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Violence against
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NEARBY



With 2,361 cases, State tally crosses 70,000

PUNE
Maharashtra's COVID-19 cases breached the 70,000 mark on Monday with 2,361 more patients, while its death toll rose to 2,362 with 76 more fatalities recorded. Of the 70,013 cases, only 37,534 are active, with 779 patients discharged on Monday. Till date, 30,108 have recovered from the infection, State Health Department officials said. Mumbai's case tally reached 41,099, with the city reporting 1,413 new cases. As many as 40 deaths took its death toll to 1,319.

REGION ▶ PAGE 3

A rude welcome for Odisha's migrants as villages lack basic facilities

The hapless workers find shelter in abandoned toilets and dry culverts

**SATYASUNDAR BARIK
BIRIPALI**

After a back-breaking 1,300-km cycle ride from COVID-19 hotspot Mumbai to his village in Odisha's Balangir district, Kishore Behera thought he had escaped hell. But little did the 31-year-old mason anticipate the appalling conditions in his village, Biripali.

With 12 positive cases reported in the village of 3,000 people, Mr. Behera went neither to a quarantine centre, as required, nor to his house. Instead, he took refuge in a road culvert. "I opted to cycle all the way from Mumbai on May 7 and did not seek pickup from

passing trucks fearing I could contract the virus. However, on reaching my village, I found no social distancing being adhered to in quarantine centres. I took shelter in a half-constructed Indira Awas Yojna house with my friends," he said.

As there was no water connection in the house, he and his seven migrant labourer friends decided to stay under culverts that offered some respite from the scorching temperature, soaring past 45°C Celsius and the unseasonal rain.

"My neighbours definitely won't feel happy to find me staying near them. Moreover, my family members will



Desperate measures: Migrant workers taking refuge under a culvert in Odisha's Balangir district. ■ BISWARANJAN ROUT

be in trouble if I get into my house," said the mason, who admits to being scared of snakes out in the open.

His struggle has already spilled over from May to June but he does not foresee any feasible solution any

time soon. Barely 200 metres away from the culvert lives Thabir Behera, another Mumbai returnee, in a small, abandoned toilet, built under the Swachh Bharat Mission.

"I cannot go home. The

toilet is too small but will be my home for the next two weeks," he said.

Like them, more than 150 migrant labourers, who have returned from other States, have quarantined themselves at half-constructed temples, makeshift agricultural watchtowers, riverbeds and village forests as they dread staying in official centres. They are also facing resistance from fellow villagers who do not want them to enter their homes at this point of time.

Facing stigma

Despite the unusual risks the migrant labourers have taken to get back, there is a sense of apprehension as well as stigma surrounding them. Wary of getting infected, their own family mem-

bers are keeping a distance from them while supplying food.

"For the sake of a few, a whole village cannot be put in jeopardy. People are of the view that these returnees should not be allowed to go back to their homes until they test negative," said Lingaraj Saraf, a Biripali native.

Situated on the border of neighbouring Nuapada district, Biripali seems to have fallen off the development map of the district. For the past two decades, people have been waiting for irrigation water from Nuapada's Tikhali dam to cover the village's fields. At any given time, 500 able-bodied men and women of the village can be found doing manual work in the construction

sector, brick kilns and industrial projects.

The pandemic has left the poor families bewildered, forced to stay indoors and away from their fields during the crucial pre-monsoon season.

With 12 cases, the administration should have continued containment zones as is the SOP. On May 1, Balangir reported its first COVID-19 case. Without containment, the district's tally has now touched 80.

Balangir Collector Arindam Dakua does not seem to have time for the poverty-stricken village. His office said he could not be contacted over his phone as he did not want to be disturbed at odd hours.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8



On time: The monsoon stuck to its normal onset date of June 1, with the IMD announcing its arrival in Kerala on Monday. A scene from Valiyathura in Thiruvananthapuram. ■ S. GOPAKUMAR

Monsoon hits Kerala with cyclone in the background

Storm brewing in Arabian sea could delay its progress

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI**

The monsoon has arrived in Kerala, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said on Monday. This is four days earlier than what the IMD had forecast in mid-May but is also the date on which the monsoon normally sets in over the State.

However, 700 km from Mumbai, a nascent cyclone is brewing in the Arabian Sea and is likely to hit north

Maharashtra as well as the Gujarat coast by June 3. "Its track is northward but will recurve into Hariharswar and Daman. However, more details on the potential damage would be available once it begins to form. Right now, it's a depression in the South East Arabian Sea and is about 690 km away from Mumbai," Mrutyunjay Mohapatra, Director-General, IMD, said at a press conference.

The IMD's latest cyclone update expects it to balloon into a "severe cyclone" by the middle of the week.

The presence of a cyclone near land during the monsoon onset could delay the progress of the monsoon and put it into a "hiatus," Madhavan Rajeevan, Secretary, Ministry of Earth Sciences, said.

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MUMBAI ON ALERT ▶ PAGE 5

Moody's downgrades India's rating

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI**

Rating agency Moody's downgraded India's foreign currency and local currency long term issuer ratings to Baa3 from Baa2, while maintaining a negative outlook, citing prolonged period of low growth and further deterioration in the government's fiscal position.

Moody's said the negative outlook reflects dominant, mutually-reinforcing, downside risks from deeper stresses in the economy and financial system that could lead to a more severe and prolonged erosion in fiscal strength.

Lowest grade
Baa3 is the lowest in investment grade in Moody's rating ladder. This means, India is just one notch above the non-investment grade or junk grade.

The rating agency expects the country's GDP to contract by 4% in the current financial year due to the shock from the pandemic and related lockdown measures. The GDP growth, however, is expected to pick up in the next fiscal to 8.7% and closer to 6% in the year after.

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Clashes outside White House, more U.S. cities under curfew

President Donald Trump spends nearly an hour in a bunker amid fury

**AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
WASHINGTON**

The police fired tear-gas outside the White House late on Sunday as anti-racism protesters again took to the streets to voice fury at police brutality. Major U.S. cities were put under curfew to suppress rioting.

With the Trump administration branding instigators of six nights of rioting as domestic terrorists, there were more confrontations between protesters and the police and fresh outbreaks of looting.

Violent clashes erupted repeatedly in a small park next to the White House, with authorities using tear-gas, pepper spray and flash bang grenades to disperse crowds that lit several large fires and damaged property.

Secret Service agents rushed President Donald Trump to a White House bunker on Friday night as hundreds of protesters gathered outside the executive mansion. Mr. Trump spent nearly an hour in the bunker, which was designed for use in emergencies like terrorist attacks, according to a Republican close to the White House.



Growing rage: A protester throwing a U.S. flag into a burning barricade during a demonstration against the death of George Floyd near the White House on Sunday. ■ AFP

Local leaders appealed to citizens to give constructive outlet to their rage over the death of an unarmed black man in Minneapolis.

One closely watched protest was outside the state capital in Minneapolis' twin city of St. Paul, where several thousand people gathered before marching down a highway.

The Minneapolis police later reported that they had discovered caches of homemade fire-bombs around the

two cities. There were other large-scale protests on Sunday night, including in New York and Miami.

In Louisville, Kentucky, CBS affiliate WLKY-TV reported the local police chief as saying law enforcement shot and killed a man early Monday morning as they broke up a crowd, although it was unclear if the group was taking part in protests.

Looting was reported on Sunday night in Philadelphia and the Los Angeles suburb

of Santa Monica, and images on Fox TV showed ransacked Rolex and Gucci stores in New York city.

The shocking death last Monday of George Floyd at the hands of the police in Minneapolis ignited the nationwide wave of outrage over law enforcement's repeated use of lethal force against unarmed African Americans.

WHITE HOUSE CALLS FOR 'LAW AND ORDER' ▶ PAGE 12

Pulses, oilseeds see sharp hike in MSP

CCEA nod to benefit all kharif crops

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI**

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) on Monday approved an increase in the minimum support prices (MSPs) for all mandated kharif crops, including paddy, pulses and cotton, for the 2020-21 marketing season.

The Union Cabinet also extended the repayment date for standard short-term loans upto ₹3 lakh for agriculture and allied activities, till August 31, 2020.

The MSP for paddy (common) has been increased by ₹53 per quintal, and urad (₹300 per quintal).

"The increase in MSP for kharif crops is in line with the Union Budget 2018-19 announcement of fixing the MSPs at a level of at least 1.5 times of the all-India weighted average cost of production, aiming at reasonably fair remuneration for the farmers," an official release said.

It added that the expected returns to farmers over their cost of production are estimated to be highest in case of bajra (83%) followed by urad (64%), tur (58%) and maize (53%).

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SUPPORT FOR MSME ▶ PAGE 13



The MSP for paddy (common) has been increased by ₹53 per quintal.

Cooper doctors term COVID-19 patient's death 'natural'

Panicked neighbours, friends cry negligence by hospital

**JYOTI SHELAR
MUMBAI**

Vile Parle residents are crying negligence over the civic-run Cooper Hospital's decision to term as 'natural', the death of a 41-year-old man with COVID-19 symptoms. The body was brought there covered merely with a white cloth and burnt on a wooden pyre instead of the electric crematorium, against infection control protocol.

Two days later, his samples tested positive for COVID-19, triggering panic among locals in Jambhul Kachchi Wadi in Vile Parle (East), who had attended the funeral and met the family to offer condolences.

The Bengal Chawl resident had first developed a cough, for which he was treated by a local doctor. The cough persisted and he began to have difficulty breathing. On May 23, he went to HBT Trauma Care Hospital, where he was re-

fused treatment as he did not have a COVID-19-positive report. The next day, he went to Cooper Hospital, where he was put on oxygen support in the casualty ward and later shifted to the isolation ward. On May 26, he went into acute respiratory distress syndrome and succumbed. His COVID-19 test reports were awaited.

"The death certificate reviewed by *The Hindu* said it was a natural death and they handed over the body wrapped in white cloth the next day," said a neighbour. No rituals were carried out, and the body was taken away immediately after his wife and children saw it.

"The doctors did not even write 'suspected COVID' on the certificate or wrap it in a plastic body bag, which could have served as a caution for those who had gathered," he said.

Nearly 15 people took the body to the crematorium.

HQ HELPS: ICMR ▶ PAGE 9

Nearly 2 lakh COVID-19 cases in India

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI**

India on Monday recorded 7,584 new COVID-19 cases and 204 fatalities. The tally stands at 1,98,182, including 96,988 active cases, while 95,590 persons have recovered, according to data from the State Health departments. The death toll rose to 5,604.

The number of new cases fell from 8,629 on May 31 to 7,584 on Monday. But the ICMR also reported that the total samples tested as of June 1 were 1,00,180, down from 1,25,428 on the previous day.

The national recovery rate stands at 48.19%, while the case fatality rate is 2.83%, the Union Health Ministry said in a release.

The Ministry warned that as COVID-19 primarily attacks lungs which can be impaired by smoking, smokers are at a higher risk.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

RS, LS meeting could be held on alternate days

'Virtual Parliament an option'

**Rajya Sabha
poll on June 19**

The elections to 18 Rajya Sabha seats that were deferred owing to the lockdown will be held on June 19, the Election Commission of India said on Monday. The polling was earlier scheduled for March 26. ▶ PAGE 9

pandemic might continue for some more time. They noted that since there was no requirement of maintaining confidentiality of the proceedings of the Houses, which were open to the general public besides being telecast live, virtual Parliament itself was an option to be explored.

For the monsoon session, which usually begins in mid-July, many options are being considered, a senior Parliament official said.

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After 2 months, Mumbai taxis resurface

Long-distance train terminals are restart point for black and yellow cabs; union seeks pre-paid services

AJEET MAHALE
MUMBAI

With the first set of passenger trains leaving and arriving in the city after a hiatus of nearly two months, several black and yellow taxis got their first real business since the lockdown was imposed.

A L Quadros, who heads the Mumbai's Taximen's Union, said it was hard to pinpoint exactly how many may have come out on the road but estimated around 3,000 taxis to have run through the day.

"The numbers will increase in the coming days as the passenger demand increases and trains arrive more regularly. We are also in talks with the authorities to see if we can start pre-paid services wherever possible," he said.

On Monday, the Railways started operating 100 pairs of trains across the country for which tickets could be reserved.

The first train departed at 12.30 a.m. from Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Terminus (CSMT) for Varanasi.



Union is confident that the number of black and yellow cabs will increase in the coming days. ■ ARUNANGU ROY CHOWDHURY

According to senior railway officials, all the trains were fully booked and there was additional staff

deployed to ensure that physical distancing and other health protocols were maintained at stations like CSMT, Mumbai Central, Bandra Terminus, and Lokmanya Tilak Terminus.

Mr. Quadros said this was a start and more taxis would join as the lockdown restrictions eased, but most of the taxi drivers who had left the city over the past two months would not return any time soon. "There is a chance that the city might face a shortage of taxis as many drivers, some along with their vehicles, have gone to their home towns. They won't return for at least two to three months," he said.

Autorickshaws are set to start on June 5 for essential services, with the State mandating only two passengers per vehicle. Shashank Rao, leader of the Mumbai Auto Rickshaw Men's Union, said the start of trains will at least help ensure that rickshaw drivers get business every day.

CR staff block tracks, protest overcrowding

AJEET MAHALE
MUMBAI

Several Central Railway (CR) staff on Monday held up a workers' special train, used to ferry railway employees, at Vidyavihar station after they found that the train was too crowded and no physical distancing was being observed.

The Karjat-bound train was stopped ahead of Vidyavihar station around 5.30 p.m. when protesting staff members blocked the tracks. CR's Mumbai Division is running three emergency trains for essential staff in the evening. The train eventually left from Vidyavihar at 6.13 p.m.

A statement issued by CR said, "Considering the gradual restarting of passenger train services by Indian Railways, and additional frontline staff and back-end staff who are also required to run these services, Mumbai Division will run one more emergency vehicle for essential railway staff between 16.30-17.00 hrs in addition to the existing emergency vehicles."

Venu Nair, general secretary of the National Railway Mazdoor Union, said the protest was spontaneous. The Railways should have run more services, she said. The employees at Vidyavihar had come from Lokmanya Tilak Terminus.

Private hospitals refusing to treat COVID-19 patients to face action

Two committees constituted to act on patients' complaints

SHOUMOJIT BANERJEE
PUNE

Private hospitals in Pune city refusing to treat COVID-19 patients will face legal action under the Maharashtra Essential Services Maintenance Act (MESMA), Pune Divisional Commissioner Deepak Mhaisekar said on Monday. Two committees constituted under senior officials will be looking into complaints filed against private hospitals.

"In accordance with the government resolution of May 21, 80% of the beds in private hospitals have been requisitioned by the Pune Municipal Corporation (PMC) for treatment of COVID-19 cases from Monday. Any hospitals found overcharging or refusing to treat such patients are liable to face action under MESMA, the Epidemic Diseases Act, 1897, and the Disaster Management Act, 2005," Mr. Mhaisekar said.

He said complaints of such patients will be addressed by two committees – one set up under Pune District Collector Naval Kishore Ram and the second under Mr. Mhaisekar.

"While complaints against private hospitals even in the past did not necessarily mean that they were overcharging patients, we will be strictly regulating them this time as the maximum COVID-19 cases within Pune city are of poor people from the highly infected slum clusters," Mr. Ram said.

Stating that there is no dearth of doctors in private medical establishments in Pune city, Mr. Ram urged them to come forward and help their col-



A health worker at a lab built in a bus at Pune Municipal Corporation's Savitribai Phule School at Bhavani Peth. ■ FILE PHOTO

leagues in the government sector as they have "a big moral and administrative responsibility" to combat the present medical crisis.

103 new cases

Meanwhile, 103 new COVID-19 cases were reported in Pune district on Monday, to take the case tally to 7,773, while five more fatalities since Sunday evening took the death toll to 337.

"Of these, only 2,934 are active cases while 4,502 people (57.92%) have been discharged," Mr. Mhaisekar pointed out. The death toll in Pune division – which consists of the districts of Satara, Sangli, Kolhapur and Solapur along with Pune – has now risen to 456.

Pune division's case tally has now reached 9,961, including 4,256 active cases, while 5,249 people – more than 50 % of total cases reported in these five districts – have been discharged till date. As many as 216 of these patients are critical, Mr. Mhaisekar said.

In a week, 391 flights land, take off at airport

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI

A week since domestic flight operations resumed, the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport (CSMIA), has catered to 391 flights, which included 196 departures and 195 arrivals.

Over the past one week, CSMIA has handled 42,503 passengers, including 31,665 passengers at departures and 10,838 at arrivals.

On Monday, GoAir started its operations from CSMIA with three departures and three arrival flights on the Patna, Lucknow, and Varanasi route carrying 320 passengers at arrivals and 538 passengers at departures from Mumbai.

Following the mandate by the Ministry of Civil Aviation and the Maharashtra government, CSMIA has been operating 25 commercial passenger flights movements.

The airport flight operations to 14 sectors up until Wednesday saw two sectors, Kolkata and Rajkot, being added on Thursday.

In the past one week, passenger load capacity has been the highest on the Mumbai-Delhi route, with 8,130 passengers departing from CSMIA.

"CSMIA prioritises and upholds the well-being of its

passengers and continues to ensure safe travel through the airport. CSMIA has undertaken various steps and has put in place several standard operating procedures for the safety of its passengers. The airport maintenance staff ensures effective sanitisation and disinfection of the entire terminal buildings, including the vital and high-touch point areas," a spokesperson said.

Venu Nair, general secretary of the National Railway Mazdoor Union, said the protest was spontaneous. The Railways should have run more services, she said. The employees at Vidyavihar had come from Lokmanya Tilak Terminus.

MSRTC staff also get ₹50 lakh COVID-19 life cover

Decision announced for govt. employees now extends to MSRTC staffers

AJEET MAHALE
MUMBAI

State Transport Minister Anil Parab on Monday announced a ₹50 lakh ex-gratia payment for the family of any employee of the Maharashtra State Road Transport Corporation (MSRTC) who dies of COVID-19.

Mr. Parab, who is also the chairman of the corporation, made the announcement on a videoconference with officials of various workers' associations and departmental heads of the State transport organisation

on the occasion of the 72nd Foundation Day of the corporation.

The State government had issued a government resolution on May 29, assuring an ex-gratia assistance of ₹50 lakh in all cases of deaths of employees on duty, on account of COVID-19.

A senior MSRTC official said this had been extended to employees of the corporation.

Tough days ahead
Mr. Parab said the year ahead would be very tough for the corporation, which has already incurred an accumulated loss of around ₹6,000 crore, and it will need to take innovative measures like freight transport in the future.

The MSRTC forayed into the freight business a few weeks ago and had transported alphonso mangoes from Ratnagiri on May 22 as its first consignment.

Freight business

The MSRTC has set up a separate department to handle goods in each district, and officials said talks were being held with the Maharashtra Industrial Development Corporation, warehouse owners, agricultural traders, and others for inputs on how to transport goods.

Officials said in the last six days, the MSRTC had received bookings for 41 trucks from districts like Pune, Nashik, Satara, among many others.

Hindmata to get some relief this monsoon

Lockdown, shortage of workers hinders project completion, but expect less flooding after June 12 this year

TANVI DESHPANDE
MUMBAI

The Hindmata junction at Parel, notorious for its monsoon flooding, will get partial relief this year, with the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) completing most of the work on a project that will allow flood water to drain faster. One of the planned works, however, could not be executed due to the lockdown.

Every year, the monsoon inundates the saucer-shaped junction, causing untold misery to pedestrians and motorists. Till a decade ago, rainwater would not recede at this crucial junction for six to 12 hours.

After the newly-constructed Britannia pumping station too failed to give relief, a three-fold plan was chalked



Conservancy workers clearing a choked drain near Hindmata junction. ■ FILE PHOTO

out to prevent flooding. This includes enlargement of a 900-m box drain at S.S. Rao Road, augmentation of an underground storm water drain at Chivda Gully through micro-tunneling as

well as of an 800-m storm water drain at Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Road.

The project's largest component was the work on the 800-m drain, which started in January 2018. It was sup-

posed to be completed last year but remained pending for want of permission from the Tree Authority. With the permission in, the work is now complete. However, the work at Chivda Gully, which was to have ended by April-end, has faced delay for want of labour.

"Work is on in full swing. We are expecting it to be completed by June 12 at best. It will certainly provide relief this monsoon and water will recede much faster as compared to last year. Had there been no lockdown, the entire project would have been complete," said Swapna Kshirsagar, assistant municipal commissioner of F South ward who conducted a site visit on Monday.

Besides this, work on about 250-m of the box drain

at S.S. Rao Road is yet to be done. It had to be stopped in April, again for want of labourers, even though pre-monsoon work was allowed during the lockdown. Work will only be completed by next year.

"About 90% work on Hindmata junction is complete. There will definitely be relief this monsoon," said P. Velrasu, additional municipal commissioner.

Reeding of flood water at the junction depends on several factors such as rainfall, high tide, desilting, flooding in neighbouring Byculla among other factors. Construction of a satellite pumping station that is closer to Hindmata – since Britannia pumping station is around six km away – is a proposed solution but is not on the cards.

At 50, Air India building is still Mumbai's cultural icon

Former employees look back at its glorious heritage, architectural splendour and even its art collection

ADITYA ANAND
MUMBAI

The Air India building, one of the city's iconic high rises, and the Maharaja's erstwhile home, turned 50 on Monday.

It was on June 1, 1970, that Air India shifted its head office to the then newly-designed building located in the newly-reclaimed central business district called Nariman Point.

Designed by John Burgee, of the Manhattan-based firm Burgee and Johnson (1967 to 1981), the building was one of the first with all its floors centrally air-conditioned. The structure has a special direct elevator to the board room on its 23rd floor.

According to available literature, in 1970, the building was also perhaps the only one with six lifts, all fitted with piped music. The building was so well planned that when one lift ascended, another descended, cutting waiting time to a minimum.

The building also boasted of two levels of underground



Dusty, but not done: With its 1,502 windows, the Air India building was among the first tall buildings on Nariman Point. ■ FILE PHOTO

parking, something that was uncommon back then.

Old memories
As per the Godrej Archives Volume 2, April 2014, Air India building, along with its neighbour Express Towers, was among the first tall buildings at Nariman Point. It said Air India building has

1,502 windows.

The building was also known for its art collection. "This was an airline which besides flying planes also dabbled in art, which only great organisations can do," said Ashwani Lohani, former chairman and managing director, Air India, who was instrumental in getting the art

work catalogued.

Former executive director, Air India, Jitendra Bharava recalled that when the building opened it became such an icon that security was needed to control the crowds.

Mr. Bharava, who spent 20 years on the 20th floor of the building, said it was well-

designed, equipped with in-built firefighting capabilities, and its large glass walls gave majestic views of the sea.

The former executive director also recalled how the building had withstood the 1993 bombings and played a role in helping security forces use the premises to evacuate hostages from the adjacent Trident hotel during the 26/11 terror attack. Lang Jon T., in his book *Concise History of Modern Architecture in India* (2002), called the Air India building post-modern.

The Centaur

The Air India logo, installed on the roof of the building, remained an icon of Mumbai's skyline, forming a backdrop in several Bollywood movies, representing Mumbai of the past and present.

Thanks to its location, the building gives an uninterrupted 360-degree view of Marine Drive from Nariman Point up to Raj Bhavan atop Malabar Hill.

Though in 2013 Air India

Sagittarius shooting an arrow in a circle representing the wheel of Konark, chosen as logo by legendary entrepreneur and Air India's founder J.R.D. Tata.

It was introduced in 1948 and continued to be in use till Air India and Indian Airlines merged in 2007. A large illuminated metal logo of the Centaur was placed atop the building and could be seen from across the Marine Drive bay, drawing attention to the iconic structure.

Lost glory
Captain Bunsha said the building had now lost its old charm. "It is sad to see it now. Most floors are deserted. I am told that it is not getting the value for the building," he said.

In recent times, at least two State-owned enterprises – the Jawaharlal Nehru Port Trust and Life Insurance Corporation – have shown interest in the 2,20,000 sq. ft building, the reserve price for which is ₹ 1,500 crore.

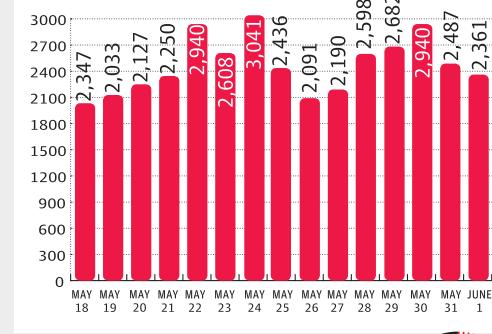
Maharashtra COVID-19 tracker

TOTAL CASES	NEW CASES	ACTIVE CASES	RECOVERED	DEATHS
70,013	2,361	37,534	30,108	2,362

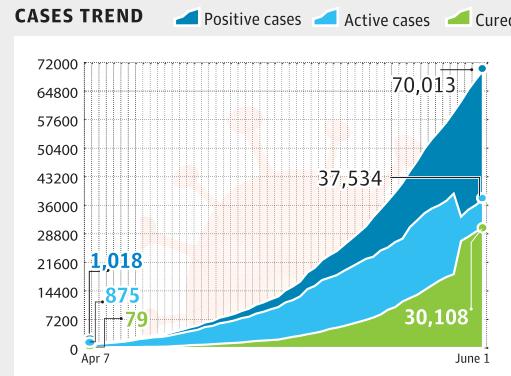
DISTRICTS AFFECTED: 35

DISTRICT	CASES	DEATHS	DISTRICT	CASES	DEATHS
Mumbai	41,099	1,319	Jalna	129	1
Thane	9,941	215	Latur	125	3
Pune	8,045	338	Sangli	112	1
Aurangabad	1,543	68	Nanded	123	6
Nashik	1,182	67	Ahmednagar	120	6
Raigad	1,148	41	Gondia	66	0
Palghar	1,071	33	Osmanabad	76	1
Solapur	933	70	Buldhana	63	3
Jalgaon	696	72	Parbhani	63	1
Akola	603	28	Beed	47	1
Nagpur	592	11	Nandurbar	35	3
Satara	527	16	Sindhudurg	33	0
Kolhapur	509	4	Gadchiroli	36	0
Ratnagiri	264	5	Bhandara	32	0
Amravati	232	16	Chandrapur	26	0
Hingoli	190	0	Wardha	9	1
Dhule	145	16	Washim	8	0
Yavatmal	130	1			

POSITIVE CASES OVER LAST 15 DAYS



1,413 (60%) of Monday's cases are from Mumbai



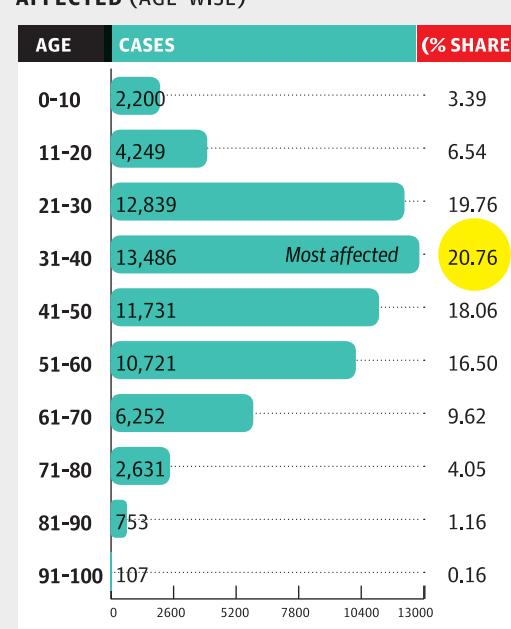
43.00% is the State recovery rate



MORTALITY RATE

Maharashtra 3.37%

India 2.80%



QUARANTINE NUMBERS

5,67,552 | 36,189



Home quarantine | Institutional quarantine



DEATH (GENDER-WISE)

Male 64% (1,457) | Female 36% (829)



69% of deaths due to co-morbidities

HELPLINE NUMBERS

Toll free number: 104/1075

Maharashtra: 020-26127394

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

State helpline email id: ssummaharashtra@gmail.com

CITY-WISE HELPLINE NUMBERS

Mumbai city: 022 22664232 | Palghar: 02525 297474

Mumbai suburbs: 022 26556799 / 26556806 | Raigad: 02141 222118

Thane: 022 25301740 | Ratnagiri: 02352 226248 | Sindhudurg: 02362 228847

Source: Public Health Department, Maharashtra, BMC

With 2,361 new cases, State tally crosses 70,000

A little over half the cases remain active; death toll up to 2,362 with 76 more fatalities across Maharashtra

SHOUMOJIT BANERJEE
PUNE

Maharashtra's COVID-19 cases breached the 70,000 mark on Monday with 2,361 more patients, while its death toll rose to 2,362 with 76 more fatalities recorded.

However, of the 70,013 cases, only 37,534 are active, with 779 patients discharged on Monday. Till date, 30,108 have recovered from the infection, State Health Department officials said.

Maharashtra's recovery rate now stands at 43%, said State Surveillance Officer Dr. Pradeep Awate.

Nine fatalities were reported from Pune district to take its death toll to 338. Six deaths each from Navi Mumbai and Mira-Bhayander in the Mumbai Metropolitan Region (MMR) took their respective death counts to 67 and 20. Deaths were also reported from other parts like Vasai-Virar, Raigad, Auranga-



Safety shield: A passenger in PPE waits to catch the Konark Express outside Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Terminus on Monday, as the Railways resumed 200 train services. ■ SALMAN ANSARI

bad, Nashik and Beed.

"Of the total deaths reported today, 54 had oc-

urred in the last couple of days while the remaining fatalities are from the period between May 14 and May 28. As many as 67% of the deaths reported had high-risk co-morbidities such as diabetes, hypertension, asthma and heart disease," said Dr. Awate. He said that the State's mortality rate due to infection stands at 3.37%, higher than the country's rate of 2.86%.

Pune district's case tally, as per figures given by the State Health Department, has risen to 8,045, with the district reporting more than 250 new cases.

Cases in MMR

Besides Mumbai, the surge in fresh cases in Thane in the Mumbai Metropolitan Region (MMR) continued unabated, with 168 new COVID-19 cases taking its total tally to 4,654. Navi Mumbai reported 56 new cases as its

Of the total deaths reported today, 54 had occurred in the last couple of days while the remaining fatalities are from the period between May 14 and May 28.

DR. PRADEEP AWATE

State Surveillance Officer

total tally reached 2,729.

"Till date, of a total 4,71,573 laboratory samples, 70,013 have tested positive, with around 8,000 samples across the State tested today," Dr. Awate said.

He further said that at present, 5,67,552 people across the State are in home quarantine and 36,189 are in institutional quarantine facilities. There are 3,294 active containment zones in the State currently, said Dr. Awate.

Mumbai breaches 41,000 mark

40 more deaths take toll to 1,319; 10 of 13 KEM mortuary staffers test positive

JYOTI SHELAR
TANVI DESHPANDE
MUMBAI

Mumbai recorded 1,413 new COVID-19 cases on Monday, pushing total cases in the State capital to 41,099. The city also recorded 40 more fatalities, taking its death toll to 1,319.

Of the latest victims, 21 were men and 19 were women. As many as 26 patients had underlying conditions like diabetes, hypertension and asthma. The city's case fatality rate stands at 3.2%.

In May, Mumbai lost an average 31 lives to the virus each day. The month has been the worst yet in the pandemic, accounting for 80% of cases and 75% of the reported deaths.

The city's recovery rate now stands at 41%. On Monday, 193 patients were discharged. A total of 16,985 have recovered and gone home so far.

As part of a sanitisation programme, the BMC has sprayed standard chemicals on over 1.08 lakh houses of COVID-19 patients, common areas and buildings, 7,764 government offices, private hospitals and railway stations, and 7,500 toilets blocks across the city. The



Temperature check: Healthcare workers screen SRPF personnel at Mukund Nagar in Dharavi on Monday. ■ VIJAY BATE

staff have used nearly 200 backpack machines, 17 quick response vehicles and 15 mist blowing machines for this work.

Mahim reported 17 new cases to take its total to 524. A 200-bed COVID-19 hospital at Mahim Nature Park will be functional from Tuesday.

G South ward, which consists of Worli that had reported 2,066 cases on May 30, spiked to 2,110 the next day.

F South ward (Parel) saw a leap of almost 100 cases, from 1,939 to 2,033.

The city's average case growth rate fell further on Monday at 3.85% as compared to Sunday's 4%.

Two lakh tests

Ten out of the 13 mortuary employees in civic-run KEM Hospital have tested positive for COVID-19. The samples of the three remaining staff members have been sent for testing. On Monday, only one staffer turned up for duty leading to a huge backlog of bodies to be released from the hospital. "With only one person to carry out the paperwork, there is bound to be a backlog. The mortuary is on the verge of being defunct," said Pradeep Narkar of Municipal Mazdoor Union.

The Navi Mumbai Municipal Corporation (NMMC) reported 80 new cases, taking its total to 2,284. With 51 more recoveries, 1,397 people have been discharged so far. With two deaths, the total toll is now 75.

Panvel Municipal Corporation reported 16 cases on Monday and 12 recoveries, taking its case tally to 542 and total recoveries to 327.

No death was reported here for the third consecutive day and its toll remains 22. Panvel rural reported eight cases (With inputs from Raina Assainar)

PIB lensman passes away

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI

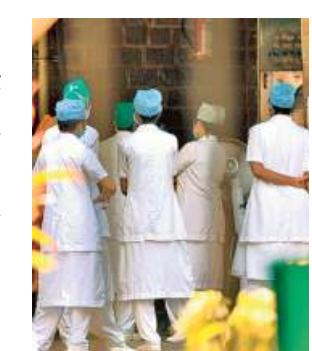
Shridhar Patil, a photographer with the Press Information Bureau (PIB) in Mumbai, passed away on Monday morning. He was 55.

Patil had been suffering from cancer for the last two years, and was being treated at Tata Memorial Centre. Last fortnight, he tested COVID-19 positive. He is survived by his wife and two daughters.

PIB Mumbai held a condolence meet on Monday. Colleagues remembered him as one of PIB's most sincere employees — hard-working, honest and extremely humble.

"He was an important member of our photo and publicity unit and was always ready to execute whatever work assigned to him. Believe me, his contributions to this office will not be forgotten," said Manish Desai, Bureau's Director (west zone).

Patil was a regular at all the events featuring Union Ministers and senior leaders in Mumbai. Kuldeep Singh Dhatwalia, principal director general, PIB, sent his condolences. Photo journalists from Mumbai-based newspapers have also mourned the demise.



The letter highlights several issues facing healthcare workers. ■ FILE PHOTO

Association of Nursing Teachers, Municipal Nursing and Paramedical Staff Union, and United Nurses Association.

It cited an April 2019 communication with State authorities showing 1,846 vacant nursing positions in Maharashtra. "Instead of hiring nurses from Kerala, the 1,800 nurses who have cleared the Directorate of Medical Education and Research exam process and are waiting to join work should be...recruited for vacant permanent posts," they said.

The letter said hospitals should not be allowed to victimise nurses who are highlighting issues pertaining to their working conditions. "A nurse was suspended for speaking out about lack of PPE in the Wadia Group of Hospitals," the letter said. A proper line of communication must be set up for grievance redressal. The activists have also demanded inclusion of nurses in decision-making bodies. "There is not a single nurse in the State-appointed COVID-19 task force," they said.

Patient missing from KEM since May 19: kin

BJP leader Kirit Somaiya takes up issue

Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation, the police and KEM

I am a work-in-progress feminist'

The actor turns producer with a new short, that explores toxic masculinity, patriarchy and emphasises gender equality

NAMRATA JOSHI

Vidya Balan confesses to being a "greedy actor" and "medium agnostic". "Give me a good story and I will even shoot it on a mobile," says Balan, when asked if she was apprehensive about doing a short film after reigning in the world of Hindi feature films for so long. She confesses that the big screen has been her primary passion for a long time. "I used to have 70mm dreams as a little girl but experience and maturity have taught me that it is wonderful to perform in different mediums. The possibilities are immense today," she says.

Equality first

Balan's first short film *Natkhat*, also marks her debut as a producer along with Ronnie Screwvala. The film is written by Annukampa Harsh and Shaan Vyas and is also directed by Vyas.

Natkhat is a film, Balan confesses grabbing with both her hands even though, according to her, it belongs to her screen child Sonu, whose mother she plays. The actor liked the film and

the role for being a part of the ongoing conversation on how to bring up men so that they don't treat women differently, respect and not abuse them. She explains, "In such a short duration it [the film] becomes a personification of that conversation."

On one hand, the film is hard-hitting, especially in the way it shows how children grow up in the thick of patriarchy and toxic masculinity, considering it as normal and often, in a disturbing way, imbibing it knowingly and unconsciously as well, in their own psyche and behaviour. *Natkhat* covers gender inequality, rape culture, domestic violence and more. There is, however also a simultaneous hope and a way out of it. Responsible parenting is upheld as the key. How we mould our children would determine the future, it's how they would grow up to see men and women as equals.

There is also a compelling hierarchy of patriarchy underlined in the film. How one man may feel "less of a man" among other men and take his frustrations out violently on other people. "It's



Mother act: Vidya Balan confesses to being a "greedy actor" and "medium agnostic" •SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

ultimately all about power," says Balan. For her Sonu works as the central character because he is talkative, chats nineteen to the dozen, is extremely sharp but at the same time is sensitive and retains a sense of innocence despite all the corrupting influences around him. He is

both the reality and the possibility.

Acting bond

The interplay between Balan and Sonu feel like a real mother-child bonding and forms the crux of the film. "He is so cute that anyone would feel maternal

with him," she says. She remembers shooting with him in a cramped house in Madh Island. It was raining, sticky and humid. He was supposed to give her cues for close-ups but was feeling sleepy. "His eyes were shutting but he didn't miss a single dialogue. He was naturally

comfortable with the camera," says the actor-producer. There were workshop sessions with him to break the ice. "But we got along immediately. His mother would guide me about how to pin the pallu and put it on the head," she remembers.

Balan hopes the film connects and strikes a chord and carries forward the gender equality discussion. "It's something that cuts across the economic strata, not just something that only the poor or illiterate go through," she says. Yet she feels it will take a long time and several on-going conversations—not just one film—to deal with it. "We have been stuck with centuries of patriarchy and conditioned in a certain way, while navigating through life and [have] picked up so much watching people around us," emphasises the actor.

Gender sensitive

Each of Balan's films is about this continuing engagement. Like the upcoming *Shakuntala Devi*, on the Indian "human computer", a woman she feels was way ahead of her time. "She was unapologetically her own self, lived her life the way she wanted to, was a feminist at a time we didn't know how to spell feminism, in India at least," she asserts.

Ask Balan about the overt gender focus of her films and she says that it's not about espousing causes, "It's about finding my own answers and thinking aloud." She adds, "On the one hand is the equality. On the other is deep-rooted conditioning. I am also as much a part of a personification and recipient of that conflict." Or, as she goes to assert succinctly about herself, "I am a work-in-progress feminist." *Natkhat* premiere on June 2 at 4.30 p.m. IST, at *We Are One: A Global Film Festival* on YouTube

FILM REVIEWS

The evil that men do

The four-part *Jeffrey Epstein: Filthy Rich* compassionately focuses on survivor stories to elicit justifiable rage for women everywhere

DEBORAH CORNELIOUS

Both convicted sex offenders, Jeffrey Epstein and Harvey Weinstein used massages as a pathetic pretext to assault several women. The two were also long-time friends. Currently, there are two documentaries showcasing their lives and misconduct that will hopefully spur worldwide outrage. While the Hollywood producer's many misdeeds are captured in the 2019 effort titled *Untouchable*, it's *Jeffrey Epstein: Filthy Rich* that documents the finance maven's survivors. Through four agonising episodes – the series is based on the 2016 book of the same name by James Patterson – director Lisa Bryant focuses the spotlight on the women who painfully recount their experiences with Epstein.

The show introduces the survivors who were tricked into massaging a 'rich old guy' before becoming embroiled in an international sex-trafficking ring. Each tearful admittance is accompanied with guilt at furthering the sex pyramid scheme. With sharp direction and a flair to elicit uncomfortable details, Bryant shuts down those who could judge even for a second that the fault may lie in the survivors. Epstein preyed exclusively on women from broken homes, vulnerable and poor who'd do almost anything to escape their circumstances. As the show progresses, so does the chronicling of Epstein's evil. From exploiting scores of women –



Me too: A still from *Jeffrey Epstein: Filthy Rich* and *Untouchable* •SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Jeffrey Epstein: Filthy Rich

DIRECTOR: Lisa Bryant

STORYLINE: Sex offender Jeffrey Epstein's survivors tell the world how they were exploited and violated by the finance mogul

which was first reported to the FBI as early as 1996 – to his manipulation of those in power, to accumulate wealth and then to get away with a slap on the wrist instead of a harsh conviction. Case in point, former U.S. attorney for the Southern District of Florida, Alexander Acosta who approved of a plea deal that allowed Epstein to practically go scot-free. Acosta would later become United States Secretary of Labor under Donald Trump's presidency.

Bryant's deliberate directorial approach compels hot seething anger at how entitled powerful white men go unpunished for their crimes. Worse yet is when law enforcement – in this case Florida police department officers – are arm-twisted and intimidated from doing their jobs. Or

encouraged and protected by many rich and powerful people, including Trump and Weinstein.

Filthy Rich doesn't present any new information or shocking details that weren't already in public purview. Instead it gathers everything, often untidily, under one roof: a one-stop-shop of everything you wanted to know about Epstein. But it does birth a fury that could never be as potent if not for its existence. It's also proof that justice can be achieved, even if it is at a snail's pace with plenty of disappointments along the way. Let it never be said that the #MeToo movement amounted to nothing. It really is Time's Up.

Both *Jeffrey Epstein: Filthy Rich* and *Untouchable* are currently streaming on Netflix

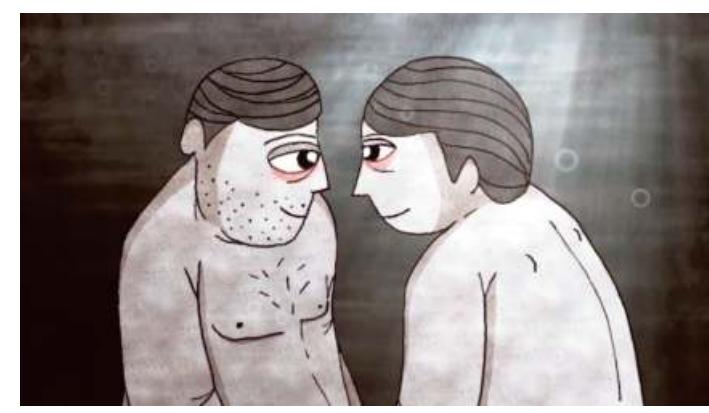
Maacher Jhol: Served with love

The aesthetic choice of hand-drawn animation distils 'coming out' to its basic emotions as well as amps up the visual drama

KENNETH ROSARIO

'Coming out' to your parents is inherently dramatic and emotionally charged. Abhishek Verma's short film, *Maacher Jhol*, is centred around this event and spends most of its runtime building up to it, like many queer films coming out of India. But what makes Verma's film noteworthy is the aesthetic choice of hand-drawn animation, which allows the maker to distil 'coming out' to its basic emotions as well as amp up the visual drama whenever needed. The filmmaker makes the right choices, as he uses the imaginative free-hand of animation in the build-up to the event, where we witness Lalit's anxiety and affection for his partner, Ashutosh. The visuals of the actual confession to his dad, over the dinner table, is allowed to be restrained, thus impactful.

Since the characters are so two-dimensional, literally and figuratively, it's the details that stand out in this film. The protagonist's apartment is occupied by queer art and undergarment of two men in the living room. He seemingly lives in with his partner, who is more than a room-



Queer lives: Despite the limited time span of 12-minutes, the film covers a wide emotional graph •SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Maacher Jhol

DIRECTOR: Abhishek Verma

STORY LINE: A young man makes traditional fish curry for his father in anticipation of revealing his sexuality to him

mate. The protagonist's father slowly scans the room, and we, as an audience, are left to deduce their relationship along with the father. The usage of classic Bollywood songs adds to the home's lived-in quality and lends Lalit the quality of being an old soul and level-headed.

The film's weakest link is its writing. While the short is visually striking and cleverly restrained, the dialogues, although sparse, feel redundant, verbose and almost unnecessary in the 'coming out' portion of the film. *Maacher Jhol*, the traditional fish curry from West Bengal and Odisha, functions as a symbol of love, understanding, nostalgia, childhood and being rooted in a culture.

POOCH CAFE



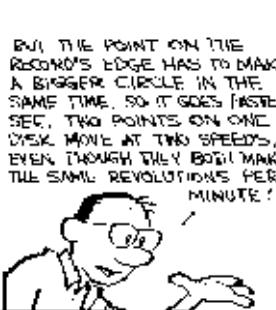
PEANUTS



HAGAR THE HORRIBLE



CALVIN AND HOBBES



TIGER



PEARLS BEFORE SWINE



Cyclone effect: Mumbai may get heavy rain

Amit Shah assures Uddhav all support; red alert for Thane, Palghar, Raigad

ALOK DESHPANDE
TANVI DESHPANDE
MUMBAI

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Monday assured Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray that disaster response teams from neighbouring States have been kept ready and will be sent to Maharashtra, if needed to tackle the onslaught of the cyclone.

During a videoconference between the two leaders, Mr. Thackeray informed Mr. Shah that Maharashtra has sounded an alert in the coastal districts of Mumbai city, Mumbai suburbs, Thane, Palghar, Raigad, Ratnagiri and Sindhudurg. Fishermen have been called back and district collectors are being asked to ensure no life is lost. He said those living in non-pucca homes have been directed to shift to safer houses provided by the State. Slum residents in low-lying areas of the Mumbai Metropolitan Region will be relocated on priority.

The CM said a 24-hour control room has been set up at Mantralaya, and the Army, Air Force and Navy are coordinating with the India Meteorological Department (IMD). Mr. Thackeray also said non-COVID-19 hospitals should be kept ready while the COVID-19 patients should be properly taken care of.

Meanwhile, the IMD on Monday scaled up its weather warning, issuing a red alert for Mumbai, Thane, Palghar and Raigad for Wednesday. There is a red alert for Palghar on Thursday as well.

On Sunday, a low pressure area formed over south-east and adjoining east-central Arabian Sea in the early morning and remained till forenoon. It intensified into a depression.



moved north-northwestwards, and lay centred there, 570 km south-southwest of Mumbai, on Monday.

Deep depression

It is very likely to intensify into a deep depression by Monday evening and turn further into a cyclonic storm on Tuesday. It is very likely to move nearly northwards initially until June 2 and then recurve north-northeastwards and cross north Maharashtra and south Gujarat coasts between Harihareshwar and Daman on June 3.

Therefore, the IMD has issued a red alert (extremely heavy rain at isolated places) for Mumbai, Thane, Palghar and Raigad districts for Wednesday.

The IMD had initially issued an orange alert (heavy to very heavy rain at a few places) for Mumbai and Thane.

The four districts will see heavy rain on Tuesday as well. Mumbai, Thane and Raigad have an orange alert for Thursday. Nashik, Dhule, and Nandurbar have a red alert for Wednesday.



Ahead of monsoon: (Top) A man walks past the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation building as the city received light pre-monsoon showers on Monday; with the onset of monsoon nearing, BMC workers clean the Versova beach to avoid water stagnation. ■ VIVEK BENDRE ■ ARUNANGSU ROY CHOWDHURY

There will be very high wind speed in these four districts, while the sea will be very rough and high to very high over east-central Arabian Sea. Fishermen have been advised not to go into the sea.

Meanwhile, many parts of

Mumbai experienced light showers on Monday. The IMD's Colaba observatory recorded a rainfall of 0.2 mm. The city recorded a maximum temperature of 34 degrees Celsius and a minimum temperature of 26.8 degrees Celsius.

10 NDRF teams ready; police shift homeless

GAUTAM S. MENGLE

MUMBAI

As a cyclone is expected to hit Mumbai, Thane and other parts of the State, the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) has placed 10 teams on standby, while the Mumbai Police have started relocating the homeless to temporary shelters.

NDRF officials said three teams are on standby in Mumbai, two in Palghar, two in Raigad, and one each in Thane, Ratnagiri and Sindhudurg. Their exact locations of deployment will be decided as per latest information from the India Meteorological Department (IMD) on Tuesday.

"Keeping in mind the dual challenges of responding to situations in the middle of the COVID-19 pandemic, we have provided kits to all our personnel. Each kit comprises two full face masks, elbow-length gloves, raincoats with extensions that cover the face, soaps, sanitisers and detergent. All our personnel have been briefed on the procedures to be followed in light of the pandemic," Commandant Anupam Srivastava, NDRF, said.

"The Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) has kept its disaster management control room on high alert. All 24 ward offices have been ordered to relocate people living in flood-prone areas to nearby schools. The BMC has appealed to people not to step out during the period of the cyclone and not to stand under trees.

(With inputs from Tanvi Deshpande)



In position: An NDRF team surveys Palghar coastline in view of the cyclone warning, on Monday. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

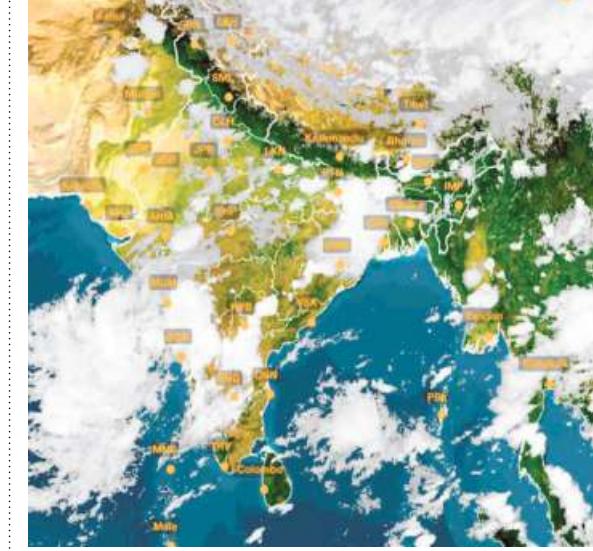
Meanwhile, the Mumbai Police have started shifting people to safety. Officials said the lockdown rules will be enforced even more strictly over the next two days so that presence of people on the streets can be kept to a minimum. "We are moving the homeless and those staying in temporary or unsafe structures to safer locations. This is being done in collaboration with the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation. Messages are being sent out via social media platforms, urging citizens to stay indoors, while patrolling and deployment is being planned in accordance with the task at hand," Mumbai Police spokesperson DCP Pranaya Ashok said.

The Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) has kept its disaster management control room on high alert. All 24 ward offices have been ordered to relocate people living in flood-prone areas to nearby schools. The BMC has appealed to people not to step out during the period of the cyclone and not to stand under trees.

(With inputs from Tanvi Deshpande)

WEATHER WATCH

RAINFALL, TEMPERATURE & AIR QUALITY IN SELECT METROS YESTERDAY



TEMPERATURE DATA: IMD; POLLUTION DATA: CPCB; MAP: INSAT/IMD (TAKEN AT 18:00 HRS)

Forecast for Tuesday: Thunderstorm accompanied with lightning/gusty winds likely at isolated places over West Bengal, Jammu & Kashmir, Gilgit-Baltistan and Muzaffarabad. Heavy/very heavy rainfall likely at a few/isolated places over central Maharashtra, coastal Karnataka, Kerala and Lakshadweep

CITY **RAIN** **MAX** **MIN** **CITY** **RAIN** **MAX** **MIN**

Agartala ... 35.0 ... 25.7 Kozhikode ... 20 ... 32.0 ... 25.4

Ahmedabad ... 41.2 ... 29.4 Kurnool ... 6.6 ... 37.1 ... 24.2

Aizawl ... 24.1 ... 17.3 Lucknow ... 36.4 ... 25.4

Allahabad ... 40.8 ... 27.6 Madurai ... 39.2 ... 26.6

Bengaluru ... 32.0 ... 22.4 Mangaluru ... 16 ... 31.1 ... 24.4

Bhopal ... 38.5 ... 28.4 Mumbai ... 0.2 ... 34.0 ... 26.8

Bhubaneswar ... 35.4 ... 27.2 Mysuru ... 34.5 ... 23.1

Chandigarh ... 50.4 ... 33.8 ... 21.1 New Delhi ... 2.6 ... 35.4 ... 21.0

Chennai ... 37.6 ... 29.0 Patna ... 0.4 ... 37.2 ... 25.2

Coimbatore ... 32.8 ... 26.3 Port Blair ... 11.8 ... 31.8 ... 25.2

Dehradun ... 27.6 ... 19.1 Puducherry ... 36.4 ... 28.2

Gangtok ... 19.0 ... 15.2 Pune ... 27.7 ... 21.2

Goa ... 31.1 ... 25.3 Raipur ... 24.40 ... 22.6

Guwahati ... 24.8 ... 22.8 Ranchi ... 21.4 ... 34.6 ... 20.6

Hubballi ... 31.0 ... 23.0 Shillong ... 0.4 ... 23.9 ... 21.0

Hyderabad ... 34.2 ... 22.5 Shimla ... 16.8 ... 20.9 ... 11.2

Imphal ... 25.7 ... 19.5 Srinagar ... 24.0 ... 12.7

Jaipur ... 37.3 ... 28.7 Thiruvananthapuram ... 58 ... 31.2 ... 24.6

Kochi ... 32.0 ... 25.0 Tiruchi ... 39.6 ... 27.6

Kohima ... 24.0 ... 14.7 Vijayawada ... 39.0 ... 28.0

Kolkata ... 35.2 ... 23.4 Visakhapatnam ... 34.7 ... 29.8

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)

Pollutants in the air you are breathing

CITIES **SO₂** **NO₂** **CO** **PM_{2.5}** **PM₁₀** **CODE**

Ahmedabad ... 26 ... 27 ... 50 ... 50 ... - ■■■■■

Bengaluru ... 10 ... 41 ... 11 ... 29 ... ■■■■■

Chennai ... 7 ... 26 ... 122 ... - ■■■■■

Delhi ... 30 ... 106 ... 118 ... 86 ... ■■■■■

Hyderabad ... 23 ... 15 ... 38 ... 47 ... ■■■■■

Kolkata ... 4 ... 16 ... 21 ... 47 ... ■■■■■

Lucknow ... 27 ... 45 ... 108 ... ■■■■■

Mumbai ... 7 ... 21 ... 19 ... 46 ... ■■■■■

Pune ... 26 ... 22 ... 32 ... 89 ... ■■■■■

Visakhapatnam ... 21 ... 31 ... 22.8 ■■■■■

In observation made at 4.00 p.m., Noida, Gurgaon recorded an overall air quality index (AQI) score of 213 indicating an unhealthy level of pollution. In contrast, Hubballi, Karnataka recorded a healthy AQI score of 18.

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

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

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

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

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

COVID-19 pandemic delays scheme for tribal students

ALOK DESHPANDE
MUMBAI

The Tribal Development Department's ambitious scheme of admitting selected tribal students to renowned schools across the State from Class I and II in the coming academic year, has been deferred due to financial constraints in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Tribal Development Minister K.C. Padvi on Monday clarified that the scheme has not been cancelled, only suspended for this year. "The process of identifying schools for tribal students usually starts in March-April, which could not happen this year. In addition, the pandemic has severely hurt the State's finances, resulting in expenditure cuts," said Mr. Padvi.

As much as 71% of the tribal department's budget is spent on education. "With cuts announced for the ongoing fiscal, the department will not be able to run this

HC bats for RT-PCR method to test frontline staff in Vidarbha

SONAM SAIGAL
MUMBAI

The Nagpur Bench of Bombay High Court on Monday said all frontline workers, including those who are asymptomatic, in hospitals and containment zones in Vidarbha shall be entitled to be tested for COVID-19 using RT-PCR (Rapid Antibody and Reverse Transcription Polymerase Chain Reaction) method.

A Division Bench of Justices Ravi Deshpande and Amit Borkar was hearing a public interest litigation (PIL) filed by Citizens Forum for Equality seeking these tests on medical staff, police personnel and others working with COVID-19 patients.

In a 37-page judgement, the court directed District Collectors or Commissioners, municipal corporations or Chief Executive Officers, municipal councils or competent authorities in the Vidarbha region to immediately use the RT-PCR tests. Mr. Deshpande was hearing a public interest litigation (PIL) filed by Citizens Forum for Equality seeking these tests on medical staff, police personnel and others working with COVID-19 patients.

The court said frontline workers, including doctors, nurses, police personnel, and sanitation workers are performing a "herculean" task by putting their lives at risk to protect the lives of others. "They are the warriors and soldiers in this process," the court said, and added it was of the view that frontline workers are covered under the definition of suspected cases and hence, should be tested.

The court said frontline workers, including doctors, nurses, police personnel, and sanitation workers are performing a "herculean" task by putting their lives at risk to protect the lives of others. "They are the warriors and soldiers in this process," the court said, and added it was of the view that frontline workers are covered under the definition of suspected cases and hence, should be tested.

Meanwhile, retailers in Pune's Mahathma Phule Market have demanded that the Pune Municipal Corporation (PMC) permit them to resume operations as well. Meanwhile, retailers in Pune's Mahathma Phule Market have demanded that the Pune Municipal Corporation (PMC) permit them to resume operations as well.

APMC vegetable market reopens with caution

50% of traders to open shops daily; thermal screening, physical distancing a must



Proceed with care: The wholesale vegetable market in Pune resumed its operations on May 31. ■ MANDAR TANNU

shop. "The number of vehicles entering Market Yard has been significantly reduced to 200. Thermal screening of every person entering the yard is done while physical distancing and other precautions have to be strictly followed. Now that we have restarted business, we hope that the city's residents will not have to face any shortage of fruits and vegetables," Mr. Deshpude said.

The grocery and grain wholesale market within the APMC had resumed operations on May 25 after being intermittently shut during the lockdown.

Meanwhile, retailers in Pune's Mahathma Phule Market have demanded that the Pune Municipal Corporation (PMC) permit them to resume operations as well.

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Ominous signals

Growth figures will worsen as India waits for full impact of lockdown

India's economy is in a severe slowdown that is only going to get worse in a pandemic-stricken world. Three months after Finance Ministry mandarins prognosticated that India's growth slowdown had bottomed out, the latest economic data has belied that prediction. Crucially, the GDP growth estimates for the January-March quarter and the full fiscal year barely reflect the impact of the public health crisis and the stringent lockdowns, which were imposed nationwide only from March 25. The NSO's estimates show fourth-quarter and fiscal 2019-20 growth slumped to 3.1% and 4.2%, respectively, the slowest pace in 11 years. The government says the lockdown impacted data flow, and with statutory reporting timelines extended the estimates would likely undergo revision. However, the fact that Gross Value Added numbers for the first three quarters have been revised significantly downwards shows that the economic malaise was deep and widespread even before the novel coronavirus landed on Indian shores. Four of the eight industry sectors that together comprise the GVA are now revealed to be in far worse shape than was reported earlier. This includes manufacturing, which contracted for a third straight quarter and shrank by 1.4% in the fourth quarter; construction, a major job generating activity that continued to weaken and contracted 2.2%; and the two largest services categories. The revisions in the trade, transport, hotels and communications, and financial, real estate and professional services sectors have cut third-quarter growth figures by 1.6 and 4 percentage points, respectively.

The economy is visibly mired in a demand drought that is unlikely to abate any time soon. Private consumption spending, which accounts for 55-60% of GDP, extended a downturn as growth slid to 2.7%. Investment activity contracted for a third consecutive quarter and shrank 6.5%. Data coming in for the current fiscal are revealing the devastating impact that the lockdown has had. Output at the eight core industries that represent 40% of the Index of Industrial Production contracted by an alarming 38% in April. Merchandise exports shrank 60% in the same month. The RBI, which cut interest rates on May 22, was categorical in its assessment that a recovery would likely start only from the October quarter. For even that to materialise, the Centre must act. Its package so far has been focused on credit enhancement measures that ease supply side constraints and structural reforms that may bear fruit over a longer horizon. But the imperative now is to bite the bullet and opt for a massive fiscal stimulus that actually puts cash in the hands of consumers and the millions of jobless youth in order to help revive demand.

Workforce habits

Instead of tweaking labour laws, States must inspire confidence in workers

Over two months into the national lockdown, India's workforce, ostensibly blessed to be part of its much-vaunted demographic dividend, is in complete disarray. There is the visibly disturbing narrative of a few million workers trying to get back home from their respective urban lives as resources run out and lack of adequate living space hits hard in the face of a virus that requires physical distancing. They used their feet, often facing police wrath, till the administration allowed trains and buses to move again. While swathes of informal sector workers are moving away from their adopted base, the remaining 10% of the workforce that is formally employed with social security benefits are beset by pink slips, furloughs, or salary cuts. The trend, driven by the slump in economic activity, cuts across sectors. Restrictions have eased slightly, but a return to normalcy has proved challenging even for the firms that are allowed to operate, largely due to inadequate manpower. Industry representatives have pleaded with the Labour Ministry to cajole workers to return to their workplaces on being summoned, and if that does not prove effective, make them liable for action under relevant industrial labour legislation. Relaxations have also been sought in statutory wage payments for April and May when little work happened.

Several States offered a temporary fix – stretching permissible working hours from eight to 12, so that productivity can improve even with less-than-optimal staff strength. While Rajasthan withdrew such an order, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and some others have used the occasion to embark on a purge of labour laws, citing the need to spur investor confidence and revive job creation. Labour unions have protested this wholesale scrapping that would leave employees vulnerable in many aspects. Being a concurrent subject in the Constitution, States, however, need the Centre's nod to effect these changes and, for now, Labour Minister Santosh Kumar Gangwar appears disinclined to agree. Official instructions to keep paying employees amidst the lockdown have not worked evenly, while tweaks such as lowering the EPF contribution rate do not amount to much relief for firms or their staff. While the nature of work is changing and greater spending is needed on hygiene, the immediate challenge is to inspire employee confidence. Most migrant workers are running scared of the pandemic. Getting them home safely is a first step and giving them an emergency income support till the worst of the pandemic subsides is the next. But for them to return to work enthusiastically over time, it is equally critical to reorient India's current approach to urban and industrial housing, workplace social security and minimum wage standards. The Centre must begin a dialogue with States on this front. Ineffective paper laws such as the Inter-State Migrant Workmen Act of 1979 can be reviewed thereafter.

Jammu, the pawn on the Kashmir chessboard

The new domicile rules have further weakened its political, social and economic aspirations



ANURADHA BHASIN JAMWAL

Ten months after the dilution of Articles 370 and 35A, new laws have been laid down and administrative structures are beginning to take shape. After months of a lull in the Jammu region, tempers remain subdued. The silence is borne not out of reconciliation, indifference or optimism, but fear of reprisal, post August 5, 2019, as well as Jammu's inherent dilemmas.

Subsumed aspirations

Injected with highly potent doses of ultra-nationalism and integrationist politics, Jammu has lived for years under the illusion that the burden of protecting nationalism and national security rests on its shoulders. In the last seven decades, it has willingly trampled on its own aspirations to perpetuate an agenda of nationalism. This has been at the risk of transgressing into divisive politics which began metamorphosing into a thoughtless counter-narrative of Kashmir, further bolstered by the rise of the Hindu right wing in India. Caught between Hindu nationalistic winds blowing from the south and Kashmir domination plus conflict, Jammu's political, social and economic aspirations were already buried long ago. Instead of drawing on its unique strength of pluralism and diversity, Jammu's political discourse has oscillated between nationalism, polarisation and a sense of discrimination at the hands of Kashmiris. The muted reaction to the political, geographical and economic changes last year largely stems from these dilemmas that are deeply embedded.

ded, apart from a sense of fear and, more recently, due to restrictions amid the COVID-19 lockdown.

In the last few months, Jammu has felt let down. The market economy has witnessed disruption on account of two factors – political and economic uncertainty due to the August 5, 2019 move and the Kashmir lockdown which froze Jammu's trade and economy. The partial Internet ban has also caused further heartburn, with people left wondering why they are being punished in spite of being nationalists and despite Jammu having no recent history of violence or any law and order problem.

After the gazette notification of March 30, 2020, which lays down the rules for domicile status, under the amended Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) Civil Services (Decentralisation and Recruitment) Act, along with repeal or amendment of about 100 J&K State laws, the rules of engagement have become clearer, beginning a process of introspection in Jammu.

Sense of loss

For those inspired by Hindu nationalism, the sense of triumph at having finally "shown Kashmiris their place" is overwhelming. Jammu's also hope for a better share of the spoils when the gerrymandering of boundaries begins as part of the delimitation process. But largely, this does not induce any optimism of political empowerment and a sense of parity with, if not domination over, Kashmir. Instead, there is a huge sense of loss and an equally overwhelming sense of being let down by an ideological party they had vested trust in and by a powerful Prime Minister they so ardently admired as part of the nationalisation project.

Much of Jammu may not share Kashmir's anxieties of a demo-

GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCKPHOTO



graphic change. However, Jammu's youth are worried that they may lose their jobs and educational seats to the new 'domiciles'. With the Agrarian Reforms Act abolished – it defined land ownership and fixed the ceiling area at 12½ standard acres – the doors have been opened for all Indian citizens triggering worries of the entry of real estate sharks and investments by companies with deep pockets, thereby upsetting the existing economy of Jammu and damaging the ecology. While business investments from outside could boost employment, the existing units operating on a temporary lease basis do not instil confidence as they have offered limited jobs for locals, most often on contractual basis.

The exact number of people who are likely to benefit from the new domicile law in terms of jobs is unknown. According to the domicile law, anyone who has resided in J&K for 15 years or has stayed there for seven years will get the domicile right. The benefits would also be extended to children of all central government employees who have served for "a total of ten years", not necessarily a continuous period.

Jammu's anxieties are more pronounced. First, most settlers who could gain immediate benefits are based there. These include about two lakh West Pakistan refugees, over 300 families of sanitation workers, and, more impor-

tantly 29 lakh migrant workers, many living in J&K for decades. Higher wages and free school education made J&K an attractive hub for them. Jammu's geographical, cultural and religious proximity with the Indian heartland also makes it a more lucrative destination for those who would like to avail themselves of the domicile rights or make investments. Third, the absence of a violent conflict offers a salubrious climate for settlement, unlike in the Valley. Jammu's high potential for prospective settlers engenders fears of a large-scale scavenger hunt for business opportunities, land purchase and jobs by outsiders.

Triple impact

A hub of trade, Jammu's business has flourished in the last seven decades due to pilgrimage tourism and interdependence with the Kashmir region. While the latter will receive a major setback due to the economic slump in the Valley as well as the embitterment of Kashmir's business circles with the political positioning of Jammu's traders, investments from outside do not quite induce the confidence of employment or inclusiveness. Jammu would have looked forward to a sustainable and inclusive economic road map, but hopes have been dashed because the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) government in its six-year tenure has not shown any inclination towards being an economic visionary.

Another fear is of Dogra culture facing extinction. Jammu's Hindu belt, despite its brush with Hindutva politics, has been the most cosmopolitan part of J&K. Its greatest strength has been the ability to assimilate many cultures and the influx of people from other parts of the State due to economic reasons and conflict. But that appears to have reached a saturation point, and threats to the Dogra identity are not unfounded.

Politically, Jammu is unlikely to gain. If a delimitation of electoral constituencies is done on the basis of area, and not population alone, and the 152 Assembly segments reserved for Pakistan Administered Kashmir (PAK), laying vacant since the 1950s, are filled up with PAK refugees as is being speculated, Jammu's fattened share at the expense of the Kashmir Valley is a possibility. That may enhance the likelihood of J&K getting its first Hindu Chief Minister. The BJP's integration project may spring an unpleasant surprise for the people of Jammu if the likely choice for the post turns out to be an outsider. At best, more constituencies and a Hindu Chief Minister could make it a symbolic victory for Jammu.

Jammu has long suffered in terms of a political vacuum, which has also deepened the sense of discrimination. Its political significance in national politics has been only to serve as a prop in the hands of New Delhi to counter the Kashmir narrative or to strengthen integrationist politics. Now, with the administrative project of integration achieved and Kashmir's politics stepping down into virtual servitude, Jammu's political worth has further diminished. The only thing that can reverse this is if Jammu is able to reimagine itself and assert itself politically. That is wishful thinking not only in view of its political limpness in the past but also because Jammu's socioeconomic landscape would have undergone a sea change, irreparably so, by the time a constructive political consciousness begins to awaken.

On the whole, Jammu has not only been left empty-handed but it also feels let down and robbed. That feeling has just begun to sink in.

Anuradha Bhasin Jamwal is Executive Editor, Kashmir Times

India, China and fortifying the Africa outreach

Burnishing their credentials as humanitarian champions is the name of the game, but their approaches differ



HARSH V. PANT &
ABHISHEK MISHRA

The COVID-19 pandemic has been a great leveller across the world. But its effects stand to be devastating particularly in Africa, where economic and public health conditions are extremely vulnerable. Although African countries moved quickly to curb the initial spread, they are still woefully ill-equipped to cope with a public health emergency of such magnitude due to shortages of masks, ventilators, and even basic necessities such as soap and water. Such conditions have meant that Africa's cycle of chronic external aid dependence continues. Africa needs medical protective equipment and gear to support its front line public health workers. As Asia's two largest economies and long-standing partners of Africa, India and China have increased their outreach to Africa through medical assistance. Their efforts are directed to fill a part of the growing African need at a time when not many others have stepped in to help.

Beijing's donation diplomacy
China, being Africa's largest trading partner, was quick to signal its intent to help Africa cope with the pandemic. It despatched medical protective equipment, testing kits, ventilators, and medical masks to several African countries. The primary motive of such donations

has been to raise Beijing's profile as a leading provider of humanitarian assistance and "public goods" in the global public health sector. China's billionaire philanthropy was also in full display when tech founder Jack Ma donated three rounds of anti-coronavirus supplies. These consignments were transported mostly by Ethiopian aircraft. Chinese embassies across Africa have taken the lead by coordinating both public and private donations to local stakeholders and have also embarked on a donation blitz of cash even as the sub-optimal quality of China's medical supplies and its depurating of medical experts have been a major cause for concern.

Beijing's 'donation diplomacy' in Africa aims to achieve three immediate objectives: shift the focus away from talking about the origins of the virus in Wuhan, build goodwill overseas, and establish an image makeover. For the most part, it succeeded in achieving these ends until China faced widespread backlash over the ill-treatment of African nationals in Guangzhou city. The issue quickly grew into a full-blown political crisis for Beijing. But for the most part, China has been successful in controlling the Guangzhou narrative due to the depth of its political influence in Africa. It is no secret that China relies heavily on diplomatic support and cooperation from African countries on key issues in multilateral fora. For example, Beijing used African support for securing a win for Chinese candidates as the head of Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and in the World Health Organization (WHO). On Africa's part, the problem lies in the deep disjunction



ture and credibility gap between Africa's governing class, the people, the media and civil society. Even when criticisms have been levelled against Chinese indiscretions, it has hardly ever surfaced at the elite level. Overall, China's donation diplomacy towards Africa during COVID-19 has received mixed reactions, but Beijing's advantage lies in its economic heft and political influence in Africa.

New Delhi's focus

For India, the pandemic presents an opportunity to demonstrate its willingness and capacity to shoulder more responsibility. The fact that even with limited resources, India can fight the virus at home while reaching out to developing countries in need is testament to India's status as a responsible and reliable global stakeholder. Nowhere has India's developmental outreach been more evident than in Africa with the continent occupying a central place in Indian government's foreign and economic policy in the last six years. Africa has been the focus of India's development assistance and also diplomatic outreach, as evident in plans to open 18 new embassies. These efforts have been supplemented by an improved record of Indian project implementation in Africa.

India's role as 'the pharmacy of the world', as the supplier of low-cost, generic medicines is widely acknowledged. Pharmaceutical products along with refined petroleum products account for 40% of India's total exports to African markets. India is sending consignments of essential medicines, including hydroxychloroquine (HCQ) and paracetamol, to 25 African countries in addition to doctors and paramedics at a total cost of around ₹600 million (\$7.9 million) on a commercial and grant basis.

The initial beneficiaries were the African Indian Ocean island nations of Mauritius, the Seychelles, Comoros, and Madagascar under India's 'Mission Sagar'. While transportation and logistics remain a concern, most of the consignments have already reached various African states.

A timely initiative has been the e-ITEC COVID-19 management strategies training webinars exclusively aimed at training health-care professionals from Africa and the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) nations and sharing of best practices by Indian health experts. Nigeria, Kenya, Mauritius, and Namibia have been beneficiaries. Across Africa, there is a keen interest to understand the developments and best practices in India because the two share similar socioeconomic and developmental challenges. There is also growing interest in research and development in drugs and vaccines. A few African countries such as Mauritius are pushing for health-care partnerships in traditional medicines and Ayurveda for boosting immunity.

The Indian community, especially in East African countries, has also

been playing a crucial role in helping spread awareness. Prominent Indian businessmen and companies in Nigeria and Kenya have donated money to the respective national emergency response funds. Country-specific chapters of gurdwaras and temples have fed thousands of families by setting up community kitchens, helplines for seniors and distributing disinfectants and sanitisers.

The contrasts

Both India and China, through their respective health and donation diplomacy, are vying to carve a space and position for themselves as reliable partners of Africa in its time of need. Burnishing their credentials as humanitarian champions is the name of the game. But there are significant differences in the approaches. For China, three aspects are critical: money, political influence and elite level wealth creation; strong state-to-state relations as opposed to people-to-people ties; and hard-infrastructure projects and resource extraction. India's approach on the other hand is one that focuses on building local capacities and an equal partnership with Africans and not merely with African elites concerned. As these two powers rise in Africa, their two distinct models will come under even greater scrutiny. And both New Delhi and Beijing might find that they need to adapt to the rising aspirations of the African continent.

Harsh V. Pant is Director, Studies at the Observer Research Foundation (ORF) and Professor of International Relations at King's College London. Abhishek Mishra is a Junior Fellow at ORF, New Delhi

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.

Pandemic and politics

The political impact of the novel coronavirus pandemic is yet to crystallise (Editorial, page "The waning of subaltern solidarity for Hindutva", June 1). Of great significance will be how people rate the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) government's handling of the crisis and its fall-out. The BJP succeeded in weaning the lower castes away from their struggles for social justice into the so-called nationalist fold in recent years. Now much depends on whether the

victims of the government's apathy take a fatalistic attitude to their untold misery engendered by COVID-19 or become disillusioned with the government for its failure to provide them succour when they needed it most. The BJP thrives on tapping religious identity and relies on a larger-than-life muscular leader to usher in *Sabka Vikas and Ache din*. It constantly renews the promise of a better tomorrow. How the central government's abandonment of impoverished multitudes to

their fate in the face of the pandemic is taken by them would shape Indian politics in the times to come.

G. DAVID MILTON,
Maruthancode, Tamil Nadu

Rebuilding Nepal ties

The tensions between India and Nepal over territorial depictions have surfaced over dissimilarities in the perception of New Delhi and Kathmandu on the issue and have cast their long shadow over the peaceful relations between the two nations (Page 1, "Amendment on new map tabled in Nepal

parliament", June 1). While the best possible method to defuse tensions is by deliberations using diplomatic channels, the Indian government must handle the situation tactfully and as peacefully as possible. In Nepal we have a close ally whose importance cannot be underscored enough as it is in the middle of India and China. Nepal's strategic location is of much value to India, and in its friendship, New Delhi has a formidable asset. The close links between the two nations is also marked by the

presence of the Gurkha regiment in the Indian Army, a unit known for its bravery and diligence. In a hostile global environment where powers lock horns for global supremacy and prominence, having allies in one's neighborhood is a great boon, especially for a fast-growing nation like India.

ABHISHEK SURESH,
Kozhikode, Kerala

Use the right term

Of late, one notes a change in journalistic parlance for migrant workers – guest

workers. This euphemistic nomenclature will, in the long run, erase this historic and painful exodus and will make us oblivious to this man-made tragedy and our collective irresponsibility. The term "migrant workers" which is global terminology ("International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families") should be retained in public discourse.

G. M. JAMES,
Chennai

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A new architecture in quake-prone areas

With tremors, like cyclones, seeming to intensify, how prepared is India for the 'big one', should it visit us?



GOPALKRISHNA GANDHI

A few days after the Kutch earthquake in January 2001, I was ringing the doorbell at Arthur C. Clarke's Colombo villa-cum-futurist office. Its architecture was as unique as its occupant, its fittings as distinctive as their owner. It had been my intention to call on the great man ever since I arrived in that city to work in India's High Commission. The urgent always overtakes the important and in some cities like Colombo, more than in others. So, with one urgency coming over another I could not pay that call.

Predicting earthquakes

The visionary was 'confined to a wheelchair' is how one would normally put it. But Clarke was not confined to anything, let alone to something on wheels. He moved from room to room, inviting me into the house and into a conversation with the ease of a skater.

I did not have to start. He opened the conversation with the subject of the earthquake. 'I have spent three weeks in Ahmedabad as a guest of the Sarabhai's,' he said, 'and so my sense of sorrow is all the greater.'

There is not much one can say in response to such a deeply felt remark and I was quiet for a long minute before asking Clarke if, in his view, we would ever come to the position of being able to predict earthquakes. 'Strange, you should ask that,' he said with excitement. Wheeling himself to one of his bookshelves, he pulled out a squat volume. It was a book co-authored by him, *Richter Ten*. Clarke autographed the volume, placed it in my hands and wheeled himself to behind his desk.

I turned the book's pages and saw the novel opened with a dramatic forward: 'Many years ago I was standing in a Delhi hotel when I became aware of a faint vibration underfoot. 'I had no idea,' I said to my hosts, 'that Delhi has a subway system'. 'It doesn't,' they answered. That was my one and only experience of earthquakes.'

Reading any further with the auth-



"We are not to get alarmed. But we are to be alert." Tekubhai Kanjaria and his daughter Hema look at the ruins of their home in Bhuj after the 2001 earthquake. AP

or sitting in front of me would have been rude and so I closed the volume with a few words of thanks. Before I could finish, he returned to my question. While earthquake prediction may take some more time, he said, what should be done is to inaugurate a new architecture in quake-prone areas which would deny the seismic activity its logical end – devastation.

Back home, I read the novel. It was gripping not as a story as much as a scientist's vision of what humanity may well encounter. The protagonist, Lewis Crane, has been crippled and orphaned in an earthquake. But does he go under? Not at all. He grows to be a physicist and a Nobel Laureate with a passion for devising a method for earthquake prediction.

I did not meet Clarke again but that conversation has stayed with me as the subject was to crop up a year and a half later when, stationed in Oslo, I was headed to Reykjavik with letters of concurrent accreditation signed by President Abdul Kalam. I was in my office and phone operators at both ends had told me who was calling and I was all attention.

'Kalam speaking.'

'Good afternoon, Rashtrapatiji. Honoured to get this call. Are you keeping well, Sir?'

'Oh yes. Fantastic.'

'Happy to know that, Sir.'

'Now... You are going to Iceland. Please ask them how their work in earthquake anticipation goes.'

'I will do that, Sir.'

'You know Iceland is volcanically active.'

'I have gathered that, Sir.'

"So, find that out and let me know."

"Of course, Sir..."

A few pleasantries followed before he hung up having tuned me to an aspect of diplomacy I would have neither dreamed of – creative engagement in what President Kalam would call 'core competence'. The conversation brought to life Clarke and our conversation in Colombo.

In Reykjavik, I did find out what the President had asked. 'You see, Mr. Ambassador,' I was told by a senior seismologist. 'It is like a cerebral situation. The brain suffers a series of mini-strokes like the equivalent of 1 or 2 on the Richter scale. You will not feel them. Such small tremors are not recorded either, except by the seismograph. We see the behaviour of those 'mini-tremors' and conclude by the frequency and the velocity of the series as to when a big quake is likely to occur. We have progressed in our work but much more needs to be done.'

Preparing for the 'big one'

Today India has a sophisticated set of monitors embedded beneath the soil's surface in many vulnerable points as a result of President Kalam's lively interest and the earnest follow-up by successive Ministers in charge of Earth Sciences. India probably has collaborations with other countries in this field as well which can only be described as a life-and-death one.

But even as cyclones intensifying their frequency and velocity makes us anxious about our littoral safety,

tremors having rocked Delhi with disturbing frequency since April this year must make us want to know how prepared we are for the 'big one', should it visit Himalayan and sub-Himalayan India. And this 'over and above' the pandemic.

The Himalayas are young and resitive. Are our cities, towns and villages on and around the Himalayas safe against such a shock? Are we regulating high-rise constructions in zones of high vulnerability like Delhi and hill stations? Is it time for a second look at dams and nuclear power installations in the region for their quake-resistant standards?

Clarke's *Richter Ten* is fiction but not fantasy. Not for us in India, Pakistan, Afghanistan where the subcontinent's pushing into upper Asia has not stopped.

How many of us recall how many died and were rendered homeless in Latur (1993), in Kutch (2001) or even in the Indian Ocean tsunami (2004)? And the one of 2005 which left 79,000 officially dead in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir and 1,500 in Jammu and Kashmir, and more recently, the one that all but flattened Nepal (2015, 8.1 'Mercalli Severe')?

We are not to get alarmed. But we are to be alert. And that includes short-, medium- and long-term action. The short term requires that vulnerable buildings be identified and plans for their occupants' safety made. The medium term requires that a new architecture regime be made mandatory for all builders and developers. The long-term action has to include a de-congesting of our cities. If South Africa can have one political capital, another legislative capital, a third judicial capital and a fourth business capital, why should we not think of such a dispersal at the Centre and in the States? And it has to include a clear-eyed survey of dangerous densities, vulnerable heights, clogged accesses.

New Delhi is receiving political and architectural attention for a major overhaul of its official buildings. New Delhi and much more seem to be receiving seismic attention as well that could do more than overhaul. But if not yet predictable and certainly not preventable, that seismic plan can yet have its impact blunted if we think and act betimes.

Gopalkrishna Gandhi is a former administrator, diplomat and governor

Chaos and insensitivity reign

Even now, migrant workers continue to be treated as irritants



T.M. KRISHNA

anger is unleashed on the migrants. Earlier that morning, a few hundred migrants were beaten when they wanted to enter the shelter. The man I mentioned waited in a corner just outside the gate, still hoping to get in, only to be told that he should ask Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee for help. Migrants who have found room in a shelter or a seat in a train are reminded that they are the fortunate ones who need to be grateful.

The chaos and insensitivity is evident everywhere. At times, members of civil society had to inform the police about the location of the local government shelter or availability of space. Coordination between the local police and revenue officials and between districts has been abysmal. At the Red Hills junction, some migrants from Jharkhand were being told to leave. 'The shelter nearby is full. What can we do?' said the revenue inspector. After some cajoling, he said, 'We cannot handle people from Jharkhand today. We have to first send those from Chhattisgarh on the train.' What will these people do, we asked. They had no answer. 'Why can't officials keep them within their own districts,' the official complained. An inter-district fight on who should take care of migrants is also in play.

Some migrants have used their limited savings to buy cycles for the ride home. The new fancy of the exercise-obsessed upper-middle class is cycling. But here we have people who do not have the extra cash being forced to buy a cycle just to go home. A few weeks ago, a man was found dead in Kavvappetai, near the Tamil Nadu-Andhra Pradesh border, while cycling home to Odisha.

A dystopian world

Over the past few weeks, the number of migrants on the road has come down. That is only because of the work of volunteer groups and the pressure they have applied on the government. Late last month, the Madras High Court instructed the State government to publish a list of shelters that can be accessed by workers in distress, and the state and the Railways Ministry to publish a schedule of Shramik trains. But this must indeed be a dystopian world if courts need to intervene for such fundamental matters. And if the courts refuse to do so, as in the case of the Supreme Court, no one is held responsible for governmental inaction.

Earlier, even in the worst of times, migrants found their way home on a bus, train or truck. But today, they have been made to beg and suffer for no fault of theirs. It is clear that, even after so much outcry, migrant workers continue to be treated as irritants.

T.M. Krishna is a musician and author. His most recent book is *Sebastian And Sons: A Brief History of Mrdangam Makers*.

For a strong and vibrant Bar

The Bar Council of India cannot intrude into the affairs of an independent Bar Association

N.G.R PRASAD & K.K. RAM SIDDHARTHA

Over the past few weeks, there has been a lot of criticism about the functioning of the judiciary. The Supreme Court's inaction in addressing the concerns of migrant workers attracted sharp criticism from several quarters, which is why the apex court woke up from its slumber and took stock of the issue.

It is in this context that the show-cause notice issued by the Bar Council of India (BCI) to Dushyant Dave and other members of the Supreme Court Bar Association (SCBA) has to be viewed. Notice was issued to them for not having obeyed the BCI's May 10 resolution and for having made derogatory remarks against the resolution. This is an attempt to curb the independent functioning of lawyers and lawyers' associations. Instead of looking at criticism as healthy and necessary, the powers that be feel that the Bar is intimidating.

Infighting within the SCBA

The current issue has its genesis in Justice Arun Mishra's description of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, at an international judicial conference in February 2020, as an "internationally acclaimed visionary" and a "versatile genius". These statements drew severe condemnation from various quarters, including the SCBA which said: "The SCBA believes that any such statement reflects poorly on the independence of the judiciary and so calls upon the Honourable Judges not to make any statements in future nor show any proximity or closeness to the Executive, including Higher Functionaries." However, on May 7, the Secretary of the SCBA, Ashok Arora, called for a general body meeting on May 11 for the removal of Mr. Dave as President and from the primary membership of the SCBA alleging misuse of the body for political purposes. The next day, the SCBA's Executive Committee suspended Mr. Arora saying his actions were against the interests of the association.

Instead of working out a remedy within the SCBA, which was the only proper course as it is an independent body that functions within its own laws, Mr. Arora made a representa-

tion to the BCI against the resolution removing him as secretary. The BCI, at its meeting held on May 11, strangely assumed powers and passed a resolution reinstating Mr. Arora. Mr. Dave rightly criticised the resolution of the BCI, which in turn promptly issued the showcause notice.

Does the BCI have the powers to interfere in a Bar Association's internal matter? There is no such provisions under the Advocates Act of 1961 and the BCI rules. The BCI appears to be relying on the provisions of Section 7 of the Advocates Act, which lays down the functioning of the BCI. However, Section 7 does not justify such intrusion by the BCI into an independent Bar Association's affairs.

Dangerous incursions

The BCI's action is surprising as a Division Bench of the Madhya Pradesh High Court said in its judgment in *Bar Association Lahar v. State Bar Council of M.P. and Another* (2018): "...no provision of statute or any Rule has been brought to the notice of this Court.... conferring power to the State Bar Council to interfere with the election process and internal affairs of the Bar Associations."

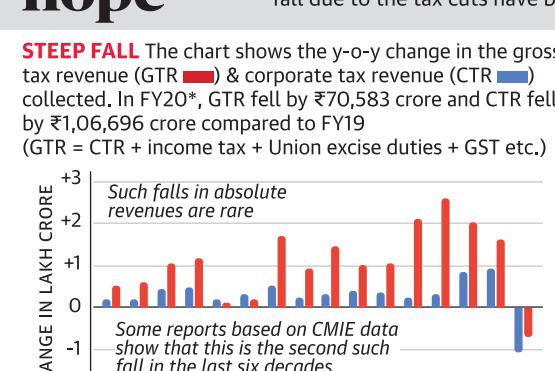
By arbitrarily encroaching upon the SCBA's internal functioning, the BCI is at cross purposes. So far it has been confining its role to maintaining professional standards of lawyers towards clients. But it is now playing a supervisory role over the SCBA which is not provided for in the statutes. In fact, it is the Bar Associations that have played a larger role in protecting the integrity and independence of the judiciary.

Such dangerous incursions by the BCI have a deep and pervasive effect on the independent functioning of the Bar Associations not only in the Supreme Court but throughout the country. With a strong executive, the importance of an independent judiciary becomes all the more important. Consequently, the role of the Bar Associations to question and safeguard the institution assumes importance. A strong and vibrant Bar is a sine qua non for a fair and fearless judiciary.

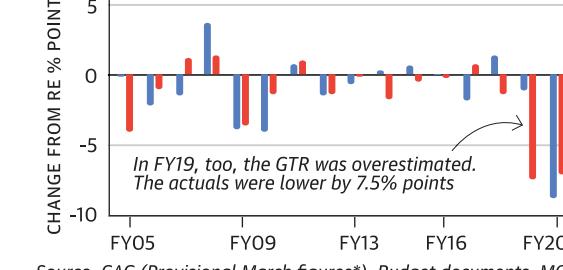
N.G.R. Prasad & K.K. Ram Siddhartha are advocates at the Madras High Court

Belying hope

Deep corporate tax cuts, announced in September last year, were aimed at spurring investments in the economy. The companies were expected to reinvest their profits. However, latest data show that not only have investments gone down overall, but revenue fall due to the tax cuts have been steeper than expected. By **The Hindu Data Team**



GROSS OVERESTIMATION The chart depicts the change in percentage points in actual GTR and CTR collections compared to the revised estimates (RE) presented in Budget documents. The actual GTR collected was 7.1% points and CTR was 8.8% points lower than the revised estimates presented in February. Such levels of revenue overestimation were not seen in the last 15 years at least

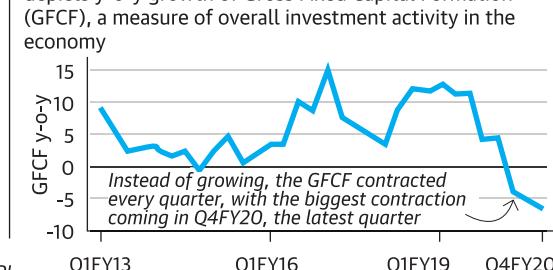


Source: CAG (Provisional March figures*), Budget documents, MOSPI

BURDEN SHIFT The chart depicts the income tax revenue (ITR) levied on individuals; firms other than companies and CTR (levied on companies) as a % of gross tax revenue. While until FY97, the share was exactly the same, the share of CTR surged between FY04 and FY13 while the share of ITR grew at a sedate pace. Since FY13, the share of CTR has plummeted but ITR's share continues to grow. Individuals paying income tax are carrying more of the tax burden in relation to corporates compared to the past



INVESTMENTS GO DOWN FURTHER The corporate tax cuts were expected to spur investments. But investments only further plummeted in the latest quarter. The graph depicts y-o-y growth of Gross Fixed Capital Formation (GFCF), a measure of overall investment activity in the economy



Source: GFCF data from MOSPI



DATA POINT

The Hindu

FROM THE ARCHIVES

FIFTY YEARS AGO JUNE 2, 1970

FROM PAGE ONE

A rude welcome for Odisha's migrants

The village sarpanch thinks the migrant workers staying in culverts and forests are a ploy to defame her.

"We have set up three quarantined centres in our village. Only 16 people are staying there. Why are rooms lying vacant?" asked Mahana Jal, Biripali's sarpanch.

Ms Jal, however, had no convincing answers as to why the village did not continue as a containment zone and returnees were allowed to spread out all over village. According to her, 80 tests were conducted in Biripali and 12 were positive.

With fear of the pandemic in the air, the migrant la-

bours say that till they are tested negative, they will not return home. The steady stream of returning migrants from Mumbai and Hyderabad is already adding to the woes.

"It is just the beginning, but the administration is nowhere to be seen. People are arriving from all corners of the country. Had Biripali been an urban area, containment measures would have been enforced by now. The administration should not have left villagers to fend for themselves," said Prashant Kumar Nayak, who heads Palli Alok Pathagar, a Balangir-based social organisation.

Monsoon hits Kerala with cyclone in background

After Kerala, the monsoon is normally expected to reach Goa, Arunachal Pradesh, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and Assam by June 5 and Mumbai by June 10. But the cyclone, if it persists or gains in strength, could block the monsoon system.

Squally winds with speeds reaching 45-55 kmph, gusting to 65 kmph, were prevailing over the Arabian Sea. It would likely become 50-60 kmph, gusting to 70 kmph, during the next 48 hours and amplify to 105-115 kmph by the time the cyclone makes landfall. These gales, along with heavy rain, are likely to be registered in Raigad, Mumbai, Palghar and Thane in Maharashtra, the IMD's latest advisory notes.

On Monday, the IMD an-

nounced that India would get more rain – or 2% more than its 88 cm long period average – than initially anticipated. "In April, we'd said India is likely to get 100% of its long period average between June and September. The good news is that we are likely to get some more," he said.

Most parts of India, except for the north-eastern region, are expected to get more rain than normal. North-western India is expected to get 107% of its normal, central India 103% and the southern peninsula 102%. North-eastern India is expected to get only 96% of its long-term average. Rains in July were likely to be 3% above what's usual for the month, but August would see a 3% decline, he said.

Moody's downgrades India's rating

"Thereafter and over the longer term, growth rates are likely to be materially lower than in the past, due to persistent weak private sector investment, tepid job creation and an impaired financial system," the rating agency said.

Moody's had upgraded the country's rating to Baa2 in November 2017. While downgrading the rating on Monday, Moody's said while the action is taken in the context of the coronavirus pandemic, it was not driven by the impact of the pandemic.

"Rather, the pandemic amplifies vulnerabilities in

India's credit profile that were present and building prior to the shock, and which motivated the assignment of a negative outlook last year," the agency said.

Moody's said slow reform momentum and constrained policy effectiveness have contributed to a prolonged period of slow growth, compared to India's potential, that started before the pandemic.

The government measures, before and after the lockdown which was aimed to boost demand, will not durably restore real GDP growth to rates around 8%, it said.

Pulses, oilseeds see sharp hike in MSP

For the rest of the crops, return to farmers over their cost of production is estimated to be at least 50%.

Among cereals, the government increased the support price of bajra by ₹150 to ₹2,150 per quintal for this year, while that of ragi has been raised by ₹145 to ₹3,295 per quintal and maize by ₹90 per quintal to

₹1,850 per quintal for the current year.

Likewise, the MSP for jowar has been increased by ₹70 per quintal for this year.

The government has increased the MSP of urad by ₹300 per quintal to ₹6,000 per quintal, while that of tur has been raised by ₹200 per quintal to ₹6,000 per quintal.

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Rajya Sabha elections rescheduled to June 19

Lockdown delayed polling in 18 seats in seven States

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The elections to 18 Rajya Sabha seats that were deferred owing to the lockdown will be held on June 19, the Election Commission said on Monday.

Polling for four seats each in Andhra Pradesh and Gujarat, three each in Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan, two seats in Jharkhand and one each in Manipur and Meghalaya was earlier scheduled for March 26, the day after the initial three-week lockdown began.

The EC said it decided to hold the polling and counting on June 19 after reviewing the matter and taking into account the Union Home Ministry's May 30 guidelines and the inputs from the Chief Electoral Officers of



Thirty-seven RS seats were filled without contest.

the States. Starting Monday, several of the restrictions imposed under the previous phases of the lockdown have been eased.

The Commission has also decided that the Chief Secretaries shall depute a senior officer from the State to ensure that the extant instructions regarding CO-

VID-19 containment measures are complied with while making arrangements for conducting the elections. Further, the Commission has appointed the Chief Electoral Officer concerned as Observer for the election in the respective State," the ECI said.

The ECI on February 25 announced elections to 55 seats from 17 States to fill the vacancies caused by those retiring in April.

After the last date for withdrawal of nominations on March 18, 37 seats from 10 States were declared filled without contest. Polling for the rest was scheduled for March 26, and the elections were to have been completed by March 30. The ECI deferred the elections in its order on March 24.

Cong. raises queries on LAC strife

'It's time PM and Defence Minister took the nation and parties into confidence'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The Congress on Monday asked Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Defence Minister Rajnath Singh to take the nation and political parties into confidence on reports of "serious transgression" by Chinese troops in Ladakh and Sikkim, as it was a matter of "territorial integrity".

"This is not a matter of blame game. It is a matter of ensuring absolute, complete and total protection of national and India's territorial integrity and there can be no compromise there," Congress chief spokesperson Randeep Surjewala said at an online press conference. "It's time the government, that is the Prime Minister and the Defence Minister, took the nation and the political parties into confidence."

Mr. Surjewala said that information available in the public domain as well as as-

essment by security experts, including former Northern Army chief Lt. General (Retd) D.S. Hooda, was that Chinese forces may have made incursions at three points in Ladakh and Sikkim.

Several questions

The transgressions were reportedly in the Galwan River Valley and Pangong Tso Lake area in Ladakh, the Congress leader said.

"Security experts and Army veterans are seeing the Chinese transgressions into the Galwan River Valley as an attempt to threaten the Durbuk-Shyok-DBO Road which

is vital to servicing Indian troops in Sub-Sector North and close to the Karakoram pass," Mr. Surjewala said.

Posing a series of questions, the Congress said the government should inform citizens of the actual situation on the border and the steps it had taken to protect India's territorial integrity.

"Have Chinese troops occupied Indian territory in the Galwan River Valley and Pangong Tso Lake in Ladakh? Have they pitched hundreds of tents, constructed concrete structures and built a few kilometres of road along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in Galwan Riv-

er Valley and on the north bank of Pangong Tso Lake?" Mr. Surjewala asked.

A few days ago, former Congress chief Rahul Gandhi too had asked the government to "come clean on the border issue as it had fuelled unnecessary speculation".

He was speaking at the 25th foundation day and silver jubilee celebration of the Rajiv Gandhi Institute of Health Sciences. He participated in the function online from New Delhi.

"Because of mob mentality, those on duty – doctors, nurses, and other healthcare workers – are subjected to violence," the Prime Minister said.

"Doctors and medical workers are like soldiers without uniform. The virus may be invisible, but our corona warriors are invincible. In the battle of the invisible and the invincible, our medical workers are sure to win," he said.

3 infiltrators killed near LoC: Army

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

SRINAGAR

Three infiltrators were killed by a counter-infiltration grid of the security forces along the Line of Control (LoC) in the Pir Panjal Valley's Rajouri district on Monday, according to the Army and police officials.

The attempt to push heavily armed militants was foiled in the Kaboutar-Gala area of the Nowshera Sector. "Three unidentified armed militants were killed and the fourth one was injured," officials said.

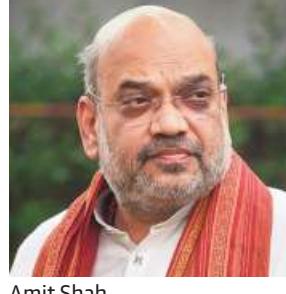
BJP State president Sanjay Jaiswal said Mr. Shah would address "at least 1 lakh people across all 243 constituencies in Bihar through video-conference and Facebook

BJP plans e-campaign in Bihar

Shah to address one lakh people via videoconference, Facebook on June 9

AMARNATH TEWARY

PATNA



Senior BJP leader and Union Home Minister Amit Shah will address a virtual rally in poll-bound Bihar on June 9, followed by similar rallies by party president J.P. Nadda and other leaders.

The Assembly elections in Bihar with 243 constituencies are due later in October-November.

BJP State president Sanjay Jaiswal said Mr. Shah would address "at least 1 lakh people across all 243 constituencies in Bihar through video-conference and Facebook

tions in the State," Mr. Jaiswal further said.

Mr. Nadda, party sources said, is expected to address people of north and south Bihar separately.

Other parties too have set up their poll campaign machinery on social media, with regular tweets and comments by their leaders. Observers say that the BJP, with its huge IT cell and media team, has a significant advantage over its adversaries in a digital campaign.

In Bihar, the BJP has shared power with alliance partner Janata Dal(U) for a

long time.

Replying to questions, Mr. Jaiswal thanked Prime Minister Narendra Modi for the "financial assistance to Bihar during the COVID-19 crisis".

"Be it fixing problems of bad debts in banks or long-standing issues like triple talaq and Article 370, PM Modi's government has always acted decisively. Even the low fatality rate in the country due to COVID-19 is by virtue of the Prime Minister's leadership, which is why he rules the hearts of the masses and would continue to do so," Mr. Jaiswal added.

Two CBI officials test positive for COVID-19

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

Two junior-level officials posted at the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) headquarters have tested positive for COVID-19.

"They contracted the virus outside the CBI headquarters," said an official. All offices at the headquarters were being sanitised daily. "Those coming to office wear masks, apart from taking other precautionary steps like social distancing. Sanitisers have also been provided," the official said.

Study backs India's current policy of recommending it as a preventive

JACOB KOSHY

NEW DELHI

More than four doses of hydroxychloroquine, along with the use of personal protective equipment (PPE), appeared to protect healthcare workers from SARS-CoV-2, according to the first such published investigation in India on the drug's preventive effects by researchers at the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR).

While globally several studies have failed to show HCQ as useful for treating those moderately or severely sick from the disease, studies are under way to establish if it might confer some benefit on the healthy in preventing them from catching the disease.

While this study that lists among its authors the Director General of the ICMR and scientists in government committees tasked with managing the COVID-19 response purports benefit from HCQ, it is yet unable to clear-



A majority of the health staff on HCQ for six weeks or more tested negative during the ICMR study.

ly differentiate whether protective gear or external factors had a greater role than HCQ in staving off infection.

For the study, published online in the ICMR's *Indian Journal of Medical Research*, researchers contacted and interviewed 751 healthcare workers who reported COVID-19 symptoms. About half tested positive for SARS-CoV-2 and the researchers primarily focused on how many of them were taking HCQ and the frequency of dosage.

They also recorded how many of them used masks and gloves and how many were working in extremely close proximity to aerosols generated by COVID-19 patients, for instance intubating swab sample.

Fifty per cent of those not on HCQ tested positive and up to 70% of those who had taken a weekly dose of 400 mg of HCQ for three weeks tested positive. However, only 40% of those who had taken 4-5 doses tested positive and – only 10% of those on the drug for six weeks or more reported testing positive. Of those on HCQ alone, 130 tested positive and 133 tested negative and of those not on HCQ at all, 206 tested positive and 180 didn't test positive. The findings, the authors said, "lend support" to India's current policy of recommending HCQ as a preventive in health workers and high-risk asymptomatic contacts of patients.

Street vendors to get credit without collateral

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs on Monday launched a micro-credit scheme for street vendors, which was announced by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on May 14 as part of the economic package for those affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and lockdown.

The Pradhan Mantri Street Vendor's Atma Nirbhar Nidhi Scheme is aimed at benefiting over 50 lakh vendors who had their businesses operational on or before March 24. The scheme is valid till March 2022, the Ministry said in a statement. The vendors will be able to apply for a working capital loan of up to ₹10,000, which is repayable in monthly instalments within a year.

"On timely/early repayment of the loan, an interest subsidy of 7% per annum will be credited to the bank accounts of beneficiaries through direct benefit transfer on a six-monthly basis. There will be no penalty on early repayment of the loan," the Ministry said.

The Ministry said an online portal and mobile application were being developed to ensure speedy implementation of the scheme. The loans would be without collateral, it said. The loans are meant to help kick-start activity for vendors who have been left without any income since the lockdown began on March 25.



सरकारी जरूरी

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA

MINISTRY OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT
DEPARTMENT OF HIGHER EDUCATION

No. 2589/Rec/Admn/2020

Advertisement

Appointment of Vice-Chancellor of Guru Ghasidas Vishwavidyalaya (A Central University), Bilaspur(C.G.)

The Guru Ghasidas Vishwavidyalaya is an institution of excellence in higher learning and research.

The Vice-Chancellor, being the academic as well as administrative head, is expected to be:

- A visionary with proven leadership qualities, administrative capabilities as well as teaching and research credentials.
- Having outstanding academic record throughout and a minimum of 10 year's experience as a Professor in a University or 10 year's of reputed research and/or academic administrative organization with proof of having demonstrated academic leadership.
- Preferably not more than 65 years of age as on the closing date of receipt of applications of this advertisement.

Salary and Service Conditions:

- The post carries a pay of Rs. 2,10,000/- (Fixed) per month with Special Allowances of Rs. 11,250/- and other usual allowances.
- The terms and conditions of the services will be those as set forth in the Act, Statutes and Ordinances of the University.

Procedure for appointment:

- Appointment will be made from a panel of names recommended by a Committee constituted under the provisions of the Central Universities Act, 2009.
- The advertisement and the format of application are available on the websites <http://mhrd.gov.in> and <http://www.ggu.ac.in>
- The Applications in the **prescribed proforma** should reach within 30 days from the date of the publication of this advertisement, by Registered/Speed Post to:

Director (Central Universities), Department of Higher Education, Ministry of HRD, Room No. 429, 'C' wing, Shastri Bhawan, New Delhi-110115

"Application for the post of Vice-Chancellor, 'GGV', should be super-scribed on the envelope.

This department is not responsible for postal delay

APPOINTMENT



सरकारी जरूरी

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA

MINISTRY OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT
DEPARTMENT OF HIGHER EDUCATION

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Our corona warriors are invincible: PM

STAFF REPORTER

BENGALURU

Violence, abuse and rude behaviour directed against frontline workers fighting COVID-19 is not acceptable, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Monday.

He was speaking at the 25th foundation day and silver jubilee celebration of the Rajiv Gandhi Institute of Health Sciences. He participated in the function online from New Delhi.

"Because of mob mentality, those on duty – doctors, nurses, and other healthcare workers – are subjected to violence," the Prime Minister said.

"Doctors and medical workers are like soldiers without uniform. The virus may be invisible, but our corona warriors are invincible. In the battle of the invisible and the invincible, our medical workers are sure to win," he said.

This is not a matter of blame game. It is a matter of ensuring absolute, complete and total protection of national and India's territorial integrity and there can be no compromise there

RANDEEP SURJEWALA, Congress chief spokesperson

er Valley and on the north bank of Pangong Tso Lake?" Mr. Surjewala asked.

A few days ago,

Assam flood toll up to nine

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GUWAHATI

While water levels have fallen in the inundated districts of Assam, two more people were reported drowned on Monday, taking the flood-related toll to nine. Officials of the Assam State Disaster Management Authority (ASDMA) said the floodwaters had continued to recede since May 28 with the number of affected districts down from 11 to three.

While more than 14,500 of the 21,807 people returning home from relief camps, the number of affected people came down from 2.52 lakh to 1.97 lakh during the last 24 hours.

"Two people died in the Kampur area of (central Assam's) Nagaon district, although (western Assam's) Goalpara district remains the worst affected with 1.48 lakh people still unable to return home," an official said.

Denying bail to political prisoners is callous'

Life and health of all prisoners is the responsibility of the State which must ensure that all are safe: PUCL

SONAM SAIGAL
MUMBAI

The denial of bail to all accused in the Elgaar Parishad-Bhima Koregaon case was "patently callous", the People's Union for Civil Liberties (PUCL) said on Monday, and urged that the health and safety of political prisoners be treated with the same urgency as other prisoners.

In a press statement, PUCL said the life and health of all prisoners, convicted or undertrial, is the responsibility of the State which must ensure that all are safe and protected.

The statement was issued following the hospitalisation of poet-activist Varavara Rao (81) on May 28, after he could not be treated in Taloja Jail. He has multiple ailments including coronary artery disease. On Monday afternoon, he was discharged from JJ Hospital and



Poet-activist Varavara Rao arrested in the Elgaar Parishad case. ■ FILE PHOTO

sent back to Taloja jail. Mr. Rao and other activists arrested in connection with the case are lodged in various jails in Mumbai. While Anand Teltumbde (70) has respiratory problems, Gautam Navlakha (67) is a patient of colonic polyposis, chronic gastritis, and hypertension. Shoma Sen (61) suffers from hypertension and arthritis and Sudha Bharadwaj (58) has hypertension and diabetes.

The recent rejection of bail applications, PUCL said, and the sudden transfer of Mr. Navlakha to the National Investigation Agency (NIA), raised questions about the rights of political prisoners amidst the COVID-19 crisis.

The PUCL said, "Repeated rejections of interim bail petitions make clear that existing medical conditions of political prisoners are not regarded as reasonable

grounds for bail, even in the context of a pandemic. These rejections are outcomes of mechanical decisions taken by High-Powered Committees. The security considerations which prompt these Committees to exclude a section of prisoners based on their alleged offence, has in effect, condemned these el-

derly and vulnerable inmates to reside in abysmal prison conditions in COVID times."

The two-page statement said, "What is disturbing is that when denying them bail, courts have not even passed orders to keep these prisoners in safe surroundings within the jail, given their advanced age and ailments. Though the NIA admitted before the Mumbai special court on April 25 that one of its officers, in the police station where Mr. Teltumbde was kept for interrogation, had tested positive, the court turned down Mr. Teltumbde's bail application and sent him to judicial custody at Arthur Road Jail, a COVID-19 hotspot. Ms. Bharadwaj had drawn the court's attention to the fact that 'social distancing' was impossible in the overcrowded Byculla Women's Jail, and that an inmate has recently tested

positive. Yet, her bail application was turned down on May 29. And Taloja jail where Mr. Rao and Mr. Navlakha are lodged, also has a confirmed COVID-19 death."

"Denial of bail are acts of persecution committed against those who have existing medical vulnerabilities. The fear of infection is extremely high in overcrowded jails, known for their insanitary and inhuman conditions. In COVID-19 times, especially when Maharashtra has emerged as the State with the highest number of cases, differentially treating bail petitions by political prisoners is gross injustice. The utter helplessness of the prisoner is evident from the hospitalisation of Mr. Rao, and from the case of Mr. Navlakha who was not produced before the court that granted permission for his transfer," the statement said.

NPCI denies breach of BHIM app data

7 million records exposed, says report

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Following a report by security researchers alleging leak of personal data of millions of users of the BHIM payment application due to a website breach, the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) on Monday denied the claim, asking "everyone to not fall prey to such speculation".



BHIM is a money transfer and mobile payments app.

"In this case, the data was stored on an unsecured Amazon Web Services (AWS) S3 bucket," it said.

"The scale of the exposed data is extraordinary, affecting millions of people all over India and exposing them to potentially devastating fraud, theft, and attack from hackers and cybercriminals," it said, adding that the developers of the website could have easily avoided exposing user data if they had taken some basic security measures to protect the users' data.

The report claims that a website, <http://cscbhim.in/>, developed by CSC e-Governance Services, in partnership with the Indian government, was being used in a campaign to sign up users and business merchants to the BHIM app. "All related data was being stored on a 'misconfigured' Amazon Web Services S3 bucket and was publicly accessible," it said.

Unsecured storage

The report explained that S3 buckets were a popular form of cloud storage across the world but required developers to set up the security protocols on their accounts.

The researchers said that after receiving no reply from the website's developers, they reached out to India's Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT-In) twice, following which the breach was closed.

"We have come across some news reports which suggest data breach at BHIM app. We would like to clarify that there has been no data compromise at BHIM App and request everyone not fall prey to such speculation."

NPCI follows high level of security and an integrated approach to protect its infrastructure and continue to provide a robust payments ecosystem," NPCI said in a statement.

Locusts fly into Chhattisgarh from M.P.

Minimal damage done to crop so far by the swarms as alert is maintained, say government officials

SIDHARTH YADAV
BHOPAL

Swarms of desert locusts flew into two villages of Korea district of Chhattisgarh from neighbouring Madhya Pradesh but caused minimal damage, State government officials said on Monday.

"The swarms descended on three villages on Saturday night, but one of them flew away from a village the next morning," District Collector Satyanarayan Rathore said.

On Sunday, a swarm remained between Punji and Kharwatala villages of Bharatpur block of the district. "We



Note of caution: Locust swarms can be killed by pesticides but some move away to nearby districts. ■ PTI

sprayed pesticide, which killed most of them. All panchayats are on alert and fire tenders have been put on standby," he added.

A further advance inside

Chhattisgarh depended on Madhya Pradesh's handling of swarms and the wind direction, Maninder Kaur Dwivedi, Principal Secretary of the Chhattisgarh Agriculture Department, told *The Hindu*.

No standing crops

"If they don't manage to kill them all, they are likely to come here. There is a nationwide alert already. As there are no standing crops at the moment, there was no damage in Korea," Ms. Dwivedi added.

On May 29, State Director

of Agriculture Taman Singh Sonwani alerted district officials to possible invasions and asked them to tour villages to apprise villagers of it.

Mr. Singh had informed agriculture officials that swarms could invade Chhattisgarh from neighbouring Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh.

He directed officials to spread awareness among farmers and teach them natural remedies, traditional alternatives and chemical methods to prevent any crop damage.

Gas blowout: OIL asks pvt. firm to explain

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GUWAHATI

Oil India Limited (OIL) has issued a show-cause notice to the Gujarat-based exploration and production firm that was outsourced the operation of the Bagjan natural gas well where a blowout occurred on May 27.

OIL's Chairman and Managing Director Sushil Chandra Mishra on Monday said John Energy Pvt Ltd had been asked to explain the blowout at the well in Tinsukia district of Assam.

COVID-19 strikes fear in Bru refugee camp in Tripura

Man who travelled from Chennai tests positive



Naisingpara without informing anyone," she added.

The man is said to be a local Reang (another name for Bru) tribal although Damcherra, along with Naisingpara, has one of seven relief camps for some 35,000 Bru people displaced from Mizoram since 1997 due to ethnic clashes.

North Tripura district officials did not rule out the possibility of health teams not ensuring proper home quarantine for the Reang man.

"He came from Chennai, stayed at an Agartala quarantine facility for less than two days and gave his address as Damcherra but came to his wife's house at

Seventy-three of the 446 firms, including multi-national companies, were delisted.

"The CPC had written to Home Ministry to give a clarity on the *swadeshi* order. The Ministry turned to the Commerce Ministry seeking clarification. Since the order had to be implemented from June 1, the official concerned released the list after getting feedback from the companies concerned. The clearance of the Ministry was not taken," a senior official said.

There are 119 master canteens that double as warehouses and more than 1,700 subsidiary canteens that act as retail outlets. They cater to nearly 10 lakh retired and serving personnel and their families, offering products at cheaper than market prices.

The camp is about 185 km northeast of Agartala.

"We have transported him to Agartala for treat-

Flip-flop on ban list for CAPF canteens

Centre recalls order as many items made by Indian companies were on the list

VIJAYA SINGH
NEW DELHI

ously issued at the level of Chief Executive Officer. The list has been withdrawn and action is being initiated for the lapse," said a statement issued by A.P. Maheshwari, Director-General, CRPF, who chairs the Welfare and Rehabilitation Board.

The order said there were three categories of products: purely made in India; raw materials imported but products manufactured/imported in India; and purely imported products.

It said the list has been prepared based on the information provided by the firms. Products from Usha, Dabur, Philips India, Nilkamal, Eagle Home Appliances, Colgate Palmolive, CavinKare, Blue Star and Bajaj Electricals were among those banned.

On May 14, the CPC wrote to all the 446 "Indian and multinational companies" seeking product-wise information on the "criterion of *swadeshi*".

The CAPF canteens offer products at prices cheaper than market rates.

A range of products of Celio, LG Electronics, Panasonic, Samsung, Proctor and Gamble, Hindustan Unilever Ltd., Singer India, Red Bull and Swiss Military Lifestyle will not be sold.

On May 14, the CPC wrote to all the 446 "Indian and multinational companies" seeking product-wise information on the "criterion of *swadeshi*".

SUDOKU



DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★☆

Solution to puzzle 12950

Solution to yesterday's Sudoku



FAITH

Merciful Narasimha

Periazhvar uses the phrase 'ulam thottu', when he talks of Narasimha slaying Hiranyakasipu. This means that the Lord touches the demon's heart, before He kills him. The Lord does so to check if somewhere in some corner of Hiranyakasipu's heart, there is some bhakti towards the Lord, said M.A. Venkatakrishnan in a discourse.

When Vibhishana approaches Rama, the latter says that He will not abandon anyone who comes with a friendly appearance, even if he has a flaw. Some people openly say they are atheists, but are actually believers. If they do have bhakti towards Him, then even if they pretend to be atheists, He does not reject them.

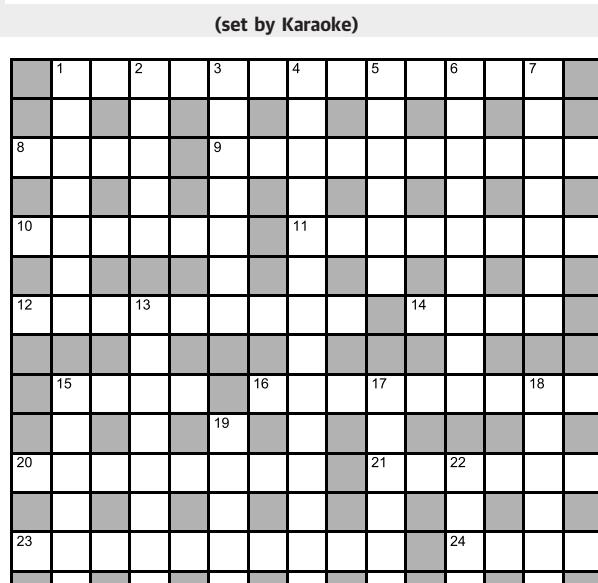
Acharyas have said that even if our love for God is mere pretence, He will still accept even that pretended love and bless us! Now how is this possible? Think of a cow whose calf dies. The cow's udders are full of milk, and if the calf does not feed, the cow will suffer from pain in its udder. So, the cowherd skins the dead calf, and stuffs the skin with cotton. He then takes the stuffed calf to the cow. The cow's love for its calf leads to milk flowing from its udders. The calf is lifeless. And yet, the sight of the stuffed calf is enough to make the cow give up its milk, as if it is a live calf. If a cow can give so much milk to a stuffed calf, will the Lord not bless a person, whose affection for the Lord may not be real? Is the Lord not infinitely merciful?

So, the Lord checking Hiranyakasipu's heart, to see if there is some bhakti there, is only natural, for such is the nature of the Lord. The killing of Hiranyakasipu is due to His mercy. Only if He rids the demon of His body, will the atma be saved. To free the atma, He severs its connection to the body.

TH CROSSWORD + 12951

(set by Karaoke)

Feeling down in lockdown?
Get across to our Crossword site.
@ <https://crossword.thehindu.com>



■ ACROSS
1 One in adversity needs him (4,9)
8 Advantage when the master leaves the fruit for son (4)
9 He is one of the parties to the Contract (4,6)
10 Lion accommodates six-footer in outhouse (4-2)
11 Liqueur produced in estate (8)

12 Setter stops playing harmonica for new presenter (9)
14 Indecent, unauthorized reproduction, not sanctimonious (4)
15 Beams pull down audibly (4)
16 Ben walks out of heated deliberation on newspaper column (9)
20 Headsquare champion, a gangster (8)
21 Not returning to mingle with one now (2,4)
23 A test chart prepared with much difficulty (2,1,7)
24 God goes from back to front in swimming pool (4)
25 Wicked stepmother embarrassed for being crusty (5-8)

■ DOWN
1 Sailing ship gone down taking everything (7)
2 Protein formed by work and wrong (5)
3 Helping hand by fool reportedly (7)
4 Together they pound and ground Rotterdam planes (6,3,6)
5 Got even with baby's nappy in return (6)
6 Show just after switch (5,4)
7 None could go beyond this sign (2,5)
13 Magic word or abracadabra – sheer typo maybe (3,6)
15 Speaks eloquently with short break obstructed by appeal (7)
17 Tap shoe dancing in restaurant (3,4)
18 Publicity gets yield, without working. Agreed (7)
19 Reverend's Arctic tern for incentive (6)
22 Steam generator's lid is destroyed by tanker (5)

White House calls for 'law and order'

Antifa was 'certainly behind' violence, says spokesperson; critics accuse Trump of stoking tensions

REUTERS
WASHINGTON

The White House on Monday called for "law and order" and blamed agitators for a sixth straight night of violent nationwide U.S. protests triggered by anger over racial inequities and excessive police force.

Police and fire departments fought into the night to quell chaos of fires burning near the White House and shops looted in New York City and Southern California.

The National Guard said it had deployed in 23 States and Washington, D.C.

The unrest, which erupted as the country was reopening after lengthy lockdowns to stop the spread of the novel coronavirus, began with peaceful protests over the death of a black man, George Floyd, in police custody in Minneapolis last Monday.

Under curfew

Dozens of cities across the United States remain under curfews at a level not seen since riots following the 1968 assassination of civil rights



Near the seat of power: A police line forming by St. John's Episcopal Church, Washington DC near the White House, as demonstrators gather on Saturday. ■AP

activist Martin Luther King Jr.

"We need law and order in this country," White House spokeswoman Kayleigh McEnany told Fox News. She said Antifa, an anti-fascist group, was "certainly behind" the violence.

U.S. President Donald

Trump, who on Sunday branded the group a terrorist organisation, was due on Monday to meet his top law enforcement officer behind closed doors and then hold a call with Governors, law enforcement and national security officials.

Mr. Trump has made no

major public statement to address the growing crisis but has issued a flurry of tweets, describing protesters as "thugs" and urging Mayors and Governors to "get tough". He has threatened to utilise the U.S. military.

Critics accuse Mr. Trump,

who is seeking re-election in a November 3 election, of further stoking conflict and racial tension rather than seeking to bring the country together and address the underlying issues.

Further disruption

"He's not helping... He is not leading, he is causing further disruption," Atlanta Mayor Keisha Lance Bottoms told CNN on Monday.

"Unless he is going to speak unity and respect and reconciliation and reform for our communities, then I don't think that he should make a statement at all. It will only make matters worse."

Atlanta was among a string of cities where protests turned violent.

Floyd's death was the latest in a string of similar incidents involving unarmed black men in recent years that has raised an outcry over police force and racism, and reignited outrage across a politically and racially divided country that has been hard hit by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Protests show chronic disease of racism in U.S.: China

Washington's response to the unrest is a textbook example of its double standards, says Beijing

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
BEIJING

China said on Monday that unrest in the United States highlighted its severe problems of racism and police violence, and exposed Washington's double standards in supporting Hong Kong's protesters.

"Black people's lives are also lives. Their human rights must also be guaranteed," Foreign Ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian told re-

porters in Beijing, referring to the death in custody of an unarmed black man in Minneapolis.

Police violence

"Racism against ethnic minorities in the U.S. is a chronic disease of American society," Mr. Zhao added. "The current situation reflects once more the severity of the problems of racism and police violence in the U.S."

Chinese diplomats and

state media have seized on the violent unrest sparked by the death of George Floyd to accuse the U.S. of hypocrisy and compare American protesters with pro-democracy demonstrators in Hong Kong.

Mr. Zhao on Monday said the U.S. government's response to protests at home was a "textbook example of its world-famous double standards. "Why does the U.S. lionise the so-called

Hong Kong independence and black violence elements as heroes and activists, while calling people who protest against racism 'rioters'?" Mr. Zhao asked.

China has insisted that "foreign forces" are to blame for the turmoil in Hong Kong, where pro-democracy protesters – described by Beijing as rioters – have marched in the millions since June last year and often clashed with the police.

Foreign ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying also took aim at Washington.

"I can't breathe," she said on Twitter, with a screenshot of a tweet by U.S. State Department spokeswoman Morgan Ortagus that had criticised China's policy in Hong Kong. Ms. Hua was quoting the words Floyd was heard saying repeatedly before his death – after a police officer knelt on his neck for nearly nine minutes.

In the last two days five local infections were reported, breaking nearly two weeks of zero tallies.

Organisers accused police of using the virus as an excuse to ban the rally.

"I don't see why the government finds political rallies unacceptable while it gave green lights to resumption of schools and other services ranging from catering, karaoke to swimming pools," said Lee Cheuk-yan, chairman of the Hong Kong

Hong Kong bans Tiananmen vigil for first time in 30 years

Police cite the pandemic as reason for imposing restrictions

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
HONG KONG

Hong Kong police on Monday banned an upcoming vigil marking the Tiananmen crackdown anniversary citing the COVID-19 pandemic, the first time the gathering has been halted in three decades.

The candlelight June 4 vigil usually attracts huge crowds and is the only place on Chinese soil where such a major commemoration of the anniversary is still allowed.

Last year's gathering was especially large and came just a week before seven months of pro-democracy protests and clashes exploded onto the city's streets, sparked initially by a plan to allow extraditions to the authoritarian mainland.

But police rejected permission for this year's rally saying it would "constitute a major threat to the life and health of the general public", according to a letter of objection to organisers obtained by AFP.

Hong Kong has managed to keep the virus mostly in check, with just over 1,000 infections and four deaths. Bars, restaurants, gyms and cinemas have largely reopened in recent weeks.

In the last two days five local infections were reported, breaking nearly two weeks of zero tallies.

Organisers accused police of using the virus as an excuse to ban the rally.

Beijing says the law – which will bypass Hong Kong's legislature – is needed to tackle "terrorism" and "separatism".

Opponents fear it will bring mainland-style political oppression to a business hub supposedly guaranteed freedoms and autonomy for



Recalling history: A Hong Kong pro-democracy protester waving a British colonial flag during a rally at a shopping mall on Monday. ■AP

Alliance which has organised every vigil since 1990.

50 years after its 1997 handover to China by Britain.

The 1989 Tiananmen crackdown occurred when China's leaders sent tanks and troops to quell student protesters calling for democracy and an end to corruption.

Hundreds were killed, with some estimates suggesting that more than 1,000 perished.

Three decades on, it remains one of the most sensitive subjects in mainland China and any mention of it is strictly censored.

But in Hong Kong the memory of what happened is kept alive.

The annual vigils swelled before the 1997 handover to China and have become especially charged in recent years as many Hong Kongers chafe under Beijing's rule.

This year's anniversary is likely to coincide with Hong Kong's pro-government stacked legislature voting for a law banning insults to China's national anthem.

Iranian scientist jailed in U.S. to return

Asgari was acquitted in November

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
TEHRAN

Tehran said on Monday that scientist Soroush Asgari, one of more than a dozen Iranians behind bars in the U.S., is set to return to the Islamic republic within days.

Mr. Asgari was accused by a U.S. court in 2016 of stealing trade secrets while on an academic visit to Ohio. But the 59-year-old scientist from Tehran's Sharif University of Technology was acquitted in November.

The academic told British newspaper *The Guardian* in March that the Immigration and Customs Enforcement agency was keeping him in a detention centre in Louisiana without basic sanitation and refusing to let him re-



Soroush Asgari

turn to Iran despite his exoneration. "Dr. Soroush Asgari's case has been closed in America and he will probably return to the country in the next two or three days," said Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesman Abbas Mousavi.

Iran's Foreign Ministry said last month that Mr. Asgari had contracted the novel coronavirus while in U.S. custody.

Google rejects Australia's call for payout

Competition regulator had asked company to share revenue with media outlets

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
SYDNEY

Google has rejected demands it pay hundreds of millions of dollars per year in compensation to Australian news media under a government-imposed revenue sharing deal. The company's top executive in Australia said Google made barely Aus\$10 million (\$6.7 million) per year from news-linked advertising, a fraction of a government watchdog's estimates for the sector.

In an effort being closely watched around the world, Australia is set to unveil plans to force major Internet firms to share advertising revenue they earn from news featured in their services.

The country's competition regulator, the ACCC, has estimated that Google and

Facebook together earn some Aus\$6 billion (\$4 billion) per year from advertising in Australia.

Loss of revenue
Leading news publishers have demanded the two companies pay at least 10% of that money each year to local news organisations, which they say have lost the vast majority of their advertising revenue to the global technology giants. Mel Silva, Google's managing director for Australia, dismissed such

figures as wildly unrealistic. "We all agree that high-quality news has great social value, but we need to understand the economics as well," Ms. Silva said in a blog post on Sunday.

She said Google last year earned just Aus\$10 million in revenue from clicks on ads placed next to news-related search queries. "The bulk of our revenue comes not from news queries, but from queries with commercial intent, as when someone searches for 'running shoes' and then

clicks on an ad," she said. Ms. Silva also denied ACCC arguments that the tech firms gain significant "indirect benefits" from displaying news since the content draws users to their platforms. News "represents only a tiny number of queries" on Google, accounting last year for barely one percent of actions on Google Search in Australia, she said.

The Google executive said her company on the other hand provided Australia's news media with "substantial" value by sending people to their websites. She said Google search accounted for 3.44 billion visits to large and small Australian news publishers in 2018, valuing those referrals at more than Aus\$200 million per year for the news companies.

There is currently no vaccine for COVID-19, the disease caused by the new co-

A secretive, far-left movement with no official leader

Antifa members campaign against actions they view as authoritarian, homophobic, racist or xenophobic



Rallying for justice: A protester holding a skateboard in Los Angeles on Saturday, during a rally. ■AP

movement is secretive, has no official leaders and is organised into autonomous local cells. It is also one in a constellation of activist movements that have come together in the past few years to oppose the far right.

Antifa members campaign against actions they view as authoritarian, homophobic, racist or xenophobic. Although Antifa is not affiliated with other movements on the left – and is sometimes viewed as a distraction by other organisers – its members sometimes work with other local activist networks that are rallying around the same issues, such as the Occupy movement or Black Lives Matter.

The goals

Supporters generally seek to stop what they see as fascist, racist and far-right groups from having a platform to promote their views, arguing that public demonstration of those ideas leads to the targeting of marginalised people, including racial minorities and members of the LGBTQ community.

"The argument is that militant anti-fascism is inherently self-defense because of the historically documented violence that fascists pose, especially to marginalized people," said Mark Bray, a history lecturer at Dartmouth College and the author of *Antifa: The Anti-Fascist Handbook*.

Many Antifa organisers also participate in more peaceful forms of community organising, but they believe that using violence is justified because of their views that if racist or fascist groups are allowed to organise freely, "it will inevitably result in violence against marginalised communities," said Mr. Bray.

Although the Merriam-Webster dictionary says the word "Antifa" was first used in 1946 and was borrowed from a German phrase signalling opposition to Nazism, more people began joining the movement in the United States after the 2016 election of Mr. Trump to counter the

threat they believed was posed by the so-called alt-right, Mr. Bray said.

The reactions

The movement has been widely criticised among the mainstream left and right. After the protests in Berkeley, California, in August 2017, U.S. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi decried "the violent actions of people calling themselves Antifa" and said they should be arrested.

Conservative publications and politicians routinely rail against supporters of Antifa, who they say are seeking to shut down peaceful expression of conservative views. These critics point to moments when purported Antifa members have been accused of sucker-punching Trump supporters.

Militancy on the left can "become a justification for those in power and allies on the right to crack down," Ms. Ben-Ghiet said. "In these situations, the left, or Antifa, are historically placed in impossible situations." NY TIMES

Japan city to ban phone use while walking

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
TOKYO

It is a scene repeated the world over: pedestrians glued to their phones while walking, causing collisions and sometimes accidents. No more, says one Japanese city.

Officials in Yamato city, near Tokyo, on Monday submitted a bill to the city assembly to stop people from using their phones while walking. "The number of people using smartphones has rapidly increased and so have the number of accidents" in the densely populated area, city official Masaaki Yasumi said. "We want to prevent that," he said.

But Mr. Yasumi said there will be no punishment for those unable to tear themselves away from their screens in the street. Posters and messages will inform citizens of the rule, expected to take effect from next month.

ELSEWHERE



Constitutional reforms vote on July 1: Putin

MOSCOW

Russian President Vladimir Putin said on Monday that a delayed vote on constitutional reforms allowing him to potentially stay in power beyond 2024 would be held on July 1. "We will carry out the national vote on amendments to the Constitution of the Russian Federation on July 1," Mr. Putin said in a video-call with election officials. AFP

Congo declares new Ebola epidemic

KINSHASA

Democratic Republic of Congo declared a new Ebola epidemic on Monday in the western city of Mbandaka, more than 1,000 km away from an outbreak of the same virus. Health Minister Eteni Longondo said four people who died in Mbandaka were confirmed as positive cases following testing at the national laboratory in Kinshasa. REUTERS

CM
YK

A-BM-BME

MARKET WATCH

	01-06-2020	% CHANGE
Sensex	33,304	2.71
US Dollar	75.54	0.11
Brent oil	37.69	8.68

NIFTY 50

	PRICE	CHANGE
Adani Ports	329.35	5.55
Asian Paints	1693.25	10.15
Axis Bank	396.95	12.00
Bajaj Auto	2758.30	47.80
Bajaj Finserv	4763.20	358.30
Bajaj Finance	2160.85	207.20
Bharti Airtel	559.05	6.45
BPCL	346.30	3.50
Britannia Ind	3434.85	56.00
Cipla	642.50	-5.65
Coal India	148.55	7.25
Dr Reddys Lab	3953.55	-117.70
Eicher Motors	16985.75	437.30
GAIL (India)	91.95	-0.40
Grasim Ind	583.50	-5.70
HCL Tech	559.75	9.50
HDFC	1737.70	78.80
HDFC Bank	987.65	36.00
Hero MotoCorp	2326.30	-34.55
Hindalco	139.15	0.30
Hind Unilever	2108.55	51.20
ICICI Bank	339.25	7.30
IndusInd Bank	410.10	16.45
Bharti Infratel	224.25	-5.70
Infosys	699.55	8.55
Indian Oil Corp	86.15	2.95
ITC	200.55	3.20
JSW Steel	193.95	9.75
Kotak Bank	1248.40	24.40
L&T	928.15	-4.10
M&B	461.10	24.75
Maruti Suzuki	5793.60	182.80
Nestle India Ltd.	17183.45	-357.35
NTPC	97.90	0.05
ONGC	83.95	0.75
PowerGrid Corp	158.85	1.30
Reliance Ind	1520.35	55.95
State Bank	170.05	8.75
Shree Cement	21069.35	212.05
Sun Pharma	465.40	-8.85
Tata Motors	89.55	2.55
Tata Steel	315.20	20.00
TCS	2045.25	72.90
Tech Mahindra	543.55	13.10
Titan	958.90	68.90
UltraTech Cement	3815.70	-89.15
UPL	419.30	13.45
Vedanta	93.65	1.45
Wipro	215.05	2.25
Zee Entertainment	185.90	2.35

EXCHANGE RATES		
Indicative direct rates in rupees a unit except yen at 4 p.m. on June 01		
CURRENCY	TT BUY	TT SELL
US Dollar	75.35	75.67
Euro	83.90	84.26
British Pound	93.51	93.92
Japanese Yen (100)	70.14	70.44
Chinese Yuan	10.57	10.61
Swiss Franc	78.60	78.97
Singapore Dollar	53.54	53.77
Canadian Dollar	54.95	55.21
Malaysian Ringgit	17.46	17.56
Australian Dollar	50.78	51.01

Source: Indian Bank

IN BRIEF

Punjab National Bank cuts lending rates		
MUMBAI		
State-run lender Punjab National Bank has reduced the benchmark lending rate or the marginal cost of funds based lending rate (MCLR) by 15 bps across all loan tenures. The one-year MCLR will be 7.6% with effect from Monday. The move comes after the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) reduced the key policy interest rate or the repo rate by 40 bps last month. Following the rate cut by RBI, the repo-linked lending rate of PNB also stands reduced by 40 bps to 6.65% from 7.05%.		
Indian Bank unveils loans for MSMEs		
CHENNAI		
Indian Bank has introduced IND GECLs COVID-19, (Guaranteed Emergency Credit Line Scheme), a special product for MSME, Mudra and other business enterprises to meet their working capital needs. These enterprises can avail themselves of loans of up to 20% of the outstanding credit. The maximum loan amount is ₹5 crore, the bank said in a statement.		

Reserve Bank approves LVB CEO's extension		
CHENNAI		
The Reserve Bank of India has approved the extension of tenure for Lakshmi Vilas Bank's MD and CEO, Subramanian Sundar by six months. This is the second extension given to Mr. Sundar who was the MD & CEO (interim) from January 1, 2020 to April 30. His tenure was further extended to May 31, the bank said in a filing. On Monday, the board extended his tenure till November 30 or till the appointment of the new CEO, whichever is earlier.		

Auto sector shows some signs of life

Post lockdown, carmakers resume operations on the slow lane

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The Indian automobile sector saw some demand returning in May after zero sales in April as partial operations resumed, albeit with supply disruptions and labour issues, after almost two months of nationwide lockdown.

The wholesale figures for May are only a fraction of monthly sales that automobile manufacturers saw in the pre-COVID-19 months. As per industry estimates, wholesales of passenger vehicles (PVs) stood at about 37,000 units in May 2020 against more than 2.39 lakh in May 2019.

The country's largest carmaker Maruti Suzuki sold a total of 18,539 units in May 2020. This included wholesales of 13,865 units in the domestic market, and sale of 23 units to other OEMs. The company exported 4,651 units following resumption of operations at Mundra and



Halt and go: Automakers sold about 37,000 PVs in May 2020 against over 2.39 lakh in the year-earlier period. ■ REUTERS

Mumbai ports, it said.

Hyundai Motor India said in May it received close to 15,000 customer bookings across models and about 11,000 new cars were delivered to customers. The company posted a cumulative sales of 12,583 units last month. Tarun Garg, director (sales, marketing & service), Hyundai Motor India said, "In an extremely challenging market environment, HMIL

made a humble beginning towards normalcy."

Honda Cars dispatched 375 units to dealers in the domestic market. Rajesh Goel, senior vice-president and director, marketing and sales, Honda Cars India Ltd., said, "The domestic wholesale sales last month was, of course, quite limited due to the negligible inventory available at our factory before the lockdown."

Mahindra & Mahindra sold a total of 9,076 vehicles in the domestic market. Exports stood at 484 vehicles.

Veejay Nakra, CEO, automotive division, M&M Ltd., said, "Our performance during May has been muted, due to the challenges the industry is facing. As new lockdown norms are being announced, we are hopeful of demand gaining traction in the coming months."

Meanwhile, Toyota Kirloskar Motor (TKM) said it sold

a total of 1,639 units in May 2020. Naveen Soni, senior vice-president, sales and service, TKM said, "Retail sales (from dealers to customers) have been much higher compared with wholesales (TKM sales to dealers), thereby helping us reduce the month-closing inventory levels at dealerships."

Relatively newer entrant MG Motor India said it sold 710 units in the retail market during the month. Rakesh Si-

dana, director, sales, MG Motor India, said, "Supply chain disruption coupled with stricter credit financing along with non-operation of some dealerships due to the lockdown have impacted our sales in May. We hope to restore normalcy from July onwards."

Two-wheeler sales

In the two-wheeler segment, market leader Hero MotoCorp said it dispatched 1,12,682 units in May 2020.

TVS Motor Company said it was seeing a progressive opening of dealerships across the country and overseas in the last two weeks of May, along with a steady pick up in retail customers over the past few days.

"During the month of May 2020, the company registered domestic two-wheeler sales of 41,067 units."

Royal Enfield posted sales



Tractors are seeing pent-up demand from unrealised sales during festivals that occurred under lockdown 1.0. ■ REUTERS

M&M tractor sales beat lockdown blues

Rabi crop income boosts purchases

LALATENDU MISHRA

MUMBAI

Mahindra & Mahindra Ltd.'s (M&M's) Farm Equipment Sector (FES) in May 2020 sold 2% more tractors in India at 24,017 units compared with the 23,539 units sold in May 2019.

This is despite issues associated with the lockdown to contain the spread of COVID-19. Total tractor sales (domestic and exports) during May 2020, however, were slightly lower at 24,341 units against 24,704 units, down 1.46%.

This was on account of the 7.2% decline in exports because of logistical issues and problems in export markets. In May 2020, the company could export only 324 units against 1,165 units in May 2019.

Hemant Sikka, president, FES, M&M, said, "The timely relaxation of the lockdown for the agricultural sector helped ensure the speedy recovery of tractor demand during May 2020."

The prices of petrol and diesel have been increased by ₹2 a litre in Mumbai to ₹78.32 and ₹68.21 respectively as the State government decided to hike the cess on the two fuels. Petrol and diesel prices, however, remained unchanged in other metros.

ing forward," he said.

"With reservoirs being much above the long period average last year, the winter crop saw a 10% increase in sowing. Despite challenges owing to labour unavailability as well as unseasonal rainfall towards the end of March and early April, we are expecting a bumper rabi harvest this year," said Hetal Gandhi, director, Crisil Research.

"With farmers realising payments for the rabi crop, we are seeing some pent up demand leading to buoyant tractor sales compared with other automobile segments," she said.

"The pent up demand is also owing to unrealised sales during festivals such as *Gudi padwa* and *Ugadi* which coincided with the beginning of lockdown 1.0.

It is also important to note the top 25 clusters (34 districts), that have almost 70% of COVID cases, account for less than 10% of tractor sales, hence tractor retail sales have been less impacted by the lockdown compared with cars that have more than 25% of retail sales from these clusters," she added.

Meanwhile, Escorts managed to hold ground by selling 6,454 units in India compared with the 6,488 units sold in May 2019, a drop of 0.5%.

Petrol, diesel sales surge in May as restrictions lifted

Oil marketing companies increase the prices of cooking gas and aviation turbine fuel

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

MUMBAI

State-owned oil marketing companies (OMCs) witnessed a more than 70% increase in petrol consumption and a more than 60% increase in that for diesel for May 2020 over April 2020 as the easing of lockdown curbs kicked in.

The demand for sensitive petroleum products is likely to rise even more in June with the further easing of restrictions, even as the OMCs have increased prices with effect from June 1.

Indian Oil Corporation (IOCL), India's largest fuel retailer, witnessed a more than 70% growth in petrol sales to 10,11,020 kilo litres (KL) in May compared with April.

The OMCs are expecting sales to return to normal levels by June, when most of the curbs may be lifted.

"With significant improvement in May, in June, we expect our sales to reach the pre-lockdown period, if not more," a BPCL director said.

The OMCs have increased the price of aviation turbine fuel (ATF) by almost 50% with effect from June 1. A KL



Inching back: Oil firms expect fuel sales to return to normal in June, when most of the curbs may be lifted. ■ K. MURALI KUMAR

of ATF will cost ₹33,575 in Delhi, ₹38,543 in Kolkata, ₹33,070.5 in Mumbai and ₹34,569 in Chennai.

Global LPG

Drop-in pitches could be lively, says Sriram

The assistant coach attributes this to very little of Australian Rules Football played on these surfaces

S. DINAKAR
CHENNAI

Life is about grabbing opportunities. When S. Sriram joined the Australian team in 2015, his role was that of a spin bowling consultant.

Over the years, so impressed the hard-to-please Australians have been with Sriram's commitment and knowledge that he is now an assistant coach with the side.

Australia's resurgence after the sandpaper scandal – where the emphasis has been on good, hard cricket and player behaviour – has been remarkable.

There was much introspection and the process was gradual. Then, in the Ashes, Australia's famous never-say-die attitude came to the fore.

Pensive Langer

Sriram vividly remembers the Headingley Test. "When last man Jack Leach joined



On the rise: S. Sriram has impressed the Australians so much with his work ethic that he is now the assistant coach after having started out as a spin consultant. ■ FILE PHOTO: K.V.S. GIRI

Ben Stokes, England needed 73 more. We thought we had won the match but coach Justin Langer was pensive. He reminded us about Stokes

and what he could do."

That was a day when things went horribly wrong for Australia. Nathan Lyon missed collecting a throw

that could have decided the Ashes and the side wasted a review though Sriram believed it was the right call given the situation.

The devastated Australians did not speak to each other after the setback and left the ground quickly. "The next morning, we replayed the entire last wicket partnership during our meeting and discussed how we could have been different in our strategy," Sriram revealed.

Winning habit

He added, "Our next game was against Derbyshire and coach Langer was keen that we win the match to get into the habit of picking 20 wickets again."

Australia crushed Derbyshire and displayed remarkable resilience to defeat England in Manchester to retain the Ashes.

Teacher and disciple

Marnus Labuschagne emerged the hero of the series. Sriram said, "His relationship with Smith was that

of a teacher and disciple. They would go for breakfast together, practise together and hang out together."

Unspoilt

Dwelling on India's tour of Australia later this season, Sriram said, "There has been very little Australian rules football played this season. So the drop-in pitches in Melbourne and other places would be unspoilt, the grass would be fresh and the pitches could be lively."

Sriram conceded the defeat against India the last time around at home was a big blow. "We were getting bowled out in 70 odd overs and our pacemen did not get enough rest," he said.

And cricket without saliva? Sriram does not have an answer yet, although he believes the kookaburra ball, in any case, does not seam much after 25 overs.

IN BRIEF



Liverpool squad training a 'massive lift': Klopp

LONDON Liverpool boss Jurgen Klopp admitted on Sunday that it has been a "massive lift" to see his

squad back training together as the team prepares for the return of the Premier League. It has been an especially frustrating time for Klopp, whose side was two wins away from clinching the title when the season was halted.

"We never had nine weeks without football training in our lives. That's all different but interesting as well," Klopp told Liverpool's website.

"We enjoy the situation, that's really all good." ■ AFP

Premier League return driven by finance: Mings

LONDON Aston Villa defender Tyrone Mings says players were the "last to be consulted" over the Premier League's

"financially driven" plan to restart in June. "The motives are possibly 100 percent financially driven rather than integrity driven," Mings told the Mail on Sunday. "As players, we were the last people to be consulted." ■ AFP

almost three months after it was halted because of the coronavirus pandemic.

Training was only previously allowed with groups of up to 14 players. Clubs began individual sessions a few weeks ago and had been gradually increasing their workload. The first game will be the derby played between Sevilla and Real Betis on June 11. ■ AP

Spanish clubs begin full squad work out

MILAN

Spanish clubs Barcelona, Real Madrid and Atletico Madrid

resumed full squad training

and posted images of the

same on Monday, beginning

the final stage of preparations

for the return to competition.

Clubs will have just under two weeks of full sessions before

the league restarts on June 11, ■ AP

Smith open to playing IPL if T20 WC is postponed

SYDNEY

Australian batting star Steve

Smith on Monday said he

would be willing to take part

in the IPL if the T20 World Cup

scheduled in his country for

October–November is

postponed due to the

COVID-19 pandemic. The BCCI

is eyeing a September–October

window for the indefinitely

postponed IPL. "When you're

playing for your country at a

World Cup, that's the pinnacle

for one-day or T20 cricket, so

of course I'd prefer to play in

that. But if that doesn't

happen and the IPL's there, then so be it. IPL's also a terrific tournament as a domestic tournament," Smith said after returning to training with the New South Wales squad. Smith was named Rajasthan Royals captain. ■ PTI

K. Murali Kumar

entertaining exuberance. "Stephen was firing away at the start, and they were on a roll. Alison made a pretty good effort," said Bopanna.

Pakistan's Qureshi, who reached the 2010 US Open final with Bopanna, was very popular, with comments pouring in from adoring fans, but he did not fare quite as well with the questions, both tough and easy. He even playfully pleaded,

"Should we skip this section?" before sportingly attempting to answer questions such as the one on the price of oranges in Amritsar.

On his appearance in a Grand Slam final in New York, Qureshi said, "It was a life-changing tournament, life-changing moment. To reach the final, with my closest friend, Bopanna, was special."

Rohan Bopanna ■ FILE PHOTO

was tasked with deciding the

winner. Ram, who won the

Australian Open this year with Britain's Joe Salisbury,

pointed out that doubles only

receives 19% of the total

prize money. He said it could

be marketed better.

Except for the hot-button

issue, it was a lively show, in

which Riske and Amritraj

were the runaway winners

for their sharp answers and

Archery coach Nanoma dies in accident

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

KOLKATA

International archer

turned-coach Jayantil

Nanoma died in a road acci-

dent in Rajasthan on Sun-

day. He was 34 and is

survived by his wife and

daughter.

Nanoma, an Asia Cup and

Asian Grand Prix medallist

in compound individual and

team events in 2010, met

with an accident while tra-

velling from Banswara to

Dungarpur in a car.

Nanoma was employed

as a District Sports Officer in

Dungarpur.

As a coach, he produced

several National and inter-

national level archers from

Rajasthan. He worked as a

coach with Indian teams in

different overseas competitions. He received the prestigious Maharan Pratap State Sports Award.

Archery Association of India (AAI) condoled his death.

Jayantil Nanoma.

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