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The COVID-19 pandemic has made teletherapy popular, and experts say its convenience will ensure that it endures beyond these lockdown times

From the therapist's couch to yours

NIDHI ADLAKHA

In early May, Mani S*, a Chennai-based writer and journalist, found himself talking to an empty chair. 'Imagine a friend seated there, going through your emotional crisis, and talk to him,' said his therapist's calming voice over a WhatsApp call from Bengaluru. Though initially awkward with the exercise – especially now in our socially-distanced reality – Mani soon found that the new perspective helped him deal with his anxiety. 'I thought in-person sessions were better, but I've had no trouble [with teletherapy] because my psychologist is aware of the medium's limitations and helps me with specific instructions,' says the 32-year-old, who first got help last October to cope with his divorce. 'During lockdown, I realised that medicines alone were not helping my depression, so I turned to teletherapy.'

In New Delhi, the fortnight after the first lockdown saw a spike in Covid-related phone calls at IWill Therapy, the online specialist therapy company. The first week was spent addressing anxiety from both first-timers and existing clients. 'With lay-offs, pay cuts and mounting bills, everyone is facing some issue now. But our callers have been triggered to a point where their depression or anxiety is painful,' says Nayamat Bawa, 32, head psychologist, adding that they've seen a 65% jump in sessions between May and June.

Even social media platforms are upping their game. This week, Snapchat rolled out its 'Here For You' feature. While there are no teletherapists, its content covers a range of topics including eating disorders, anxiety and how to identify distress in a loved one.

Though teletherapy has been around for years, the pandemic has most certainly brought the psychotherapist home.

Help's just a tap away

Teenagers, millennials and people in their 40s are reaching out the most, to address concerns such as job insecurity, couple discord, behaviour issues with children, sleep disorders and loneliness. 'Anxiety and depression as clinical conditions have seen a strong spike. This is because the pandemic has created stressful conditions for people with no pre-existing issues as well as those with an existing risk for burnout,' says Bawa. One of her first sessions, she recalls, was a client in his 40s whom she'd been seeing for a couple of years. 'His business was overseas and he had to shut shop. He was experiencing suicidal thoughts. I had to use positive coping mechanisms and cognitive behaviour therapy, such as thought restructuring, to help him,' she says.

In Chennai, psychiatrist Vijay Nagaswami, 62, has also noticed a much higher incidence of anxiety and irritability over the last four months. 'Many couples haven't spent as much time in direct contact with each other as they have now. So the cracks that were once papered over are now opening and people are realising that they can't delay addressing the issues any longer,' he says.

Need for privacy

For those who've never had therapy, teletherapy is an easy introduction. 'Many first-timers find video sessions more comforting as they remain in their own environment,' says Nagaswami, who has been taking online sessions since 2013. Moreover, taking 50 minutes out of one's day is far easier than travelling a couple of hours to get to a therapist's office. 'Virtual

sessions are more convenient for someone with anxiety as the smallest of things, such as traffic or bad roads, can seem impossible to handle,' says Mani. But convenience and

flexibility aside, there are challenges too. Therapists have to be alert for non-verbal cues. They also have to judge the baseline for a new client's anxiety. 'I talk this through at length with patients, but mostly we go by how long the problem has been persisting and how badly it affects their daily life,' says Jessica Gold, Assistant Professor at Washington University's Department of Psychiatry (St Louis), who has authored articles on issues faced by therapists. 'Where I need to check their heart rate or blood pressure [for those on stimulants for ADHD, etc], I've been asking them to use Fitbit or other ways to get their own measurements,' she adds.

Another constraint: lack of a 'safe space'. When you pay for therapy, you pay for the psychotherapist's knowledge and the space – where you can open up without the risk of interruption or being overheard. Nagaswami believes teletherapy won't completely replace face-to-face sessions in the future. 'For those living with large families, privacy is a concern. They will prefer to wait for in-person sessions, unless their issues are too compelling and require urgent intervention,' he says. This explains why many opt for sessions on WhatsApp or the chat platform on IWill's app. Poornima Bhola, faculty at the Department of Clinical Psychology at NIMHANS (National Institute of Mental Health and Neuro Sciences), recalls a 19-year-old who found it challenging to speak to a psychologist because his family didn't know he was in therapy.

Let's talk money

Price is a concern, too. Especially since no insurance company covers therapy (though the 2017 Mental Health Act provides for the inclusion of mental illness cover). Last month, Delhi-based feminist researcher Radhika Radhakrishnan, 26, tweeted about the exorbitant cost of therapy in India. With over 2,000 retweets and 10,000 likes, it resonated with many. 'A session with a psychologist costs between ₹1,500 and ₹2,000 for an hour, and psychiatrists cost more, close to ₹3,000. This, added with the

cost of medicines, is a high expense every month,' she says.

Finding the right specialist takes time too, says Radhakrishnan, who has consulted four psychologists and two psychiatrists in the last five years. Then there are the bad experiences no one talks about. 'I once had a psychologist who disagreed with me during a session, stopped midway and then blocked me on WhatsApp!'

Unfortunately, at

the



It can be really exhausting to go from person to person on Zoom or Skype all day... Having more people from different cities connect with me is a plus point

JESSICA GOLD
Department of Psychiatry,
Washington University



Connectivity is a sore point. As many people don't have a broadband connection and use 3G or 4G, the video/audio quality is often variable. Staring at pixelated images can be trying

VIJAY NAGASWAMI
Psychiatrist



Over the last four months, the need for seeking professional help has gone up. People from all walks of life are grappling with anxiety and need help to cope. This is propelling them to open up more

NAYAMAT BAWA
IWill Therapy



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RISE 06:32	SET 20:05	
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IN BRIEF

DU defers last date for online registrations

NEW DELHI
Delhi University on Sunday postponed the last date for online registrations for admissions to all its courses to July 31. Earlier, the registrations were going to come to a close on July 4, but the date was extended till July 18, keeping in view, dates for the deceleration of the CBSE board results, NEET and JEE entrance exam dates. A total of 6.48 lakh students have registered for the various undergraduate, postgraduate and MPhil courses as of Sunday.

Capital records lowest no. of fresh cases in a month

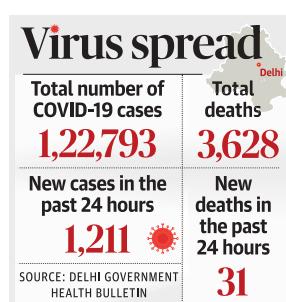
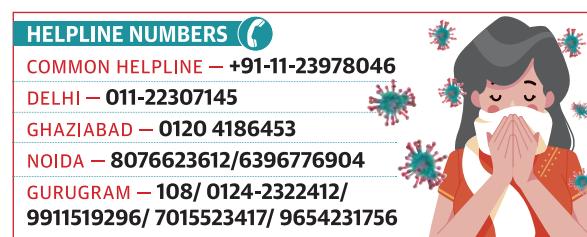
Virus tally climbs to 1,22,793 with 1,211 new cases in 24 hours

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Capital recorded 1,211 new COVID-19 cases in the last 24 hours, taking the total number of cases to 1,22,793, a health bulletin by the Delhi government said on Sunday.

The number of death added in the last 24 hours, it said, was 31, taking the total number of deaths due to the virus to 3,628. The number of cases was the lowest in over a month after it shot up to over 3,000 a day. On June 8, the city had recorded 1,007 cases.

The Capital now has 16,031 active cases. The number of people discharged in the past 24 hours was 1,860, taking the total number of people recovered to 1,03,134, the health bulletin added.



The data in the bulletin showed that 5,762 RT-PCR/ TrueNat tests and 14,444 rapid-antigen tests were conducted in the last 24 hours.

A total of 8,18,989 tests have been conducted till date, which is 43,104 tests per million population.

The number of patients under home isolation now stands at 8,819, with 3,592 out of 15,475 hospital beds occupied. Dedicated COVID-19 care centres and health centres now have 2,250 and 159 beds occupied out of a total of 9,454 and 554 beds respectively.

There are 685 containment zones in the city at present.

Gurugram society residents allege poor construction; complaint lodged

Residents did not adhere to condominium guidelines'

ASHOK KUMAR
GURUGRAM

ing minor injuries. The resident, Uttam Biswas, lodged a formal complaint. The police are examining whether it was a cognisable offence.

Emaar spokesperson said that the residents undertook modifications in the flats through external contractors and did not adhere to the condominium guidelines. He said that incorrect installation and insufficient holding material led to these incidences.

Minor injuries
In a recent case, a kitchen cabinet came off in a flat, two days ago and fell on the hands of the resident caus-

terior. It is all sand. I got the kitchen interiors done from a reputed Bengaluru-based firm in October last year. The plaster on many walls has peeled off at many points," alleged Mr. Biswas who owns the three-bedroom flat.

Another resident, Sanjeev Garg, had a narrow escape when the geyser in his flat crashed on the commode seat breaking it into pieces. "I was lucky as I was standing at a distance," said Mr. Garg.

A Bench of Justices Rajiv Sahai Endlaw and Asha Me-

non also took note of the fact that another petition entailing the same question in relation to the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) is already pending before the High Court. It posted both the petitions to be heard together on August 26.

Advocate Ankur Chhibber,

appearing for the 19 BSF personnel, stated that they are presently holding the ranks of Assistant Commandants, Deputy Commandants or personnel below Officer rank and are posted at various locations across the country, including Jammu

and Kashmir, Mizoram, Punjab and Delhi.

Mr. Chhibber stated that a

representation made by one of the BSF officers with the authorities to extend the benefit of the old pension scheme was rejected without giving any reason.

He argued that as per Section 4(I) of the BSF Act, 1968, BSF is an Armed Force of the Union of India for ensuring the safety of borders of the country.

"Even though BSF was raised as an Armed Force of Union of India and is governed by a special Act called the BSF Act, 1968, despite that the respondents [Centre and Director General, BSF] had taken wrong interpretation of notification, dated December 22, 2003, and illegally invoked new pension scheme to the members of BSF," the plea said.

Two minors and their mother found dead in Nihal Vihar

Police suspect role of the woman's husband who is missing

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The bodies of a 28-year-old woman and her minor children were found at their house in outer Delhi's Nihal Vihar on Sunday, the police said.

The police suspect that the woman's husband is behind the murders since he has been missing.

The police said that they received a call around 11.30 a.m. According to a relative, the woman's phone number

was not reachable and the husband was also not responding.

The police said they found that the woman, identified as Preeti, her nine-year-old son and five-year-old daughter were found murdered at their house at Shiv Ram Park, in Nihal Vihar area.

"We broke open the gate

and entered into the house and found that the victim and her children were lying dead on the same bed. It seems that they were hit with

a hammer. Preeti also had multiple stab wounds in her abdomen. Her son's hands and legs were tied and the daughter was lying next to them," said a police officer.

Deputy Commissioner of Police (Outer) A. Koan said a case of murder is being registered and further investigation is being done.

Preeti's parents, who live nearby, claimed that her husband, Gagan, was an alcoholic who would often fight with her.

BJP is behind Delhi riots, alleges AAP

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

Aam Aadmi Party MP Sanjay Singh on Sunday attacked the BJP over the Delhi riots case alleging it was a well-planned conspiracy by them.

"The Delhi riots was a conspiracy by the BJP. It was carried out in a planned manner by the BJP and their police, which comes under the Home Ministry has done no investigation," Mr. Singh said.

Points finger at police
Further, he said that the police weren't admitting chargesheets properly. "While in some cases they were filed poorly, in other cases, they were especially strong with additional details. Sometimes, they were hiding the truth," he said.

He also asked, "Why are they bent on putting the Central government's BJP's and the L-G's favourite lawyer on the case." Mr. Singh said that it was an attempt to hide the crimes and the role played by people in the BJP in the riots.

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OBC man thrashed for 'stealing' pesticide in M.P.

Two accused held, hunt on for others

STAFF REPORTER

BHOPAL The Guna police have registered a case and arrested two of the accused who allegedly thrashed a man belonging to an Other Backward Class (OBC) community after he was reportedly caught selling stolen pesticide at a local market.

"We have caught two of the accused and are questioning them. Others involved are being identified," said Guna Superintendent of Police Rajesh Kumar Singh.

The incident took place on July 16, two days after a Dalit couple reportedly consumed pesticide while resisting an anti-encroachment drive in Guna district. The District Collector and Superintendent of Police of the district were shunted out later, and a magisterial

inquiry ordered.

Vikas Mali had reportedly stolen the pesticide from a local farmer who had bought it for ₹5,500.

"He then sold it to a shopkeeper for ₹3,000. The public caught him and thrashed him," said Mr. Singh, adding that Mali had been sent to a jail.

Dragged on the road

A video of the incident, which did the rounds on the social media on Saturday, showed Mali being thrashed and dragged on the road with a scarf around his present tenure.

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHANDIGARH

After the Punjab government decided to offer pay scales to the new recruits in the State government on the Central government pattern, the Opposition parties have turned the heat on the Congress. They are terming the move 'anti-employees' and demanding a 'White Paper' on the jobs given by the Amarinder Singh government in its



CM Amarinder Singh. ■

offered to the youth in the State so far under the Congress' much-hyped poll promise — 'Ghar-Ghar Naukri' (job in every household).

Punjab Finance Department had last week issued an instruction, stating, "The State government, after careful consideration, has decided that pay scales admissible to all prospective appointments — direct recruitments/compassionate appointments — in any cadre of any administrative department or the entities there under shall not be higher than the pay scale admissible to the said cadre in the Government of India."

Pay scales of the Punjab government employees are higher than their equivalents at the Centre.

Shiromani Akali Dal also

opposed the decision and accused the State government of failing to safeguard the interests of its employees. Party spokesperson N.K. Sharma, said, "... it is shocking to see that the Punjab government is continuously taking decisions to cause maximum damage to the interests of the government employees. The government has already delayed the Sixth Pay Commission and has failed to give pending dearness allowance to the employees."

"We will oppose this anti-employee decision, which is set to harm the interests of the newly recruited employees. If the Congress wants to save the government money, then it should curtail its expenditure on Ministers and others," he added.

Rainwater floods ward of COVID-19 patients

Video of Bareilly incident goes viral

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GHAZIABAD

In a video that went viral on Sunday, water could be seen gushing from the roof of a COVID-19 ward in a private hospital at Bareilly in Uttar Pradesh. The infected persons could be seen staring helplessly at the thick stream of water falling almost in the middle of the ward, with no hospital staff around.

Raising questions about the efficiency of the State government, Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra also tweeted the video.

The incident happened at the Rajshree Medical Research Institute & Hospital, designated as a COVID-19 hospital by the district administration.

Arjun Singh, the Medi-

cal Superintendent of the hospital said the incident happened on Saturday when the rainwater outlet got damaged because of heavy rain.

He said the hospital has around 100 COVID-19 patients.

Ishan Pratap Singh, Joint Magistrate, Bareilly, told reporters that as soon as the video came to his notice, officials concerned were rushed to the hospital.

'Plumbing issue'

"It was found that because of construction activity in the hospital, there was a plumbing issue that led to this leakage of rainwater. The patients were removed from the ward and the roof was repaired," he said.

Robbers blow up ATM, steal ₹22 lakh

STAFF REPORTER

BHOPAL Two unidentified persons on Sunday morning reportedly blew open an Automated Teller Machine (ATM) and stole ₹22 lakh in Panna district of Madhya Pradesh, said the police.

"Two men arrived at around 2 a.m. and blasted the machine using explo-

sives," Panna Superintendent of Police Mayank Awasthi told reporters. "We have set up check posts. Our teams are searching for the accused."

According to the nationalised bank, he added, the persons reportedly stole ₹22.23 lakh from the machine in Simaria area of the district.

The bank's security guard

Sukhvinder Choudhary was sleeping inside when he heard a knock on the shutter.

"When I opened it, they pushed me and pointed a gun at me, telling me to keep quiet while they did their job," Mr. Choudhary said.

"They threatened to kill me if I told about the incident to anyone," he added.



Flood-affected villagers moving to a safe place in Morigaon district of Assam on Sunday. ■ PTI

Dalit family in M.P.'s Guna gives up hope of owning land

Eviction bids, debt force two of them to consume pesticide

SIDHARTH YADAV
BHOPAL

The previous year's nightmare came haunting back for the Ahirwar family on July 14. Seeing wheat they nurtured for months being bulldozed in minutes had meant forsaking half-year's income, mounting debt and giving up the hope of owning a patch of land one day.

But this time, when revenue officials rolled in with earthmovers and jeeps escorted by the police, the family's resolve was stronger to protect their 40-bigha field, sown with the year's first crop. "We requested them to wait for at least another two and a half months for the soyabean harvest," said Sishupal Ahirwar, 20.

Many farmers, however, heaved a sigh of relief as the total affected crop area came down from 1.16 lakh hectares to 1.12 lakh hectares.

Goalpara district was the worst hit with 4.53 lakh people affected, followed by Barpeta (3.44 lakh), Morigaon (3.42 lakh), Dhubri (3.15 lakh) and South Salmara (2.25 lakh).



Policemen evicting members of the family. ■

my duty as a father," said Rajkumar Ahirwar, 38, who consumed pesticide along with his wife, now being treated at the Guna district hospital.

Outraged seeing his family being abused, roughed up, his brother Mr. Sishupal blocked police personnel attempting to move the couple into an ambulance, to which they landed lathis on him.

The children wailed inconsolably over the unconscious couple. "They thrashed us and then registered a case against us. I want justice. Otherwise what happened to us could happen to someone else tomorrow," said Mr. Raj-

kumar. The couple face the charge of obstructing officials from performing duty.

The family of six brothers cultivated the land for at least five years as sharecroppers with purported owner Gabbu Pardhi. "Every harvest, we give half of the roughly 200-250 quintals produce to him," explained Mr. Sishupal. But last year, when their crops were destroyed, the family couldn't repay loan taken for implements and pesticide. And it mounted this year.

'How will we repay'

"We have to repay ₹3 lakh this year, including the ₹1 lakh carried from the previous year," said Mr. Sishupal. +

The State government has replaced the Guna Superintendent of Police and Collector besides the Gwalior range Inspector General of Police after the incident and initiated a magisterial inquiry.



A social worker sanitises the vehicle of a delivery boy in Bhubaneswar on Sunday. ■ BISWARANJAN ROUT

Odisha government to scale up plasma therapy

'Patients responding well to treatment'

STAFF REPORTER
BHUBANESWAR

The Odisha government is likely to scale up plasma therapy in the State after tasting initial success.

Stating that plasma therapy brought a great relief to serious COVID-19 patients in the State, the Chief Minister's Office said out of six critical patients who were under plasma therapy, four were responding very well and they were not in need of oxygen support, and would soon be discharged.

Condition of other two patients was stable and they were expected to be out of danger zone soon, said CMO in a statement on Sunday.

Total 8 units of plasma were collected from four donors. Six plasma units had already been used.

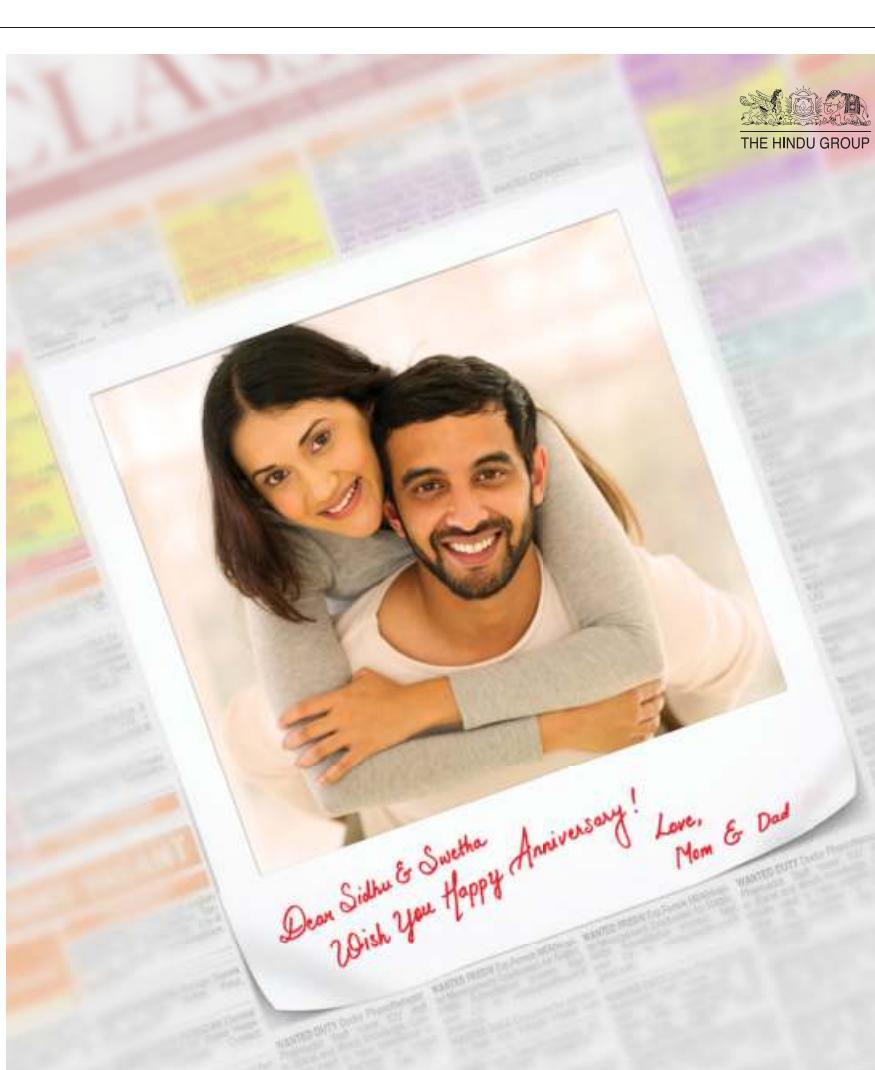
Last week, Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik had inaugurated a plasma facility at SCB Medical College Hospi-

tal at Cuttack which acts as the nodal agency.

According to government, plasma therapy was taken up in SUM Hospital, Bhubaneswar and Ashwini Hospital in Cuttack. KIMS Hospital in Bhubaneswar was ready to start the therapy.

Personnel of Odisha Fire Service and National Disaster Response Force, who had tested positive for coronavirus following their deployment in cyclone-hit West Bengal, have come forward to donate plasma after their recovery.

Ten men of Odisha Fire Service would donate plasma at SCB Medical College Hospital in first phase. Similarly, 37 personnel of third battalion NDRF have volunteered to donate plasma. Around 300 Odish Fire Service and NDRF personnel, who were infected by COVID-19, have recovered from the disease.



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A chance to restore the rule of law

The extra-judicial killing of Vikas Dubey is the last wake-up call for our democracy and the judiciary



PRASHANT BHUSHAN



Special Task Force and forensic teams re-enact the events leading to the extra-judicial killing of Vikas Dubey, as part of the ongoing investigation of the case, in Kanpur district on July 18. ■ PTI

The killing of gangster Vikas Dubey was clearly a case of premeditated murder and not a spontaneous act of self-defence as the Uttar Pradesh police would have us believe. No person can be expected to believe the police version of the incident which is riddled with multiple absurdities. First, Dubey surrendered publicly in Madhya Pradesh. Why then would he try and run away in an open field from more than two dozen policemen? Second, he was seen travelling in a different car, just a few minutes before he was killed, from the one that overturned. Third, the media vans trailing the convoy from Ujjain were stopped by the police minutes before the "accident". Fourth, why had Dubey, a dreaded criminal, not been handcuffed? And if he was, how could he have snatched a pistol after the car overturned? Last, he was shot in the chest, while supposedly running away. And despite the scuffle that allegedly ensued, his clothes were spotless and his COVID-19 mask was on! Before Dubey, five of his aides had been killed in similar fashion.

Spate of extra-judicial killings
No disciplinary action has been taken against the police officers who participated in this extra-judicial killing. The killings of Dubey and his aides highlight the disturbing trend of extra-judicial killings in the State. U.P. Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath's disregard for judicial due process is captured in his 2017 statement: "Agar apradh karenge toh thok die jayenge (If they commit crimes, they will be knocked down)". This has prompted many to colloquially refer to his regime as 'Thoki Raj'.

Dubey's killing suggests that there were people in this government who were at risk of being exposed if he testified in court. It is ironic that Dubey thrived even during 'Thoki Raj', which could have been possible only if he enjoyed political patronage from those in the current State government as well. Over the past three

years, his name did not figure in the 'Most Wanted List' of the U.P. government despite the fact that he had more than 60 serious cases against him.

Dubey's killing has been applauded by a large number of people who have been made to believe that this is the only way of ensuring justice in a State where the courts are increasingly seen as weak and effete institutions incapable of dispensing justice. Dubey was acquitted in case after case by various local courts. We have reached a stage where lynch mobs and extra-judicial killings are celebrated. There is a progressive weakening of people's faith in the rule of law. Nothing can be more alarming and shameful for a country that takes pride in the claim that unlike many banana republics of the world, it is still a democracy governed by the rule of law with an independent judiciary capable of enforcing it.

Alarmed by the spate of extra-judicial killings happening in the country, the Supreme Court, in *People's Union for Civil Liberties v. State of Maharashtra* (2014), said that the 'encounter' philosophy is a criminal philosophy" because it affects the credibility of the rule of law. The Court laid down a number of guidelines for the prevention and investigation of such killings, including immediate registration of FIR in respect of such killings; independent investigation by the State Criminal Investigation Department (CID) or the police force of a police station other than that involved in the extra-judicial killing, and headed by an officer

ranked higher than the policemen involved in the incident; and simultaneous magisterial inquiry under Section 176 of the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC).

Utter disregard for guidelines

However, according to a fact-finding report by Citizens Against Hate (CAH), a collective comprising public-spirited members of civil society, there is utter disregard in U.P. for the guidelines for investigation of extra-judicial killings laid down by the Supreme Court as well as the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC). The report, published in May 2018, titled 'Countering the Silence – Citizens' Report on Extra Judicial Executions in Uttar Pradesh and Haryana, India' undertakes, inter alia, a detailed study of 16 extra-judicial killings in U.P. since March 2017. The findings reveal that the FIRs registered by the U.P. police in respect of the 16 killings contain similar, if not identical, facts, and seem to be modelled on a fixed template. The sequence of events leading to the killings are identical, with names being the only difference. CAH's interactions with the family members of the victims of these killings suggest that rather than being spontaneous acts of self-defence by police officers, these are premeditated acts of murder. The report also documents how investigations into these killings did not follow the Supreme Court guidelines. For example, none of the 16 cases was transferred to the CID for investigation; final reports under Section 173 of the CrPC submitted to

The Dubey killing is perhaps the last wake-up call for our democracy and the judiciary. If the higher judiciary wants to inspire respect in the rule of law, it must call out this extra-judicial killing. The U.P. government has announced the constitution of a Special Investigation Team (SIT) to undertake an inquiry into the episode. However, the SIT comprises Deputy Inspector General of Police Ravinder Goud who was himself charge-sheeted by the CBI for an extra-judicial killing many years ago. No body formed by the U.P. government to conduct an inquiry would inspire any confidence in this matter. The inquiry must be done under the aegis of a retired judge with some credibility and independence to go to the root of this matter and hold the police officers and other persons accountable. Only then can we begin to redeem the pledge of our Constitution-makers to establish a republic governed by the rule of law and protected by an independent judiciary.

Prashant Bhushan is a public interest advocate practising at the Supreme Court of India

magistrates did not contain reports of forensic/ballistics analysis; and in 11 out of the 16 cases, the family members of the deceased are not even aware about the magisterial inquiry being conducted, and their statements have not even been recorded by the magistrate concerned.

Ending the culture of impunity

The extra-judicial killings in U.P. show that the NHRC and the Supreme Court guidelines need a re-working. The only way to stem the rising tide of extra-judicial killings is to end the culture of impunity and punish police officers who resort to such extra-legal means. This is only possible if the investigation into such cases is independent and fair. I was a counsel in the *PUCL* case and had suggested to the Court that the National and State Human Rights Commissions have an investigative arm to probe police encounters and custodial deaths. This would be one way of ensuring that the investigations are independent of police and political interference. Another way would be to handover investigation of such cases to an agency independent of the State government like the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI).

FROM THE READERS' EDITOR

Re-imagining journalism-3

Contemporary news is negotiated through partisan politics, technology, capital and the desire for an egalitarian world



A.S. PANNEERSELVAN

As I was trying to explore the idea of journalism for the post-pandemic era, there was disturbing news of more job losses in the news media. Those who have been tracking the changes in the newsroom and the job losses in the news industry since the COVID-19 outbreak came up with a stark question: does the re-imagining of journalism mean salvaging the profession without journalists?

The extent of the problem

While the reduction in the workforce is real, editors and media managers have a different understanding of the situation.

They argue that the effort is to save as many journalistic jobs as possible despite the terrible economic situation.

Some readers were not comfortable with the

fact that I cited research from Western universities to build my arguments. It remains a fact that systematic studies of the transformation of newsrooms at the time of the pandemic and the economic meltdown are being done by some of the major universities of the world. I mentioned the specific cases of job losses in the BBC and *The Guardian* because they represent different business models. The BBC with its licence fees and *The Guardian*, which is owned by the Scott Trust Limited, have an additional revenue stream that is not subject to the vagaries of the market. The examples provided were meant to explain the extent of entrenchment of the financial crisis in the media industry.

The idea of re-imagining journalism for the digital age is at least three decades old. From the creation of the MIT Media Lab in 1985 to the controversies it generated for accepting financial support from the disgraced Jeffrey Epstein, the task itself has been on a roller-coaster ride. We have always gone one step forward and two steps backward. For me, it is clear that re-imagining journalism is neither a business strategy nor an attempt to apportion blame on technology disruptions. The attempt is to widen the scope of the discussion and include readers as key partners in this important democratic task.

Some readers ask: is it necessary to go

back in time to recollect the observations of Benjamin Franklin and Mahatma Gandhi to address a contemporary issue like re-imagining journalism? Given the centrality of credible information for the survival of our democratic institutions, it is important to know the history of our institutions and how they were built. The discussions and reflections that have gone into the making of modern journalism are significant, and it is important to know the past to define our future.

For instance, is it possible to re-imagine the purpose of journalism without remembering the short monograph, 'A Test of the News', by Walter Lippmann and Charles Merz published in 1920? They wrote: "It is admitted that a sound public opinion cannot exist without access to the news. There is today a widespread and a growing doubt whether there exists such an access to the news about contentious affairs. This doubt ranges from accusations of unconscious bias

to downright charges of corruption, from the belief that the news is coloured to the belief that the news is poisoned. On so grave a matter evidence is needed." Insouciant suggestions fail to recognise the building blocks of a public information ecosystem because they are made without adequate evidence.

A viable model

It is important for us to keep in mind what journalist and media teacher George Brock said about the nature of the news business. He said: "News media does not follow a master narrative or plan because it involves connecting two elements: the person or group with something to tell and the people who are interested enough to hear it." How do we identify relevant and credible information from the vast amount of material on the Internet – through which, according to one study, nearly five exabytes of information courses through in just a day? This, according to technology experts, is the equivalent of 40,000 two-hour movies per second. The idea is to come up with a viable model that takes into account the fact that contemporary news negotiates a complex web of partisan politics, technology, capital and a fundamental human desire for an egalitarian world.

I recognise the limitations of a weekly exchange of 700-odd words to address an issue of immense gravity, but will try and wrap up this series next week.

readerseditor@thehindu.co.in

Why a separate anti-torture law?

The need of the hour is to implement the existing recommendations of various commissions

R.K. VIJ

ment was too harsh. Though the 262nd Law Commission Report recommended that the death penalty be abolished except in cases of 'terrorism-related offences', the Bill provided for the death penalty for custodial deaths. While most countries have deleted or are deleting the death penalty from their statute books, for India to enact fresh legislation with the death penalty as the ultimate form of punishment shows its continuing passive mindset towards human life.

In the Bill, the proposed registration of every complaint of torture as an FIR and blanket denial of anticipatory bail to an accused public servant was not reasonable. The bail can be refused in appropriate cases, but excluding an investigating officer, struggling every day to meet the challenges of emerging crime, from availing such an opportunity shall be no less than putting him on the highest pedestal of mistrust. Overall, the proposed Bill was not a reformative one. It was vague, harsh and retributive in nature.

In 2017, the Central government admitted in the Supreme Court that it was seriously considering the 273rd Report of the Law Commission that recommended ratification of the UN Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment (CAT). CAT was signed by India, but is yet to be ratified. However, except for minor discrepancies, the prevalent law in India is adequate and well in tune with the provisions of CAT.

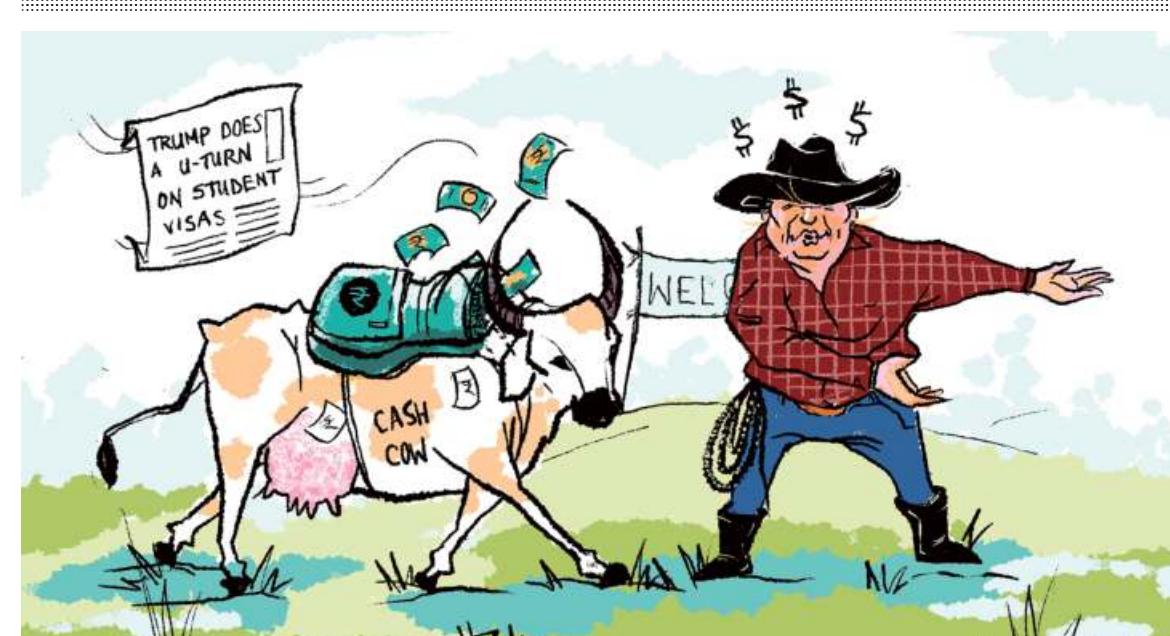
Root cause of the problem

Retired Supreme Court Justice Deepak Gupta said that we first need to implement the law as we have it. "The investigations, the prosecutions are not fair; these must be rectified first," he said. He exhorted that the police need to be trained better. The temptation to use third-degree methods must be replaced with scientific skills. Thus, the need of the hour is to strike at the root cause of the problem and implement recommendations of various commissions to bring in necessary reforms.

Vague, harsh, retributive

However, a fresh draft of the Prevention of Torture Bill was released in 2017 for seeking suggestions from various stakeholders. The Bill was not only vague but also very harsh for the police to discharge its responsibilities without fear of prosecution and persecution. It was inconsistent with the existing provisions of law. It included 'severe or prolonged pain or suffering' as a form of torture but that was left undefined.

The proposed quantum of punis-



DATA POINT

Out of coverage

In March 2020, the number of wireless connections reduced by 2.84 million compared to February 2020. The drop was led by a sharp decrease in urban areas. The T.N., J&K and Northeast circles recorded huge drops. While Jio remains unscathed, Airtel and Vodafone may feel the heat amid mounting losses. By *The Hindu Data Team*

1. SUBSCRIBER GROWTH | The graph plots overall urban and rural wireless teledensity in India over time. Teledensity is the number of connections owned by every hundred individuals. After peaking in June 2017, the urban density has been dropping. While rural density is still rising, its growth rate has decelerated

3. MARKET LEADER | Most of the loss in subscriber base was recorded by Vodafone-Idea followed by Airtel, while Reliance Jio's base continued to increase. As of March 2020, Jio holds 33.4% of India's wireless connections, the highest

2. STATE-WISE GROWTH | The graph plots the number of wireless subscribers as on March 2020 against the change since March 2018 for the 22 telecom circles in India. The J&K, Tamil Nadu and Northeast circles lost the most subscribers in this period while Himachal Pradesh gained the most

2. STATE-WISE GROWTH | The graph plots the number of wireless subscribers as on March 2020 against the change since March 2018 for the 22 telecom circles in India. The J&K, Tamil Nadu and Northeast circles lost the most subscribers in this period while Himachal Pradesh gained the most

4. DOUBLE WHAMMY | The erosion in subscriber base has come at a time when telecom companies are posting record losses. The graph shows net profit/loss over the years

Bharti Airtel, Vodafone-Idea and Reliance Jio all recorded net losses in FY20, the highest ever by any Indian firm. The loss was due to provisioning done for Supreme Court-mandated statutory dues

The Hindu

FROM THE ARCHIVES

FIFTY YEARS AGO JULY 20, 1970

'Border issue delicately balanced'

The Prime Minister, Mrs. Indira Gandhi, reiterated here [Bellary] to-day [July 19] that the aim of the Central Government was to find some solution to the Mysore-Maharashtra border issue, which caused least bitterness later. At a press conference in her saloon in Hospet railway station, the Prime Minister said already there was considerable acrimony on both sides, and any solution should not make it worse. It was difficult to set any time-limit to resolve the issue. To a question whether she would have any discussion on the issue with the Mysore Chief Minister, Mr. Veerendra Patil, before her current tour ended, Mrs. Gandhi said he (Mr. Patil) said only one thing (implementation of the Mahajan Commission's report) and there could hardly be any discussion unless he had other proposals. Asked whether the division of Belgaum had been suggested in the tentative proposals sent to both the Mysore and Maharashtra Governments, the Prime Minister merely said: "May be I do not know." Asked whether the endless delay in finding a solution would not encourage divisive forces like the Shiv Sena, Mrs. Gandhi stated that if the question was decided in the way Mysore wanted, then also it would encourage the Shiv Sena activities. The whole question was delicately balanced and anything she might say might be misinterpreted.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO JULY 20, 1920

Education and citizenship.
(From an editorial)

Viscount Burnham addressing the Association of Education Committees at Manchester dwelt upon the goal of education as being citizenship and remarked that our schools and colleges exist for the creation of good citizens. Indian politicians have from the very beginning realised the importance of this ideal of education and recognised that the education of the nation's youth on proper lines, imbued with high ideals of life and service, alone lays the surest foundation of national emancipation and greatness. The future of India, especially in the critical periods of national struggle for freedom and equality, depends to a large extent on the efficiency of its younger generation to carry on the flag of nationalism to its destined goal and the public cannot any longer afford to look with indifference on the denationalising and devitalising tendencies of our educational system which is to prepare our youth for the future citizenship of the country.

■ PRAJODH RAJAN

Today, due to the changes caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, we are living in an era where time is fluid, and each aspect of our world is undergoing a massive shift. Education is no exception.

India has a young talent pool that is estimated to become the world's largest by 2030. With more automated, digitised and fluid job markets, today's higher education systems increasingly demand an evolved infrastructure that can keep pace with the future. Here are the four biggest challenges to our higher education model:

Continuous learning

Today, education models need to prepare our children for a new era. We are currently in the Fourth Industrial Revolution, where the impact of digitisation will extend in new and unanticipated ways. The demand for lifelong learning will be higher than ever before. People need to continually learn and update their skills in order to stay relevant. This means continuous learning in different ways, for different purposes, and at various career stages. So we need to build education models that reflect this change and a culture that promotes it.

The concept of life-long learning, while not new, has changed. An increasing number of jobs require substantial interaction with technology, moulded by technological disruption, labour mechanisation and more flexible and fluid employment. The conventional mindset of – education early in life to be ready for work-life later – is outdated and no longer reflects the individualised and unexpected routes of modern careers. However, schools alone cannot be expected to execute the complex combinations of STEM (science, technology, engineering, maths), and imbibe digi-

Move with the times

Educational systems of the future

will be better served by alternative, inventive models that can constantly upgrade and upskill



Many new ed-tech startups and academic models are disrupting traditional educational institutions and operating models.

tal and transferable skills like collaboration, problem solving and communication that young people will need in their future careers.

Student-led demand

Like any other sector, the

changing demands of the students have driven changes in education. A one-size-fits-all approach does not agree with today's generation. The Gen Z entering higher education has an absolutely different point of exit than the previous generations. As digital natives, technology has been fully integrated into most phases of their lives. And their entire career is driven by it in some form or other. So, students are increasingly embracing a consumer's mindset and opting for flexi-

ble, seamless and bespoke educational experiences to achieve their goals.

Skill, not degrees

The traditional way of thinking led us to believe that success in professional life was directly linked to a higher education degree. But the worth of degrees is being questioned now more than ever before, with technology disrupting the way we learn and transitioning the way we apply knowledge. While many compa-

nies still scour through degrees for a potential employee's abilities, there is a dynamic shift among some corporates to develop new ways of gauging employability.

New academic models

Many new ed-tech startups and academic models are disrupting traditional educational institutions and operating models. The future higher education landscape will almost certainly include disruptive new entrants,

who use technology and data to introduce new and alternative approaches that deliver better on the evolving expectations of the learners.

The notion of education developed for the earlier generation is changing and renovated and higher education is no exception. Educational institutes must reassess their roles now and what they will be in the future.

The writer is Co-founder & CEO, EuroKids International.

Focus on research

The Hindu Education Plus has been hosting a series of webinars on Career Counselling. Presented by SRM Institute of Science and Technology, this fourth in this series will focus on Nurturing the Innovation Potential of Research for Students.

The speakers are Dr. T. Ramasami, the Nayudamma-Abdul Wahid Chair Professor at the Department of Leather Technology at Anna University, Chennai and former Secretary, Department of Science and Technology, Government of India; Dr. K. Ramaswamy, Director of Faculty and Academics, SRMIST; Dr. Leena Chandran Wadia, Senior Fellow at the Observer Research Foundation, Mumbai; and Dr. R. Ramanujam, Professor of Theoretical Computer Science, The Institute of Mathematical Sciences, Chennai.

When: July 22, 2020, from 3.00 to 5.00 p.m.

Register: <https://bit.ly/396IYcU> or scan the QR code

BLACKBOARD



Re-imagine the teacher's role

Post the pandemic, schools should encompass multiplicity and bring the outside world into the classroom

■ K. ELANGO

Schools throw their gates open post COVID-19 and students wobble in dressed in space suits with a pressure helmet, neck ring, pressure gloves, LITMG boot, food port, water connector and pencil pockets. If you think this is exaggerated, the new uniform may resemble the PPE to cover the whole body.

Face recognition technology will have to be installed. There will be no need to carry lunch and snacks boxes; instead they will consume foods like fruits, nuts, candies, cookies and juices in disposable packages. Another sigh of relief: no more books, just the tablets.

Primary teachers are lightened of their non-pedagogical burdens and no complaints of "Teacher! He is pinching/pushing/beating me/has taken my pencil/torn my page/stolen my lunch box...."

New models

But the critical shift required is an engaging architecture of a novel

teaching-learning process: content delivered in small bites with plenty of video, audio materials and infographics, PPTs with voiceovers, interactive voices of teachers and students, and VR and ARs.

The pandemic has exposed learners to multiple modes of teaching-learning. Unlike the regimented teacher-led classes, learners navigate on their own matching their cognitive potential and passion when absolutely ready. The structured quizzes interspersed with texts are indicators of their learning level.

Realisation dawned that learning could be personalised, outcome-oriented and a happy experience. Educators are convinced that this is not a passing fad; the demand for relevance and personalisation will only increase in the years to come.

A shake-up for teachers

Back in their classes, no longer can teachers settle into their old methods: read out, dictate notes, solve problems on the boards, lecture, and let students do it all. The learners will demand innovative practices rooted to their demands and aspirations. Sure, this will rattle the teaching community habituated to doling out information monotonously.

Well, there are no set pedagogical formulas to succeed. The 'new normal' classes should encompass multiplicity and a felt

need to bring the outside world into the classroom. They should replicate reality; and channelise it to shape a safe life for the post-millennials.

Learners acknowledge that learning is their responsibility and not just confined to the physical space of a school and books. Setting aside the pandemic, the educational landscape has witnessed new avatars in the last couple of decades – distance education, home schooling, online learning, MOOCs from the renowned universities with transferable credits, multi-disciplinary courses and for specific purposes – but, disappointingly, the brick and mortar institutions kept these influences out. However, students will fashion metamorphoses for better learning ecosystem.

Teachers are compelled to embrace classroom-based research to evolve practical approaches, methods, strategies and techniques for different levels, different environments and different sets of students. No longer can they be content with the same notes, teaching the same subjects with the same methods; their sameness has to pave way for variety. As an educationist remarked, "If computers can replace teachers, so be it."

The writer is the National Secretary, ELTAI, and former Professor and Head, Department of English, Anna University, Chennai.

VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

Awaiting a revamp

Promises have been made about making changes in vocational education, but have they been kept?

■ ROOPASHI KHATRI

Reports of the high unemployment rates in India may be a warning signal of stagnant sectors of the economy. One significant solution to this is to strengthen vocational training and qualifications.

Vocational education is an integrated programme that combines knowledge, attitudes and skills for specific occupations, as opposed to merely training students to perform certain tasks. If designed correctly, the vocational education policy will make it easier for millions of people to enter the workforce, including through self-employment, and earn a decent livelihood. A vocational curriculum will be up-to-date with market demands, if designed in coordination with government agencies, industry stakeholders and education/training institutions. Further, linking vocational education with professional education (particularly in law and medicine) will ensure that productive individuals have an alternative pathway.

Vocational education must not be the 'last resort' for socially disadvantaged groups. It must be an easily accessible resource for every citizen to forge their destinies on the basis of their capacities and hard work; not merely their degrees.

In order to design an appropriate model, one requires data about the demographics of individuals opting for, continuing or dropping out of such programmes, and the demand for qualified individuals across various sectors. It is not clear if mo-

dernisation of programmes alone could solve more complex issues in employment policy – such as the low participation of women in the workforce or the class differences in occupational choices.

Government agencies

The development of vocational education programme and the infrastructure required for it requires coordination among various government departments. Take, for example, Agricultural education. This is stipulated as a State Subject under Entry 14 of the Seventh Schedule of the Constitution of India. It is yet to be seen whether the legislations, rules and bye-laws governing agricultural education in the States are in conflict with the overall goal of a consistent standard for students throughout India.

Finally, apart from targeting groups such as crafts persons, artisans, students in rural areas and tribal youth, vocational education should also be incentivised for the differently abled and women, both in rural and urban areas. The former are a significant portion of the population and require equitable institutional set-ups to promote their continued and effective participation in educational programmes and labour market.

To move beyond past mistakes, proposals for the future of vocational training must be substantiated with specific and actionable targets.

The writer is Assistant Professor at National Law School of India University, Bengaluru.



Do you feel uncertain about a career option? Do you feel low on self-confidence? Are you constantly doubting yourself? A Q&A column to assuage your doubts

NANDINI RAMAN

I graduated in B.Tech Electronics and Communication Engineering in 2016 but was unable to apply for a job. Now, I want to return to the field. Is such a long gap an issue? If yes, how do I resolve it? -- Apoorva Gupta

Dear Apoorva,
Yes, the four long years might become an issue; however, as an interviewer, I would want to know what you did with yourself during that time. There is no harm trying and applying to entry-level vacancies and possible job openings at the earliest. Be honest and transparent with the management. Good luck.

I am a class X student in a dilemma about choosing a group for class XI and XII. I am interested in Math, and am considering two possible career options: B.Sc Math and pursuing Data Science, or taking up B. Com Business Analytics. Would it be possible to keep both these options open, if I study Commerce in class XI and XII? Would these career options both suit an interest in Math? -- Deepika Ganeshan

Dear Deepika,
B.Sc Math and Data Science requires the student to have completed class XII with Science (Physics, Chemistry and Math). If a student has Computer Science as an additional subject, it is treated as an advantage. Business Analytics is of

fered at MBA/PGDM level, is what I am aware of and not for an undergrad course. The minimum eligibility criteria is graduation (any stream). However, Science or Commerce background will be of enormous help as candidates study maths and statistics at higher level.

I have a diploma in Mechanical Engineering and now have a full-time job. However, the pay is low and I don't like the work. I am pursuing my second year in BA psychology through the Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU). I want a change in career. I am 25 years old. Please suggest career options as well as a good career counsellor -- Nijah Ahmed

Dear Nijah,
You haven't mentioned where you are from. Look online for some good career counsellors who will be able to help you narrow down your search to what you will best suit you. Spend time in finding that out first so that you are happy and content with the work and feel motivated and driven to do better. Once you are able to follow your heart and passion, the money will come. Good luck.

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

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

ELSEWHERE



Kuwait ruler hospitalised; Crown Prince takes charge

DUBAI

Kuwait's ruler Sheikh Sabah Al Ahmad Al Sabah, 91, underwent a "successful" surgery on Sunday that required the oil-rich nation's Crown Prince to be temporarily empowered to serve in his place, its state-run news agency reported. The state-run KUNA news agency had described Sheikh Sabah's hospitalisation on Saturday as "medical checks," citing a statement from the country's royal court. **AFP**

Iran halts execution of three linked to protests

TEHRAN

Iran has halted the execution of three people linked to November protests sparked by a hike in petrol prices, said one of the accused's lawyers on Sunday. "We conveyed a request (for a retrial) to the supreme court and they have accepted it. We hope the verdict will be overturned," said Babak Paknia. Iran's judiciary said last week that a court had upheld the death sentence for the three. **AFP**

Democrats urge Indian-American voters to support Joe Biden

Their votes could make a significant difference in battleground states: panel

SRIRAM LAKSHMAN

With about three and a half months to go for the election day, prominent Democrats urged the Indian-American community to vote this year and support presumptive Democratic nominee Joe Biden – emphasising his character and history of support for the India-U.S. relationship.

The pitch is particularly significant in "battleground States", and at a time when the country is highly polarised on key issues including U.S. President Donald Trump's response to the COVID-19 pandemic, immigration and racial justice.

Drawing links to the message of civil rights leader John Lewis who died on Fri-

COVID-19 global toll crosses six lakh

Hong Kong introduces new restrictions amid resurgence in cases; Lam calls the situation 'critical'

ASSOCIATED PRESS
JOHANNESBURG

The number of people around the world who have died as a result of COVID-19 has passed the 6,00,000 mark as countries from the U.S. to South Africa to India struggle to contain infections. Hong Kong also warned of a resurgence in the virus as it issued tougher new rules on the wearing of face masks.

Concerns are rising that the pandemic has found fresh legs over the past few weeks, with Johns Hopkins University and the World Health Organization both recording daily highs in newly reported infections.

Rising numbers in Africa

While the U.S. leads global infections, South Africa now ranks as the fifth worst-hit country in the pandemic with more than 3,50,000 cases, or around half of all those confirmed on the continent. Its struggles are a sign of potential trouble to come for nations with even fewer health care resources.

Confirmed global deaths from or with COVID-19 rose to more than 6,02,000, according to data compiled by Johns Hopkins. The United

Message of caution: A street artist spray painting a protective face mask over an old mural featuring a Venezuelan indigenous man, in Caracas, Venezuela, on Saturday. **AFP**

States tops the list with over 1,40,000, followed by more than 78,000 in Brazil, 45,000 in the United Kingdom and 38,000 in Mexico. The number of confirmed infections worldwide has passed 14.2 million, with 3.7 million accounted for by the United States alone. Brazil has witnessed more than two million while India has recorded over one million. Experts believe the true numbers around the world are higher because of testing shortages and data collec-

tion issues in some nations.

Infections have been soaring in U.S. States such as Florida, Texas, Arizona, with many blaming a haphazard approach to the lifting of the lockdowns as well as the resistance of some Americans to wearing masks.

Even where the situation has been largely brought under control, new outbreaks continue to worry authorities and prompt the return of some restrictions. Following a recent surge in cases, Hong Kong made the wearing of

masks mandatory in all public places. Hong Kong leader Carrie Lam said the situation in the Asian financial hub is "really critical".

Police in Barcelona are limiting access to some of the city's beaches because sunbathers are ignoring regulations amid a resurgence of the virus. Authorities in Amsterdam are urging people not to visit the city's famous red light district and have closed off some of the historic district's narrow streets because they are too busy.

Mask-wearing to be compulsory in Melbourne

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
MELBOURNE

Australia's second-biggest city will make it compulsory to wear a mask in public, authorities announced on Sunday, as Melbourne steps up efforts to bring a COVID-19 outbreak under control.

Victoria State, which includes Melbourne, now has nearly 3,000 active cases of COVID-19 after a further 363 infections were reported on Sunday despite a 10-day lockdown.

Victoria State's Premier Daniel Andrews said more than five million people in Melbourne and neighbouring Mitchell Shire would be required to wear a mask or other face-covering in public spaces from midnight Wednesday into Thursday.

Failure to comply with the new rule will mean a Aus\$200 (\$140) fine.

The decision makes Melbourne the first place in the country to mandate the use of face-coverings.

Twitter disables Trump tweet over copyright issue

It included music from Linkin Park

REUTERS
WASHINGTON

Twitter Inc disabled a campaign-style video that U.S. President Donald Trump retweeted on Saturday, citing a copyright complaint.

The video, which included music from the group Linkin Park, disappeared from the President's Twitter feed late Saturday with the notification: "This media has been disabled in response to a report by the copyright owner."

U.S. President Donald Trump at a rally in June. **AFP**

sentatives," a Twitter representative said in an email statement.

Twitter began challenging Mr. Trump's tweets in May and has repeatedly clashed with him since. The social media company has several times disabled or commented on tweets by the President because of what it said were copyright complaints or violations of a policy against threatening violence.

The company put a tweet from the President behind a warning label in late May, saying that he had violated its rules against "glorifying violence" when he advocated that Minneapolis authorities be tough in responding to protests over the death of George Floyd.

EU leaders struggle to reach accord

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
BRUSSELS

An EU summit to agree a huge COVID-19 economic rescue package was at risk of collapse without a deal on Sunday as bickering leaders struggled to find compromises on a third day of talks.

The 27 leaders have argued for more than two days over the scale and rules for the package, with the Netherlands leading a band of "frugal" allies in demanding lower budgets and tougher conditions for handouts.

House Foreign Affairs Committee Leader, Democrat Eliot Engel, asked China to "respect norms and use diplomacy" to resolve differences with India.

Support has come from Democrats as well.

House Foreign Affairs Committee Leader, Democrat Eliot Engel, asked China to "respect norms and use diplomacy" to resolve differences with India.

He [Mr. Biden] would work together with India to keep our citizens collectively safe. That means standing up against cross-border terrorism and standing with India when its neighbours attempt to change the status quo," Mr. Varma said. The India relationship has strong bipartisan support in Washington.

On China for instance, individuals in the Trump administration such as Secretary of State Mike Pompeo have supported India and repeatedly spoken of China's recent actions along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) and characterised those as part of a larger pattern of Chinese aggression in other arenas – Taiwan, Hong Kong and the South China Sea for instance.

Support has come from Democrats as well.

House Foreign Affairs Committee Leader, Democrat Eliot Engel, asked China to "respect norms and use diplomacy" to resolve differences with India.

Recent challenges

But the relationships have not been without recent challenges on both sides of the aisle. Lawmakers, mostly Democrats (but also some Republicans) had taken issue last year with India's legisla-

tive actions in Kashmir (Article 370 related), the Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA) and the National Registry of Citizens (NRC).

While Prime Minister Narendra Modi's personal rapport with Mr. Trump might sway some Indian-American voters towards the Republican Party, most of this demographic are expected to vote Democrat, University of California political scientist Kartick Ramnathn had said in February.

A lot has happened recently that has impacted Indians in the U.S. Mr. Trump's temporary suspension of H-1B visas has impacted mostly Indians and the administration's recent policy battles over foreign students has left over a million students, including some 2,00,000 Indians, with a great deal of uncertainty about their plans over the next year.

China committing gross abuses against Uighurs: U.K.

MEERA SRINIVASAN

COLOMBO

Campaigning for Sri Lanka's August 5 general elections, the country's main Tamil party has foregrounded the promise Colombo made to New Delhi on power devolution, the need for greater connectivity to India from the northern Palaly airport, and the need to expedite the return of Sri Lankan refugees living in India.

British Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab said the re-

ports of forced sterilisations and mass detentions in the region required international attention.

China's Ambassador to London Liu Xiaoming warned on Sunday that it will make a "resolute response" if Britain follows the U.S. in sanctioning Chinese officials for the alleged abuses. "If the U.K. government goes that far to impose sanctions on any individuals in China, China will certainly make resolute response to it," he said.

Raoni, a chief of the Kayapo people in northern Brazil, was likely suffering from a digestive hemorrhage, said Santa Ines Hospital, in Colider in Mato Grosso State, where he was admitted on Thursday. Mr. Raoni, in his 90s, was showing "signs of improvement" including a rise in blood pressure after being administered first aid, according to

Dois Pinheiros Hospital in the city of Sinop, where he was transferred.

Known for his feather head-dresses and the large disc inserted in his lower lip, he has traveled the world raising awareness of the threat posed by destruction of the Amazon.

Mr. Raoni tested negative for COVID-19, said Gert-Peter Bruch, leader of French NGO Planete Amazon, even as many indigenous people in the Amazon have contracted the illness.

TNA-backed former unity government, helmed by President Maithripala Sirisena and Ranil Wickremesinghe, to deliver on the many promises made to the Tamils have contributed to voters' disillusionment with their elected representatives.

In this parliamentary election, the TNA will compete mainly with former Northern Province Chief Minister C.V. Wigneswaran's alliance, the All Ceylon Tamil Congress led by Gajendrakumar Ponnambalam and Minister Douglas Devananda-led Eelam People's Democratic Party (EPDP), aligned to the current Rajapaksa administration, among others.

In addition to underscoring its long-standing demand for power devolution, the release of political prisoners,

yet to be fulfilled, the TNA manifesto pointed to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's address to the Sri Lankan Parliament in March 2015, when he observed: "[W]hen we empower States, districts and villages, we make our country stronger and stronger... I am a firm believer in cooperative federalism."

The TNA, led by veteran Tamil leader R. Sampanthan, said sovereignty lies with the people and not with the state. In the November 2019 presidential elections, it backed Sajith Premadasa, against Gotabaya Rajapaksa, who secured very few votes in the Tamil-majority areas.

Criticism from voters

In terms of its own constituency, though the TNA has traditionally retained its sup-

A voter in Kalutara, Sri Lanka, taking part in a mock election in June. **AFP**

A voter in Kalutara, Sri Lanka, taking part in a mock election in June. **AFP**

port base in the post-war decade, the alliance faces growing criticism from voters for its lack of development initiatives, especially in regard to job creation and economic revival, while governing the Northern Provincial Council from 2013. Further, the failures of the

TNA said it would challenge militarisation and "attempts to Sinhalise" the Tamil region; the TNA promised an alternative economic vision, focused on local development.

Better access to India

The manifesto also spoke of better access to India through the Palaly International Airport and passenger services through the Kanchanthurai Port.

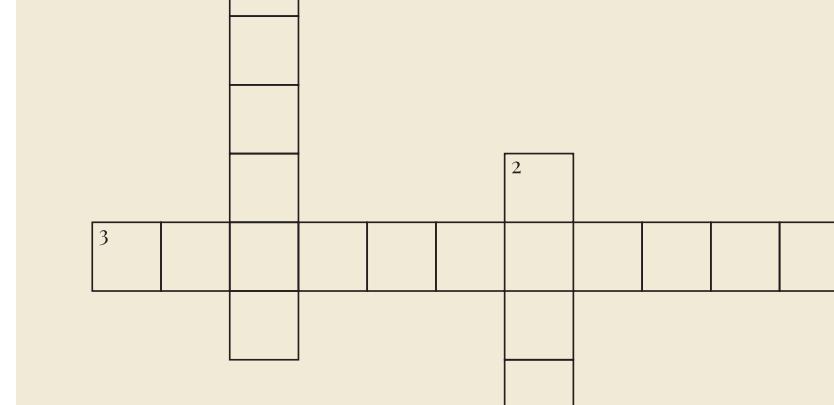
Referring to Sri Lankan refugees living abroad, including those in India, the manifesto said: "In particular, expeditious steps must be taken for the return of about 1,00,000 refugees in south India with measures in place to enable to resettlement and successful re-integration post-return."

Across

3. A British daily newspaper founded in 1821 (3, 8)

1. Crosswords (7) founded in 1821 (3, 8)

2. Used to indicate a source (4)



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