quarter of FY20.

"The National Pension Scheme (NPS) has been a success among the corporate employees. While financial planning often took a backseat in an individual's life, this pandemic has brought it to the forefront, creating awareness for financial security at such testing times," PFRDA chairman Supratim Bandyopadhyay said.

"During this pandemic, a growing realisation for both corporates and individuals has emerged that retirement planning is not a mere saving or tax benefit choice," Mr. Bandyopadhyay added.

The number of new sub-

scribers in first quarter FY21 were 30% more than the 79,230 subscribers added in the first quarter of FY20.

Revenue from operations at ₹735.59 crore was 24% higher, while total income increased 24.13% to ₹741.22 crore.

Operational excellence, a vigilant watch over margins through

TV PICKS

Hungarian Grand Prix: Qualifying, SS Select 2 (SD & HD), 6.20 p.m.

England vs West Indies: Sony Six (SD & HD), 3.30 p.m.

Premier League: Star Sports 1 & SS Select 1 (SD & HD), 9.40 p.m.

Serie A: Sony Ten 1 (SD & HD), 11 p.m. & 1.10 a.m. (Sunday); Sony Ten 2 (SD & HD), 8.40 p.m.

FA Cup: Sony Ten 2 & 3 (SD & HD), 12.10 a.m. (Sunday)

PGA Tour: Eurosport (SD & HD), 12.30 a.m. (Sunday)

IN BRIEF



Finau leads; Woods makes quiet return

DUBLIN (US) Tiger Woods was back on the PGA Tour for the first time in five months and finished with a one-under 71, five shots behind Tony Finau in the Memorial. Finau had seven birdies over his last 10 holes, giving him a one-shot lead over Ryan Palmer. AP

Punjab FC's transfer ban lifted by FIFA

CHANDIGARH Former I-League champion Punjab FC's three-window transfer ban for non-payment of dues to North Macedonian footballer Hristijan Denkovski has been lifted by the sport's global body FIFA, the club announced on Friday. PTI

Ferrari's Vettel posts the fastest time

BUDAPEST Four-time Formula One champion Sebastian Vettel posted the fastest time for Ferrari in a rain-soaked second practice for the Hungarian Grand Prix on Friday. He was .272 seconds ahead of Mercedes driver Valtteri Bottas and 1.32 clear of McLaren's Carlos Sainz Jr. Lance Stroll was fourth fastest. In Formula 2, Jehan Daruvala's disappointing stint continued as the Indian went off during a wet qualifying session and will start 15th in the race on Saturday. AP



Serena returns to action in Kentucky next month

LEXINGTON (US) Serena Williams is planning to make her return to competition at a new hard-court tournament — The Top Seed Open — in Kentucky next month. She last played for the U.S. in the Fed Cup in February. AP

I will be back, says Thomas Bach

LAUSANNE Thomas Bach said on Friday he will stand in 2021 for a second term as president of the International Olympic Committee. The 66-year-old German was elected for an eight-year term in 2013. He will be eligible for a second term. Speaking at the 136th IOC Session, Bach said: "If you, the IOC members, want, I am ready to run for a second term as IOC president." AFP

Ness' magic touch gets Pranjala back on course

She has made rapid strides in improving fitness levels, says the physio

TENNIS

KAMESH SRINIVASAN

NEW DELHI A lower back injury had kept Y. Pranjala away from the courts for nearly a year. A timely visit to Melbourne, before lockdown around the world, and efficient care from Paul Ness, a renowned physio who deals with elite athletes including top tennis players regularly, has set her career back on course.

After Pranjala won all her three matches at a UTR event in Melbourne, it was interesting to catch up with Ness to get his perspective.

"Pranjala had injured her lower back when she over-stretched for return. The back had become stiff. Her usual treatments and exercises were not able to loosen it up. She lost strength around the area and general fitness," says Ness.

Stokes, Sibley put England in charge

The all-rounder and the opener thwarted the West Indies attack with a 260-run partnership

WI IN ENGLAND

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
MANCHESTER

Ben Stokes piled on the agony for the West Indies with a century in the second Test at Old Trafford on Friday after Dom Sibley's painstaking hundred finally came to an end.

England was 378 for five at tea on the second day, with Stokes 172 not out in a match the host needs to win to level the three-Test series. He put on 260 for the fourth wicket with Sibley.

Sibley's hundred was one of the slowest in Tests by an England batsman, the opener batting for 471 minutes to complete a 312-ball century featuring just four fours. But the 24-year-old's second hundred in eight Tests was a valuable innings all the same.

Run-scoring was difficult against the swinging ball and a sluggish outfield, with even the normally fluent Stokes taking nearly six hours and 285 balls to reach his 10th



Cheeky: Ben Stokes plays a reverse sweep during his big century knock. ■ GETTY IMAGES

Test century.

But, significantly, Stokes' third fifty came off just 46 balls and, having given Sibley a 'head start' of 31.2 overs, he overtook his teammate's score.

After England resumed at 207 for three, with on Sibley on 86 and Stokes unbeaten on 59, West Indies made a wayward start with Shannon Gabriel bowling several wide

deliveries. Sibley reached his hundred before lunch while Stokes was unbeaten on 99 at the break. The latter went to three figures with a cheerful reverse-swept four off spinner Roston Chase.

Delightful strokes

Holder delayed taking the new ball until the 94th over, perhaps concerned it would make run-scoring easier for

England. As if proving that point, Stokes promptly clipped the paceman through midwicket for four.

Stokes surpassed that shot when he check-drove a Alzarri Joseph delivery for six over midwicket.

Having batted for over nine hours, Sibley holed out to deep midwicket off Chase on 120. Stokes had moved to 157 when a diving Shai Hope

SCOREBOARD

England — 1st innings: Rory Burns lbw b Chase 15, Dom Sibley c Roach b Chase 120, Zak Crawley c Holder b Chase 0, Joe Root c Holder b Joseph 23, Ben Stokes (batting) 172, Ollie Pope lbw b Chase 7, Jos Buttler (batting) 12; Extras (b-4, lb-7, nb-8, w-10); Total (for five wkts. in 139 overs, at tea): 378. **Fall of wickets:** 1-29, 2-29, 3-81, 4-341, 5-352.

West Indies bowling: Roach 28-6-53-0, Gabriel 24-2-66-0, Joseph 23.1-5-70-1, Holder 28-9-63-0, Chase 32-1-106-4, Brathwaite 3.5-0-9-0.

failed to hold a tough chance at gully off Gabriel.

Ollie Pope then fell leg-behind to give Chase, the spinner's fourth wicket.

England 469-9 declared

■ England declared at 469 for nine in 162 overs in its first innings. Stokes was dismissed by Roach for 176. Bess (31) and Broad (11) remained unbeaten

Deccan Chargers axing deemed illegal

BCCI ordered to pay over ₹4800 crore

IPL

V.V. SUBRAHMANYAM

HYDERABAD

Deccan Chronicle Holding Ltd. – the owner of the now defunct Deccan Chargers – has been awarded a compensation of ₹4814.67 crore plus 10% interest from 2012, by a Bombay High Court-appointed arbitration tribunal, on Friday. According to a statement released by the law

firm Dhir and Dhir Associates, 'the tribunal found illegal the termination of the Deccan Chargers IPL team by the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI).'

The statement added: "The dispute arose in the fifth IPL season, when the BCCI issued a show-cause notice for termination."

It remains to be seen whether the BCCI will challenge the verdict.

Hockey: Indian men to begin against NZ

OLYMPICS

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

LAUSANNE

The Indian men's hockey team will open its campaign against New Zealand in the Tokyo Olympics on July 24 next year.

The women's side will be up against the Netherlands

in its first match on the same day.

India has been clubbed alongside Australia, Argentina, Spain, New Zealand and host Japan in a tough Pool-A.

In the women's competition, India is in Pool-A with the Netherlands, Germany, Great Britain, Ireland and South Africa.

Apex council meeting: no major decisions

AMOL KARHADKAR

MUMBAI

The apex council of the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) preferred to play the waiting game on the numerous issues surrounding Indian cricket during a marathon four-hour meeting on Friday.

While none of the office-bearers was available for an official reaction, *The Hindu* understands that the Indian men's team's revised FTP and domestic cricket schedule, two crucial issues on the agenda, have been postponed for finalisation.

Humpy in final

P.K. AJITH KUMAR

KOZHIKODE

Koneru Humpy stunned Hou Yifan 6-5 to enter the final of the fourth Grand Prix leg of the FIDE Chess.com Women's Speed Chess Championship on Friday.

It was an exciting semifinal that went down to the wire. The scores were level 5-5 going into the last game.

In the nerve-wracking finale of the one-minute-plus-one-second game, Humpy prevailed.

In Sunday's final, she will meet Alexandra Kosteniuk of Russia, who defeated Sarasadat Khademalsharieh of Iran 7.5-3.5.

Real dethrones Barcelona, wins 34th LaLiga title

EURO LEAGUES

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

MADRID

Real Madrid was crowned LaLiga champion for the 34th time on Thursday after Karim Benzema scored twice in a 2-1 victory over Villarreal which clinched the title with one game to spare.

Benzema's double included a second-half penalty at the empty Alfredo di Stefano Stadium as Madrid moved seven points clear to end Barcelona's two-year hold on the trophy.

Barca had to prevail against Osasuna at home and hope Madrid slipped up but its fading challenge ended with a 2-1 defeat at Camp Nou, despite a brilliant Lionel Messi free-kick.



Champions! Real Madrid's Zinedine Zidane is thrown up in the air by the players after the title triumph. ■ GETTY IMAGES

Everton 1 (Walcott 87) drew with Aston Villa 1 (Konsa 72); Leicester 2 (Perez 29, Gray 79) bt Sheffield United 0; Southampton 1 (Ings 66) drew with Brighton 1 (Maupay 17); LaLiga: Eibar 3 (Bigas Rigo 21,

du Plessis bats for Black Lives Matter

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

JOHANNESBURG

Former South African captain Faf du Plessis on Friday came out in support of Black Lives Matter and said a comment he made in January that "we don't see colour" had been a mistake.

The BLM issue has shown up racial divisions in South African cricket, with 30 black former international players claiming earlier this week that racism remained a factor in the game, 29 years after the formation of a single controlling body.

Du Plessis, who resigned as captain of the national team in February but remains available as a player, said in an Instagram post that his support for BLM came at a time when there were many injustices in South Africa.



Faf Du Plessis. ■ GETTY IMAGES

"If we wait only for the ones that attack us personally, we will always live for 'my way versus your way' and that way leads us nowhere," he said.

Some white South Africans, including former players, have linked the BLM issue with the murder of white farmers, claiming that all lives matter.

Olympic Games schedule remains the same

REUTERS

TOKYO

Next year's Tokyo Olympics will follow an almost identical competition schedule as the one planned for this year before the event was postponed due to the novel coronavirus pandemic, organisers said on Friday.

The new date for the opening ceremony at the newly-built National Stadium – July 23, 2021 – had already been announced but the full schedule was pending final approval until Friday when the Tokyo 2020 organising committee made a presentation to the IOC Session in Lausanne.

"Today we are able to report that we have confirmed both the competition schedule and the use of all venues originally planned for this year, including the

venue for the athletes village and the main press centre," said Tokyo 2020 CEO Toshiro Muto.

The new schedule means women's softball will kick-off competition in Fukushima on July 21, two days before the Games officially open, with all events taking place a day earlier than the 2020 schedule.

There have also been some minor changes to session times.

The Games are set to be the biggest ever in terms of events, with a record 339 medals available, before the closing ceremony on Aug. 8.

The marathon and race walking events will remain in the northern city of Sapporo after being controversially moved out of Tokyo because of the anticipated scorching summer heat.

Granted the pandemic and subsequent lockdown is a factor, but how are big Bollywood stars convinced to release their films on OTT platforms?

■ If you look at our upcoming Originals, we have a whole slew of our own commissioned films with the likes of a Kajol or Anil Kapoor coming on board, that Netflix has been heavily investing in. In the west, we have had Chris Hemsworth's *Extraction* and more recently, Charlize Theron's *The Old Guard*. This proves that stars coming on board for a digital release isn't a challenge really. For us, as a full-scale entertainment service, our perspective has always been about casting the right talent.

The recent line-up of content announced has no south Indian content; is that a vertical the platform plans to focus on eventually?

■ Our regional cinema titles, especially in south India have gotten great response on the service. Vijay's *Sarkar*, Rajinikanth's *Petta* and Allu Arjun's *Ala Vaikuntha puramal* are some of the titles that have done exceedingly well in recent times. We are definitely very invested in finding stories from down south and there is a lot of interest towards adding more and more to it.

When a big-budget film is up for acquisition, does a bidding war happen between platforms?

■ I can safely say that all the different services have a tremendous appetite for content and the consumers are eager for more.

There's no bidding war as such; the first choice always lies with the creator as to where they wish to go and which platform their story will best fit. I can't speak for the other sites, but the team at Netflix is very conscious

that we want to work with the best, and so have no qualms reaching out to filmmakers and asking them to collaborate with us too.

Netflix India has been supporting many female filmmakers in recent times, could you elaborate on that?

■ Our consistent focus area is to bring to light original and passionate voices – and this is also determined by a lot of women executives here at Netflix, who have sought to work with first-time women filmmakers such as Ruchi Narain (*Guilty*) and Anvita Dutt (*Bulbul*). It makes for a really interesting and joyful experience.

What has been Netflix's biggest learning or takeaway from this lockdown?