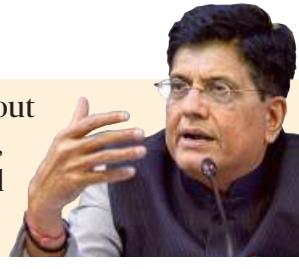




Supreme Court allows Puri Jagannath Rath Yatra, with conditions
page 10



Soldier dies in fresh ceasefire violation by Pakistan along LoC
page 10



Exports down by about 10-12% so far in June, but improving: Goyal
page 13

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'MoUs with Chinese firms kept on hold'

ALOK DESHPANDE
MUMBAI

Maharashtra Industries Minister Subhash Desai on Monday said the status quo has been maintained on Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) signed with Chinese companies. He said that since there are no directions from the Centre to not accept investment from China, the projects had been kept on hold and not cancelled.

"The MoUs signed on June 15, 2020, between the Industries Department of Maharashtra and three Chinese companies have been placed on hold (as-is-where-is) by the Maharashtra government," said Mr. Desai. "Status quo will be maintained on the MoUs for the moment. This does not mean that they have been rescinded or cancelled. Further developments are awaited."

The three companies – Hengli, PMI Electro Mobility Solutions, and Great Wall Motors – have committed to investments of ₹250 crore, ₹1,000 crore and ₹3,770 crore, respectively, in Phase II Talegaon industrial belt in Pune.

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Amid military talks, reports of Chinese build-up at Pangong

Corps Commanders meet at Moldo; lake area remains most contentious issue

DINAKAR PERI
NEW DELHI

As the second round of talks at the Corps Commander-level were held on Monday to resolve differences on the disputed India-China boundary, there were reports of a Chinese troop build-up at Pangong Tso in eastern Ladakh. The meeting, which began around 11.30 a.m., continued late into the night.

The first round of Corps Commander talks on June 6 resulted in an important understanding for limited disengagement, but the consensus was breached after Indian troops were attacked on June 15 during the "de-escalation" process, resulting in the death of 20 soldiers, including a Colonel.

Monday's meeting was held at Moldo on the Chinese side opposite Chushul, a defence source said. The Indian side was led by Lieutenant General Harinder Singh, General Officer Commanding of the Leh-based 14 Corps, and the Chinese side by Major General Liu Lin, Commander of the South Xinjiang Military District.

Five locations
The talks are aimed at reducing tensions, continuing the disengagement agreed earlier and restoring the status quo ante prior to May 5 along the Line of Actual Con-



Mountain manouevres: An Indian fighter jet flies over a snow-clad range near Leh on Monday. AFP

trol (LAC). On June 6, both sides mutually identified five locations of conflict – Patrolling Point (PP) 14, 15, 17A, North bank of Pangong Tso and Chushul.

Though tensions escalated at Galwan last week, the Pangong Tso area remains the most contentious issue. According to satellite images made available on Twitter by Nathan Ruser, researcher at the Australian Strategic Policy Institute, an independent think tank based in Canberra, China, which has moved up to Finger 4 since the beginning of the stand-off in May, has now undertaken a major build-up between Finger 4 and Finger 8 and also on the ridge lines overlooking Finger 4.

India holds the mountain spurs till Finger 4, while its

claim is till Finger 8. Defence sources had stated that Pangong Tso would take time to resolve and would be taken up at the Corps Commander level.

Spokesperson of China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs Zhao Lijian declined to respond to comments of Union Minister Gen. V.K. Singh (retd.) that China had lost more than 40 soldiers in the Galwan incident.

"I have no information to release on that," Mr. Zhao said in response to questions. China and India were in communication with each other to resolve the situation on the ground through diplomatic and military channels, he added.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

RELATED REPORTS ▶ PAGE 9

Manmohan cautions PM on remarks

Former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh has urged PM Narendra Modi to be "mindful" of the implications his remarks will have on national security and not allow them to vindicate China's position. Speaking for the first time after the Galwan clashes, he said, "Truth cannot be suppressed by having pliant allies spout comforting but false statements". ▶ PAGE 9

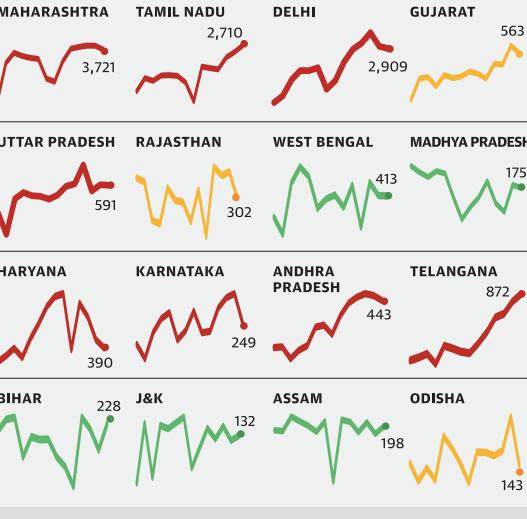
India to attend trilateral meet with China

External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar will take part in the Russia-India-China trilateral on Tuesday, in an indication that New Delhi is prepared to press on with diplomatic moves with Beijing despite the LAC face-off. Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi will also attend. Officials in Moscow and Delhi underlined that "no bilateral issues" would be discussed. ▶ PAGE 9

Fewer tests

Due to a drastic decrease in the number of samples tested on Sunday, the number of new cases also fell significantly. From 1.9 lakh on Saturday, the total samples tested fell to just over 1.4 lakh on Sunday. After crossing the 15,000 new cases mark in the past two days, the count on Monday came down to 13,363. States are classified based on where the cases are rising ■, dropping □, or showing a mixed trend ▲.

NEW CASES AND DEATHS IN INDIA
CASES 13,430 DEATHS 310
7 DAY-CHANGE +23.5% 7 DAY-CHANGE -84.7%*



Figures in the graphs show number of new cases on Monday. *2,024 deaths, including from backlog, were recorded seven days ago

CBSE to seek SC directive on exams

Board to submit its decision today



The CBSE may fall back on internal assessment scores or average marks of papers already completed. PTI

PRISCILLA JEBARAJ SONAM SAIGAL NEW DELHI

methodology in lieu of examinations, such as using internal assessment scores, or the average marks from already completed papers. Another possibility could be to allow students who wish to write the examination and improve their scores, to do so at a later date.

CISCE deadline

Also on Monday, the Bombay High Court extended the deadline for the Council for Indian School Certificate Examinations (CISCE) to declare its alternative methodology to June 25, after which students can make an informed choice on whether to write the exams that begin on July 1.

The matter is in the court. The CBSE will communicate its position to the court in a closed cover, and then the court will decide, a senior official told The Hindu.

The CBSE is likely to offer an alternative assessment

Aaditya opposes mine auction near tiger reserve

ALOK DESHPANDE MUMBAI Maharashtra Environment Minister Aaditya Thackeray on Monday asked the Union government not to go ahead with the proposed auction of coal mine blocks near the Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve.

"I have written to the Union Minister [for Environment, Forest and Climate Change] Prakash Javadekar ji on the issue of the proposed auction of a mine site near Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve, opposing the auction. We cannot have such destruction of our wildlife corridors," said Mr. Thackeray.

He said the auction has been scrapped after evaluation twice before, once in 1999 and then around 2011. "Then why once again must we waste time and energy over a futile process when we know that it will destroy the wildlife corridor of Tadoba and Andhari?" he asked.

The Sena leader recalled that former Union minister and Congress leader Jairam Ramesh, almost a decade ago, had stopped this destruction. "He had got the area surveyed and reports suggest that the mine site is not suitable at all," he said.

Last week, 41 coal blocks were notified by the Centre for auction. As per the objections, the Bander coal block in the vicinity of the tiger reserve is likely to impact a few hundred acres of the forest. It also falls on the route used by tigers to travel from the sanctuary in Chandrapur to Wardha and Amravati.

Parliament project returned for finer detailing

Delhi Urban Art Commission asks CPWD for details on landscape, parking, day-lighting, ventilation

DAMINI NATH SIDHARTH RAVI NEW DELHI

The Centre's proposal to construct a Parliament building in time for Independence Day in 2022 was not approved by the Delhi Urban Art Commission (DUAC) at a meeting earlier in June, according to sources involved in the approval process.

The project, which was cleared by an expert appraisal committee of the Union Environment and Forests Ministry and the Central Vista Committee in April, was brought before the DUAC on June 5. The panel sent it back, asking the Central Public Works Department for additional details, the sour-



Making way: The new structure will come up on a 10-acre plot near the existing Parliament building. SANDEEP SAXENA

es said.

In a written response to The Hindu on Monday, HCP Design, Planning and Man-

agement, the CPWD's consultant for the larger Central Vista redevelopment project that includes the construc-

"At present, the DUAC has requested additional details on provisions for landscape, parking, day-lighting and ventilation. Information on the same is being collated and will be submitted to the DUAC," an HCP statement said.

Asked if the project was still on schedule, HCP said:

"There is no impact on the timelines."

Though the project was considered over 15 days ago, the minutes of the meeting are yet to be uploaded on the DUAC website, which as on Monday evening only showed minutes of meetings that took place till May 29. Minutes of at least two meetings since then, including the one discussing the Parliament project, have not been uploaded yet, unlike the usual practice.

Multiple calls and messages to DUAC secretary Ruby Kaushal on Monday on reasons for the delay were not answered.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

In a spot



Hub of worry: With the lockdown continuing in Chennai, fishing boats lying idle at Royapuram. The densely populated area continues to be worst hit by COVID-19, reporting the maximum number of cases in Chennai. K. PICHUMANI

State adds 3,721 cases, tally crosses 1.35 lakh

With 113 more deaths, total toll up to 6,283

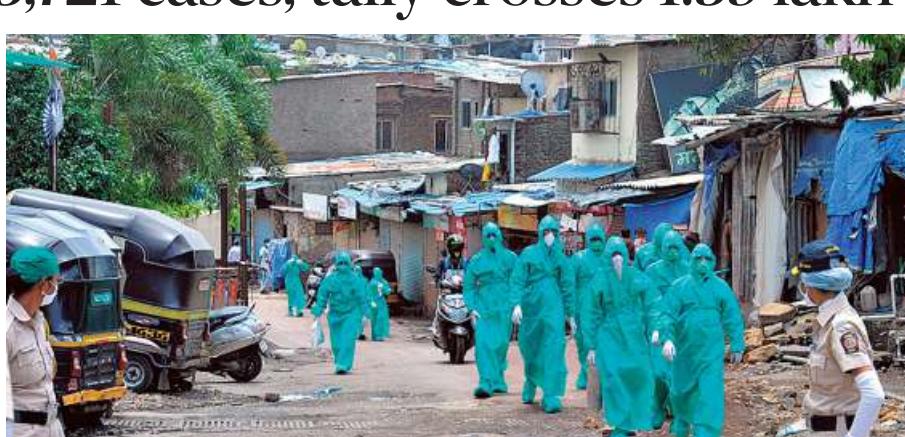
SHOUMOJIT BANERJEE PUNE

Maharashtra recorded yet another big increase of 3,721 new COVID-19 cases on Monday, taking its total case tally to 1,35,796. Another 113 deaths pushed its total death toll to 6,283. Of these, 62 fatalities were reported in the last two days while the remaining 51 were from an earlier period, said State Health Department officials.

Of the total cases, 61,793 are active, while 67,706 patients have recovered so far, with 1,962 patients discharged on Monday.

With 1,098 new cases, Mumbai's total case tally has reached 67,586, of which 29,720 are active cases. With 20 more fatalities, the city's death toll has risen to 3,737.

Eleven more deaths took Pune district's death toll to 612, while four were reported from Aurangabad district to take its fatality count to



Kurur village in Malad (East) in Mumbai is completely sealed on Monday. VIJAY BATE

figures to 2,510 and 2,970.

Pune district's case tally, as per State Health department figures, has shot up to 16,474 with the district reporting more than 550 new cases. Of these, 7,071 are active, while 8,791 patients have been discharged so far.

Elsewhere, Nashik district reported 109 fresh cases, with Nashik city reporting 96 of these. In some measure of relief, Malegaon reported only a single new case in the last 24 hours. The district's total tally stands at 2,871, of which 1,185 are active. A total 160 fatalities have been reported from Nashik till date. In Aurangabad, 164 new cases took the district's total case tally to 3,564.

"Till date, of a total 7,87,419 laboratory samples, 1,35,796 (17.24%) have been tested positive with around 14,000 samples across the State tested today," Dr. Awate said. He said at present, 6,01,182 people across the State are in home quarantine and 26,910 in institutional quarantine.

A wider net: non-profit helps disabled upskill during the lockdown

Youth4Jobs trains youngsters with disabilities in rural India, will now connect them to employers

SHUBHA SHARMA

MUMBAI

Mahekal (22) lent his parents a hand in their farm in Yeswadi village in Ahmednagar district during the nationwide lockdown, when labour was hard to come by. The family grows corn and cereal, and farming is their only source of income.

During his lunch breaks, Mr. Kale, who has a speech and hearing impairment and has studied up to Class XII, watched videos preparing him for a job. His disability has not cut his ambition; like most men his age, Mr. Kale says he "wants to work in a reputed company and support his family financially."

Mr. Kale was part of Web Interface Study Environment (WISE), an online training and placement programme conducted by Youth4Jobs (Y4J) Foundation, a pan-India organisation that trains youth with disabilities and links them to organised sector jobs in the cities.

"We launched Youth4Jobs Online as a COVID-19 response, across India," says Meera Shenoy, founder and CEO, Youth4Jobs. "At a time when every skilling organisation had halted operations, we were the only ones who launched a programme in the disability space; one of the few working at the bottom of the pyramid," she says. The programme's im-

perative was providing people with disability – among the most underemployed and undereducated community in India – a safety net during and after the lockdown.

The Y4J teams in 27 centres across the country reached out to youth with disability, government organisations, rural communities and gram panchayats to collect data.

Social media

The teams placed advertisements on social media to mobilise candidates with disabilities in search of employment opportunities, and reached out to organisations that had a manpower requirement. Y4J alumni who wanted to upgrade their skills were also welcome to take the training.

A majority of the candidates were from low-income backgrounds in rural areas. They had speech and hearing impairment, locomotor (physical or orthopaedic) disabilities, low vision and intellectual disability, and had not completed their secondary and higher secondary education. Some had not even completed Class X.

The NGO received calls from remote places – "little villages in Bihar and even Agartala," says Ms. Shenoy – and a big challenge was addressing candidates with

bandwidth issues. "We had to take a strategic decision on tools and learning management systems," says Ms. Shenoy. "How could we open up the possibility of them watching sessions offline, take attendance, do screen-sharing, and help them log in with a simple interface?"

Candidates were screened on internet connectivity, how digitally savvy they were, whether they owned smartphones and computers, what their available time slots were, and whether they were willing to take up jobs. Those from 18 years to over 35 years of age were trained in life skills, basic English and job readiness in the 15-day programme. In case of hirers like Amazon, candidates were trained to crack the entrance test. The team created sign language videos for speech-and-hearing impaired people.

A team comprising a project executive, trainers and sign language interpreters ran the programme in each centre. "While our regular classroom training is for eight hours a day, we had to cut it down to two to three hours," says Swapnil Dewalwar, assistant programme manager, WISE programme, Mumbai region. "This is because their attention span is small, and it becomes diffi-



A Youth4Jobs training session in progress. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

cult to find candidates in one place," he said.

Mix of content

The teams looked at a mix of live and pre-recorded content, says Mr. Dewalwar. For the live sessions, WhatsApp, Google Hangouts and Zoom were used, while for the pre-recorded sessions, Facebook Private Groups came in handy. "Our biggest challenge was how to get them to understand Zoom and Google Hangouts, and how to load these apps. They knew SMS and WhatsApp to some extent. It took a lot of time and patience from the teams," says Ms. Shenoy.

tive safety of their homes. Also, dropouts, which the teams were expecting because of classes being online, were negligible.

Placement support

Despite the impact on the economy due to the lockdown, a number of corporates in the Y4J network across India were ready to hire their candidates post the lockdown. The foundation has a corporate connect team that does accessibility audits, sensitises managers and provides sign language training. "We build relationships with organisations and encourage them to hire candidates in multiple roles. We explore how they can take in people with 100% visual impairment or intellectual disabilities, which they may not otherwise be keen on doing," says Mr. Dewalwar.

Assessments – one midway through the course and one at the end – were conducted mainly through Google Forms and live video calls, and certificates were given to candidates once they completed the course.

At least 1,152 people have been trained so far in 117 batches. "In just two batches, 1,100 youth with disabilities enrolled in rural areas. We have tapped into some kind of energy no one expected," says Ms. Shenoy.

Another interesting aspect was that girls, who would not come to the resource centres earlier, had enrolled in large numbers because of the rela-

BAI to train jobless youth to tackle worker scarcity

LALATENDU MISHRA

MUMBAI

around the MMR, who are unemployed but are ready to work in the construction industry as carpenters, masons and fitters. "BAI wants to work with NGOs to source the labourers from the villages," he said.

"BAI initially will work with its members to ensure that unskilled labourers are trained on the site by specialists and then BAI wants to start training centres for which the State should provide suitable land," the letter to the CM said.

Mr. Rijhwani said more than 5,800 projects have been stalled till date, and the MahaRera has received complaints against them under Sections 7 and 8 of the Real Estate (Regulation and Development) Act, 2016, for revocation of the registration of the projects.

He said such projects should be completed through formation of a panel of interested contractors.

The foundation is also thinking of conducting a drive to procure unused phones and computers to help those with no access to these devices. None of this

Daughter to vacate house after elderly mother alleges torture

70-year-old from Kandivali moves HC, offers daughter another flat in Nalasopara

SONAM SAIGAL

MUMBAI

A daughter finally gave an undertaking to vacate her 70-year-old mother's house after the woman approached the Bombay High Court, alleging physical and mental harassment.

A Division Bench of Justices S.J. Kathawala and N.R. Borkar was on June 19 hearing a plea by the septuagenarian, an ex-government employee and mother of five daughters. She alleged that one of her daughters tortured her mentally and physically.

The Bench said prima facie "we gathered an impression that the mother seriously apprehended physical and mental harassment and consequent threats to her life, at the hands of her daughter if she resided in



The Bombay High Court

lives, seeking redressal of their grievances against their children."

On June 5, the 70-year-old woman, in her direct address to the court, had insisted that her daughter along with her 19-year-old son be directed to forthwith vacate her flat. However, because of the pandemic and consequent problems that individuals are facing, the HC had declined to pass such an order.

The Bench had then said, "We hereby sternly warn the daughter, as well as her son that in the event of this court receiving any complaint from the mother of harassment by either or both of them, then in that event, after verifying the same, we will be constrained to pass orders, including an order restraining them from entering the said flat."

The daughter on June 19 filed an affidavit stating that her mother was reacting or overreacting at the instance of her another sibling who had temporarily come down with her family from Singapore. The mother, however, refuted this allegation.

The mother offered to give one of her flats at Nalasopara to her daughter to stay there with her son from July 15. The daughter then took an undertaking, on the same day, to vacate the said flat with her son within eight weeks.

Testing of water sources halted

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

MUMBAI

The coronavirus-induced lockdown has affected the annual quality testing of drinking water sources in Maharashtra, with nearly 1.5 lakh such facilities remaining unchecked, as per official figures.

According to data of the Maharashtra drinking

water and sanitation department, there are 2,12,642 water sources notified, of which samples of only 62,482 could be tested, while 1,50,160 water sources still remain untested.

Every year, the State carries out quality testing of notified drinking water sources.

Mumbai Weather max min
Mumbai Airport 33 26
Pune 31 22
Mumbai City 33 26

Mumbai Today
33°C Light rain and thunder-shower are expected. The sky will remain cloudy. A pleasant morning.

Mumbai Tomorrow
33°C Light to moderate rain and thunder-shower will effect. A comfortable morning. The sky will remain cloudy.

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WESTERN RAILWAY

PROVISION OF POWER SUPPLY

(1) Tender No.: EL 81/4/443/WA/8 dated 24.06.2020. (2) Work Location: Mumbai Central Bank Terminus - Provision of power supply for Automatic Coach Washing Plant (ACWP) at BTDS Depot. Approx. cost of work : ₹ 1,01,100/- Completion Period : Four Months. (3) Dates & time of opening : 24.07.2020 till 15.30 hrs. Note : Please visit our website www.ireps.gov.in to download the tender document, corrigendum and further details.

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SAVE ENERGY FOR BENEFIT OF SELF & NATION

DHAULASIDH HYDRO ELECTRIC PROJECT
PRESS NOTICE / E-Tender No. PCD-87/2020
Online bids (e-tender) on Domestic Competitive Bidding (DCB) are invited on behalf of SJVN Ltd. for Construction of approach road from Salasi Khad bridge near Jihan to Dam site of DSHEP (RD 0.00 to 3125 m). Last date for bid submission is 15.07.2020. For details, please visit websites www.sjvn.nic.in, <https://sjvn.abcprocure.com> and www.eprocure.gov.in. Amendments(s), if any, shall be issued on above websites only.

For and on behalf of SJVN Ltd.
DGM (P&C), Dhaulasidh Hydro electric project, Hamirpur (HP)

MAHARASHTRA SOCIAL JUSTICE MINISTER DHANANJAY MUNDE DISCHARGED FROM BREACH CANDY HOSPITAL

Highway Police to penalise overspeeding vehicles on Mumbai-Pune Expressway

RAINA ASSAINAR

NAVI MUMBAI

The Highway Police have initiated a pilot project of finding overspeeding vehicles by comparing footage of CCTV cameras at two toll nakkas – Khalapur and Urse – on the Mumbai-Pune Expressway.

The project, which is planned to take off next month, is the brainchild of Vinay Korgaonkar, Additional Director General of Police, Highway Police.

"The maximum number of deaths on highways is due to the accidents caused by overspeeding vehicles. Hence, it is important to discourage overspeeding by penalising such errant drivers. It is not possible to manually catch hold of each such vehicle, so we decided to take the help of CCTV cameras," Digambar Pradhan, Superintendent of Police, Highway Police, said.

From January to May, there were 46 accidents on the expressway. Of them, 16 were fatal ones, killing 17 people, while 10 were serious mishaps that injured 20. As many as eight were minor accidents, injuring eight people, while 12 mishaps were without any injuries. Last year, 306 accidents were reported, leaving 92 people dead and 162 seriously injured.

The time taken to travel the distance between the two toll plazas will be monitored by obtaining data of every vehicle using the expressway. "Motorists crossing the speed limit will be penalised by sending e-challan," Mr. Pradhan said.

Case filed for blocking ambulance with body

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

PALGHAR

A case has been registered against a group of people in Palghar district for obstructing movement of an ambulance carrying the body of a COVID-19 victim to the crematorium in their locality, the police said on Monday.

They were not wearing masks and violated locking norms by their act, he said, adding that the situation was resolved only after intervention of the police.

A case has been registered under various sections of the Indian Penal Code, and under the Disaster Management Act and the Epidemic Diseases Act at Vasai police station.

Dhananjay Munde discharged after recovery from COVID-19

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

MUMBAI

Maharashtra Social Justice Minister Dhananjay Munde was on Monday discharged from Breach Candy hospital after recovering from COVID-19. He was admitted to the hospital on June 12 after testing positive.

"My second test report came negative, thanks to your good wishes and prayers. I am heading to my village after getting discharged," Mr. Munde said.

Earlier, Maharashtra ministers Ashok Chavan of the Congress and Jitendra Awhad of the NCP had tested positive for the virus, and both recovered later.

Safety risk



Beating the heat: Youths enjoying a high tide at Marine Drive on Monday. ■ VIVEK BENDRE

WESTERN RAILWAY
ENGINE REPLACEMENT OF TRACK MACHINES
FOUR WHEELER HIRING & CONSTRUCTION WORK
Tender No. W-118/9/IREPS/BCT (WA)
(1) Executive: Sr.DEN (N) BCT, Tender Notice No.: BCT/20-21/145, dt. 22/06/2020. Work and location: VIRASURAT SECTION-Hiring of Four wheeler Non-AC vehicle for day to day inspection and supervision of various works under the ADEN/DFCCIL section for two years. Approx. Cost of work: ₹ 11,98,342.08/- EMD: ₹ 24,000/- Date & Time of submission: on 21/07/2020 till 15:00 hrs. Date & Time of opening: on 21/07/2020 at 15:30 hrs. (2) Executive: Sr.DEN (N) BCT, Tender Notice No.: BCT/20-21/146, dt. 22/06/2020. Work and location: VIRASURAT SECTION-Extension of CPW office and stores for material storage against new sanctioned track renewal works under SSE (W) DRD, BL, BIM, ST. Approx. Cost of work: ₹ 1,07,00,886/- EMD: ₹ 2,03,500/- Date & Time of submission: on 21/07/2020 till 15:00 hrs. Date & Time of opening: on 21/07/2020 at 15:30 hrs. Reporting detailed nature of work, containing cost of tender document (non refundable), EMD, eligibility criteria, similar nature of work, detailed tender conditions, please visit www.ireps.gov.in. Manual offers will not be considered. D-07
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A Mini Ratna & Schedule 'A' PSU
CIN No. L40101HP1988G00409
DHANASIDH HYDRO ELECTRIC PROJECT
PRESS NOTICE / E-Tender No. PCD-87/2020
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SAVE ENERGY FOR BENEFIT OF SELF & NATION

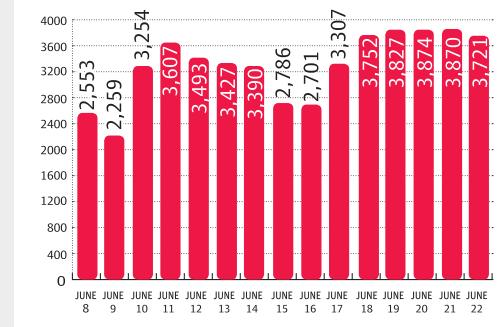
Maharashtra COVID-19 tracker

TOTAL CASES	NEW CASES	ACTIVE CASES	RECOVERED	DEATHS
1,35,796	3,721	61,793	67,706	6,283

DISTRICTS AFFECTED: 35

DISTRICT	CASES	DEATHS	DISTRICT	CASES	DEATHS
Mumbai	67,586	3,737	Ahmednagar	280	12
Thane	25,390	732	Nanded	286	11
Pune	16,474	612	Hingoli	254	1
Aurangabad	3,564	178	Yavatmal	238	7
Palghar	3,621	93	Latur	226	13
Nashik	2,871	160	Omanabad	179	6
Raigad	2,632	93	Sindhudurg	164	4
Solapur	2,291	172	Buldhana	170	6
Jalgaon	2,426	182	Gondia	101	0
Nagpur	1,337	13	Parbhani	85	4
Akola	1,248	65	Beed	98	3
Satara	861	38	Nandurbar	83	5
Kolhapur	747	8	Washim	71	3
Ratnagiri	501	17	Bhandara	77	0
Dhule	561	46	Chandrapur	59	0
Amravati	457	22	Gadchiroli	59	1
Jalna	372	11	Wardha	14	1
Sangli	297	07			

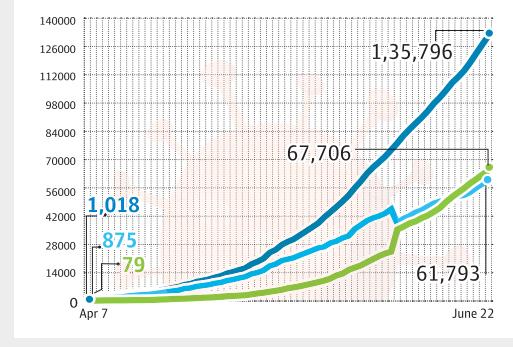
POSITIVE CASES OVER LAST 15 DAYS



1,098 (29.50%) of Monday's cases are from Mumbai



CASES TREND



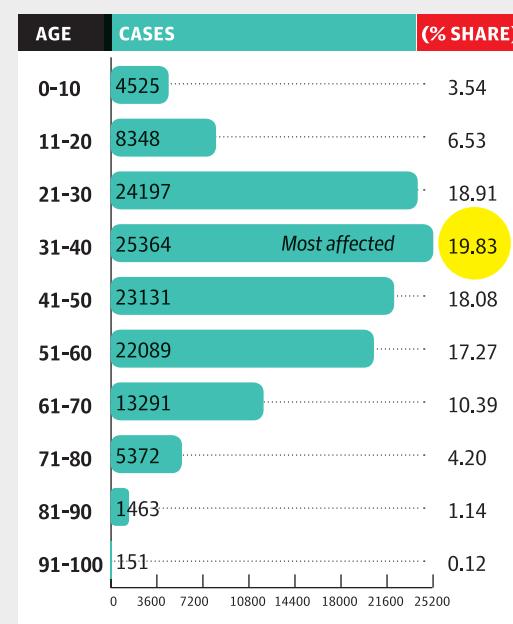
49.77% is the State recovery rate

MORTALITY RATE

Maharashtra 4.67%

India 3.22%

AFFECTED (AGE-WISE)

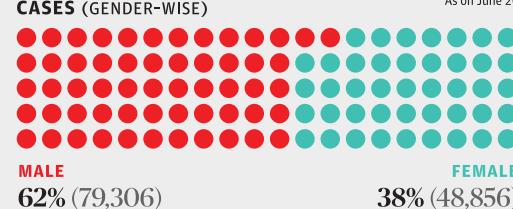


QUARANTINE NUMBERS

6,01,182 Home quarantine

26,910 Institutional quarantine

CASES (GENDER-WISE)



DEATH (GENDER-WISE)



70% 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: ssumarashtra@gmail.com

CITY-WISE HELPLINE NUMBERS

Mumbai city: 022 22664232

Palghar: 02525 297474

Mumbai suburbs: 022

Raigad: 02141 222118

26556799 / 26556806

Ratnagiri: 02352 226248

Thane: 022 25301740

Sindhudurg: 02362 228847

Source: Public Health Department, Maharashtra, BMC

Mumbai sees 1,098 new cases; death toll is 3,737

Despite increase in city's doubling rate, some areas reporting higher cases; 50 mobile dispensaries to focus on the suburbs

JYOTI SHELAR
MUMBAI

Mumbai recorded 1,098 more cases of COVID-19 on Monday, pushing its tally to 67,586 cases. The city also recorded 66 fatalities, taking its death toll to 3,737.

Civic health officials said only 20 deaths were reported in a span of 24 hours, while the rest had occurred before June 19. At least 40 of these patients had co-morbid conditions.

'Sitting on a plateau'

Officials said the number of positive cases had also stabilised considerably. In a Facebook post, Manisha Mhaiskar, principal secretary on special deputation to the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC), wrote that the city was sitting on a plateau in June.

"Daily positives are steady between 1000-1200, admissions have stabilised, there are vacant beds even in KEM, there is no longer the pressure to commission a ward every alternate day. And this is even after 2 full weeks of unlock down in form of Mission Begin Again. Chase the virus



Duty calls: Police personnel walk through the sealed Kurar village in Malad (East), a COVID-19 hotspot, on Monday. ■ VIJAY BATE

is working (sic)," she said.

According to civic officials, while the doubling rate of the city had improved to 37 days, some areas were recording more cases.

"Keeping this in mind, BMC has decided to implement a rapid action plan in areas like Mulund, Bhandup, Andheri, Malad, Borivali, Dahisar and Kandivali. With the aim to bring down the num-

ber of positive cases in the city to zero, 'Mission Zero' has been launched today [June 22] at Shahaji Raje Bhosale Sports Complex in Andheri," the BMC said.

"The ambitious project will comprise 50 mobile dispensaries vans going to different areas to conduct preliminary check-ups and identify patients. With the onset of monsoon, the plan

is particularly critical for timely detection and treatment of patients with COVID-19 and other ailments. All suspected patients will be immediately isolated and swab tests will be conducted. This will lead to early detection and timely treatment of those infected. At the same time, public awareness will also be created," the civic body said.

Malabar Hill building sealed after 21 cases

Death toll touches 594, duplicated records deleted

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MUMBAI

A plush residential complex on Napean Sea Road in Malabar Hill has been sealed after 21 COVID-19 cases were reported in seven days, a BMC official said on Monday.

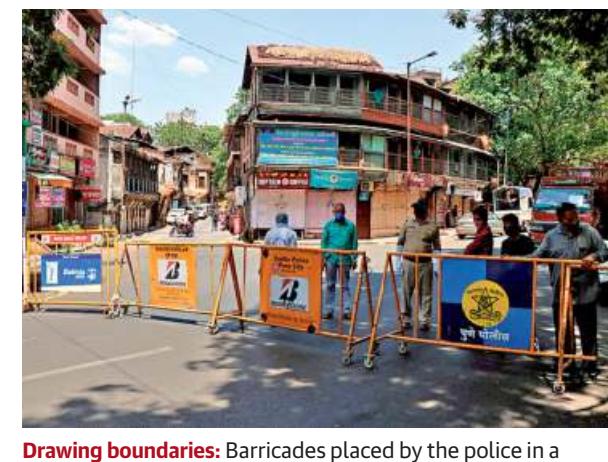
He said 19 of the 21 patients were domestic helps, drivers and security staff.

"House-helps work in different flats in the building and may have spread the infection. The entire building had to be sealed to break the chain of spread," assistant municipal commissioner (D Ward) Prashant Gaikwad said.

"We have shifted the house-helps and security staff to quarantine centres and told the residential society to sanitise common toilets at least four to six times a day," he said.

The district witnessed record surges of 823 and 675 cases on Saturday and Sunday respectively, with 90% of the fresh cases being reported from Pune city.

Around 40% of the new cases in Pune city are from



Drawing boundaries: Barricades placed by the police in a containment zone at Kasba peth area in Pune city. ■ FILE PHOTO

outside 'containment zones', said Pune Municipal Corporation (PMC) Commissioner Shekhar Gaikwad, acknowledging that the sharp spike in cases was worrying.

"After the unlocking and easing of restrictions on June 1, increased inter-city and inter-district movement has seen the number of fresh COVID-19 cases soar outside

Pune city's usual containment zones. The figure of these cases [outside the 'red zones'], which hitherto was limited to 18-20% has now risen sharply to 40%," Mr. Gaikwad said.

He also said in the wake of mounting cases, the zone revision exercise would now be done weekly instead of fortnightly. "Every Saturday,

NMMC reports 120 new cases; nears 5,000 mark

Four more deaths take toll to 168

RAINA ASSAINAR
NAVI MUMBAI

The Navi Mumbai Municipal Corporation (NMMC) reported 120 new COVID-19 cases on Monday, pushing its total tally to 4,961 cases.

Four more deaths were also reported, taking its toll to 168. A total of 62 patients were discharged, taking the number of recoveries to 2,850. There are currently 1,943 active patients in Navi Mumbai. The city's case fatality rate is 3.38% and a 57% recovery rate.

On the rise in cases, NMMC Commissioner Annasheeb Misal said, "Lack of physical distancing in gaonthans and low-income housing areas, post the easing of

the lockdown, is one of the major reasons."

However, Mr. Misal said the doubling rate, which was seven days, is now 25 days. "It was 23 till few days ago. We are trying our best to improve the doubling rate," he said.

Meanwhile, the Panvel Municipal Corporation (PMC) reported 53 new cases, taking its tally to 1,382. With two more deaths, the toll is now 58. Fifty-six people were discharged, bringing the total recoveries to 923. PMC now has 401 active cases with a case fatality rate of 4.19% and a recovery rate of 66.8%.

Panvel rural reported 23 new cases of COVID-19 and two deaths on Monday.

Goa reports first COVID-19 death

85-year-old man succumbs; State to conduct last rites

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
PANAJI

An 85-year-old man succumbed to COVID-19 in Goa on Monday, making it the first fatality due to the disease in the State, Health Minister Vishwanath Rane said.

While Mr. Rane earlier said the deceased was a woman, he later clarified in his tweet that the victim was a man. The victim, belonging to Morlem village in Sattari taluka of North Goa district, was undergoing treatment at ESI Hospital, a designated facility for COVID-19 patients, Mr. Rane said.

The State government has already declared Morlem village, which falls under Valpoi, the Assembly constituency of Mr. Rane, as a containment zone.

The victim, who was bed-

ridden for four years, was taken to Goa Medical College and Hospital from his home in Morlem on Saturday, after he complained of breathlessness, a health department official said. He was later shifted to ESI Hospital, the official added.

Body not handed over Hours after his death, Chief Minister Pramod Sawant said the body would not be handed over to kin and the final rites will be conducted by government authorities.

The body will not be handed over to the family. The State Health Department will conduct the final rites as per the laid down protocol," he said.

The victim, who was bed-

ridden for four years, was taken to Goa Medical College and Hospital from his home in Morlem on Saturday, after he complained of breathlessness, a health department official said. He was later shifted to ESI Hospital, the official added.

Auditors settle 134 complaints

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MUMBAI

The Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) has appealed to citizens to bring to its notice if

SERIES REVIEW

Sushmita Sen is a tour de force in a gripping but not-too-ambitious crime saga

KENNETH ROSARIO

Suspended upside down from gymnastics rings in the opening shot, Sushmita Sen as Aarya, perfectly sets the tone for the nine-episode series. The enigmatic image, contrary to expectations, ushers us into a normal household, grappling with a familial morning routine. It's a clever glimpse into the possibilities of Aarya shape-shifting into something more badass from a regular home-maker, and the underlying capability, focus and strength required, both in body and mind, to do so. The series rests heavily on Sen's capabilities and conviction to slip into different avatars, while maintaining her credibility in all the roles – a grieving wife, scared mother, hurt friend, diplomatic daughter, drug dealer, businesswoman and keeper of secrets. Sen's prowess to transition smoothly, while not giving away too much, is one of the biggest assets of the show.

Aarya is a genre series that's not too ambitious. The show knows its limits and remains quite basic as a crime thriller, which works in its favour. The big reveals aren't too shocking,



Shape shifter: Sushmita Sen has a composed, vulnerable and tall presence throughout the show ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

but the emphasis is on how we, as an audience, reach the destination rather than the destination itself. The cliff hangers at the end of each episode – clas-

sic old-school television-style – serve their sole purpose of creating a desire to know more. In a genre film, with its time constraint, the narrative is of-

ten limited to what's integral to the plot and the thriller. But with a lavish run-time of nine 50-minute episodes, *Aarya* can explore the finer relationship

details and wallow in moments like the murder of Tej Sareen (Chandrachur Singh). For the most part, even though stretched a bit too much at

times, the story remains on track, is simple (sometimes simplistic) to follow and leaves you with utmost curiosity at the end of each episode.

Aarya
DIRECTOR: Ram Madhvani, Sandeep Modi, Vinod Rawat
CAST: Sushmita Sen, Manish Chaudhary, Chandrachur Singh, Vikas Kumar, Ankur Bhatia, Alex O'Neill, Namit Das, nkur Bhatia, Sohaila Kapoor, Jayant Kripalani, Sikandar Kher
STORYLINE: Aarya is forced to join the family business of smuggling illicit substances after the murder of her husband, and to pay the debts left behind by him.

Grey filters (typical of a crime thriller) mixed with upscale and modern yet traditional Rajasthani mise-en-scène, renders a visually-striking show and lends it an air of high-production value. But the show's dubbing takes away its expensive look. Perhaps it is the last-minute patchwork, but the characters often sound like they are speaking into a mic, and there is an evident disassociation between the dialogues and the sounds of a landscape. Even the sounds of a wedding in the first two episodes feel engineered rather than atmospheric. The show overall sounds quite shoddy.

The three-camera, long-takes shooting technique pays off rather well, as actors, led by Sen, appear invested. There isn't a disassociation of emotions between takes and there is a natural fluidity in the way the actors conduct themselves. Sen has a composed, vulnerable and tall presence throughout the show, but there are others like Sohaila Kapoor, Vikas Kumar and Namit Das, who are given enough space to showcase their acting abilities. Although one wishes Kapoor was given more space in the writing, the show does hint at a second instalment and perhaps she'll have more to do then. The show, by no means, is extraordinary, yet it keeps you interested in the characters and their lives, and emerges as a good example of basic storytelling done right.

Aarya is currently streaming on Hotstar+ Disney

Farrukh Jaffar: Keeper of the old world

The much loved Fatima "Fatto" begum of *Gulabo Sitabo* fame tells **Namrata Joshi** that she's a firm believer in a zest for life

NAMRATA JOSHI

Farrukh Jaffar, just like *Gulabo Sitabo*'s writer Juhi Chaturvedi, is a Lucknow girl. So, what does Jaffar then think of the portrayal of her city in the film in which she is the centre of attention as the spunky and spirited nonagenarian Fatima "Fatto" Begum? "It is true that parts of Lucknow are exactly as shown in the film. But like all cities there is the more modern side [to it] as well," she tells *The Hindu* on an email interview.

Jaffar's character, despite the sharp tongue, is actually the keeper of old world, genteel values of loyalty and love, even when it comes to something inanimate like her crumbling ancestral haveli Fatima Mahal. A belief system and philosophy that is fast on the decline; on its way to becoming extinct, in fact.

Starting out

Just like Shoojit Sircar's *Gulabo Sitabo*, Jaffar's first foray on to the big screen—Muazzaf Ali's *Umrao Jaan*—was also set in Lucknow. She played the courtesan's mother. In an earlier interview with me she had referred to it as "filmi duniya ki sair ka pehla jeena" (the first step in the journey through the world of films). Both recreations of the city are vastly different, set as they are in different times and cultures. "Every city has different corners. When you watch *Umrao Jaan* you may get the impression that Lucknow is one big brothel. After watching *Gulabo Sitabo* you might



Old wisdom: Farrukh Jaffar's character, despite the sharp tongue, upholds genteel values of loyalty and love ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

think that the entire population of the city is decadent and decaying. But each film is only a small part of the whole city," she asserts.

Born in 1933, Jaffar was 16 when she left her village in district Jaunpur, to come to Lucknow following her mar-

riage to eminent journalist and freedom fighter Syed Muhammad Jaffar. Her maternal grandfather and father were landlords. "I was very excited to leave the village behind. In Lucknow, I was glamour struck," she recollects. Jaffar wanted to do many things but was not

sure what. In Lucknow University she participated in cultural programmes and theatre. After graduation she did not want to remain a housewife, and so began her career in radio in 1963. "I landed a job at the radio station by accident, and I began to like the idea of

speaking to countless people, some of whom fell in love with my voice," she shares. She wrote and acted in several radio plays and also did a brief stint on stage.

Born to be loved

How do you relate to the world of radio and theatre as opposed to films? I ask her. "I like the idea of being loved by so many people and the idea of plays and films allowing me to play so many different characters in one life. The biggest high of showbiz is to be able to communicate with the whole world. Radio, films and theatre all work for me. All these are a medium for me to be loved by a maximum number of people. I love to be loved," she declares.

I remember seeing her first on big screen in Anusha Rizvi's *Peepli Live!* as the crochety old amma. In between, there have been outings in *Sultan*, *Photograph*, *Tanu Weds Manu* etc. But her character in *Gulabo Sitabo* has made an impact, like no other of Jaffer's. She gives the credit to the direction of Shoojit Sircar and the writing of Juhi Chaturvedi. "I am a director's actor. Shoojit explained my work so well to me, that it became easy for me to play it," she says.

Fearless Fatto

It was the first time for her to have been working with Sircar's unit and she can't seem to get enough of him. "He is able to explain what he wants in few words. He gave me tremendous confidence by

saying 'There is no other actress in the film except you. You are my leading lady. You are the heroine. It is just you and the Big B,'" she recollects. He told her that during the shoot she should not see Amitabh Bachchan as a super star but as the "creep" Mirza. "That made me dialogue with Amitabh fearlessly," she says.

It's clear that she has an energy and vivacity—similar to Fatto—that totally belie her age. Though she thinks that she isn't as bold and cheeky as her latest on screen avatar. "What I do give her character, is that twinkle in the eye. I believe in having maximum fun in life despite age or the economic situation," she emphasises.

She loved her birthday scene in the film, "Fatto is happy that she, as a woman with age not on her side, still smarts the crooks." She also liked it for getting to wear lovely clothes, jewellery and make-up which made her look good on the screen. However, in her own family, birthdays are not a big deal. "There is no celebration. When I do remember, I wish my grandchildren on their birthdays. I routinely forget the birthdays of my children." I ask her whom she'd want to elope with in real life just like she does in the film. Her reply makes me smile, "I would not like to elope with anyone. I am very happy where I am in life today. Even Fatto Begum did not elope for love or for a man. She staged the elopement to spite the very greedy Mirza."

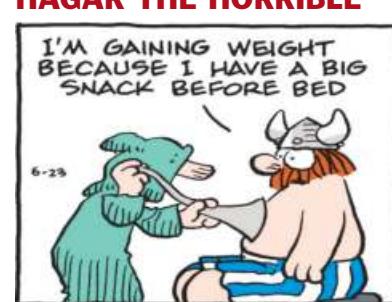
POOCHE CAFE



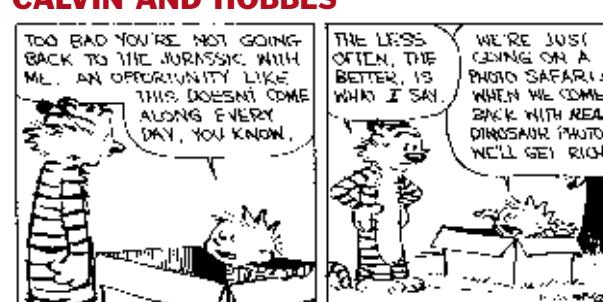
PEANUTS



HAGAR THE HORRIBLE



CALVIN AND HOBBES



TIGER



PEARLS BEFORE SWINE





Vigilance paramount

States have tackled the virus differently, but they must learn from each other

On June 20, a month after 1,00,000 novel coronavirus cases were reported, India crossed a grim milestone of 4,00,000 cases. If it took 13 days to double to 2,00,000 cases, India added another one lakh cases in 10 days on June 12. From a test positivity rate of 4.6% in mid-May, it is 7.9% as on June 21, reflecting a wider spread in the community, particularly in the hotspots – Mumbai, Delhi, Chennai and Ahmedabad. Mortality, which was initially low, has been steadily increasing. The first death was reported on March 13 and the figure crossed 1,000 only on April 28. But it has taken just three days for each additional 1,000 deaths after the toll touched 4,000 to reach 13,703 deaths as on June 21. The lower mortality figures are a reflection of the low median age (nearly 27 years) of the Indian population, the stage of the pandemic in India, health-seeking behaviour and the health-care system. While the low median age has helped keep mortality low, high prevalence of high-risk factors even among younger people might put them at great risk if infected with the virus. The health-care system in Mumbai, Delhi, Chennai and Ahmedabad, already strained, could witness more deaths if the virus spreads unabated. With India now in the unlock phase, this is the time to be most vigilant.

Kerala, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh have done exceptionally well in containment. If Kerala was fully geared even before the first case was reported, the other two States utilised the early phase of the lockdown to track, test and isolate those infected and trace contacts. Nothing else can explain why Bengaluru has bucked the trend while Delhi, Mumbai and Chennai have become pandemic epicentres. Maharashtra has adopted the correct approach of enhanced testing unmindful of the large number of cases getting reported each day. Aggressive testing enabled Maharashtra to achieve the remarkable feat of containment in Dharavi. In stark contrast, till a few days ago, Delhi had used every trick in the textbook to keep cases and deaths low. That fewer cases are reported from Telangana, West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar raises suspicion about their testing and counting. While many States have reported migrant workers testing positive on arrival, it is inconceivable that Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and West Bengal, which have recorded the most returnees, should not see a spike. Through fever clinics and testing of people with influenza-like illness in certain areas in Chennai that have high spread, Tamil Nadu is making up for lost time. But true containment will remain difficult and will depend on door-to-door surveillance and large-scale testing in these areas. Going by the cases reported, Gujarat seems to be the only place where the virus spreads to a definite number of people every fortnight even when tests are increased incrementally. The only way to contain numbers is by not hiding them.

The lone wolf threat

There is no sure way of preventing isolated terror attacks that require little planning

The knife attack at a park in Reading, a town west of London, which killed three people and injured three others, is yet another reminder of the threat of lone wolf attacks the U.K. is facing. Last November, the British government reduced the official threat level from "severe" to "substantial", which means attacks could happen but there was no intelligence of an immediate terror strike. Since then, the country has seen three major incidents. In November, Usman Khan, 28, who had been jailed for terror offences, killed two with a knife at the Fishmongers' Hall, London. In February this year, a 20-year-old was shot dead by police when he launched a knife attack in south London. A 25-year-old Libyan national has been arrested in connection with the latest incident. British media have reported that Khairi Saadallah was on the MI5's radar. He was investigated as the intelligence community got a report that he was looking to travel abroad to link up with terror outfits. The investigation closed for lack of evidence. But he is now in custody for the Reading attack, which has been declared a terror incident.

Lone wolf attacks, in which extremist individuals translate their beliefs into violent actions, are hard to detect and prevent. In coordinated terror attacks, the chances of competent intelligence agencies detecting the perpetrators are much higher. To their credit, the U.K.'s intelligence wings have foiled dozens of terror attacks since the devastating 2005 London bombings that killed 52 people and injured 700 others. But the U.K., especially London, continued to see low-tech lone attacks, where the attacker either used vehicles to run over people or launched knife attacks. Terrorist organisations had also embraced this tactic to spread violence in countries where coordinated big attacks are impossible. When the territories it controlled in Iraq and Syria started shrinking in the wake of counter-attacks, in 2015 and 2016 the Islamic State urged its supporters first to launch attacks in western cities and then declare allegiance to the 'Caliph'. In 2017, Khalid Masood, a British citizen, drove a car into pedestrians on the pavement of Westminster Bridge and stabbed a police officer. He killed six people and injured 40 others before being shot by police. Though British authorities had foiled some knife attacks since the 2013 killing of soldier Lee Rigby in southeast London, lone wolf attacks continue to pose a security challenge to the public and the government. In all the last three knife attacks, the attackers were known to the agencies. The government and the security agencies need to adopt a multi-pronged approach towards radicalisation, which is anchored in human intelligence, strong ties with communities and community leaders and deradicalisation programmes.

In anti-racism fight, the Lyndon B. Johnson option

A swift wind is blowing following George Floyd's death, and in reform, the executive must look to the 36th U.S. President



DIPANKAR GUPTA

Police killing blacks at the slightest pretext, sometimes without pretext, is one of the social constants of the United States. When police officer Derek Chauvin choked George Floyd to death on May 25, in Minnesota, the usual analysts pointed to the usual suspect, namely, racism. So, what is new?

Yes, we all knew that blacks are more likely to be shot than white people by the police. Numbers vary; ProPublica's 2014 finding says shooting blacks is 21 times higher, while a 2020 report in *The New York Times* points out that it is seven times greater in Minnesota. These numbers are nagging and repetitive. Just as we know where babies come from, racism in the U.S. police is not a revelation either.

Much to be done

George Floyd's brother, Philonese Floyd, thinks what is new is that "people see it, White people too". Yet, barely had George Floyd been cremated when another black person, Rayshard Brooks, was killed by the Atlanta police, on June 12. Perhaps Philonese was impressed that in Minneapolis, Denver, Dallas, Houston, Washington DC, California and New York, elected Mayors, citizens and even police officers want chokeholds banned or have got them banned.

That still leaves out a very large area of concern. Banning chokeholds, yes, but what about gunshots? What about random, invasive probes? Thus far, these aspects are loosely worded by police reformists in terms of "de-escalation" of violent confrontations and greater caution to be exercised in "no-knock warrants".

Promote people power against COVID-19

It is time to change track from a government-led but people-disconnected strategy of fighting the virus



K. SRINATH REDDY

India has a single time zone by the clock but it exists in many COVID-19 time zones. Cities with large international airports and high inflows of foreign returnees opened the door to COVID-19 and are trying to expel the unwelcome intruder. Other parts of India are trying to protect themselves against the virus which has just managed to get its toe in. These include rural India and much of the eastern and north-eastern regions. So, a pan-India defence is needed, with variations as appropriate to local contexts.

Antibody prevalence

Differences in viral exposure rates were initially observed across the country, from the RT-PCR tests. Since the testing criteria were restricted to specific indications and testing rates were variable, over time and geography, these comparisons were fallible. As reports of many persons testing positive but staying asymptomatic came in from across the world, questions arose as to the extent of virus spread in the general population. The government has just released the results of population surveys, employing antibody tests in different parts of the country. Data presented on 63 of the 83 districts reveal an antibody prevalence of 0.73% in the population. Earlier media reports of 15-30% antibody prevalence in the containment zones of large cities are yet to be corroborated, since data are still being analysed.

Some sections of the media rushed to say that the reported prevalence in the containment zones heralds an imminent arrival of herd immunity in India. The herd immunity threshold (HIT) for this virus is estimated to be at least 70% of the Indian population. Extrapolating from containment zones to the entire country is a mistake, as the district survey shows. Even the prevalence attributed to the containment zones is far from the HIT. Much of the country remains untouched by the virus. This offers an opportunity to immo-



"COVID-19 can be countered only through a unified society effort." Healthcare workers at a medical camp in Dharavi, Mumbai, on June 10. ■ VIJAY BATE

bilise the virus even as we move out of the lockdown.

It is clear that we need a differentiated approach in our response as we address the varied levels of infection across large cities, smaller towns and rural areas. One challenge is to stall the spread within the urban containment zones. The other is to protect the many parts of the country where the virus has touched very few but can threaten many. Despite the fatigue of national lockdown and the natural urge to get on with life as before, there are many battles yet to be fought before we unfurl the flag of victory like New Zealand or Vietnam.

Changing track

It is time to change track from a government-led but people-disconnected strategy of planning and implementation. As we open up, we need to engage the strengths of our community resources to ensure that the many components of the response, from testing and isolation to enhanced public awareness and personal protection, are successfully delivered at scale. So far, the strengths of voluntary groups and elected local bodies have been inadequately tapped across the country. There are examples of panchayats becoming excellent organisers of local community response in Kerala and Odisha, while Andhra Pradesh has deployed village and ward volunteers for symptom-based syndromic surveillance of rural and urban households and contact tracing. We need to replicate those good practices, and go beyond, as we move ahead.

Symptom-based viral nucleic acid

testing with RT-PCR will have limited success if we only depend on sick persons to self-report at hospitals. Stigma and fear of isolation in a crowded hospital impedes or delays self-referral. We need to detect all likely cases, with influenza-like illness and other COVID-19 symptoms, early in their illness and arrange for testing at home. The initial screening can be done by a school-educated community volunteer, without solely depending on the overburdened ASHA. Such volunteers can also become a family's link with the health care system for follow-up of mild COVID-19 positive persons who are now being advised to isolate at home. Young volunteers can be equipped with a thermometer and a fingertip pulse oximeter. Each volunteer can visit 50 allotted houses daily, for case detection and follow-up. They should also act as the home isolated person's link with the health system for efficient transfer and hospitalisation if symptoms worsen.

Where will we get such easily trainable, disciplined and community-oriented young persons? The National Service Scheme functions under the Ministry of Youth Affairs. Started in 1969 to commemorate Mahatma Gandhi's birth centenary, the NSS can demonstrate its value as we celebrate the completion of 150 years of his birth. The National Cadet Corps involves college students mentored by the Defence Ministry. These youth groups can be mobilised. Young persons are at very little risk of serious illness even if infected in the line of duty. This applies also to local youth volunteer groups. Elderly

individuals, people with co-morbidities and persons with physical or mental disability will need special attention and customised service, for which the volunteers can be trained by experienced NGO trainers.

Shortages in skilled healthcare providers need to be addressed, especially as there will be periodic attrition due to infection and exhaustion. The government can create a year-long short service commission under the National Health Mission to recruit doctors who have recently graduated and even attract private practitioners whose clinics shut during the lockdown. These temporary measures can lay the foundations for a larger, well-integrated health workforce of the future.

Improving awareness

We need to step up health awareness campaigns, not just through mass media but also through community leaders and local influencers. From women's self-help groups to resident welfare associations, and trade unions to business associations, all social collectives have to be mobilised to educate their members and others. Fright and stigma, which drive the epidemic underground, must be countered while fostering social solidarity that assures collective safety.

Within the hotspots, we need to increase efforts for micro-surveillance to curb spread even as the broader containment efforts aim to douse the infection. Physical distancing is difficult in slums but masks and hand washing can be highly protective. To overcome water shortages, municipalities should arrange water tankers. Each family in a slum can also be provided a bucket of soap solution (water with dissolved soap) for hand cleansing daily. However, all of this requires the active engagement and organisational skills of local community leaders who enjoy the trust of the people.

COVID-19 threatens all of society. It can be countered only through a unified society effort. It is now time to direct people power against the virus. It requires the government to be more welcoming of NGO and volunteer participation and to create a platform for a new model of PPP: Peopled Partnered Public Health.

K. Srinath Reddy is President, Public Health Foundation of India. Views are personal

A case to exempt GST in Central Police Canteens

It will boost the morale of the forces

M.P. NATHANAEI

Union Home Minister Amit Shah announced in early May that only indigenous products will be sold in all Central Police Canteens run by the Central Armed Police Force (CAPF). This is a welcome step in keeping with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's directive to promote indigenously manufactured products, or swadeshi products, in India. As almost all products sold in CAPF canteens are indigenous, detailed instructions on this are awaited from the Home Ministry. The CAPF comprises the Central Reserve Police Force, the Border Security Force, the Central Industrial Security Force, the Indo-Tibetan Border Police, the Sashastra Seema Bal, the Assam Rifles and the National Security Guard.

Clearing proposals

Repeated efforts over the years to get the facilities of the Canteen Stores Department for CAPF personnel proved futile though the items were sold to civilians as part of the Army's civic action programme in the North-east.

When Atal Bihari Vajpayee, as Prime Minister, concurred with the Home Ministry's proposal to include the CAPF in the list of beneficiaries of the Canteen Stores Department, the Defence Ministry opposed it and later shelved it. A proposal was subsequently cleared in 2006 by former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh to open Central Police Canteens for the police forces of the country on the lines of the Canteen Stores Department.

The first CEO of the Central Police Canteen, R.K. Singh, visited the Canteen Stores Department headquarters in Mumbai to obtain first-hand knowledge for the gargantuan task of opening Central Police Canteens. Headed by an Additional Director General, the Central Police Canteen purchase Committee registered nearly 200 firms and the project took off in 2007. Run by the CAPFs, the Central Police Canteens are open to serving and retired CAPF and State police personnel and their families all over the country.

functioning as depots and 1,700 canteens running across the country catering to over 50 lakh family members of 10 lakh serving personnel, the Central Police Canteen boasts of sales of over ₹2,800 crore worth of products annually. Baba Ramdev's Patanjali has already made inroads into these canteens with various products and is expected to expand. The Khadi and Village Industries Commission is also channelling the sale of its products like textiles and uniform accoutrements through these canteens.

Non-exemption of GST on all products sold through canteens has been a sore point among the CAPF personnel. The rates at which the products are sold at present in the canteens are marginally less than the market rates. Exemption of GST will reduce the costs further making the products more easily affordable and lucrative. The government has to pay serious attention to this aspect.

Paying VAT

Before the GST came into effect, certain States had exempted the levy of VAT while many others, including Delhi, were reluctant to extend this benefit. While VAT was exempted for all Canteen Stores Department items, the Central Police Canteens in most States had to continue paying VAT.

The authorities cannot ignore the fact that the CAPF is working in difficult conditions across the country at grave risk to their lives. Not only are these personnel combating terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir, tackling insurgency in the Northeast and fighting the Maoists in left wing extremism-affected areas but are also in the forefront quelling riots, as they did in Delhi and Aligarh recently.

While sale of indigenous products in CAPF canteens is a step in the right direction, the issue of exemption of GST needs to be addressed on priority lest the CAPF personnel feel that they are being given step-motherly treatment despite the arduous duties they carry out in inhospitable terrains and the innumerable sacrifices they make for the nation.

M.P. Nathanael is Inspector General of Police (Retd), Central Reserve Police Force

With over 119 master canteens



DATA POINT

Spreading further

Though urban centers such as Mumbai and Chennai continue to bear the brunt of COVID-19, cases are also rapidly rising in several Tier-II and Tier-III districts. While those districts have a lower disease burden, cases have grown at a much faster pace in the last one month. The increase in deaths has been relatively slower

By The Hindu Data Team

■ NEW TARGETS
The graph plots the number of confirmed cases across districts in select States as of June 21, against the % change in cases compared to a month ago. While Mumbai continues to be the worst affected district, the spread of cases increased exponentially in districts such as Cooch Behar, Alipurduar and Ayodhya. Cooch Behar in West Bengal, which had no cases one month ago, recorded 288 cases as of June 21

■ CASES | The table divides the districts into three categories based on the case count on June 21 (new) and a month ago (old). For instance, 28 districts in Gujarat recorded 0-99 cases a month ago, while only 15 districts did so on June 21

■ DEATHS | The table divides the districts into three categories based on the no. of deaths as of June 21 (new) and a month ago (old). Thirty districts in Gujarat recorded <9 deaths a month ago, while only 23 did so on June 21

State	0-99 cases		500-999 cases		>999 cases	
	Old	New	Old	New	Old	New
A.P.	6	2	1	5	0	2
Gujarat	28	15	1	1	2	3
Haryana	19	7	0	1	0	2
J&K	13	5	0	5	0	0
Karnataka	23	9	0	1	0	3
MP	41	33	1	1	2	2
Maharashtra	19	9	2	4	4	11
T.N.	20	8	2	5	1	5
U.P.	66	23	1	5	0	2
W.B.	18	3	1	2	1	3

■ While the number of districts which recorded <100 cases went down drastically, those with >500 cases went up significantly across most States in this one month period

State	0-9 deaths		50-99 deaths		>99 deaths	
	Old	New	Old	New	Old	New
A.P.	11	10	0	0	0	0
Gujarat	30	23	1	0	1	2
Haryana	22	19	0	2	0	0
J&K	20	17	0	0	0	0
Karnataka	28	25	0	1	0	0
M.P.	44	40	1	2	1	1
Maharashtra	26	17	1	3	2	7
T.N.	36	32	1	0	0	1
U.P.	73	59	0	2	0	0
W.B.	21	18	0	2	1	1

■ While the number of districts which recorded <100 cases went down drastically, those with >500 cases went up significantly across most States in this one month period

Transparency during a crisis

Proper implementation of the Right to Information Act is more crucial now than ever before



ANJALI BHARDWAJ

eneficiaries to get their due – ration shopkeepers siphon foodgrains and keep their shops closed on the pretext that they have no stocks.

Greater openness would prevent controversies of the kind exemplified by faulty testing kits and fake ventilators. Following complaints from various States about rapid COVID-19 testing kits imported from China, the Indian Council for Medical Research halted their use. Serious questions arose about the government's decision to order the kits from China, especially in the backdrop of countries like Spain and the Netherlands returning faulty Chinese kits. Numerous instances have been reported of COVID-19-positive patients requiring treatment in intensive care units being shunted from one hospital to another. This could be prevented if hospitals and health centres publicly provide real-time information about availability of beds and other facilities. To ensure easy accessibility to those who need it the most, relevant information must be made available in local languages and widely disseminated. In fact, this is a statutory obligation of public authorities under Section 4 of the RTI Act.

Role of transparency watchdogs

In the current scenario the role of information commissions is crucial. While in the midst of a pandemic it is reasonable to expect delays in processing information requests, public authorities must not be allowed to interpret the crisis as a justification for not complying with the RTI Act. Unfortunately, an assessment of the functioning of the transparency watchdogs revealed that 21 out of 29 commissions in the country did not hold a single hearing during the first three stages of the lockdown. While the Central Information Commission and some State commissions used audio and video conferencing to hear and dispose cases, most commissions did not make provision for hearing even urgent matters.

At a time when incentives for secrecy are great, and the scope for discretionary actions wide, it is critical to create a culture of openness to empower people to participate meaningfully in the decisions that have profound effects on their lives and livelihoods. People must be able to obtain information about how and where their money is being spent in the efforts to combat the pandemic and whether funds are reaching the intended beneficiaries. It is behind the cloak of secrecy that the rights of individuals are most frequently abrogated, corruption thrives and public trust in institutions is eroded.

Anjali Bhardwaj is associated with the National Campaign for Peoples' Right to Information

The Hindu

FROM THE ARCHIVES

FIFTY YEARS AGO JUNE 23, 1970

Sukarno's success and failure

(From an editorial)

For more than two decades, the name of Sukarno was synonymous with that of Indonesia and history will record that it was he who united this group of 3,000 islands into a new Asian nation. Sukarno founded the Indonesian Nationalist Party in 1927 and his powerful demand for independence led the Dutch rulers to exile him for many years. Then came the Japanese conquest and Sukarno accepted their offer to form a puppet government though he did not give up the goal of genuine independence. With the defeat of Japan in 1945, the Dutch reappeared on the scene and a new movement, strongly supported by India, was launched to force them to transfer power to the Indonesian people. This was achieved in 1950 and Sukarno was unanimously chosen as President. Assisted by outstanding leaders like Sultan Sjahri, who became Premier, and Vice-President Hatta, it seemed Indonesia would forge ahead on the democratic path. Despite the numerous political parties, parliamentary government seemed to be well established and economic progress was fairly rapid. But the extreme nationalism which had developed a reaction to Dutch colonial rule led the Government into a kind of radicalism for which it was not prepared.

FROM PAGE ONE

Reports of Chinese build-up at Pangong

Separately, in the national capital, the Phase-II of the Army Commanders Conference got under way.

The biannual conference was postponed in April due to the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequently the first

phase was held from May 27 to 29.

"ACC-20 is being conducted on June 22-23 to review the operational situation on both the Northern and Western Fronts," the Army said on Twitter.

CBSE to seek SC directive on pending exams

The pending examinations had been rescheduled to be held in the first two weeks of July, with CBSE increasing the number of centres from 3,000 to over 13,000 to allow for minimal travel and maximum social distancing.

"In March, we had thought July would be a safe time to hold exams. But the situation has only gotten worse, and it is changing everyday," said a senior Ministry official, downplaying the chance of further postponement of the examinations, given the uncertainty of the course of the pandemic. Several State governments, including Delhi and Maharashtra, have also communicated their unwillingness to risk the health of students and staff by conducting the examination.

Several State governments, including Delhi and Maharashtra, have also communicated their unwillingness to risk the health of students and staff by conducting the examination.

The HRD Ministry has been hesitant to announce a complete cancellation of board examinations because of the fall-out on professional entrance examinations such as JEE and NEET, needed for admission to engineering and medical courses, which had also been rescheduled for the second half of July.

Already, a section of students has been calling for those examinations to be cancelled as well.

HRD Minister Ramesh Pokhriyal Nishank has been holding consultations with the National Testing Agency, which conducts these entrance exams, as well as with the University Grants Commission and the All India

Council for Technical Education.

With regard to the Class 10 and 12 examinations conducted by the Council for Indian School Certificate Examinations (CISCE), students have been given an option to either write their pending examinations physically or opt for alternative grading.

On Monday, the Bombay High Court extended the deadline for the Council to declare its alternative methodology till June 25, after which students can make an informed choice on whether or not to write the examinations which begin on July 1. Several students have said their schools have already forced them to choose.

The court also directed the Union and State government to apprise the court on their stand on conducting the examinations as per the revised schedule.

A senior HRD Ministry official said it has been made clear that the Centre does not administer the CISCE, which is an autonomous body.

The Bombay High Court is hearing a parent's petition to cancel the ICSE and ISC examinations, and a number of similar-minded parents have joined the plea.

On Monday, other parents intervened to say some students are willing to write the pending papers, having put in hard work to prepare, and that any decision taken by the State or by the Council to cancel the examinations would be detrimental to their interest. There is a pending proceeding before the SC on the same issue. The matter is scheduled to be heard on June 24.

Parliament plan returned for finer detailing

Sources in the DUAC also said the offices had been shut last week as an employee had tested positive for COVID-19. The office was reopened on Monday after being sanitised.

The proposal of the CPWD, which operates under the Union Housing and Urban Affairs Ministry, is to construct a triangular Parliament building in the 10.5-acre plot adjacent to the existing heritage structure built in the 1920s.

The project is estimated to cost ₹922 crore, according to the CPWD's applica-

tion for environmental clearance.

While the new Parliament building is the first of the Central Vista revamp projects to get underway, the CPWD has proposed constructing 10 new office buildings for all Ministries along the Central Vista by 2024, new residences for the Prime Minister and Vice-President near South and North Block and a Prime Minister's Office. The Parliament building as well North and South Blocks are proposed to be re-purposed as museums.

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

BENGALURU

The death toll from COVID-19 in southern States rose by seven in Telangana, and five each in Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh on Monday.

Karnataka reported 249 new cases, pushing up the State tally to 9,399. The overall death toll was 142.

Of 249 cases, 126 were from Bengaluru. An official bulletin said among the 249 cases, 50 were inter-State passengers and 11 international passengers. Mean-

while, 111 patients were discharged on Monday. With 5,730 discharges, the recovery rate in Karnataka stood at 60.96%.

The bulletin said 80 out of the total 3,523 active cases were admitted in the intensive care units of various designated hospitals.

One of the five patients who died did not have any

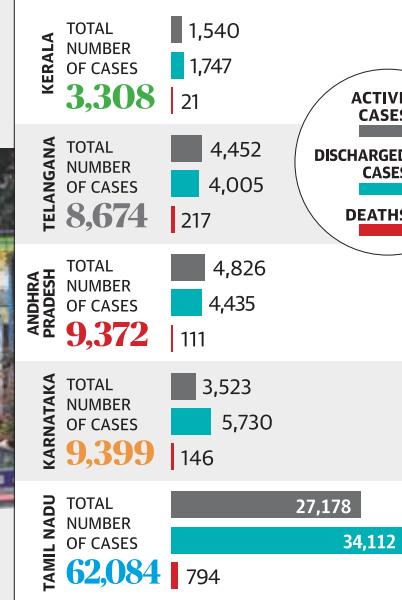
Busy as ever

In spite of the Karnataka government announcing 14 days lockdown in red zones in Bengaluru, there seems to be no reduction in the city traffic



Jam packed: Traffic snarls were witnessed on Silver Jubilee Park Road in Bengaluru on Monday.

■ K. MURALI KUMAR



co-morbidities, while one patient was asymptomatic. Of the five deaths - three were in Bengaluru, one each in Ballari and Ramanagar.

The patient in Ramanagar, aged 90 and asymptomatic died at his residence. Meanwhile, a 60-year-old woman

in Ballari with ILI died in a designated hospital with breathlessness and diabetes.

Meanwhile, Karnataka Medical Education Minister Dr K. Sudhakar's octogenarian father tested positive for COVID-19 and was admitted to a private hospital.

He is suspected to have contracted the virus at home from domestic help.

Andhra Pradesh, for the third-day consecutive day, reported five deaths taking the toll to 111.

As of Monday, 443 new COVID-19 cases were detected.

Telangana CM hands over relief to Col. Santosh Babu's family

KCR visits family in Suryapet to condole death of officer

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

HYDERABAD

Telangana Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao on Monday visited the Suryapet residence of Col. B. Santosh Babu, slain in the Indo-China border skirmishes, to pay his condolences to the family.

The CM, accompanied by Ministers Jagadish Reddy and V. Prashanth Reddy and Chief Secretary Somesh Kumar, first paid floral tributes to a portrait of Col. Santosh Babu. Later, he spoke to the late Army officer's wife Santoshi, parents Manjula and Upender, and sister Sruthi, and consoled them.

Mr. Chandrasekhar Rao also interacted with Col. Santosh Babu's children Abhigna and Anirudh Teja. He handed

over a cheque for ₹4 crore to Ms. Santoshi and another cheque for ₹1 crore to the parents of Santosh Babu. He also handed over an appointment letter for a Group I officer's post to Ms.

Santoshi and a land document for a 711 square yards house site in Banjara Hills to her.

"Santosh Babu sacrificed his life for the security of the nation. His death deeply saddened me," Mr. Rao said.

Unhappy with IMD, Kerala ropes in private forecasters

No new AWS, near time data streaming is minimal: govt.

JACOB KOSHY

NEW DELHI

For the first time, a State government will be funding private weather companies for alerts and warnings about extreme climate events, moving away from the India Meteorological Department.

An order by Kerala's Disaster Management Department issued on June 19, and viewed by *The Hindu*, authorises the release of ₹95 lakh to three private companies – Skymet Private Ltd, Earth Networks and IBM Weather Company – to use ensemble predictions to improve extreme weather alert services in the State".

"The devastating floods of 2019 have heightened concerns about the state of ex-

treme-weather preparedness in Kerala. The order states that these services would be part of a 1 year pilot project.

The government's decision builds on an earlier order from April 30, where it said it was dissatisfied with the IMD. The Kerala State Disaster Management Authority reviewed the State's preparedness in terms of weather prediction and the IMD's preparedness.

The IMD, that order reads, had promised to put up 15 Automatic Weather Stations (AWS) before the monsoon. "Unfortunately no new AWS has come up and the near time data streaming is minimal to nil," the order said.

A senior official associat-

ed with the IMD told *The Hindu* on condition of anonymity that the Department was unable to accede to the Kerala government's requirement because of disagreements over the location of the AWS.

Disagreement with State

After cyclone Ockhi of 2017, the IMD, as part of improving the State's weather warning capabilities, committed to installing 100 AWS. However, these could only be installed as per a pre-defined IMD protocol.

"They wanted us to install them in certain places and we couldn't do that. Moreover, there are three Doppler Weather Radars and already a strong forecast mechanism in the State," the official said.

Post-surgery, Kerala infant remains critical

She was allegedly assaulted by father

STAFF REPORTER

KOCCHI

An infant who suffered serious head injury after being allegedly assaulted by her father underwent surgery at the Kolencherry Medical College on Monday.

The surgical procedure for removing a blood clot from the brain started around 9 a.m. and was completed around 1.30 p.m.

Since then the infant, 54-days-old at the time of the incident, has been moved to the neuro Intensive Care Unit on oxygen support and her condition remains critical, a medical bulletin said. A clear idea of her condition will be known in the next 24

to 48 hours.

The incident in which her father slapped her took place on Thursday night.

Health Minister K.K. Shylaja on Monday said the Department of Women and Child Development would bear the medical expenses.

The Angamaly police have registered a case against the father, Shaiju Thomas, 40, of Kannur. Inspector T.K. Josy said the baby used to sleep through the day and remain awake at night. On the fateful day, when she started crying, Thomas, who was quarrelling with his wife, slapped the baby and threw her on to the bed.

Telangana HC questions Railways' reluctance to add 1 compartment

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

HYDERABAD

Expressing dissatisfaction over the South Central Railway's (SCR) refusal to attach a compartment to a train for transporting stranded migrant labourers from Hyderabad to Bihar, the Telangana High Court on Monday summoned its Divisional Railway Manager to appear before it. "I will request the DRM of Railways on behalf of migrant workers to attach a single bogie to a Bihar-bound train so that stranded non-local workers can reach their homes," Chief Justice Raghvendra Singh Chauhan told SCR counsel Pushpin Kaur.

During the hearing, petitioner's counsel Vasudha Nagaraj said there were only 47 workers from Bihar in a shelter in Secunderabad waiting for transportation to their State. The revenue authorities were ready to

book tickets under emergency quota but the railway authorities were not giving more than 30 tickets under the quota in each train.

In that case, a single bogie should be sufficient for shifting them, the Bench said. But the SCR counsel said not more than a specific number of bogies could be attached to a train.

The Chief Justice wondered why could not a single bogie for stranded migrant labourers be attached to a train and asked Ms. Kaur, "Where was the bar in the law not to attach an additional bogie to a train?" The Bench remarked that the SCR's heart is not beating for migrant workers.

The Bench summoned senior Railway official in a case of transporting migrants.

During the hearing, peti-

IN BRIEF

Six held with two country rifles in A.P.

CHITTOOR
The Palamaner forest range officials on Friday night nabbed six persons and seized two country-made rifles and a car from their possession. They were allegedly found to be hunting wild animals in the reserve forest at M. Kotur village of Palamaner mandal in Andhra Pradesh. Forest officials said the six accused were remanded after being produced in a local court.

Sailor electrocuted on board INS Rajput

VISAKHAPATNAM
In a tragic incident on board INS Rajput, naval sailor Rahul Jangir suffered an electrical shock while on duty at the Visakhapatnam naval base on Sunday evening. Despite first aid on the ship and efforts to revive him at INHS Kalyani, he succumbed on Sunday night. The mortal remains of the 19-year-old will be flown to his hometown in Jhunjhunu, Rajasthan, where he will be laid to rest with full military honours. An inquiry has been ordered by the Navy.

J.C. Prabhakar, son remanded till June 26

ANANTAPUR
Former Andhra Pradesh MLA J.C. Prabhakar Reddy and son J.C. Ashmit Reddy were on Monday remanded in judicial custody till June 26, after spending two days in police custody. They are facing charges of selling BS-III vehicles after registering them as BS-IV vehicles by fabricating documents.

According to sources, their bail petitions are likely to be submitted to the court.

Film project on Malabar hero sets off hate campaign

Its release is timed to coincide with the centenary of the Malabar Rebellion next year

STAFF REPORTER

PALAKKAD

The announcement of a big-budget film telling the story of Variyamkunnam Kunhammed Haji, a 1921 Malabar Rebellion hero who was shot dead by the British police at Kottakkunnu, Malappuram, has set off a hate campaign against the proposed film and its crew.

Actor Prithviraj announced on Monday that he would portray Variyamkunnam in the film, to be directed by Ashique Abu and Muhsin Parari. The film will be timed to coincide with the centenary of the Malabar Rebellion next year. Right-wing radicals kicked off a social media campaign soon after.

They launched a blistering attack on the Prithviraj-Ashique Abu team, describing Ashique Abu as a 'Muslim terror sponsor'. Some social media posts threatened the crew that

their film would never be allowed to be shot if they went about portraying Variyamkunnam as a Muslim hero against the British.

Extensive study
"For long, there have been attempts to give a communal colour to the Malabar Rebellion of 1921 by the right-wing radicals. There is nothing new about it. But with the Sangh forces in power, the virulence of their hatred has increased manifold," Mr. Parari told *The Hindu*.

He said they decided to take up the project after an extensive study of history. "We have examined innumerable documents within and outside the country relating to the 1921 Mapila rebellion.

'Not anti-Hindu'
I.V. Sasi's film titled 1921 on the Malabar Rebellion was a big hit in 1988. Scripted by T. Damodaran, the ₹120 crore film portrayed Variyamkunnam, among other characters, as a Mapila leader in the fight against the British.

Variyamkunnam has done many good things. We have enough and more proof to establish that he was not anti-Hindu," said Mangalam Gopinath, veteran Congress leader, at Manjeri.

"He [Variyamkunnam] stood up against an empire that ruled a quarter of the world," Mr. Prithviraj said in a social media post on Monday. "Etched out his own country with an army that waged a never before war against the British. Though history was burned and

Why is China praising Modi, asks Rahul

'PM should pay heed to Manmohan'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Former Congress president Rahul Gandhi on Monday asked why China was praising Prime Minister Narendra Modi after killing Indian soldiers and "taking away India's land".

The Congress took to Twitter and posted a news report published in *The Hindu* that mentioned how Chinese media praised Mr. Modi's statement at Friday's all-party meeting and how it would pave the way for de-escalation.

"China killed our soldiers. China took our land. Then, why is China praising Mr. Modi during this conflict," asked Mr. Gandhi.

In a separate tweet, Mr. Gandhi commented on Dr. Manmohan Singh's advice to Mr. Modi. "An important advice from the former Prime Minister. I hope the Prime Minister will pay heed to it for the sake of the country," he said in Hindi.

The Congress also hit back at BJP president J.P. Nadda who accused Dr.



Rahul Gandhi

Singh of presiding over "600 incursions between 2010 and 2013".

"Dear Sh. Nadda, PI show the courage to ask Modi Govt about: 1. 2,264 Chinese transgressions since 2015. 2. Martyrdom of 471 jawans & 253 civilians in J&K alone, highest in 30 years. 3. 3,289 ceasefire violations by Pak in 2019 alone, highest in 16 years, up from 583 in 2014," chief spokesperson Randeep Surjewala said.

Dr. Singh lauded the efforts of the Indian Army and the soldiers who lost their lives.

The government must ensure justice for Col. Santosh Babu and the jawans who sacrificed their lives protecting the borders. "To do any less would be a historic betrayal of the people's faith," he said.

Speaking for the first time on the India-China face-off in Ladakh's Galwan Valley, Dr. Singh said, "Disinformation is no substitute for diplomacy or decisive leadership. And the truth cannot be suppressed by having pliant allies spout comforting but false statements."

In a statement, he urged all organs of the government to work together to prevent the situation from further escalating.

Subsequently, the Prime Minister's Office clarified that Mr. Modi had specifically talked about the area where Chinese and Indian troops clashed and how, because of the brave act of the

Army, the Chinese attempt was foiled.

Referring to the clashes in the Galwan Valley, Dr. Singh said the government should not allow the supreme sacrifice of the 20 soldiers to go in vain.

'Historic crossroads'

"At this moment, we stand at historic crossroads. Our government's decisions and actions will have serious bearings on how the future generations perceive us. Those who lead us bear the weight of a solemn duty. And in our democracy, that responsibility rests with the office of the Prime Minister.

Right now, India "must stand together as a nation and be united in our response to this brazen threat", he added.

External Affairs Minister's presence hints at efforts for a diplomatic solution to the LAC crisis

SUHASINI HAIDAR
NEW DELHI

External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar will take part in the Russia-India-China trilateral on Tuesday, in an indicator that New Delhi is prepared to press on with diplomatic moves with Beijing despite last Monday's clashes between Indian and Chinese troops at the Line of Actual Control (LAC) that left at least 20 Indian soldiers dead.

The meeting that will be held via videoconference around 1.30 p.m. will include Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi and will be hosted by Russian Foreign Minister

Sergey Lavrov. The three leaders were originally scheduled to meet on March 22 in Sochi, but the annual meeting had to be put off due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The RIC meeting coincides with Defence Minister Rajnath Singh's visit to Moscow to attend Russia's Victory Day parade, and for high-level meetings. The Indian and Chinese militaries have both sent contingents for the parade, but officials ruled out a meeting between Mr. Singh and any Chinese official in Moscow.

Officials in Moscow and Delhi have also underlined that "no bilateral issues"

The Prime Minister must always be mindful of the implications of his words and declarations on our Nation's security as also strategic and territorial interests," he stated.

Dr. Singh accused China of "brazenly and illegally seeking to claim parts of Indian territory such as Galwan Valley and Pangong Tso lake" and committing multiple incursions between April and now.

"We cannot and will not be cowed down by threats and intimidation nor permit a compromise with our territorial integrity. The Prime Minister cannot allow them to use his words as a vindication of their position and must ensure that all organs of the government work together to tackle this crisis

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This is going to be a trilateral meeting," MEA spokesperson Anurag Srivastava said, when asked last Thursday.

Moscow's push

However, the fact that the meeting is going ahead, despite heightened tensions at the LAC, is seen as an indicator that the government is willing to put aside the bilateral issues with China for the moment.

A push behind the scenes from Russia is also understood to have ensured that the meeting, convened as a special session of the RIC grouping to "commemorate the 75th anniversary of the victory in the second world

BJP president lashes out at former PM

Statement is mere wordplay: Nadda

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI



J.P. Nadda

ing of the nation over and above everything else," Mr. Nadda said in a series of tweets.

While Dr. Singh "rightly calls for unity" in the face of the crisis at the border, "again strong words on paper fall flat when we see exactly who is vitiating the atmosphere of unity. Hope Dr. Singh is able to prevail upon his own party," he said. It was the Congress that "helplessly surrendered 43,000 km of Indian territory to the Chinese", he alleged.

"During the UPA years we saw abject strategic and territorial surrender without a fight," he said.

Manmohan cautions Modi on statements on national security

Disinformation is no substitute for diplomacy or decisive leadership: former PM

SANDEEP PHUKAN
NEW DELHI

Former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh on Monday asked Prime Minister Narendra Modi to be "mindful" of the implications his statements will have on national security and not allow them to vindicate Chinese position.

Speaking for the first time on the India-China face-off in Ladakh's Galwan Valley, Dr. Singh said, "Disinformation is no substitute for diplomacy or decisive leadership. And the truth cannot be suppressed by having pliant allies spout comforting but false statements."

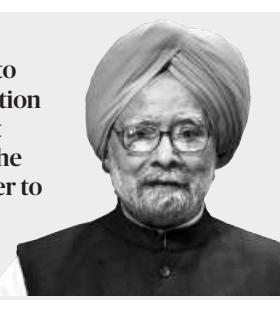
In a statement, he urged all organs of the government to work together to prevent the situation from further escalating.

Dr. Singh lauded the efforts of the Indian Army and the soldiers who lost their lives.

The government must ensure justice for Col. Santosh Babu and the jawans who

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MANMOHAN SINGH
FORMER PM



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"At this moment, we stand at historic crossroads. Our government's decisions and actions will have serious bearings on how the future generations perceive us. Those who lead us bear the weight of a solemn duty. And in our democracy, that responsibility rests with the office of the Prime Minister.

Right now, India "must stand together as a nation and be united in our response to this brazen threat", he added.

Pranab to open online summit for IAS aspirants

Unacademy, in association with *The Hindu*, is organising it

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Unacademy, in association with *The Hindu*, is organising an online summit for civil services aspirants from June 26 to 28.

The idea behind the summit is to motivate aspirants to achieve by giving them an opportunity to interact with people of eminence from the fields of politics, public administration, cinema and sports.

The online summit will be inaugurated by former Presi-



Pranab Mukherjee

dent Pranab Mukherjee on June 26.

The summit will host some of the accomplished speakers in the country – Dr. Shashi Tharoor, MP, on the

role of the bureaucracy, Jairam Ramesh, economist and MP, on the post COVID-19 Indian economy, former cricketer Kapil Dev on leading a historic team, and Dr. Kiran Bedi, IPS (retd.), Lieutenant Governor of Puducherry, on testing civil services' aspirants and others.

Anyone, who is keen on cracking the civil services, can register for the summit, which is free and open to all aspirants. To register, please click on <https://unacademy.com/upscsummit2020>.

The meeting that will be held via videoconference around 1.30 p.m. will include Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi and will be hosted by Russian Foreign Minister

External Affairs Minister's presence hints at efforts for a diplomatic solution to the LAC crisis

SUHASINI HAIDAR
NEW DELHI

External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar will take part in the Russia-India-China trilateral on Tuesday, in an indicator that New Delhi is prepared to press on with diplomatic moves with Beijing despite last Monday's clashes between Indian and Chinese troops at the Line of Actual Control (LAC) that left at least 20 Indian soldiers dead.

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Sergey Lavrov. The three leaders were originally scheduled to meet on March 22 in Sochi, but the annual meeting had to be put off due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The RIC meeting coincides with Defence Minister Rajnath Singh's visit to Moscow to attend Russia's Victory Day parade, and for high-level meetings. The Indian and Chinese militaries have both sent contingents for the parade, but officials ruled out a meeting between Mr. Singh and any Chinese official in Moscow.

Officials in Moscow and Delhi have also underlined that "no bilateral issues"

This is going to be a trilateral meeting," MEA spokesperson Anurag Srivastava said, when asked last Thursday.

Moscow's push

However, the fact that the meeting is going ahead, despite heightened tensions at the LAC, is seen as an indicator that the government is willing to put aside the bilateral issues with China for the moment.

A push behind the scenes from Russia is also understood to have ensured that the meeting, convened as a special session of the RIC grouping to "commemorate the 75th anniversary of the victory in the second world

war over Nazism and creation of the United Nations", is going ahead. In past conflicts with China, including during the stand-offs on the Depsang plains in 2013 and at the Doklam plateau in 2017, high-level meetings had only taken place after the situation at the LAC had been fully resolved.

According to experts, Prime Minister Narendra Modi's statement on Friday, denying that there had been any transgressions by Chinese troops on Indian territory leads to speculation that India is now looking at diplomatic options to resolve the current crisis.

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Rath Yatra in Kolkata cancelled

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
KOLKATA

The Rath Yatra procession of ISKCON (International Society of Krishna Consciousness) organised in Kolkata has been cancelled, and the rituals will be held on its temple premises in the city.

"At ISKCON Kolkata, we had to cancel the procession as it attracts over 15 lakh people during the nine days festivities and we don't have dedicated area where people's entry/exit can be controlled," it said in a statement. The organisation also said it has "decided to conduct all rituals inside our temple premises at ISKCON". Radharaman Das, vice president of ISKCON, Kolkata, said, "The ceremony will be live telecast on the ISKCON Kolkata (official) Facebook and YouTube channels from 8.30 a.m. on June 23".

"During the period of curfew, no one would be allowed to come out of their houses or their places of residence, such as, hotels, lodging houses, etc. To start with, the curfew shall begin tonight at 8 p.m.," the Supreme Court ordered.

Puri Rath Yatra gets conditional nod

SC says only 'bare minimum number of people' will be allowed to participate in rituals, Yatra

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Monday lifted its June 18 ban on the conduct of Puri Jagannath Rath Yatra after ensuring a complete lack of public attendance for the festival to avoid spread of infection amid the pandemic.

A virtual court Bench led by Chief Justice of India Sharad A. Bobde ordered "strict curfew" in the city of Puri from Monday night (June 22) onwards till the entire duration of the festival. All entry points to the city would also remain closed during this period. The festival is scheduled to begin from June 23.

"We take note of the fact that the State of Odisha has a good record of having controlled the pandemic with a very little loss of life. We see no reason why the same attitude of care and caution should not be applied to the Rath Yatra," the court said.



Festivities continue: Wooden chariots under construction ahead of the Rath Yatra at Puri in Odisha. ■ BISWARANJAN ROUT

plicants seeking a recall of the injunction order.

"We are informed that in the 18th-19th century, a Yatra of this kind was responsible for the spread of cholera and plague 'like wild fire'. We say this in order to remind the authorities concerned that the situation can become dangerous if the rules of caution are ignored," the court cautioned the applicants.

The Bench explained it opted for an injunction on June 18 when informed that a festival without public attendance was "well-nigh impossible". The court indicated that an application by Gajapati Maharaj of Puri, the chairman of the Puri Jagannath temple administration, proposing to hold the festival "in a limited way without public attendance" has now changed its mind.

If it is possible to ensure that there is no public attendance, we see no reason why

the Rath Yatra cannot be conducted safely," the court said.

The 11 conditions include that only those who have been tested COVID-19 negative would be allowed to pull the chariots and participate in the rituals. It said only "bare minimum number of people" would be allowed to participate in the rituals and Yatra.

The court directed that 500 people who have cleared the COVID-19 test would be allowed to pull each chariot. There should be a one-hour gap between two chariots. Visual media would be allowed to install cameras at vantage points.

The "primary responsibility" to conduct the festival lies with the committee in charge of the Puri Jagannath temple administration. Both the temple management and the State should consult the Centre on the safety norms.

MPs' panel looking into Aarogya Setu

Work must and will continue: Tharoor

SOBHANA K. NAIR
NEW DELHI

After several failed attempts to organise a meeting, both online and offline, the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Information and Technology has started working on the various questions of privacy and data security of the government-run Aarogya Setu app, which was launched during the COVID-19 pandemic.



The panel has started working on the questions of privacy and data security.

oversight of the government, by providing a constructive check and balance to the working and functioning of the various Ministries under our jurisdiction," he said.

Budget session

The Budget Session ended abruptly hurrying through the debates on the Finance Bill on March 23. Since then no department related standing committee has met. Mr. Tharoor, on April 20, announced on Twitter that the panel would meet via videoconference.

Speaking to *The Hindu*, Chairperson of the committee Shashi Tharoor said the committee's work "must and will" continue, even though the panel members can't meet in person or via videoconference.

"Due to restrictions on movement and various other functional challenges, the physical occurrence of committee meetings is proving to be a challenge. Despite that, its work must and will continue, as there are a host of critical matters that need to be addressed," he said.

Forwarding questions

For now, the committee is forwarding all the questions raised by the members on the Aarogya Setu app to the government and other stakeholders concerned. These replies are then circulated amongst the members for further deliberations.

Mr. Tharoor refused to delve into details about the deliberations but sources indicated that the committee will also look into the legality of the government's mandatory imposition of the app on various categories of persons.

"Despite the considerable challenges the current situation imposes on us as elected representatives, we will continue to carry out our duties of parliamentary

oversight of the government, by providing a constructive check and balance to the working and functioning of the various Ministries under our jurisdiction," he said.

After much to and fro, a meeting was called for June 10 at the Parliament complex but it had to be deferred to June 17. On both days, the committee could not meet because of varied quarantine rules and travel restrictions for out of State travellers since most of the members are in their respective constituencies.

Peak demand for Shramik Specials over'

Demand for only 15 such trains now; they will run as long as there is demand from States: Railways

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The peak demand period for Shramik Special trains has ended and the Railways presently have demand for only 15 such trains from various States, Railway Board Member (Traffic) P.S. Mishra said on Monday.

The Railways was also in the process of sending letters to the Chief Secretaries of all States to assess the demand for such trains and these trains would be run till there was demand from the States, he said.

"We have got demand for 15 more trains for today... When Shramik Special was



Homebound: A file photo of migrant workers on a special train in Vijayawada, Andhra Pradesh. ■ V. RAJU

started, we even ran 269 trains a day. That peak period has ended. We ran three trains on Sunday. Today, we might run six-seven such trains," he said during a media interaction.

The Railways have till now run 4,436 Shramik trains, ferrying over 62 lakh passengers. Last week, they ran about 100 such trains, with just three trains being operated on Sunday.

There were no pending dues for the Shramik Specials and payments had been made by all the States. "...all the States have paid; in some cases, the receiving States paid and in some sending States. There is no pending payment," he said in reply to a query.

Asked about running more special passenger trains, he said a decision would be taken in consultation with the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA). "The trains we have started till now have been done in consultation with the MHA. Going forwards also, we will consult them before more

trains are added. The assessment and dialogue happens almost on a weekly basis."

The Railways are currently running 230 special passenger trains with a cumulative occupancy of 73%.

COVID coaches

In a statement, the Railways said 59 patients were admitted in COVID care coaches in Uttar Pradesh. "On June 20, 2020, 42 suspected patients were admitted in COVID coaches deployed at Mau Junction in Varanasi division and 17 patients were admitted on 21st June, 2020. Eight patients have already been discharged," it stated.

"The risk assessment for the crew shall be done by the airline's doctor and the crew shall be advised for testing as per the ICMR guidelines," said a circular.

Ex-Gujarat CM Vaghela quits NCP

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
AHMEDABAD

Senior leader and former Gujarat Chief Minister Shankarsinh Vaghela resigned on Monday from the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP).

In a video message after his resignation, he expressed his displeasure at party MLA Kandhal Jadeja cross-voting in the June 19 Rajya Sabha polls for four seats. "Lone NCP MLA's act of defying the party whip to vote for the BJP in the Rajya Sabha polls has disappointed me," he said.

The NCP has issued a show cause notice to Mr. Jadeja for defying party whip to vote for the Congress.

Mr. Vaghela, in his letter to Sharad Pawar, said he had been unhappy with the NCP since his removal as president of the Gujarat unit a week before the Rajya Sabha elections.

Govt. cautions against self-medication

With no cure available, Health Ministry urges COVID-appropriate behaviour

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Union Health Ministry on Monday urged people to be cautious about drug abuse and self-medication and underlined that COVID-19, which is caused by a virus and not bacteria, does not respond to antibiotics.

"There is currently no cure for COVID-19 and if you have symptoms the best idea is to call a doctor and go by a trained professional advise," the Health Ministry said.

The Ministry added that in the last 24 hours the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) had tested 1,43,267 samples, while the total number of samples tested so far is 69,50,493.

The Ministry reiterated that ensuring hand hygiene, not touching the face, keeping a physical distance of at least one metre from other people and calling one's health care provider in case



Sound advice: Health workers at work in Mumbai. Consult a doctor if symptoms arise, the government has said. ■ VIJAY BATE

any symptoms are detected, are the pillars of the community fight against COVID-19.

The Ministry said only "COVID-appropriate behaviour" will safeguard the community from the pandemic.

Masks and exercise

The World Health Organisation (WHO) in an advisory has said that "people should

not wear masks when exercising as masks may reduce the ability to breathe comfortably."

"Sweat can make the mask become wet more quickly which makes it difficult to breathe and promotes the growth of micro-organisms. The important preventive measure during exercise is to maintain physical distance of at least one metre from others," the Organisa-

tion said. The WHO added that while prolonged use of medical masks can be uncomfortable, it does not lead to carbon dioxide intoxication nor oxygen deficiency.

"While wearing a medical mask, make sure it fits properly and that it is tight enough to allow you to breathe normally. Do not reuse a disposable mask and always change it as soon as it gets damp," it said.

Speaking about footwear hygiene, the WHO noted that the likelihood of COVID-19 being spread on shoes and infecting individuals is very low. "But as a precautionary measure, particularly in homes where infants and small children crawl or play on floors, consider leaving your shoes at the entrance of your home. This will help prevent contact with dirt or any waste that could be carried on the soles of shoes."

A Jammu-based Army

Soldier killed in Pakistan firing along LOC in Rajouri

There was ceasefire violation in Poonch too, says Army

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
SRINAGAR

An Army soldier was killed in fresh ceasefire violation by the Pakistan Army along the Line of Control (LoC) in Rajouri on Monday.

An official said the soldier was hit during the firing from across the LoC in Kalal area of Nowshera sector. "It was around 5:30 a.m. that Pakistan initiated unprovoked ceasefire violation in Nowshera Sector, Rajouri. There was heavy mortar shelling and firing from small arms at the border posts," an Army official said.

"Own troops responded strongly to the enemy fire. In the incident, Havildar Dipak Karki was critically injured and later succumbed to his injuries," the Army said in a statement.

A Jammu-based Army



Strict vigil: Security forces cordon off an area in Rajouri, Jammu, earlier this month. ■ PTI

spokesman said Pakistan violated ceasefire also in Krishnaghati and Nowshera Sectors.

"The Indian Army retaliated befittingly," the spokesman said.

Gunfight in Anantnag

Meanwhile, a gunfight broke out between militants and the security forces in south Kashmir's Anantnag on

Monday.

The gunfight, according to the Army, erupted during a search operation in a forest in Verinag area.

"The hiding militants opened fire. The firefight continued for two hours," a police official said.

An operation was on till late Monday evening in the area to neutralise the militants.

Extend distribution of free foodgrains: Sonia

'Allow schemes for another 3 months'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Congress President Sonia Gandhi on Monday wrote to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and sought to extend the distribution of monthly free foodgrains to vulnerable sections of the population till September.

In a letter to Mr. Modi, Ms. Gandhi said the government should extend schemes that provided monthly free ration of 5 kg of food grains per person to migrant workers who were not covered under any Central scheme or the public distribution system (PDS), as well as those who are covered under Antodaya Anna Yojana and as Priority Households under the National Food Security Act, 2005.



Sonia Gandhi

The Union government must consider extending the provision of free food grains for a further period of three months, that is, July to September 2020. Many State governments have asked for the same. Furthermore, since a significant number of poor households continue to be excluded from the PDS system, temporary ration cards must be issued to all such households," she said.

Bangladesh rejects criticism of China deal

Indian critics of exports agreement reveal their narrow mindedness: Momen

KALLOL BHATTACHERJEE
NEW DELHI

Bangladesh Foreign Minister A.K. Abdul Momen on Monday said that Indian commentators who described the zero-tariff bilateral agreement for 97% of exports to China as "charity" for "least developed" Bangladesh are revealing their "narrow-mindedness". This was the Minister's second comment in two days after certain Indian publications said China was using the deal to get Bangladesh on its side as tension with India simmers along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) near Ladakh.

In a set of comments made to a leading online publication, the senior Minister in Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's government said that the remarks from sections of



A.K. Abdul Momen

the Indian media were "entirely unacceptable". "News outlets that have used such words have renounced ethical journalism," Mr. Momen was quoted as saying in Bengali on jagone24.com.

'Not welcome'

On Sunday, the Minister had said the portrayal of Bangladesh in a demeaning manner in certain sections of Indian media was "not welcome". He indicated that

Dhaka has taken serious note of the negative Indian media reports on Bangladesh and said, "it appears they [the government] are very upset." However, he said that Bangladesh would not take it up at an official level despite a social media uproar in the country over the use of the term "khoya-raati" (charity) in the reports.

"We don't think there is a need to protest [officially] on these news reports," said Mr. Momen when asked by presspersons about further action on the matter.

However, trade is only one part of Bangladesh-China ties. Both sides have also intensified cooperation in the field of health in recent months. On Monday, a delegation of top-level doctors from China's National Health

Commission, who spent a fortnight assisting the government of Bangladesh in dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic, attended an event held in their honour at Dhaka's Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport of Dha-

ka. The health- and trade-related cooperation was boosted after the May 20 telephone call between Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and Chinese President Xi Jinping. President Xi described China as the "truest" friend of Bangladesh during the interaction.

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Mizoram quake wrecks buildings, roads

Tremors were also felt across the State, adjoining Manipur and Myanmar; PM promises all help

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

GUWAHATI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi assured Mizoram Chief Minister Zoramthanga of all help after an earthquake of magnitude 5.3 damaged several residential buildings, churches and roads in Champhai district of Mizoram on Monday.

The earthquake, whose epicentre was at Zokhawthar on the India-Myanmar border, shook the State at 4.10 a.m. The tremors were felt in other parts of the State and Manipur besides Myanmar.

Third quake in a week

This was the third quake in Mizoram within a week. The State experienced a 4.6-magnitude quake on June 18 followed by another of 5.1 magnitude on June 21 evening.

Mr. Zoramthanga said there were no reports of casualties. "Two earthquakes rocked #Mizoram within a



Devastating blow: Debris inside a damaged building after an earthquake hit Champhai district in Mizoram on Monday. ■ PTI

span of 12 hours. Damage assessment undertaken by MLA concerned and district administration. Fortunately,

no casualties reported so far. Thanking the Hon'ble Prime Minister and Hon'ble Home Minister for their assurance

of support," he tweeted. Mr. Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah had called up Mr. Zoramthanga

NHRC notice to U.P. after 57 girls infected

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The National Human Rights Commission on Monday issued notices to the Uttar Pradesh government and the police over media reports of 57 girls at a state-run shelter home in Kanpur testing positive for COVID-19.

The NHRC noted that five of the affected girls were pregnant and one HIV-positive.

Negligence cited

"Reportedly, the girls were exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19 for some time but there was delay in taking them to hospital for tests. The commission has observed that the contents of the media report, if true, are enough to *prima facie* believe that the public servants have failed to provide safeguard to the victim girls and, apparently, were negligent in protecting their right to life, liberty and dignity in the custody of the State," the NHRC said in a statement.

The NHRC issued notices to the Chief Secretary and the Director General of Police, asking for reports, including on the action taken in the matter, within four weeks.

"The State government is expected to order an inquiry into the matter by an independent agency. It is also expected to review the health status of the female inmates lodged in shelter homes across the State and issue suitable directives that such incidents do not recur in future," the NHRC said.

Help the needy, Rajasthan HC tells FCI

In a plea, two law students said the destitute were not being given enough foodgrains

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

JAIPUR

A Division Bench of the Rajasthan High Court has issued notices to the National Disaster Management Authority and the Food Corporation of India (FCI), asking them to extend the maximum possible benefit to the poor and needy people in the State during the COVID-19 pandemic without waiting for further directions from the court.

Two law students in Rajas-

than had brought to the attention of the High Court, through a public interest litigation petition, the issue of the FCI not providing sufficient quantity of foodgrains to the destitute and the underprivileged.

The students said the number of beneficiaries had increased exponentially after the data collection in 2013.

Petitioners Himakshi Alaria and Harsh Kumar pointed out that migrant labour-

ers, daily wage earners, people excluded from the purview of social security pensions and those not covered in the National Food Security Act (NFS) were important contributors to the change of demography in the State. None of them was getting any food assistance from FCI, they said.

The food stocks being dis-

bursed by the FCI in Rajas-

than amounted to 2.23 metric tonnes for a total of 4.46 crore beneficiaries, calculat-

ed on the basis of the 2011 Census and data collection in 2013. But the State government had data showing the number of NFS beneficiaries to be 5 crore. "This clearly establishes a shortage for 54 lakh beneficiaries," the petition stated.

The Bench posted the matter for further hearing on July 13, while directing the Centre and its authorities to take urgent action if the assertion of the petitioners was found correct.

For first time since 1565, a Kamakhya festival sans fair

Ambubachi marks annual 'menstruation' of the Goddess

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

GUWAHATI

Ambubachi, the festival marking the annual 'menstruation' of the presiding Goddess, began at the Kamakhya temple on June 22 without mendicants, hermits and devotees for the first time in almost 500 years.

Many places of worship in Assam had opened after the State government went on 'unlock' mode from June 3. But the Kamakhya temple administration decided to keep the premises locked in view of the spike in COVID-19 positive cases in the State, primarily Guwahati. The local administration declared 129 localities as containment zones.

Till June 21, Assam had re-

corded 5,586 positive cases, with 2,170 of them active, nine dead and three migrated to other States. The rest have been discharged.

"We decided not to risk community transmission of the novel coronavirus by allowing large-scale gathering during Ambubachi Mela, as in previous years. Our priests are conducting the rituals behind locked gates.

Only assigned priests and security personnel are being let in," head priest Mohit Sarma said.

The rituals began at 7:53 a.m. on Monday and would end at 8:16 a.m. on June 25, after which the door of the sanctum sanctorum would be opened without the start of the 'menstruation'-ending fair, he said.

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- 14 One run getting past point; England's top score gets closer (5)
15 50% scheme on spectacles; loot primarily to dupe student (9)
17 Sen is upset on glass vials not having class in tests (9)
21 Small capital provided to take a genre of movie (3-2)
22 A scam; it's a wonder perhaps to mastermind (7,6)
24 Exhausted don takes whiskey at close (5)
25 A shot without substance, right before stump and across (9)
26 Verity? No, virtual reality to make a mythical beast (4)
27 School is in delight to get uniform (10)
- DOWN
- 1 Say, Garfield Sobers is everything; complete player, no joking (3-7)
2 Perhaps English are open in a way, barring upper class at central Essex (9)
3 Comments on characters (7)
4 Hawkers around the periphery of roadway face trials (7)
5 Perversely bad orgies arranged at hotel (7)
7 A ship skirts bay, crossing a gulf (5)
8 Lock new shed (4)
9 A little bear, first seen in Ohio is one that suffers from pigmentation issue (6)
13 Careful consideration to be given to commercial; point on right is missing (10)
16 Geek fined perhaps on border (5-4)
18 Persecute shop by end of day on writing (6)
19 Placing order on new album is a pain in the back (7)
20 Pacifies border state at meetings (7)
21 Ali gets disciplined in college/school after some silly overtures at gatherings (7)
22 Factory worker is behind power and money (5)
23 Ottawa youth arrested outside (4)

ACROSS

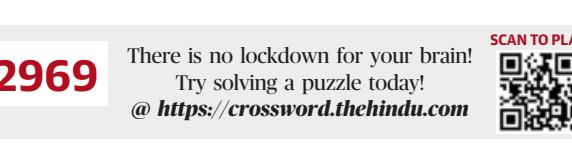
1 It's a mistake to be airborne drunk, flying over a territory primarily (10)

6 Books, arrests a rabblerouser primarily for sarcasm (4)

10 Harry, old army officer's heartless chief of town (4,5)

11 Communication's about to retreat and go to the back and cover (5)

12 University matches after work; left to chances (13)



Big screen set to reopen after three decades in Srinagar

A multiplex has received the go-ahead to screen films

NISTULA HEBBAR

NEW DELHI

Nearly three decades after almost all cinema halls closed down in Srinagar, a two-storeyed multiplex (within a five-storey commercial complex) has received the go-ahead to screen films this month and is likely to start operations by next March.

Praying for safety

"I have spoken to Shri @Zoramthanga CM Ji on the situation in the wake of the earthquake there. Assured all possible support from the Centre," Mr. Modi tweeted.

District officials said residential houses, church buildings, community halls, historical structures, the immigration checkpost building at Zokhawthar and a school were partially damaged. Some roads have also developed cracks.



Past glory: A view of Neelam Cinema in Srinagar, which ran till the early 2000s, in this file photo. ■ NISSAR AHMAD

the mid-1990s but shut down again. Security issues are still key as security forces have been mounting one operation after another to close in on terror groups.

"It is an issue, but more for the government to think about," said Mr. Vijay Dhar. "I feel that since the 1990s we haven't done anything to address the youth of JK. There is a major change in terms of what they are exposed to in the world and what other young people have access to, we must consider that. A short time ago, at DPS, we held music festival 'Shireen', inviting 180 schools and the finale was attended by 9,000 people, in a city like Srinagar. So there is definitely a desire for music, cinema, arts and sports," he said.

The multiplex is to come up at Sonwar on land owned by Mr. Vijay Dhar and his sons, Vikas and Vishal Dhar.

Mr. Vijay Dhar, a resident of Srinagar, is the son of the legendary D.P. Dhar, who is considered one of the chief architects of India's intervention in the liberation of Bangladesh. Mr. Vijay Dhar runs the Delhi Public School (DPS) in the city. His family owned Broadway, along with many other cinemas in the city, shut down after threats from terrorists. According to reports, it opened briefly in

the mid-1990s but shut down again. Security issues are still key as security forces have been mounting one operation after another to close in on terror groups.

"It is an issue, but more for the government to think about," said Mr. Vijay Dhar. "I feel that since the 1990s we haven't done anything to address the youth of JK. There is a major change in terms of what they are exposed to in the world and what other young people have access to, we must consider that. A short time ago, at DPS, we held music festival 'Shireen', inviting 180 schools and the finale was attended by 9,000 people, in a city like Srinagar. So there is definitely a desire for music, cinema, arts and sports," he said.

Camps for troops

Many cinema halls in the 1990s had been converted to camps for the paramilitary troops and continue to be so till now. One of the few holdouts was Neelam cinema, a single screen

Kashmiri art turns to virtual fairs

Over 50,000 workers are unemployed due to the economic slump: KCCI official

PEERZADA ASHIQ

SRINAGAR

In a first, scores of Kashmir Valley artisans and carpet sellers are mulling over participation in virtual or online fairs to tide over the slump in the sales caused by the lockdown imposed to contain the COVID-19 pandemic. Officials said handicrafts and handloom businesses were facing tough challenges in showcasing their products and services to potential buyers.

"Virtual fairs will provide a great opportunity to sell handmade products made by the finest craftsmen from Jammu and Kashmir. Online trade shows seem to be the only viable solution available to both seller and buyer to understand each other's requirements and keep business going," a spokesperson of Kashmir's Handicrafts and Handloom Department



In search of solace: A file photo of Kashmiri women weaving a carpet at a handloom centre in Srinagar. ■ NISSAR AHMAD

(HHD) said.

The Kashmir HHD is encouraging exporters and businessmen from J&K to participate in the virtual fairs being organised by the Export Promotion Council for Handicrafts (EPCH) and the Carpet Export Promotion Council (CEPC) in July and August this year.

In 2019-20, J&K exported handicrafts worth ₹935.25

crore. "It generated sizeable foreign exchange," the official said.

An official said the EPCH is using technology that will make buying and selling a pleasurable experience in the age of social distancing. "It's inviting overseas buyers representing chain stores, retailers and e-commerce businesses to connect to the exquisite range of handmade

products being offered by exporters from all over the country," the official said.

The CEPC aims to restart online business in handmade carpets. "It will be a first-of-its-kind initiative to bridge the gap between markets," the official said.

The Kashmir HHD has assured stakeholders of all support in the two virtual fairs. "It is a good idea. We need to try all platforms to keep the business going," said Neyaz Ahmad, a carpet seller in Srinagar.

Kashmir Chamber of Commerce and Industry president Sheikh Ashiq said, "Over 50,000 workers in carpet and handicraft industries have no work. Since August 5, 2019 all sectors in J&K have been witnessing a slump. COVID-19 only amplified it."

SUDOKU

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DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★☆

Solution to puzzle 12968

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Brazil COVID-19 toll crosses 50,000

France returns to life by staging music festival, sending children back to school

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

DUBAI

The World Health Organization (WHO) sent out a fresh warning on Monday over the dangers of COVID-19 even as France returned to life by staging an annual music festival and sending millions of children back to school.

In spite of numerous European countries further easing their lockdown restrictions, cases around the world are rising especially in Latin America with Brazil now registering over 50,000 deaths. There are also fears of a second wave with Australians being warned against travelling to Melbourne.

WHO's warning

"The pandemic is still accelerating," WHO's director general Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus told the virtual health forum organised by Dubai in the United Arab Emirates.

Mr. Tedros said the great-



Back to business: Students at a class at the Ziegelau elementary school in Strasbourg, eastern France, on Monday. • AFP

est threat facing the world is not the virus itself, which has now killed over 4,65,000 people and infected nearly nine million worldwide, but "the lack of global solidarity and global leadership".

Brazil is the second worst-affected country behind the United States, another country where political infighting

has prevented a unified policy to handle the virus.

The spread of COVID-19 is accelerating across Latin America, with Mexico, Peru and Chile also hard-hit as death tolls soar and health-care facilities are pushed toward collapse.

Mexico City has delayed reopening markets, restaura-

nts, malls, hotels and places of worship, with the country now recording over 20,000 COVID-19 deaths.

Highlighting the region's woes, Peru passed 8,000 deaths on Sunday despite preparing to reopen shopping malls on Monday.

In Europe, meanwhile,

the feel-good factor continues as countries ease their lockdown restrictions. Thousands of French danced and partied well into Monday for an annual music festival, in the first big blow out since the lockdown.

Swimming pools and cinemas also reopened on Monday. Children up to the age of 15 also returned to school as attendance was switched from voluntary to compulsory. Fears remain, however, that the virus, may be on its way back even as countries where infections have ebbed lift their lockdowns to restart battered economies.

Australians were warned Monday to avoid travelling to Melbourne, as the country's second biggest city tightened restrictions over fears of a second wave. Victoria state has recorded more than 110 cases in the past week – many of them in Melbourne – prompting leaders of other regions to warn against visiting the city's six designated virus "hot spots".

U.S. citizen among those killed in U.K. stabbing

3 people died in the lone-wolf attack

REUTERS

READING

The English town of Reading held a minute's silence on Monday for the victims of a stabbing that killed three people including an American in the latest terrorism-linked attack.

Three people were also hospitalised after a man wielding a five-inch knife went on the rampage in a park on Saturday, randomly stabbing people enjoying a sunny, summer evening. A Western security source, speaking on condition of anonymity, said that the suspect was a 25-year-old Libyan called Khairi Saadallah.

The *Philadelphia Inquirer* said one of the dead was U.S. citizen Joe Ritchie-Bennett, 39, who had lived in Britain for 15 years. U.S. Ambassador Woody Johnson sent condolences to families of victims. "To our great sorrow, this includes an Ameri-



A woman paying tribute to the victims in Reading, England, on Monday. • AP

can citizen," he said on Twitter.

The security source told Reuters that Saadallah had come across the radar of Britain's domestic security agency MI5 last year over intelligence he had aspirations to travel for extremist purposes, although his plans then came to nothing.

The attack was reminiscent of some recent incidents in Britain that authorities also called terrorism.

China to join UN arms trade treaty

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

BEIJING

China will join a global pact to regulate arms sales, with Beijing saying on Monday that it is committed to efforts to "enhance peace and stability" in the world. The Communist Party leadership's top legislative body voted on Saturday to adopt a decision on joining the UN Arms Trade Treaty that is designed to control the flow of weapons into conflict zones. It comes after U.S. President Donald Trump announced plans last year to pull the U.S. out of the agreement – which entered into force in 2014.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian told reporters that joining the treaty was "another important measure for China to support multilateralism". It is among the agreements reached under the Obama administration that Mr. Trump has moved to pull out of.

South Korea battles 'second wave' of coronavirus

REUTERS

SEOUL

Health authorities in South Korea said for the first time on Monday it is in the midst of a "second wave" of novel coronavirus infections focused around its densely populated capital, stemming from a holiday in May.

The Korea Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (KCDC) had previously said South Korea's first wave had never really ended. But on Monday, KCDC director Jeong Eun-kyeong said it had become clear that a holiday weekend in early May

marked the beginning of a new wave of infections focused in the greater Seoul area, which had previously seen few cases. "In the metropolitan area, we believe that the first wave was from March to April as well as February to March," Ms. Jeong said at a regular briefing. "Then we see that the second wave which was triggered by the May holiday has been going on."

At the end of February, South Korea reported a peak of more than 900 cases in a day. An intensive tracking and testing cam-



Invoking the divine: People praying at the Chogyesa temple in South Korea on Monday. • AP

paign reduced the numbers to single digits by late April. But just as the country an-

nounced it would be easing social distancing guidelines in early May, new cases

spiked. "We originally predicted that the second wave would emerge in fall or winter," Ms. Jeong said. "Our forecast turned out to be wrong. As long as people have close contact with others, we believe that infections will continue." As of Sunday, South Korea reported 17 new cases, the first time in nearly a month that daily new cases had dropped below 20. It was a drop from the 48 and 67 cases reported in the previous two days. South Korea has reported a total of 12,438 cases, with 280 deaths.



Vladimir Putin at the Resurrection Cathedral, near Moscow. • REUTERS

of Moscow, had been due to open in May as part of a sequence of events to commemorate 75 years since the Soviet victory in World War Two, but this was delayed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

On Wednesday, Mr. Putin will oversee a military parade across Red Square to commemorate the Soviet victory over Nazi Germany. The following day, Russians will begin casting their ballots in a seven-day vote to approve or reject an array of reforms, including one that could allow Mr. Putin to serve two more terms in the Kremlin instead of stepping down in 2024.

Ahead of vote, Putin visits army church

REUTERS

MOSCOW

President Vladimir Putin visited a huge new Orthodox Christian cathedral dedicated to the military on Monday as Russia prepares to vote on reforms that could let him stay in power until 2036.

Mr. Putin, 67, addressed hundreds of soldiers to commemorate Russia's remembrance day following a prayer ceremony led by Patriarch Kirill, head of the Orthodox Church, at the Patriot cathedral, which opened earlier this month. "We have gathered here outside the walls of the main cathedral of the Russian

armed forces to remember the heroes of the past with deep respect," he said.

The lavishly decorated cathedral, some 55 km west

India-born Pak. Shia scholar passes away

Talib Jauhari was a poet and philosopher



Talib Jauhari

The Express Tribune newspaper quoted his son as saying.

Mr. Jauhari was respected among his sect as well as by Sunnis and was a class-fellow of the widely revered scholar Ayatollah Sayyid Ali al-Husayni al-Sistani.

He was also a poet, historian and philosopher and authored many books. Among the awards he received was Pakistan's third-highest civilian honour, Sitara-e-Imtiaz.

Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan has condoled Mr. Jauhari's death.

Spying charges are not linked to Huawei executive's arrest: Beijing

China calls Canadian PM Trudeau's remarks 'irresponsible'

ASSOCIATED PRESS

BEIJING

China told Prime Minister Justin Trudeau on Monday to "stop making irresponsible remarks" after he said Beijing's decision to charge two Canadians with spying was linked to his country's arrest of a Chinese tech executive.

The spying charges are "completely different" from the case of Huawei executive Meng Wanzhou, a Foreign Ministry spokesman said. Ms. Meng was arrested on U.S. charges connected to possible violations of trade sanctions on Iran.

Arrest of Canadians

Michael Kovrig and Michael Spavor were detained after Ms. Meng's December 2018 arrest in Vancouver. Charges against them were announced on Friday after a Canadian judge ruled Ms. Meng's extradition case can proceed to its next stage.

Mr. Trudeau, speaking to



Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian in Beijing in April. • REUTERS

reporters in Ottawa, said Chinese authorities "directly linked" the cases of Kovrig and Spavor with Ms. Meng. He called on Beijing to end their "arbitrary detention."

"There is no such thing as arbitrary detention," said the Ministry spokesman, Zhao Lijian. "China urges the relevant Canadian leader to earnestly respect the spirit of the rule of law, respect China's judicial sovereignty and stop making irresponsible remarks," Mr. Zhao said.

U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo on Monday called the charges against Kovrig and Spavor "politically motivated and completely groundless." "The United States stands with Canada in calling on Beijing for the immediate release of the two men and rejects the use of these unjustified detentions to coerce Canada," Mr. Pompeo said in a statement.

'Release Meng'

"We strongly urge Canada to correct its mistakes as soon as possible, immediately release Meng Wanzhou and ensure her safe return to home," said Mr. Zhao.

Ms. Meng is living in a mansion she owns in Vancouver, where she reportedly is working on a graduate degree. Kovrig and Spavor are being held at an undisclosed location. China has also sentenced two other Canadians to death and suspended imports of Canadian canola.

Ex-LTTE leader Karuna's claim to be probed

He boasted of 'killing security forces'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

COLOMBO

The Sri Lankan police has ordered a probe into an alleged statement by former Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) deputy leader Karuna Amman, claiming that he had murdered over 2,000 security forces on behalf of the Tamil separatist group, the government said on Monday. The acting police chief Chandana Wickramaratne has directed the Crime Investigation Department to launch an immediate probe into Mr. Amman's statement, according to a press statement issued by the Ministry of Defence.

Speaking at a political rally last week for the upcoming parliamentary elections in the country, Amman alias Vinayagamurthy Muralitharan reportedly said that he had murdered over 2,000 government troops during the LTTE's separatist war which lasted for over three decades.

"When I was a member of

the LTTE, I killed some 2,000 to 3,000 Sri Lankan Army personnel in one night at Elephant Pass. I have killed more in Kilinochchi. That is certainly higher than the number of lives the coronavirus has claimed in Sri Lanka," he was quoted as saying in the statement.

He made the statement in response to a comment made by the Chairman of the Karathivu local government body that Karuna Amman is more dangerous than the coronavirus, a report in the *Colombo Page* said on Sunday.

Japan to rename islands disputed with China

Local council votes for the move

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

TOKYO

A local council in southern Japan voted on Monday to rename an area, including islands disputed with China and Taiwan, a move Beijing denounced as illegal and a "serious provocation". The local assembly of Ishigaki city approved a plan to change the name of the area covering the Tokyo-controlled Senkaku Islands – known by Taiwan and China as the Diaoyus – from "Tonoshiro" to "Tonoshiro Senkaku". Local media said another part of Ishigaki is also known as Tonoshiro, and the name change was cast as a bid to avoid confusion.

But the uninhabited islands are at the centre of a festering row between Tokyo and Beijing and the move sparked anger in both Taiwan and mainland China. "The passing of the so-called administration designation bill by Japan is a serious provocation to China's territorial sovereignty," said Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian.

Taiwan says the islands are part of its territory, and also protested the move. "The sovereignty of Diaoyu Islands belongs to our country and any move attempting to alter this fact is invalid," the Foreign Ministry said in a statement.

N. Korea ready to send millions of retaliatory leaflets to the South

They are reflective of the 'wrath and hatred of people from all walks of life' in the country, says Pyongyang

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

SEOUL



Sending a message: North Koreans preparing anti-South Korea propaganda leaflets, in an image provided last week. • AP

border that symbolised inter-Korean rapprochement, while threatening to bolster its military presence in and near the Demilitarized Zone. Analysts say Pyongyang

has been conducting a series of staged provocations aimed at forcing concessions from Seoul and Washington with nuclear talks at a standstill. Ostensibly the source of its anger is the leaflets which it says insult the dignity of its leadership – a reference to leader Kim Jong-un. It is preparing to retaliate with its "largest-ever distribution of leaflets against the enemy", the official Korean Central News Agency reported on Monday. Altogether "12 million leaflets of all kinds reflective of the wrath and hatred of the people from all walks of life" have been produced, it said, and more than 3,000 balloons prepared to send them far to the south.

"The time for retaliatory punishment is drawing near," it said. One of the leaflets shown in the official Rodong Sinmun newspaper carried an image of South Korean President Moon Jae-in drinking from a cup and accused him of having "eaten it all, including the north-south Korea agreement". Both Koreas used to regularly send leaflets and loudspeaker broadcasts to the other side, but agreed to stop such activities in the Panmunjom Declaration that Mr. Moon and Mr. Kim signed at their first summit in 2018.

Loudspeakers set up
North Korea has begun setting up loudspeakers at multiple locations along the border to broadcast propaganda, the South's Yonhap news agency reported on Monday, citing an official of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Inter-Korean relations

have been in a deep freeze following the collapse of a summit in Hanoi between Mr. Kim and U.S. President Donald Trump early last year over what the nuclear-armed North would be willing to give up in exchange for a loosening of sanctions. At times, leaflet dispatches have led to escalation – in October 2014 the North opened fire on an air balloon carrying anti-Pyongyang leaflets, triggering an exchange of shots at the border. But most South Koreans largely ignore leaflets they find sent by the North. The flyers often boast of its military prowess or criticise the U.S. and Southern Presidents, accompanied by offensive images and language.

MARKET WATCH

	22-06-2020	% CHANGE
Sensex	34,911	0.52
US Dollar	76.03	0.33
Gold	48,811	0.99
Brent oil	42.33	-0.07

NIFTY 50

	PRICE	CHANGE
Adani Ports	349.60	0.70
Asian Paints	1652.15	29.65
Axis Bank	430.15	13.10
Bajaj Auto	2855.75	181.40
Bajaj Finserv	6183.55	283.75
Bajaj Finance	2840.30	141.70
Bharti Airtel	581.05	8.55
BPCL	385.15	4.60
Britannia Ind	3421.20	-17.35
Cipla	655.95	19.75
Coal India	143.65	6.40
Dr Reddys Lab	4032.85	27.25
Eicher Motors	17588.95	239.60
GAIL (India)	98.30	-1.20
Grasim Ind	617.60	16.35
HCL Tech	569.60	0.00
HDFC	1819.40	-15.70
HDFC Bank	1028.75	-4.60
Hero MotoCorp	2412.60	56.75
Hindalco	150.10	-0.95
Hind Unilever	2100.80	8.05
ICICI Bank	367.55	3.75
IndusInd Bank	489.90	6.25
Bharti Infratel	222.85	4.00
Infosys	703.70	-1.85
Indian Oil Corp	88.05	2.75
ITC	185.00	0.95
JSW Steel	197.95	3.65
Kotak Bank	1355.35	52.85
L&T	907.45	9.25
M&M	498.75	-1.30
Maruti Suzuki	5896.00	-1.35
Nestle India Ltd.	16104.80	45.95
NTPC	95.30	2.30
ONGC	84.85	-0.90
PowerGrid Corp	178.60	7.20
Reliance Ind	1746.15	-13.25
State Bank	187.70	3.20
Shree Cement	22017.60	338.65
Sun Pharma	493.20	5.10
Tata Motors	102.65	0.15
Tata Steel	325.70	5.15
TCS	2027.95	-16.65
Tech Mahindra	548.50	9.65
Titan	979.50	3.65
UltraTech Cement	3825.25	-11.10
UPL	446.20	9.30
Vedanta	110.05	4.80
Wipro	218.05	-4.00
Zee Entertainment	177.05	4.10

EXCHANGE RATES

CURRENCY	TT BUY	TT SELL
US Dollar	75.82	76.14
Euro	85.02	85.41
British Pound	94.04	94.44
Japanese Yen (100)	70.91	71.24
Chinese Yuan	10.72	10.76
Swiss Franc	79.77	80.12
Singapore Dollar	54.34	54.58
Canadian Dollar	55.86	56.11
Malaysian Ringgit	17.71	17.80
Australian Dollar	52.16	52.38

Source: Indian Bank

IN BRIEF



Mahindra unveils Sarpanch tractors

The Farm Equipment Sector of Mahindra & Mahindra Ltd. has introduced the Sarpanch range of tractors in Maharashtra. The new series offers models spanning multiple HP-points in the 30 HP (22.37kW) to 50 HP (37.28kW) category. Hemant Sikka - president, Farm Equipment Sector, M&M Ltd., said, "The new series is developed to meet the evolving demands of modern farmers by providing extra power, higher back-up torque and modern styling."

Reliance to hold virtual AGM on July 15

NEW DELHI
After Tata Consultancy Services (TCS), Reliance Industries will hold its first virtual annual general meeting of shareholders on July 15 as public gatherings are not possible in view of the COVID-19 pandemic. In a regulatory filing, RIL said "the 43rd AGM will be held on Wednesday, July 15, 2020 at 2 pm through video conferencing / other audio-visual means." So far, all the post-IPO AGMs of Reliance have been physical meetings. PTI

AIMO seeks grievance portal for MSMEs

CHENNAI
A consortium of about 25 trade associations coordinated by the All India Manufacturers Organisation (AIMO) have requested the Centre to consider opening two portals – one, for all establishments to upload sundry creditor statements on a quarterly basis, and the other to file complaints against banks, financial institutions and non-banking financial institutions for denial of loans, denial of EMI moratorium and excess charges on interest.

Aurobindo sets eyes on China

Starts filing products from India; work on oral formulations unit underway

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD

Drugmaker Aurobindo Pharma has started filing products from India for the Chinese market even as construction of its oral formulation manufacturing facility in the neighbouring country is underway.

"We expect to take the exhibit batches by the second half of FY-2021," MD N. Govindarajan said during an earnings call that took place on June 4, transcripts of which were made available late last week.

He was responding to a query on the manufacturing facilities in China and if recent developments between India and China would impact the plans.

"Currently, for the Chinese market, we have already started filing products



The firm is keen on supplying products under the tender route in China, where there is a price correction. • GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCK

from India and the construction of our own oral formulation manufacturing facility is going on," he said.

Besides the plant under construction, the firm has another for which it had entered into a joint venture one and a half years ago. Aurobindo is keen on supplying

products under the tender route in China, where price correction is being witnessed while also looking at private business as well as overtime.

Elaborating, Mr. Govindarajan said "the regulation has changed. Preference is there for FDA-approved product

and FDA-inspected facility in China. They would get preference in terms of the expedited review. The pricing in the other segments, other than tenders, is also attractive for us to move ahead. But in terms of specifics, we will have more clarity as we get closer to the filing and launch."

Executive chairman of Aurobindo Pharma USA P. V. Ram Prasad Reddy said, "Ultimately, the China plant will be used for China's requirements. Till that time, we may use [the facility] for China, Europe and U.S."

To queries on the U.S. market, Mr. Govindarajan said the company had filed 55 ANDA (abbreviated new drug applications) with the USFDA during 2019-20 and is expected to file about 50-60 during the current fiscal.

L&T arm, KRB to build modular process plants

Firms eye refinery, petrochem units

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI

L&T Hydrocarbon Engineering (LTHE), a wholly-owned subsidiary of Larsen & Toubro (L&T), has signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with KBR to build modular process plants for refinery and petrochemical projects.

Under the agreement, KBR and LTHE will collaborate to develop business opportunities in these sectors, a statement said.

LTHE will exclusively bid for KBR's solid acid alkylation, solvent de-asphalting and catalytic olefins technologies for global projects, with a special emphasis on India, southeast Asia, West

Asia and Africa, according to the statement.

Subramanian Sarma, managing director and CEO of LTHE said, "Through this memorandum, LTHE will combine its engineering, modular fabrication facilities and core strength of project management and construction to offer optimised solutions to our customers."

Organised under offshore, onshore, construction services, modular fabrication and AdVENT (Advanced Value Engineering & Technology) verticals, LTHE delivers 'design-to-build' engineering and construction solutions across the hydrocarbon spectrum.

Murugappa cuts debt, capex

Group syncs with changing economic scenario

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI

Keeping in tune with the changing economic environment, the city-based Murugappa Group had reduced its aggregate capital expenditure in group companies by 19.5%, or by ₹390 crore, in the last two financial years.

The group's manufacturing entities, however, reduced a loan outstanding of ₹1,540 crore, leading to an improvement in total debt-to-equity ratio to 0.47 from 0.74.

The group incurred a capital expenditure of ₹1,610 crore for the last two fiscals against its planned investment of ₹2,000 crore.

The financial results of 2019-20 reflect the capabilities of the group to face a dif-

ferent economic environment and make the required changes in all elements of operations to ensure sustainable business results," said M.M. Murugappan, group executive chairman.

"Some of our companies and SBUs have managed to buck the industry trends to achieve higher sales and profitability, while some recorded higher profitability even on the back of flat or lower sales. A few businesses were impacted on both topline and profitability."

"There was a strong focus on improving cash flows and reducing debt. We have also been prudent in making suitable provisions arising out of economic conditions and the impact of the pandemic," he said.

The group posted a 20.4% increase in net profit for the financial year ended March 2020 to ₹3,489 crore, after excluding special provisions.

The group registered a 3.3% growth in its turnover to ₹38,105 crore while net profit stood at ₹2,946 crore (including the special provisions). Market capitalisation of listed group companies aggregated to ₹46,683 crore.

India can reduce trade deficit with China by \$8.4 bn: study

'40 sub-sectors have potential to lower import dependency'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI

India can potentially reduce its trade deficit with China by \$8.4 billion over FY21-22, which is equivalent to 17.3% of the deficit with China and 0.3% of India's GDP, Acuité Ratings & Research said in a study.

This can be achieved by the rationalisation of just a quarter of India's imports from that country in select sectors where India has well-established manufacturing capabilities, Acuité said.

Without any significant additional investments, the domestic manufacturing sector can substitute 25% of the total imports from specified sectors in the first phase, it added.

Suman Chowdhury, chief analytical officer, Acuité Rat-

Gold surges, hits highest in over a month

REUTERS

Gold prices climbed 1% on Monday to hit the highest in more than a month, as investors took refuge in the safe-haven metal after an uptick in coronavirus cases roiled hopes for a quick economic recovery.

Spot gold was up 1% at \$1,760.55 per ounce at 7.54 p.m. The session high was \$1,762.84, the highest since May 18. Prices were \$4 shy of a 7/12 year high of \$1,764.55, hit last month. U.S. gold futures was also 1.3% higher at \$1,776.

"There is some flight to safety in gold," said Bob Haberkorn, senior market strategist at RJO Futures.

"Rise in coronavirus cases have led gold to break the \$1,750 level. If we close above \$1,765 today, the \$1,800 level is not very far."



FDI is welcome, but we have to guard against capital that is opportunistic and not good for India, says Mr. Goyal.

Exports improving, down 10-12% in June'

'Focus is on growth, not handout'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

India's exports are showing signs of improvement as the contraction in outbound shipments in June so far has come down to about 10-12%

in April, Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal said on Monday.

Declining for the third straight month, India's exports dipped 36.47% in May to \$19.05 billion. "Currently, we are about 10-12% down in June. So, in a sense, we have reached up to 88-90% of the level of exports we had in June 2019 in the current month in the first two weeks. I am awaiting data for third week (of June)," Mr. Goyal said at a CII function.

The Minister said the focus was on sustainable growth and not on giving 'handout' for exports. He said subsidies were never good for businesses and wouldn't help domestic exporters in engaging with the world from a position of strength and power.

On foreign direct investment, he said, "We have some constraints in multi-brand retail because we have a large part of Indians dependent on small mom-and-pop stores," he said, adding,

that these shops have kept essential supplies available and played a key role during the ongoing coronavirus pandemic.

"In insurance, our expectations from insurance companies was much more and deeper, sadly we feel let down. So there are a few sectors where we would like all of you tell us," he added.

The Minister said that the government has to balance security concerns and opening up of the economy.

"FDI is welcome, but we certainly have to take precautions that we do not get the wrong type of capital which is opportunistic and which is not really good for the nation," Mr. Goyal said.

TV PICKS

Premier League: Star Sports 1 & SS Select 1 (SD & HD), 10.15 p.m. & 12.40 a.m. (Wednesday)
Serie A: Sony Ten 2 & Sony Six (SD & HD), 11 p.m. & 1.10 a.m. (Wednesday)

QUICK SINGLES



Pujara hits the nets with Saurashtra teammates

NEW DELHI
Architects of Saurashtra's maiden Ranji Trophy triumph including Cheteshwar Pujara and skipper Jaydev Unadkat are back at the nets more than three months after they won the title in March. Pujara has been training at his academy, alongside Unadkat, Arpit Vasavada and medium-pacer Prerak Mankad. PTI

Pakistan's Shadab, Rauf and Haider test positive

KARACHI
Pakistan cricketers Shadab Khan, Haris Rauf and rookie Haider Ali on Monday tested positive for coronavirus. "The Pakistan Cricket Board has confirmed three players — Haider Ali, Haris Rauf and Shadab Khan — have tested positive for Covid-19," said the PCB in a statement. PTI



2020 World Cup is most watched women's event

DUBAI
The International Cricket Council on Monday claimed record viewership of the 2020 Women's T20 World Cup in Australia with the event clocking 1.1 billion views through the governing body's digital channels. An ICC release said, the tournament held in February-March recorded 10 times more views than the previous most successful women's event — the 2017 ODI World Cup. PTI

Former shooter Pournima passes away

NEW DELHI
Cancer-stricken former India shooter Pournima Zanane passed away aged 42. She had represented India at multiple ISSF World Cups and Asian and Commonwealth Championships, among other events. PTI

Aditi learning to be ambidextrous

UTHRA GANESAN
NEW DELHI

She has been busy hitting balls on to the curtains and off a roll-on mat on her terrace but the big challenge for Aditi Ashok in the last three months has been trying to master the art of being ambidextrous.

The lone Indian on the LPGA Tour at the moment has been home for the longest period in over a decade and while it has not been easy, Aditi is now looking forward to finally getting back onto the golf course. She has already walked out at the BGC in Bangalore thrice since the lockdown eased but admitted it wasn't anything like before.

"It's nothing close to how much time I usually spend, maximum 3-4 hours so far, but still it's better to feel the greens than hitting balls on the terrace. Of course there are precautions and protocols in place — checking tem-

Madrid supplants Barca

Merseyside derby ends goalless, delays Liverpool's title push

EURO LEAGUES

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
MADRID

Real Madrid knocked Barcelona off the top of LaLiga by beating Real Sociedad 2-1 on Sunday as Sergio Ramos rolled in another penalty before being forced off due to injury.

Karim Benzema continued his excellent form by adding a second at Anoeta and while Mikel Merino gave Sociedad hope with seven minutes left, Madrid held on to go above Barca on head-to-head as both have 65 points.

Ramos' 20th consecutive spot-kick has made him LaLiga's highest ever scoring defender on 68 goals, overtaking Ronald Koeman.

Liverpool's march towards the Premier League title was delayed as the leader returned to action with a goalless draw against Everton in the 'Merseyside derby', while Chelsea fought back for a 2-1 win at Aston Villa.

Record viewership
Incidentally, the Liverpool-Everton match was the most-watched Premier League game ever on British television with an average of five million people across Sky's channels watching the match.



Well done, amigo! Karim Benzema is the centre of his Real Madrid teammates' adulation after his strike. ■ AFP

The results: Premier League:

Aston Villa 1 (Hause 43) lost to Chelsea 2 (Pulisic 60, Giroud 62); Everton 0 drew with Liverpool 0.
LaLiga: Valencia 2 (Guedes 12,

Rodrigo 35) bt Osasuna 0.
Real Sociedad 1 (Merino 83) lost to Real Madrid 2 (Ramos 50-pen, Benzema 70).

Serie A: Atalanta 4 (Djimsiti 16, Zapata 31, 66, Bourabia 37-og) bt Sassuolo 1 (Bourabia 90+2); Inter Milan 2 (Lukaku 10, Martínez 33) bt Sampdoria 1 (Thorsby 52).

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