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Assam's flood situation takes a turn for the worse, 12 lakh hit
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Blackwood shines as West Indies beats England in first Test
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NEARBY

16 employees contract COVID-19 at Raj Bhavan

MUMBAI
Sixteen personnel at Raj Bhavan have contracted COVID-19, while Governor Bhagat Singh Koshyari has tested negative for the virus. Mr. Koshyari has denied reports that he is in self-isolation. "I am perfectly alright," Mr. Koshyari said.

WEST ▶ PAGE 5

Maharashtra tally surges past 2.5 lakh

PUNE
With 7,827 new COVID-19 cases, Maharashtra's tally touched 2,54,427 on Sunday. The State also recorded 173 more deaths, pushing its toll to 10,289. With 1,243 new cases, Mumbai's tally has now reached 92,988. The city also recorded 44 deaths, taking its total toll to 5,288.

WEST ▶ PAGE 5

EDUCATION PLUS ▶ PAGE 13

Xi's mobilisation order, months of planning preceded border moves

Timing of incursions shows high level of coordination'

DINAKAR PERI
ANANTH KRISHNAN
NEW DELHI

China's moves into the Galwan Valley, Pangong Lake area and several other spots along the Line of Actual Control (LAC), starting in early May, were likely planned for months and followed a new mobilisation order issued by President Xi Jinping, according to the assessments of Indian officials.

Several Chinese incursions across the LAC took place almost simultaneously in locations several hundred kilometres apart — some

even hours apart on the same day — leading to skirmishes in early and mid-May.

The timing of the incidents suggested a high level of coordination and planning, the officials said.

In Galwan Valley and Pangong Lake, the People's Liberation Army's (PLA) de-

EXCLUSIVE

ployments appeared to have been aimed at pushing India back from the LAC and redrawing it to more closely align with China's official borders.

A buffer zone that both sides have temporarily agreed to in Galwan has, on China's insistence, been structured around Beijing's new LAC perception, shift-



Watchful eyes: An Army vehicle moving towards Ladakh on Saturday. ▶ PTI

ing the line around 1 km west.

In Pangong Lake, China has thinned its presence from its LAC perception at Finger 4 but moved only to Finger 5, still much deeper

inside from the Indian claim line at Finger 8 which is about 8 km from Finger 4.

Starting in late January and early February, the PLA began what was viewed as routine mobilisation for an-

while border frontier troops remained in forward areas, for the first time moved close to the border. Due to this, there was huge mobilisation since April and the move was very evident, officials stated.

Significant new order

In January 2020, President Xi signed a new Training Mobilisation Order (TMO) for strengthening military training in real combat conditions and "to maintain a high level of readiness". The new order updated the 2019 TMO, which was the first such order to be signed by Mr. Xi, and had called for implementing new military training guidelines announced by him in 2018 to improve combat readiness.

They are putting these to test and are war-gaming in real-time," said one government source, who like others quoted in this article requested anonymity.

was seen as routine at the time, Indian officials believe it dramatically altered the pattern of annual exercises and China's forward deployments, not just with India but also in other theatres, where tensions have flared this summer with Japan, Taiwan and in the South China Sea. Government sources said the TMO called for "confrontational training" to assess the reaction of commanders in real-time combat situations and deal with "a multi-front situation".

"They are putting these to test and are war-gaming in real-time," said one government source, who like others quoted in this article requested anonymity.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

Pilot's rebellion with 30 MLAs puts Gehlot govt. on the edge

Simmering differences spill out; Rajasthan Deputy CM says govt. is in minority

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

JAIPUR/NEW DELHI

The power struggle between Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot and his deputy Sachin Pilot, that has been simmering for long, spilled out into the open on Sunday, threatening the stability of the 20-month-old Congress government in Rajasthan.

In a statement released through his media adviser, Mr. Pilot said the Gehlot government was now in a minority after over 30 Congress MLAs and some independent lawmakers had pledged support to him. Mr. Pilot also said he would not attend a meeting of the Congress Legislature Party scheduled for Monday.

Late night on Sunday, Congress sources said form-



Divided house: Television crews outside the hotel in Manesar, where some MLAs are said to be staying. ▶ ASHOK KUMAR

er Congress chief Rahul Gandhi had had a conversation with Mr. Pilot. The outcome of the discussion was not immediately clear.

Moved too far
Meanwhile, BJP sources said Mr. Pilot had moved too far from the Congress for a tur-

rule Haryana, a source close to him told *The Hindu*. Mr. Pilot was miffed over a notice issued by the Special Operations Group of Rajasthan police seeking time from him to record his statement in a case of conspiracy and sedition registered after attempts were allegedly made by the BJP to bribe Congress MLAs to switch sides during last month's Rajya Sabha polls. "The police sending a similar notice to the Chief Minister was just a pretext to harass Mr. Pilot," the source in his camp said.

A source close to Mr. Gehlot, however, said Mr. Pilot was playing into the hands of the BJP.

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Punjab farmers find a better way to grow paddy

Many chose the direct seeding method for the crop during COVID-19, with a bonus: no stubble burning



Fast forward: Farmers removing weeds in a paddy field at Sotal village in Punjab. ▶ VIKAS VASUDEVA

VIKAS VASUDEVA
MADAN HERI
Labour shortage after the exodus of pandemic-struck migrant labourers forced Gurteg Singh in Punjab to plant paddy using the direct seeding of rice (DSR) technique in the kharif season, rather than do traditional transplanting. A month later, he is upbeat about his crop yield, and relieved at being spared of a major problem: handling crop residue after harvest.

Farmers and agricultural experts say that large scale use of DSR to plant paddy could solve the staggering problem of stubble burning, a key cause of air pollution across the northern region.

"I have used direct seeding for the first time. The growth looks good. I have saved on labour. Last year, I spent ₹30,000 on labour to sow and transplant. This year, I have spent only ₹10,000 on paddy planting in eight acres." Another benefit is less water needed for

irrigation. Most importantly, there will be very little post-harvest stubble," said 48-year-old Gurteg of Madan Heri village. "As my crop will mature around 10-11 days earlier, I'll have more time to prepare the field for the next winter crop," he said. With sufficient time available, farmers need not burn the stubble.

After harvest, the farmers usually burn the stubble to get rid of it. A short window of 20-25 days is the key reason for stubble burning, rather than opt for other ways of disposal. This year, the Punjab government relaxed sowing schedules, and many farmers chose direct seeding.

Harjap Singh at Sotal also direct-seeded his paddy. "The DSR crop gets mature 7-10 days faster than with transplantation," he says.

In Punjab and Haryana, the harvesting of paddy is

NATGRID gets access to data from 14,000 police stations

VIJAYA SINGH
NEW DELHI

The National Intelligence Grid (NATGRID) has signed a memorandum of understanding with the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) to access the centralised online database on FIRs and stolen vehicles.

First conceptualised in 2009, NATGRID seeks to become the one-stop destination for security and intelligence agencies to access database related to immigration entry and exit, banking and telephone details of a suspect on a "secured platform". The project aims to go live by December 31.

The MoU, signed in March, will give NATGRID access to the Crime and Criminal Tracking Network and Systems (CCTNS) database, a platform that links around 14,000 police stations. All State police are mandated to file FIRs in the CCTNS.

"At present, security agencies directly contact an airline or a telephone company if they are on a suspect's trail. The data is shared through international servers. The NATGRID will ensure that such information is shared through a secure platform," said a senior government official.

INFO FROM FIR ▶ PAGE 9

U.P. sets up panel to probe killing of Dubey, aides

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

LUCKNOW

The killing of history-sheeter Vikas Dubey allegedly while trying to escape from police custody on July 10 will be probed by a single-member commission, led by a retired judge, the Uttar Pradesh government said on Sunday.

Retired Allahabad High Court judge Sashi Kant Agarwal will head the commission, which will be based out of Kanpur, and have two months to submit its report.

The decision comes a day after a series of petitions were filed in the Supreme Court seeking an independent probe into the killing of Dubey and his associates by the police following the Bikru ambush.

The commission will also investigate 'intensively' the Bikru ambush as well as all the cases of 'encounters' between the police and Dubey's associates, a government spokesperson said.

The incidents had become

a "matter of public importance," making a probe necessary, the spokesperson added.

Bikru ambush

Eight policemen were killed in the ambush while five associates linked to Dubey were killed later by the police in alleged exchange of fire. The commission has been formed barely a day after the State government set up a Special Investigation Team (SIT) to probe the Bikru

incident, the financial and criminal background of the accused and the role of the Kanpur police.

The SIT has been mandated to investigate the involvement of policemen in the incident, examine a full-year's call records of Dubey and his associates and recommend "suitable and tough" action against policemen they were in touch with, if evidence was found against them.

RELATED REPORTS ▶ PAGE 10

**HOMAGE TO PIONEER POET
Bhanubhakta Acharya**

Mamata Banerjee
Chief Minister, West Bengal

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

Government of West Bengal

Sophie's choice of colleges

:: SWETA AKUNDI

While for a majority of India, lockdown officially began on March 24, the country's 17-18-year-olds – the batch of 2020 – have been living in a quasi-lockdown state since the beginning of this year, preparing for the 'board year'.

In any other year, by this time, students would have been ready to start a new chapter of their lives. The top scorers' faces would have been up on billboards and parents would have gone through variations of the 'Top 10 Colleges' lists, choosing campuses based on 'Only the best for our child'.

This year has been anything but normal. And with the pandemic shifting perspectives, the criteria for what makes for a 'good college' has changed vastly. It is no longer just about the best placement rate, but also about how hygienic the dorms are, and how strict its safety standards are.

"The pandemic did not give us any warning," says Madurai-based Divya Hindujā, mother to 17-year-old Kunal. Interested in data sciences, Kunal managed to get admission in City University of Hong Kong. But with no end of the pandemic in sight, Divya rethought the idea of Kunal going abroad. "I turned around on that because the pandemic taught us that anything can happen anytime," she says.

All through last year, it was Divya backing Kunal's desire to study abroad. "After the pandemic, I said anywhere in India is okay *beta*, but



As this batch of Class XII looks for college options, the criteria for the best institution is no longer just a good placement rate, but also how hygienic, healthy, and safe the campus and hostels are

not abroad. Just in case anything like this springs up again, it will be difficult for us to meet, and I will be completely petrified," she says.

Her decision was strengthened after understanding what her friends, whose kids were studying abroad, were going through. For the first few months, students were stuck away from home. Now, under a new directive by the Trump government in USA, students whose classes have moved online will be stripped

of their visa and be required to go back to their countries.

Open campuses

While Divya is willing to send Kunal to any good college in India, some parents are rethinking their top college choice based on their locations. Cities such as Mumbai, Delhi and Chennai have an air of fear lingering over them, given their newfound reputation as places with the highest number of COVID-19 cases.

In Dehradun, Preeti Gulati

does not wish for her daughter Samriddhi to even move away from their hometown. The 17-year-old was already battling certain health issues and the pandemic further ensured that she stayed put.

"At least they have online classes, if they didn't, we would have considered taking a one-year break," says Preeti, adding that she selected the best computer science institution in the city. "Plus, if she stays with us, we can keep a better eye on her nutrition and immunity."

Divya, on the other hand, says the infrastructure of the college matters more than its location: "Most colleges are not in the centre of the city but on the outskirts."

On Divya's checklist is a hostel with spacious rooms for a maximum of two people, so that social distancing can be maintained. The academic buildings as well shouldn't be overcrowded, and should follow a strict hygiene protocol. She will also be checking who the caterers for the hostel are, and "whether or not the cooks wear gloves and masks while cooking and sanitise themselves before entering

Main priorities: Health and hygiene are the top scorers when it comes to choosing a college this year. ■ GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCK

the kitchen."

Samriddhi and her parents too made a trip to her college to register and check the safety standards of the campus. "We checked how airy and well-ventilated the classrooms were, how much sunlight they got, how green the campus was. The desks are such that only one person sits on one bench," says Preeti.

"Whoever entered had to sanitise themselves at the gates and there was a thermal screening check," she adds.

Learn to live with it

What do you do when your own city is one of the most infected areas in India? Does home still feel safe? "There is at least one COVID-19 positive case in almost every household in our city here. In our own society, there are a couple," says Ranjita Mandal, a Panvel (Navi Mumbai) resident.

Her daughter, Sudipa, has been preparing for engineering entrance exams since last year. But the pandemic keeps pushing the date for JEE and NEET further – as things stand, they are supposed to be held in September.

"I wish they could take just one test and be done with it. But there are so many private colleges with their own (now-online) entrance exams... we don't know when this will end and we will be able to select a college," says Ranjita.

With the looming uncertainty regarding admissions, Ranjita finds that it doesn't pay to worry too much about campus hygiene and health.

"As long as she gets into a good college – that is our priority. Because even if the admission is done, I'm sure they will conduct classes online, at least for this year. Maybe they can do just theory this year. So is does not matter where the college is, as long as it is good for her in the long run," she says.

Preeti agrees, "We don't know when there will be a cure, but we can't always keep our children restricted. Once they go to college they need to take care of themselves. As they say, you have to learn to live with it."



Illustration: Soma Basu



THE
CREAKING
TREE

A glossary of new Zoom language



■ SHOVON CHOWDHURY

not wearing pants.

● **Advanced Pottery:** A high level Zoom skill. Refers to the ability to complete bowel movement during the course of the meeting, without revealing this fact to others.

● **Cereal Killing:** The act of chewing cornflakes very carefully so that others are not disturbed by the noise. If your camera is on, your spoon movements will need to be quick.

● **Juvenile Retention:** When your child refuses to leave the room while you are in a meeting. May involve musical instruments.

● **Perfeuphoria:** The realisation that you no longer have to buy deodorant.

● **Patriot Shame:** The feeling that arises within you when you want to stop using Zoom because some people say it's Chinese, in order to support our troops on the border, but are unable to figure out how to use Microsoft Teams.

● **Stubble Fallacy:** The mistaken belief that if the lighting is dim enough, no one will be able to make out that you have not shaved for the last three days.

● **Porn Scorn:** The reaction of your colleagues when you watch porn during a meeting without realising that your screen is on.

● **Hair Supremacy:** The sense of satisfaction that you get when you realise that you are the only one in the meeting who has recently had a haircut.

● **Snortle:** The mildly amused noise you make, quickly suppressed, combining a snigger and a chortle, when you notice that your boss has positioned his camera in such a way that you can see right up his nose.

● **Skin Depth Analysis:** Post meeting judgemental remarks about your physique and complexion, made by others, after you take a shower during a Zoom meeting and forget to turn off your camera.

We hope this was useful. Please share this knowledge with others, and use it well.

No new words were invented in Shovon Chowdhury's most recent novel, *Murder With Bengali Characteristics*.

CONVERSATIONS WITH SELF

A tragedy to learn from

We must not treat fear as an adversary and allow it to punish us



■ TT SRINATH

It is hard to accept that a tragedy can actually teach us something positive. After or even as we are experiencing COVID-19, the fact is that the world will never be the same again. I ask myself as I read and hear about people dying – both elderly and even the young – if their death is really in vain? Or is there a lesson that we can take from death that has been forced on them?

Every life is being touched at some point by tragedy; it could be a building collapse, a broken relationship or a sudden disability. Life seems to be at a constant risk, and if we forget this we might be unprepared for challenges that existence may have in store for us. We are therefore being forced to attempt to make some sense of what is happening, to overcome our fears and look at rebuilding our lives.

I am realising, with pain

undoubtedly, that I have to first accept 'what is'. I do not want to treat my fear as some kind of adversary and allow it to punish me.

People around the world are struggling, like I am. With every death we read about here in our country or elsewhere, each of us is dying, a little. The whole world is becoming one.

The lesson to embrace thus is the need for patience and the certainty that everything in life is temporary. If this is true and the world is no more a safe place, at least for now, I am telling myself to take advantage of this sudden change, spend my time doing things I have always wanted to do, but for which I always lacked courage.

I wish for myself and for all those like me that we work towards lifting ourselves out of the emotional rubble that has been forced upon us and build our own life, a life we dreamed of, but never dared to create.

The writer is an organisational and behavioural consultant. He can be contacted at ttsrinath@gmail.com



■ SOMA BASU

Over the past 15-plus weeks, how many times in a day have you furiously wiped down surfaces with disinfectants? The COVID-19 fear factor has turned scientists to research on products with nano technology, that is based on the application of group of few atoms. They are looking for a solution aimed at a surface coating that bonds to the material with long-term protection against germs (bacteria, viruses, fungi, protozoa).

What are these surface protectors?

They are substances that use metals such as silver and copper or biomolecules such as neem extract known for their anti-microbial activity, or cationic (i.e. positively charged) polymers in combination with chemical compounds (like ammonia plus nitrogen) that can be used as a long-lasting protective coating. The compound can be sprayed on metal, glass, wood, stone, fabric, leather, and other materials; the effect can last from a

week to 90 days depending on the type of surface.

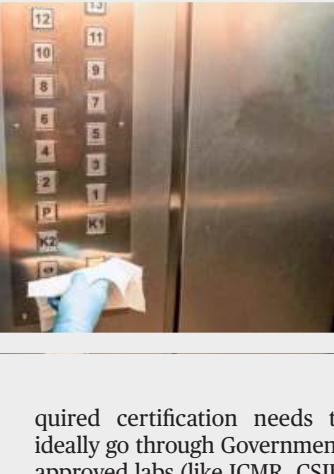
Are they out in the market?

Until the pandemic, there were products for anti-bacterial application, but now the focus has shifted to viruses. For instance, Prof Ashwini Kumar Agrawal, the Head of Textile and Fibre Engineering Department at IIT Delhi, developed N9 blue nano silver in 2013, with a much higher potency than other metals and polymers to catch and kill bacteria. He has now evaluated anti-viral properties and re-formulated the compound to work

against COVID-19. He says different kinds of silver (yellow and brown) have been patented by countries including the US, China, and Australia to establish the uniqueness of the metal for surface hygiene. "But the N9 blue silver can be 100 times more effective with the longest lasting protection."

Institutions (particularly the IITs) across the country are in different stages of developing these nanoparticles as surface coatings. All are awaiting validation against viruses, through field trials before they can legally mass manufacture. The re-

Surface protection:
Nanotechnology is looking at providing virus protection via sprays. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT



quired certification needs to ideally go through Government-approved labs (like ICMR, CSIR, NABL or NIV) that are currently all engaged only in research on medicinal drugs and vaccines.

But are there nano-products that are available?

There are some products that have been tested by private labs either in India or abroad. For instance, Delhi-based start-up, GermCops has launched a disinfection service with a US manufactured and EPA-certified water-based anti-microbial product which, it is claimed, when sprayed over metallic, non-metallic, tiled and glass surfaces gives protection up to 120 days with a 99.9% killing rate in the first 10 days. Dr Pankaj Goyal, the founder, says the product is good for homes that have had a COVID-19 positive patient home-quarantined. She is speaking to the Delhi Transport Corporation to disinfect 1,000 buses. However, the testing has been conducted in a private lab.

IIT Delhi's samples were sent in April to the microbiological testing laboratory, MSL in UK. The reports are expected only by the end of the year. "The battery of lab tests will confirm the efficacy of the compound in dry state, how fast and for how long

it can continue to kill the virus and if it is non-toxic and safe to use," says Prof Agrawal.

While Prof Agrawal's N9 blue silver comes under the Government of India's Nano Mission project funded by the Department of Science & Technology, another by IIT Madras, funded by the Defence Research Development Organisation, has developed a nano-coated filter for PPE kits, masks, and gloves that can be used by frontline healthcare workers. The coating filters sub-micron-sized dust particles in the air. However, its practical application is also subject to field testing and is therefore, pending.

Are long-lasting surface protectors in use anywhere else in the world?

Following findings from the Diamond Princess cruise ship that the novel coronavirus can last on surfaces up to 17 days, the development of a new disinfectant technology arose.

While anti-viral coatings are undergoing clinical tests in several countries, three months ago, scientists from Haifa's Institute of Technology, in Israel, claimed to have developed anti-viral polymers that could kill the novel coronavirus without getting diminished.

Researchers in Hong Kong University of Science & Technology also developed a new anti-microbial coating known as MAP-1 that can kill most bacteria and viruses – including the coronavirus – for up to 90 days.

Prof Agrawal says many countries are engaged in developing heat-sensitive polymers that respond to contamination from touch or droplets, from the time of previous epidemics of SARS. Many of those formulations have been modified during the current pandemic and sold under different brand names in Japan, Singapore, and the US. However, the surface protectors currently available in international markets are pocket-pinchers.

Tiny particles, big solutions

Nano-coated materials could be the anti-virus weapons of the future

Timings		
MUMBAI		
MONDAY, JUL. 13		
RISE 06:09	SET 19:20	
RISE 00:28	SET 12:58	
TUESDAY, JUL. 14		
RISE 06:09	SET 19:20	
RISE 01:02	SET 13:47	
WEDNESDAY, JUL. 15		
RISE 06:10	SET 19:20	
RISE 01:38	SET 14:36	

Mumbai Weather	max	min
Mumbai Airport	29	25
Pune	31	23
Mumbai City	29	25

Mumbai Today
33°C A warm morning.
Moderate rain will occur over the city. The sky will remain cloudy over the city.

Mumbai Tomorrow
34°C Moderate rain are possible over the city. A warm morning. A mostly cloudy sky is expected over the city.

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THE HINDU
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Air quality of Delhi-NCR			
Delhi	71	Gurugram	78
Ghaziabad	131	Faridabad	89
Noida	94	Greater Noida	62
Good	51-100	Satisfactory	101-200
Poor	201-300	Very poor	301-400
Severe	>401		
AIR QUALITY INDEX AT 4 P.M. YESTERDAY (AVERAGE OF PAST 24 HOURS) SOURCE: CPCB			

Bike-borne men loot ₹25 lakh

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

Two bike-borne men allegedly looted ₹25 lakh from a 31-year-old man after intercepting his vehicle near Shastri Nagar metro station, the police said on Sunday.

The victim, Manish Verma, a resident of outer Delhi's Nangloi, works at a packaging unit in Rohini Sector-3, they said.

The incident took place on July 10, when Mr. Verma was returning to office after collecting ₹25 lakh from a man in Kucha Ghaisram, the police said.

When he reached near Shastri Nagar metro station, two bike-borne men intercepted his vehicle, engaged him in a conversation. Before he could realise that he was looted, they managed to flee with the money, which was kept in a polythene bag inside the trunk of his scooter.

Soon after they left, he checked the trunk of his vehicle and realised that the bag was missing, a police officer said.

As per the instruction of his boss, Mr. Verma had gone to collect money from a person in Kucha Ghaisram, the officer said.

Case registered

On the basis of his complaint, a case was registered and efforts are on to trace the culprits, the police said, adding that CCTV camera footage are being scanned to identify the routes taken by the accused.

Security guard killed during burglary attempt at factory

Body of victim spotted by workers; no valuables or any other item were stolen

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

A 62-year-old security guard at an iron factory in north-west Delhi's Wazirpur Industrial Area was killed after he was allegedly hit on the head with a rod during a burglary attempt, the police said on Sunday.

The victim, identified as Madhav Mishra, who hailed from Bihar, lived here with his son in a slum cluster in Shalimar Bagh, they said.

COVID-19 bed occupancy low in the Capital

Delhi clocks a recovery rate of nearly 75% against the national average of 62.93%, show Union Health Ministry data

BINDU SHAJAN PERAPPADAN
NEW DELHI

Touted as a game changer by the Central government in easing the acute hospital bed crisis in the Capital for COVID-19 patients, the recently-opened 10,200-bedded Sardar Patel COVID Care Centre (SPCCC) at the Radha Soami Satsang Beas in Chhattarpur currently has a bed occupancy of just 123 patients and 2,000 functional beds. Catering to 11 districts of Delhi, the facility mirrors the low-bed occupancy across the Capital, where over two-third of COVID beds are lying vacant.

As per the Health Ministry data, the health infrastructure dedicated to provide medical attention to the COVID affected across the country includes 1,370 Dedicated COVID Hospitals (DCH), 3,062 Dedicated COVID Health Centres (DCHC),



A view of the Sardar Patel COVID Care Centre in the Capital.
■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

and 10,334 COVID care centres (CCC).

The Capital alone offers 15,253 hospital beds, 9,217 beds in dedicated COVID care centres and 544 in COVID healthcare centres. Earlier this week, the Capital got an additional 1,000 beds with the opening of a temporary medical centre built

by the Defence Research and Development Organisation.

In mid-June there was a huge demand for COVID beds. An analysis by the Delhi government showed that during this period, patients were brought in and admitted in a critical condition and 15% of COVID deaths

took place within two days of arrival.

However, Delhi is doing better in July with over 75% recovery rate against the national recovery rate of 62.93%, according to the Union Health Ministry data.

Treatment approach

"Currently, the approach for treatment of COVID-19 is largely based on supportive care since there is no cure. Maintaining good hydration is essential. Based on the severity of symptoms, COVID-19 can be categorised into three groups: mild, moderate and severe," said a senior Health Ministry official.

As per the Health Ministry's clinical management protocol of COVID-19 for moderate and severe cases, adequate oxygen support, appropriate and timely administration of anti-coagu-

lants, and widely available and inexpensive corticosteroids in accordance with the protocol can be considered the mainstay of COVID-19 therapy. For mild cases, which comprise nearly 80% of the cases, hydroxychloroquine (HCQ) has been recommended. The standard of care treatment strategies have shown to yield positive results.

Decline and climb

"Delhi, however, has benefited from stringent testing measures, priority containment of cases and their contacts and the medical support that has been offered to patients at home isolation. We are in a better position

infrastructure-wise than we were in mid-June. But we are dealing with a virus that is unpredictable and trends in several countries have shown that there can be a

decline and then a climb in number," said a Delhi Health Department official.

COVID-19

D.K. Sharma, Medical Superintendent of the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) noted that despite the fact that the rush for beds is currently manageable, the infrastructure has to be in a state of preparedness.

"One-third COVID beds of AIIMS Trauma Centre and Jhajjar campus are currently occupied with approximately 400 patients in both," he said.

Lok Nayak Hospital Medical Director Suresh Kumar agreed that the stress on hospital beds for COVID has come down by 50%, as patients are opting for home isolation and care.

Authorities in Delhi have put on hold their plan to use stadiums as makeshift COVID care centres for now in view of the city witnessing a good recovery rate, officials said on Sunday.

Seeing the current situation, there is no need to convert stadiums into COVID-19 care facilities, an official in the east Delhi district administration said.

However, he said, the stadiums can be converted into COVID facilities in the coming days if the need arises.

Last month, a Delhi government panel constituted by Lt. Governor Anil Baijal had suggested to use Pragati Maidan, Talkatora Indoor Stadium, Indira Gandhi Indoor Stadium, JLN Stadium, Thyagaraj Indoor Stadium and Dhyanchand National Stadium for the purpose.

A government study on Saturday said that there has been a "sharp decline" in daily fatality figures in the city in the past two weeks.

'Sardar Patel COVID Care Centre part of joint effort by State, Centre'

Union Health Minister reviewed the facility on Sunday

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan visited and reviewed the Sardar Patel COVID Care Centre (SPCCC) here on Sunday and said that the SPCCC is part of the "coordinated efforts of the Centre and the Delhi government to bolster the containment measures".

"The healthcare facility follows naturopathy and protocols of Ayurveda for boosting immunity of the inpatients at the centre. They are given Ayurvedic kadha in the morning followed by meals as advised by dieticians and the day ends with milk with turmeric," noted a release issued by the Health Ministry.

The Ministry added that a unique feature of the Centre is that it has been backed by the community and donors, in kind, donation and support through beds, oxygen cylinders etc.

The healthcare facility also has in-house psychological counselling and psychiatry services provided by NIMHANS-trained counselors along with meditation



Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan interacting with a COVID-19 patient at the centre on Sunday. ■ ANI

capacity with two enclosures supervised by one nursing station. Currently, the SPCCC is ready with 20 enclosures and 10 nursing stations. Also, 10% of the beds comprise the Dedicated COVID Health Centre (DCHC) with oxygen support.

As on date, 123 patients are admitted, out of which 5 patients with comorbidities have been shifted to hospitals for tertiary care," said the Minister.

The Minister added that as we proceed into Unlock 2.0, it is critical to ensure that all of us rely on the "social vaccine - 'Do Gaj ki Doori'".

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Police suspect the victim and accused were in a relationship

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GURUGRAM

A young man allegedly shot dead a 20-year-old newlywed woman of his village before killing himself in a similar manner in the early hours of Sunday. The police suspect that the two were in a relationship.

The woman, belonging to Scheduled Caste, got married in Basai village on June 29 this year and had come to visit her parents in Nanu Kalan village. The accused used to work at a vacant plot behind some shops that belong to one Kisan Pal, on some pretext and allegedly

shot her. He then shot himself. The matter came to light when the woman's uncle spotted the bodies lying in the plot in the morning.

The family claimed that the villagers had heard the gunshots around midnight. They said the man and the woman did not know each other and the motive behind the murder was unclear.

A countrymade pistol used in the commission of crime was also found lying close to the bodies. The woman's uncle called the police control room to inform about the incident. The police sent the bodies for post-

mortem and the weapon was seized.

A case has been registered on charges of murder and under the Scheduled Castes and Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act and Arms Act at Pataudi police station.

Gurugram Police spokesperson Subhash Boken said an investigation was under way, but prima facie, it seemed that the duo was in a relationship.

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Police team
attacked in
BulandshahrPRESS TRUST OF INDIA
BULANDSHAHAR

A special operations group team of the Uttar Pradesh police was attacked by some persons when it had gone to arrest a man wanted in a murder case here, police said on Sunday.

The incident took place on Saturday evening when the team tried to apprehend one Shahid, a resident of Sarai Kaaji locality in the Kotwali Nagar area, wanted in a murder case, they said.

As soon as the accused, his brothers and some four-five men saw the police, they started fleeing. When policemen tried to stop them, they attacked them with bricks and stones, Superintendent of Police (City) Atul Kumar Srivastava said.

The policemen had to fire some rounds in the air in self defence, he said.

Markets, establishments in U.P.
to remain shut on weekends

Restrictions will be imposed from coming Saturday, says government official

OMAR RASHID
LUCKNOW

All markets and establishments in Uttar Pradesh will remain closed on weekends as part of the State's efforts to check the spread of COVID-19.

Markets and all industrial units will be cleaned and sanitised on Saturdays and Sundays, a government spokesperson said on Sunday.

Additional Chief Secretary (Home and Information) Avanish Awasthi said the restrictions will be imposed from the coming Saturday and remain in place at least for July. "Banks will remain open. Economic activities will not suffer. Social activities will remain limited," he said.

He added that all markets will open from 9 a.m. to 9



People thronging the Alambagh vegetable market in Lucknow on Saturday despite the lockdown. ■ PTI

p.m. from Monday to Friday.

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has instructed all officials to ensure that all COVID-19 hospitals have uninterrupted oxygen supply and that they also store a backup of 48 hours of oxygen.

He also asked officials to increase testing to 50,000

samples per day.

The State recorded 1,388 fresh cases over the past 24 hours and 21 deaths, taking the toll to 934, said the Health Department.

The State has 12,208 active cases. Of the new cases, 38 were recorded in Muzaffarnagar on Sunday, taking the total number of active

cases in the district to 144, officials said. The new cases include 11 inmates of the district jail, six employees of the U.P. Power Corporation Limited and seven police personnel, they said.

New cases

According to Muzaffarnagar DM Selvakumari J, the Health Department had received 839 results of samples, of which 38 were positive for COVID-19. She said eight patients have recovered from the infection. All the new patients are being shifted to a COVID hospital in Begarazpur, officials said.

The most number of deaths have been recorded in Agra (94), followed by Meerut (90) and Kanpur (86) districts.

(With PTI inputs)

M.P. MLA quits Cong., joins BJP

'Only through BJP, the Bundelkhand region can be developed'

SIDHARTH YADAV
BHOPLA

A Congress MLA from the Bundelkhand region of Madhya Pradesh resigned as a legislator on Sunday and joined the BJP, dealing another jolt to the Congress.

Kunwar Pradyumna Singh Lodhi, MLA from Malhara in Chhatarpur district, joined the BJP at its office here in the presence of Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan and State party president V.D. Sharma.



Kunwar Pradyumna Singh Lodhi joining the BJP in Bhopal on Sunday. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

pedited so that migration from the region stops."

Maharashtra tally surges past 2.5 lakh with 7,827 new cases

173 more deaths in State push toll to 10,289; Mumbai's case load touches 92,988

SHOUMOJIT BANERJEE
PUNE

With another massive surge of 7,827 COVID-19 cases on Sunday, Maharashtra's tally breached the 2.50 lakh mark and touched 2,54,427. The State also recorded 173 more fatalities, pushing its death toll to 10,289.

Since July 1, the State has reported single-day spikes of over 7,000 cases at least four times, with the highest single-day surge of 8,139 cases being reported on Saturday.

With 1,243 new cases, Mumbai's total case load has now reached 92,988. As many as 44 more deaths were reported in the city, taking its toll to 5,288. While there are 22,540 active cases in the city, the tally of active cases in the State is 1,03,516.

State Health Department officials said 3,340 patients were discharged on Sunday, pushing the cumulative tally of recoveries to 1,40,325.

Dip in case fatality rate

State Surveillance Officer Dr. Pradeep Awate said the State's recovery rate stands at 55.15%, while its case fatality rate has marginally reduced to 4.04% from last week's figure of 4.15%.

Pune district reported 1,711 new COVID-19 cases till Sunday evening, taking the district's total case tally to 39,125. Of the total cases, 21,601 are active, according to the State Health Department. Pune district administration authorities, however, said there were only 14,484 active cases. The district also reported 37 deaths, taking its toll to 1,097.

Along with Mumbai and Pune, big surges continued to be recorded across the



Health workers arrive to conduct a screening of residents in a COVID-19 containment zone at Malad in Mumbai on Sunday. ■ PTI

Goa sees 85 fresh cases

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
PANAJI

Goa reported 85 new COVID-19 cases and two more deaths on Sunday, taking the infection count to 2,453 and the toll to 14, an official said.

An 80-year-old woman and 49-year-old man died in ESI Hospital in Margao,

Mumbai Metropolitan Region. Thane reported 775 new cases to take the district's total tally soaring past the 23,000 mark.

28 deaths in Thane

Thane also recorded 28 deaths, pushing its death toll to 718. Kalyan-Dombivli outdid Thane to report another massive spike of 779 cases,

deaths in Vasai-Virar pushed its cumulative toll to 166.

Nashik in north Maharashtra reported eight more fatalities, taking the district's death toll to 290. Jalgaon recorded 209 fresh cases, pushing its tally to 5,810, of which 2,129 are active ones.

The rise in cases continued in Aurangabad, with the district reporting 222 new cases, taking its case tally to 8,217, of which 3,837 are active. With six more deaths being recorded on Sunday, the district's death toll has now reached 338.

Dr. Awate said, "Till date, of a total of 13,17,895 laboratory samples, 2,54,427 (19.3%) have tested positive. Nearly 32,000 samples across the State were tested on Sunday." He said 6,86,150 people across the State are in home quarantine, while 47,801 are in institutional quarantine facilities.

he said. Fifty-nine people were also discharged, leaving the State with 952 active cases, he said.

A total of 5,008 samples were tested during the day, of which 85 were positive, 2,328 negative and 2,595 reports are awaited, the official added.

Deaths in Vasai-Virar pushed its cumulative toll to 166.

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Mr. Koshyari has denied reports that he is in self-isolation.

"I am perfectly alright, and not in self-isolation. I underwent relevant tests, the result were negative. There are no symptoms of COVID-19 either," Mr. Koshyari said in a statement.

The Governor said he was discharging all his official duties, strictly adhering to safety protocols such as

Bhima-Koregaon: NIA gets another 90 days to file chargesheet

Central agency also granted Gautam Navlakha's custody for 10 days

SONAM SAIGAL
MUMBAI

The City Civil and Sessions court on Sunday allowed the National Investigation Agency (NIA) an extension of 90 days to file its chargesheet against Anand Teltumbde and Gautam Navlakha, accused in the Bhima-Koregaon case.

The Central agency was also granted Mr. Navlakha's custody for 10 days till July 22. Special Judge D.E. Kothalikar directed the Superintendent of the Taloja jail to hand over Mr. Navlakha's

custody to the NIA. He had surrendered before the New Delhi office of the NIA on April 14. The agency was granted custody till April 21, which was extended by seven days. The NIA had then claimed that he was not cooperating with it and giving evasive replies. It therefore sought his judicial custody, which was granted. Mr. Navlakha is at the Taloja jail's quarantine centre located at Namdar Gopal Krishna Gokhale Vidya Nagar, Kharghar.

The agency's application seeking his custody was on the grounds that it had to confront him with data recovered from seized electronic articles and question him about the whereabouts of the other accused absconding in the case.

The Central agency was also granted Mr. Navlakha's custody for 10 days till July 22. Special Judge D.E. Kothalikar directed the Superintendent of the Taloja jail to hand over Mr. Navlakha's

physical distancing and wearing a mask. "Reports appearing in a section of the press regarding my health are baseless. I am Hale and hearty," he said.

The Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) said all staff members at Raj Bhavan were asked to undergo COVID-19 tests after two personnel tested positive a few days ago. "In all, 100 employees were tested and the reports of 14 of them have returned positive. This takes the total number of positive cases at Raj Bhavan to 16," the BMC said. "It has been decided to quarantine the patients in their residences on the premises of the Raj Bhavan. However, if the Raj Bhavan administration demands a separate quarantine facility, then it will be provided to them," BMC said.

WEATHER WATCH

RAINFALL, TEMPERATURE & AIR QUALITY IN SELECT METROS YESTERDAY



TEMPERATURE DATA: IMD, POLLUTION DATA: CPCB, MAP: INSTAT/MD (TAKEN AT 16.30 HRS)

Forecast for Monday: Heavy to very heavy rainfall likely at isolated places over West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Bihar, Goa, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Odisha, central Maharashtra, coastal Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Kerala

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	34...	33.0...	25.6	Kozhikode	11.4...	32.8...	24.4
Ahmedabad	2.5...	36.0...	26.2	Kurnool	—	33.1...	25.7
Aizawl	—	22.1...	18.0	Lucknow	—	36.3...	27.7
Allahabad	27.4...	36.0...	27.4	Madurai	4.3...	37.0...	24.0
Bengaluru	0.2...	29.0...	21.0	Mangaluru	36.3...	28.0...	22.8
Bhopal	—	32.1...	24.8	Mumbai	39.2...	28.6...	25.6
Bhubaneswar	27...	33.0...	24.6	Mysuru	—	29.0...	21.1
Chandigarh	52.6...	35.0...	22.4	New Delhi	2.4...	35.7...	23.4
Chennai	—	35.0...	25.8	Patna	0.2...	33.6...	27.4
Coimbatore	—	32.7...	22.6	Poona Blair	0.3...	30.0...	25.5
Dehradun	—	32.9...	21.0	Puducherry	—	37.2...	25.2
Gangtok	52.6...	22.4...	18.4	Pune	—	31.0...	23.0
Goa	76.9...	28.0...	24.1	Raipur	16.6...	34.0...	26.5
Guwahati	6.9...	29.4...	24.8	Ranchi	3.9...	31.6...	23.5
Hubballi	—	27.0...	22.0	Shillong	49.8...	22.1...	18.2
Hyderabad	—	32.0...	23.9	Shimla	16.6...	27.3...	15.6
Imphal	4.7...	29.2...	22.0	Srinagar	1.2...	30.4...	16.1
Jaipur	3.6...	36.9...	28.8	Thiruvananthapuram	31.8...	24.1	
Kochi	10...	30.0...	24.6	Tiruchi	75.4...	37.5...	23.6
Kohima	1.2...	25.0...	18.3	Vijayawada	34.0...	35.4...	26.9
Kolkata	2.7...	34.0...	26.3	Visakhapatnam	6.3...	32.7...	28.6

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)

Pollutants in the air you are breathing

CITIES	SO ₂	NO ₂	CO	PM2.5	PM10	CODE
Ahmedabad	24	35	.286062	...
Bengaluru	9	13	.5331	—	...
Chennai	.2	.29	.955555	...
Delhi	2	—	121	50	73	...
Hyderabad	13	20	.73855	...
Kolkata	.8	9	.172642	...
Lucknow	.2	9	.5563	—	...
Mumbai	59	18	.72127	...
Pune	29	11	.562830	...
Visakhapatnam	.9	.54	.5154105	...

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

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

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

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

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

Yesterday

In observation made at 4.00 p.m., Nandesari, Gudalpura recorded an overall quality index (AQI) score of 259 indicating an unhealthy level of pollution. In contrast, Kannur, Kerala, recorded a healthy AQI score of 17

+ Country needs another Manmohan Singh for revival of economy: Pawar

NCP chief attacks Modi for creating picture of camaraderie with Xi Jinping, says China is a bigger threat than Pakistan

ALOK DESHPANDE
MUMBAI

Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) chief Sharad Pawar on Sunday said the country again needs an economist like Dr. Manmohan Singh to revive the economy.

"When Dr. Singh was the Union Finance Minister, he gave new directions to the Indian economy. I was also part of that Cabinet. I credit Dr. Singh and late P.V. Narasimha Rao for the turnaround of the economy from the crisis," Mr. Pawar said, adding Prime Minister Narendra Modi should also take the help of experts as the country needs another Dr. Singh.

He was talking to Shiv Sena mouthpiece *Saamana*, in the second part of a three-part interview. Sena MP Sanjay Raut interviewed the NCP president, who is only the third leader after Sena founder late Bal Thackeray and Sena president and Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray, to be featured in the Marathi daily.

When asked about Mr. Modi calling him a political guru, Mr. Pawar said there is no such thing as guru in politics. "There is no dialogue between the Modi govern-

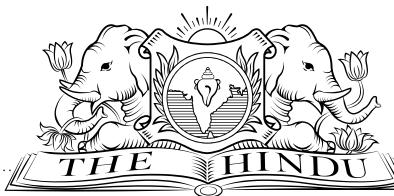


Sharad Pawar

ment and leaders of other parties. When Dr. Singh, Pranab Mukherjee, and P. Chidambaram were the finance ministers, they would constantly be in touch with experts and political leaders cutting across party lines to get their views on various issues facing the country. This is not happening now."

Commenting on the ongoing tensions with China, Mr. Pawar, a former Union Defence Minister, said China is a bigger threat to India than Pakistan. "When we think of an enemy, the first name that comes to our mind is Pakistan. But we need not worry about Pakistan. In the long term, it is China that has the power, vision, and programmes to act against Indian interests. China is a bigger threat to India," he said.

Nehru signed the Panchsheel treaty with China and there was peace in the region, the NCP chief said. "Unfortunately, the Chinese leadership took a different stand and there was a conflict," he said.



Sure power

India's solar strategy should look at tapping the best globally, to make locally

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's stated resolve to tap the energy of the sun to substantially power the economy and everyday life is to be welcomed, because it could help chart a green deal for the future. He restated the case for greater reliance on solar power, for energy and as a path for self-reliant industrialisation, at the inauguration of a 750 MW photovoltaic project at Rewa, in Madhya Pradesh last week. But as he would recognise, the idea of building a domestic solar manufacturing industry that delivers increasing volumes of quality photovoltaic cells, modules and associated equipment is long in the tooth. India's installed base of this green power source is about 35 gigawatts (GW), and its projected addition of capacity until 2024 in a COVID-19 affected future is estimated by the industry to be of the order of 50 GW. Viewed against the goals set five years ago for the Paris Agreement on climate, of installing 100 GW of solar power by 2022, there could be a sharp deficit. Combined with low domestic cell manufacturing capacity at 3.1 GW last year, and heavy reliance on China, high ambition must now be supported by aggressive official policy. The Chinese story is one of a steady rise from insignificant manufacturing capability in the 1990s, to virtual dominance through active government support in identifying and acquiring top technologies globally, importing critical raw materials such as polysilicon, acquiring solar manufacturers abroad, and investing in third countries with ready capability. Importantly, the domestic market was treated with great importance while promoting exports.

The pandemic presents a critical opportunity for India to plan a green deal, on the lines of what the EU has committed itself to: that future growth and employment should align itself to environmental and sustainability objectives, particularly in energy production, away from dirty fuels such as coal. There is no better time than now to make solar energy a strategic sector, giving it as much importance as defence. As the architect of the International Solar Alliance, which attracted about 120 nations at its launch, India needs to show leadership to advance the manufacture and absorption of solar photovoltaic infrastructure in low- and middle-income countries. The key requirements are integrated policies fully supported by States. Industry must get help to set up facilities and avail low cost financing – both important elements in China's rise – and be able to invest in intellectual property. A forward-looking programme should also look at emerging trends in deploying solar innovatively. These include newer technologies such as aesthetic photovoltaic window and roof tiles for buildings, multi-role urban structures, and greater use of residential and commercial buildings to deploy more panels. Rapid progress requires a strategic shift to aid competitive domestic manufacturing.

Museum to mosque

Turkey is reopening old religious wounds by changing the status of Hagia Sophia

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's decision to turn Hagia Sophia back into a working mosque is a major setback to the country's secular values that are already under attack from Islamists. The sixth century Byzantine monument had been at the centre of the conflict between Ottoman Muslims and eastern Orthodox Christians for centuries. Built as a cathedral by Byzantine Emperor Justinian I, it was converted into mosque by the Ottomans after Mehmed the Conqueror captured the city in 1453. For five centuries, it was a jewel in the Ottoman Sultan's crown. Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, the founding father of modern Turkey, closed down the mosque in 1930 as part of his secularisation drive and reopened it as a museum five years later. Ever since, it has been one of Turkey's most visited monuments as well as a symbol of Christian-Muslim co-existence. In recent years, the demand for converting the museum into a mosque gained traction with support from Mr. Erdogan and his party. On Friday, as soon as the country's highest administrative court cancelled Hagia Sophia's museum status, he signed a decree transferring its management to the Directorate of Religious Affairs. Reopening Hagia Sophia as a mosque is now only a matter of time and formality.

Mr. Erdogan, whose Justice and Development Party (AK Party) came to power in 2002 on promises of reforming the Kemalist state into a more inclusive and democratic one, has, instead, been systematically unmaking the secular republic. He has tightened his grip on power by moving religion to the centre of his governance. He has rewritten the Constitution, turning Turkey into an all-powerful executive presidency, and launched a war against journalists and critics at home. His foreign policy bets on Syria and Libya had backfired with jihadists making gains in both countries. After the failed coup of 2016, he started a purge to get rid of rivals from the government. Now, with the decision on Hagia Sophia, his brand of Islamism is taking a giant leap forward. The symbolism is hardly lost on anyone. For Turkish Islamists, Hagia Sophia has always been associated with the "glory" of the Ottoman imperial era. He is appealing to those sentiments, while symbolically marking an end to Kemalist secularism. The move comes at a time when the President is facing challenging times. The economy is in free fall. The COVID-19 pandemic is spreading. His popularity is sliding, especially after the AK Party lost local elections in Istanbul and Ankara last year. Whether the Hagia Sophia decision would help him politically or not, it could further fracture Turkish society and worsen international relations. Mr. Erdogan is opening the wounds of the past, which could have lasting consequences. Surely, 2020 is not 1453.

The sum and substance of the EU's China dilemma

Though the Asian giant is critical to European economic health, the political narrative is a sign of a shift in the wind



VIJAY GOKHALE

Europe and China have been major partners for a generation. According to the Global Office of the International Comparison Program at the World Bank, China and the European Union (EU) jointly account for nearly 35% of global GDP in PPP terms. Europe championed China's case for World Trade Organization (WTO) membership and China supported the 'European Project'. A single example is sufficient to demonstrate how critical China is for European prosperity. Between 1995 and 2012, Germany, Europe's economic powerhouse, enhanced its industrial value by 37%, the largest chunk of which came from supply chains not in the United States but in China.

Behind the presumption

Therefore, when on June 9, Josep Borrell Fontelles, the European Union's High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, publicly proclaimed that "China is without doubt one of the key global players. We have to engage with China to achieve our global objectives, based on interests and values", a logical assumption might be that there is unlikely to be any change in the Europe-China relationship after the novel coronavirus pandemic. Such a superficial impression is reinforced by European statements that they will not choose sides between the United States and China. Yet any such presumption bears closer examination.

In March 2019, the EU Commission published "A Strategic Outlook", describing China as, simultaneously, a cooperative partner,

an economic competitor and a systemic rival promoting alternative models of governance. This was the product of a long process of distillation during which the political and security dimensions began to jostle with the economics that had been the primary determinant of China-EU ties for two decades.

Red flags go up

There was a growing appreciation that the balance of challenges and opportunities presented by China were shifting as its economic power and concomitant political influence grew with unprecedented scale and speed, and in ways that concerned European security. China's efforts to cultivate separate European sub-constituencies like the 16+1 Format with the Central and Eastern European States, and meetings with the Nordics and the Southern Europeans; the sailing of the PLA Navy into the Baltic Sea for joint exercises with Russia in 2017; cross-sectoral hybrid threats including information operations in European countries; Chinese behaviour in the South China Sea and Indian Ocean; and its targeted acquisition of key high-technology companies such as Kuka in Germany or key ports like Piraeus in Greece, began to raise red flags in the Chancelleries of Europe. China's economic and financial practices backed by strategic motives threatened unity and the European project itself, since it appeared to undo their efforts in terms of connectivity, regulatory frameworks and the building of a single European entity.

Thus, even before the pandemic, the "Strategic Outlook" recommended that the EU should shift towards "a more realistic, assertive and multifaceted approach" to China.

China's actions in the first half of 2020 have sharpened such contradictions. Its early handling of COVID-19, and even more im-



GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCKPHOTO

portantly, the clumsy Chinese efforts to use the confusion inside Europe to their propaganda advantage, led the EU to make a rare and blunt accusation against China on June 10, 2020: "Foreign actors and certain third countries, in particular Russia and China, have engaged in targeted influence operations and disinformation campaigns around COVID-19 in the EU, its neighbourhood and globally, seeking to undermine democratic debate and exacerbate social polarisation, and improve their own image in the COVID-19 context." China's aggressive actions in the South China Sea, on the Line of Actual Control with India, and in Hong Kong, among others, have also gained European eyeballs, so much so that even though China remains critical to European economic health, the EU Commission President, Ursula von der Leyen, after the virtual Summit with Chinese Premier Li Keqiang on June 22, 2020, said that Europe's relations with China are "simultaneously one of the most strategically important and one of the most challenging that we have". This then is the European dilemma.

Determinants and focus now
The European debate is no longer simply about market access, industrial subsidies, over-capacity in steel and hi-tech industries; stealing of IPR, and China's assertive approach to the security, resilience and stability of digital net-

works. It has begun to turn towards how to balance economic co-dependency and co-prosperity with China's strategic global intentions and efforts to seek military supremacy and its bearing on European security. In the trinity of determinants identified by the EU in March 2019 – namely [negotiating] Partner, [economic] Competitor and Systemic Rival – the last dimension is gradually becoming the dominant political narrative.

China also views Brussels as increasingly antagonistic. Yuan Peng, President of China Institutes of Contemporary International Relations, which belongs to China's intelligence services, has opined in a stellar article on June 17, titled "The Coronavirus Pandemic and a Once-in-a-Century Change", that "Europe's star is fading". Ironically, the retreat of the U.S. from global leadership is providing the Chinese with the means to take advantage, even when they no longer deem it in their strategic interests to support the "European Project". During recent EU-China leader level meetings, the Chinese have downplayed the differences. Yuan Peng puts it thus: "The United States, Europe and Japan have common interests in curbing China, but China, Europe and Japan also have much to gain in tapping the potential of their relations." The Chinese intention is to delay the former by dangling the economic carrot.

Sentiments after pandemic

None of this should lead to the inference that the EU will follow the U.S. in 'de-coupling' or join an 'against-China' camp. The European Union Chamber of Commerce in China, which recently released its Business Confidence Survey 2020, says that most European businesses are chiefly "in China, for China". European companies still hope that China's President Xi Jinping will use this pandemic to make fundamental

reforms in the way that Deng Xiaoping and Zhu Rongji did in 1992 and 1998, respectively. European companies still regard China as the biggest potential market. Yet, the pandemic has also triggered calls for diversifying European businesses away from an overreliance on any single market. The deteriorating relationship between China and the U.S. is causing many new investors to look for alternative investment spaces. If either the Chinese fail to restore their end of the global supply chains or if the world demand cannot be revived, more companies will tend to look elsewhere.

A role for India

This, then, is an opportune time for India-EU relations, but only if we do not waste the crisis. Political conditions are favourable especially after the withdrawal of the United Kingdom. The Europeans recognise India's role in helping provide peace and prosperity in the Indo-Pacific. They see great potential in working together on technologies and issues of the future. But we are not the only economic alternative for Europe in the aftermath of COVID-19. If the Broad-based Trade and Investment Agreement can be put back on track or, at the very least, if we conclude a new investment agreement, and if we are ready to join in high-technology collaboration including 5G and artificial intelligence, we may be able to align our stars. This will require imagination from our side, but Europe will also need to change its positions on trade in goods and be ready to accommodate India on services. The opportunity for India and the EU to build a partnership that is both economic and strategic is there for the taking in a post-COVID-19 strategic scenario.

Vijay Gokhale is a former Foreign Secretary of India and a former Ambassador to Germany and to China

Hardly smart about urban health care

Despite the renewed policy focus on cities, the pandemic has exposed the weaknesses in handling a public emergency



MATHEW IDICULLA

The novel coronavirus pandemic has largely been an urban crisis so far, with megalopolises such as Delhi, Mumbai, Bengaluru and Chennai accounting for most of the COVID-19 positive cases. Indian cities are not only facing a public health crisis but also a larger emergency of economic issues and livelihoods. A high percentage of urban residents have lost employment during the lockdown and continue to face an uncertain future. So, are Indian cities equipped to deal with the pandemic and its aftermath?

Still an urban dream

Over the last decade-and-a-half, cities have started receiving more policy attention from the government, with dedicated national-level programmes on urban development. The 'Smart Cities Mission', a flagship programme of the Narendra Modi-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) government, completed five years, in June 2020. The Mission had sought to make 100 selected cities "smart", primarily through an "Area-Based Development" model under which a small portion of the

city would be upgraded by retrofitting or redevelopment.

Five years after its launch, the enthusiasm regarding Smart Cities seems to have waned. While "smart cities" and "bullet trains" were buzzwords in the initial years of the first term of the NDA government, over the last few years there has hardly been any mention about them by the top political leadership. Many of the projects undertaken under the 'Smart Cities Mission' are behind schedule. According to the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, of the 5,151 smart city projects across the 100 cities, while around 4,700 projects have been tendered, only 1,638 projects have been completed. In terms of expenditure, of the total investment of ₹2,05,018 crore, only projects worth ₹26,700 crore have been completed. Hence, the idea of completely transforming India's derelict cities into "smart cities" within five years now seems a pipe dream.

A blind spot

Most of these Smart Cities are now reeling under the devastation caused by COVID-19. Some cities have been using the Integrated Command and Control Centres created under the 'Smart Cities Mission' as "war rooms" for monitoring real time data regarding the spread of the virus. However, tackling the larger public health and economic fallout remains a more difficult challenge.



In fact, the 'Smart Cities Mission' has given short shrift to basic services such as public health. An analysis of the smart city projects under the Mission shows that only 69 of over 5,000 projects undertaken under the Mission were for health infrastructure. These projects are for an estimated cost of ₹2,112 crore, amounting to just around one per cent of the total mission cost. Hence, public health seems to be a major blind spot in India's smart city dreams.

While one could argue that health infrastructure is not a core element of a "smart" city, the 'Smart Cities Mission' was never focused merely on technology; it had the stated aim of improving the quality of life of urban residents. Further, public health is an essential local government function in India's constitutional scheme. As per the 12th Schedule of the Constitution, introduced by the 74th Amendment, "public health" is one of the 18 functions that are to be devolved to the municipalities. However, public health infrastructure of cities has often

been neglected over the years and new programmes such as the 'Smart Cities Mission' have further driven local governments away from their core responsibilities.

Strengthening local capacities

The COVID-19 crisis has exposed the weaknesses in the institutional and human capacity of Indian cities to handle a public health emergency. Despite the renewed policy focus on cities, India's urban local bodies continue to be financially and administratively weak and heavily understaffed. There is also high level of vacancy of Accredited Social Health Activist (ASHA) workers, the frontline public health workers carrying out contact tracing, in urban areas, especially in COVID-19 hotspot cities such as Mumbai.

The relative success of Kerala in containing the pandemic has shown how a decentralised political and administrative system with strong local governments and high investment in local public health care can be effective. In the absence of such participative local government institutions, authorities in some cities have roped in resident welfare associations to monitor COVID-19 cases. In this process, resident welfare associations have become emboldened and are often imposing draconian rules as they exercise a form of private authoritarianism in their neighbourhoods.

To tackle the COVID-19 crisis, it

is important to strengthen local government capacities, invest heavily in urban public health systems, and promote programmes that improve the livelihoods of urban vulnerable communities. The 'Smart Cities Mission', with its skewed priorities and parallel governance structures of Special Purpose Vehicles, offers little hope in this regard. Instead, programmes such as the National Urban Livelihoods Mission and National Urban Health Mission, which have lately received limited focus and resources, need to be strengthened.

Think jobs too

Further, it is time to consider the introduction of a national urban employment guarantee programme that assures jobs for urban residents and strengthens the capacities of urban local bodies. Kerala has been running such a scheme since 2010 and States such as Odisha, Himachal Pradesh and Jharkhand have also recently launched similar initiatives in the wake of the COVID-19 crisis. As Indian cities face an unprecedented challenge, it is important to get the priorities of urban development right and invest in programmes that improve the health and livelihoods of its residents.

Mathew Idiculla is a lawyer and researcher on urban issues, and a consultant with the Centre for Law & Policy Research, Bengaluru

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Letters emailed to letters@thehindu.co.in must carry the full postal address and the full name or the name with initials.

Mission Rajasthan

The allegation by Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot that the BJP is trying to topple his government in the midst of the pandemic cannot be brushed aside (Page 1, July 12). The ruling party, ever since it assumed power at the Centre, has been accused of indulging in political games using money and muscle power. How can one forget the events in Karnataka, Manipur and Goa? The ruling party could be forgetting that the people are watching. Democracy is not about winning elections alone.

J. ANANTHA PADMANABHAN,
Tiruchi, Tamil Nadu

■ It appears that the BJP is on a toppling spree of

Opposition-ruled State governments. The Narendra Modi government came to office in 2014 and retained power in 2019 with the promise of clean administration but its actions in the past year seem to be with the main aim of snatching power by subverting democracy.

N.A. JOSEPH,
Ettumanoor, Kottayam, Kerala

■ What is Mr. Gehlot striving to accomplish by going public? Is he naive and expecting that the BJP will refrain from pulling the rug under his feet after his public indictment? The anti-defection law has failed to deter India's law-makers as inducements outweigh the cost of losing the seat. The Indian National Congress has

indulged in horse trading during its heyday and is now getting a taste of its own medicine. All parties are cut from the same cloth and it is like the pot calling the kettle black. Even if a piece of legislation is enacted to disqualify such turncoats for life it may not have any bearing on them as their sole purpose of entering politics, to make money, would have been accomplished.

Contemporary politics is a great money-spinner and morals and ethics have taken a backseat. Voters are left with no meaningful choice which is also why MPs and MLAs have the gumption to put up a brave face and confront the electorate brazenly and repeatedly.

DEEPAK SINGHAL,
Chennai

Crime, law, politics

The gangster, Vikas Dubey, undoubtedly deserved severe punishment – either the death penalty or life sentence. Whatever be the case, it should have been done after observance of all the legal and judicial processes. The brutality of the police, in this case the Uttar Pradesh police, in the name of an encounter was unwarranted. The police taking the law into its own hands and delivering instantaneous death penalty disregarding processes and procedures prescribed in the Indian Penal Code are barbaric and unconstitutional. The "encounter" which is being used in a routine or an easy way by the police to eliminate criminals on the

whims and fancies of the powers-that-be will have to be curbed. The judiciary must intervene.

MANOHAR MUTHUSWAMY,
Ramanathapuram, Tamil Nadu

■ A small-time *dadha* grows into a Frankenstein monster. He attains political clout, gains wealth and becomes a threat. He commits heinous crimes but exploits

CORRECTIONS & CLARIFICATIONS:
The photograph published along with the report titled "1st phase of disengagement completed" (July 11, 2020) was erroneously identified as a C-17 aircraft. It was actually an IL-76 aircraft.

In a report titled "4 more COVID-19 deaths in Punjab, 3 in Haryana" (July 11, 2020) the cumulative tally in Haryana was erroneously given as 19,993. It should have been 19,934.

It is the policy of The Hindu to correct significant errors as soon as possible. Please specify the edition (place of publication), date and page. The Readers' Editor's office can be contacted by phone: +91-44-28418297/28576300 (11 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday to Friday); Fax: +91-44-2855263; E-mail: readerseditor@thehindu.co.in; Mail: Readers' Editor, The Hindu, Kasturi Buildings,

Nurturing citizens in social studies

The proposed move of rationalising the syllabus strikes at the target of training good citizens



HAMID ANSARI

The list of jettisoned subjects is comprehensive; the apprehension that it is purposeful is unavoidable; the conclusion that a 'happening' has been converted into a 'penalty goal' is inescapable. These thoughts cross the mind while reading about the decision of the Ministry of Human Resource Development to exclude certain subjects from the list of topics in the social science curriculum for Classes 9 to 12 with the objective of reducing by 30% the 'load' while retaining "core concepts". The stated rationale of the move is the disruption caused by COVID-19 to the academic year. The exercise covers other subjects too, but the focus of this analysis is on the social sciences only for reasons that will become evident in this essay.

The argument for disruption and the resultant load is self-evident and valid. The phenomenon is universal and applies to all stages of education and to all lands across the globe. Not all have reacted the same way and pedagogues would argue that there could be more than one method of lightening the academic load that in any case predates the pandemic. Democratic societies the world over have developed methodologies of nurturing young citizens in essential values and procedures and none have so far abandoned them on account of the pandemic.

Salient features of curriculum
The Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) on its website indicates nine salient features of the senior secondary school curriculum for Classes 11 and 12 for the years 2020-2021. It mentions that the curriculum strives to "provide ample scope for physical, intellectual and social development of students". The curriculum also strives to "uphold Constitutional values such as Socialism, Secularism, Democracy, Republican character, Justice, Liberty, Equality, Fraternity, Human Dignity of Individual and Unity and integrity of the Nation by encouraging value-based learning activi-



"Would the young person exercising franchise for the first time be an informed voter?" First-time voters in Bhopal on January 25, 2020. ■ A.M. FARUQUI

ties." With some abridgements, therefore, the features reiterate the values mentioned in the Preamble of the Constitution of India. Item 4 of the salient features says the curriculum strives to "nurture Life-Skills by prescribing curricular and co-curricular activities to help improve self-esteem, empathy towards different cultures etc." There is, however, no mention of Fundamental Duties (Article 51A of the Constitution); of the duty "to value and preserve the rich heritage of our composite culture" and of the duty "to develop the scientific temper, humanism and the spirit of enquiry and reform". The wording here is curious. Are "different cultures" synonymous with our "composite culture"? Is it an admission that ours is a land of "different cultures"?

It would be argued in defence of abridgements that the CBSE curriculum for Classes 9 and 10 has identical wording for items 3 and 4 and that the themes are therefore covered at an earlier stage of school education. This is to presume that levels of student comprehension between Classes 9 and 11 or 10 and 12 remain static and do not need upgradation either in teaching or in understanding.

Being 'politically conscious'
Our system of democratic governance is based on the Constitution that prescribes universal adult suffrage with the voting age now being

18, after the 61st Amendment of 1988. It was then argued formally in Parliament that "the present-day youth are literate and enlightened and the lowering of the voting age would provide to the unrepresented youth of the country an opportunity to give vent to their feelings and help them become a part of the political process. The present-day youth are very much politically conscious. It is, therefore, proposed to reduce the voting age from 21 years to 18 years."

In other words, and since the general average school-leaving age after Class 12 is 16-17 years, this objective of being "politically conscious" is to be attained suddenly at the age of 17 and without the benefit of formal instruction on fundamental principles of our polity. And if this formal instruction on the principles of the Constitution is not available to the young person at that age, she or he has no option but to resort to informal knowledge acquired through hearsay and media or social media with all the tilt or prejudice of demagoguery and propaganda that go with it. Would the young person exercising franchise for the first time then be an informed voter?

In this context, it is useful to examine the relevant portions of the Draft National Education Policy 2019 with a Message from the Minister of Human Resource Development. It has on page 96 a section on 'Development of Constitutional Values'. It

states that "the process and the content of education at all levels will also aim to develop Constitutional values in all students, and the capacities for their practice... Some of these Constitutional values are: democratic outlook and commitment to liberty and freedom; equality, justice, and fairness; embracing diversity, plurality, and inclusion; humanness and fraternal spirit; social responsibility and the spirit of service; ethics of integrity and honesty; scientific temper and commitment to rational and public dialogue; peace; social action through Constitutional means; unity and integrity of the nation, and a true rootedness and pride in India with a forward-looking spirit to continuously improve as a nation." The same document, on page 231, reiterates the objective of developing "an understanding of our Constitutional values, and the disposition and capacities for their practice, amongst all their students." The other objectives mentioned in this section are diversity, plurality, humanness, fraternal spirit, scientific temper and commitment to rational dialogue.

Focus on the next generation
Will these virtues and constitutional values and capacities for their practice be developed without formal instruction? Would this necessarily be the best training for citizenship? Could the objective be to lessen the instruction in constitutional values and their impact on perceptions and practices of the next generation?

The BJP's Sankalp Patra for the 2019 general election mentions in several places the objective of good governance and of putting in place for it "a framework of governance which will yield rich dividends over the next generation". This focus on the next generation requires good citizens who in turn need to be educated in good governance. This is precisely what the objective of the jettisoned items of the curriculum was intended to be. The proposed move of load-shedding goes counter to this and strikes at the target of training good citizens and teaching them civility. Would a sceptic be justified in suspecting that the objective may be to have a less literate young voter?

Hamid Ansari is the former Vice-President of India, 2007-2017

FROM THE READERS' EDITOR

Re-imagining journalism-2

The nature of the press is directly linked to the kind of society we want



A.S. PANNEERSELVAN

In this 400th column, I continue our collective efforts to re-imagine journalism. This also marks the 40th anniversary of the Organization of News Ombudsmen and Standards Editors (ONO). The organisation, which was born in the U.S. in 1980, deliberately chose the acronym ONO to mark the difficult relationship between an ombudsman and the newsroom. According to the official history of ONO, "It was said at the time that 'Oh No!' was the most common thing an ombudsman would hear from nervous or annoyed reporters whenever the ombudsman was seen on the newsroom floor, as their appearance often heralded a difficult discussion about poor decisions or outright mistakes. So the chance to call the organization itself 'Oh No!' was simply too good to pass up."

Reflections on journalism

There have been many reflections on journalism over the last three centuries. From Benjamin Franklin's declaration on journalistic ethics (found in his autobiography published in 1791) and Mahatma Gandhi's reflections on running *Indian Opinion* (1904-1915) to the findings of various commissions, there is a rich oeuvre of literature about what makes journalism a public good. India had two press commissions – the First Press Commission (1952-54) and the Second Press Commission (1978-1982) – to define the contours of the Indian press.

The first commission to come up with a comprehensive report was called the Hutchins Commission (the Commission on Freedom of the Press). In 1943, Henry R. Luce, the publisher of Time Inc., and Robert Maynard Hutchins, president of the University of Chicago, came up with the idea of forming a panel to reflect on the state of the U.S. press. The commission had a generous grant of \$2,00,000 from Luce, and 13 American and four international advisers. It examined the role of journalism during the financial crisis following the Great Depression and World War II. As Chair of the commission, Hutchins told his fellow members that their purpose was to answer three questions: "What society do we want? What do we have? How can the press... be used to get what we want?" These questions remain valid. The commis-

sion's key recommendations were that newspapers should redefine themselves as "common carriers of public discussion" by providing "a truthful, comprehensive account of the day's events in a context which gives them meaning, a forum for the exchange of comment and criticism, a means of projecting the opinions and attitudes of the groups in the society to one another, and a way of reaching every member of the society by the currents of information, thought, and feeling which the press supplies."

It is heartening to receive a number of responses from readers, though a couple of them were merely clever jibes at the vocation itself. Academics define the news media as knowledge machines which make a distinct product: accounts. The role of these machines includes having editorial judgment in selecting and rejecting materials. As Professor Pablo J. Boczkowski said: "From a multitude of potentially newsworthy events happening in the world, these machines produce reports of the facts that count and explanations of why they count."

Space for debate

When Internet 2.0 happened, there was a wide belief that this would enable readers to voice their opinions in the comments section leading to better dialogue and debate. Unfortunately, the comments section, instead of becoming a site for democratic mediation of ideas, soon descended to a gladiatorial arena drawing more blood than ideas. Many publications opted to shut down the comments section fully. Some like *The Hindu* have opted for a moderated comments section, which means deploying more human resources in these hard times. The unbridled space, and the choice to be anonymous, offered by platform companies like Facebook and Twitter amplifies hate, bigotry and misogyny. Debate has given way for shrill acrimonious exchanges that often end up as personal abuse. Digital disruption often blurs some of the crucial distinctions – for instance, how a local newspaper covers an international development as opposed to a global player such as Reuters or The Associated Press. For instance, a report in *The Hindu*, "The spectre of U.S. sanctions" (July 12), dealt with the adversarial impact on India of the U.S. Congress's move to implement the Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act. A community requires not just hyper-local news but also needs to know about decisions taken by foreign leaders that have a profound impact on its livelihood.

readerseditor@thehindu.co.in

The travesty of film journalism

Gossip, sensationalism and hype dominate the film news space

KUNAL RAY

The recent death of actor Sushant Singh Rajput has raised several questions. Many have expressed their concerns about blind items that regularly feature in film-related news space slandering actors. Some have also said that these news items are manipulated and controlled by rivals of the target. No evidence is given in such news items; they are all based on hearsay. Often the news item doesn't even mention the writer of the piece. That we still call it news is nothing short of farcical.

A serious concern

Film editor and writer Apurva Asrani wrote a long blog explaining his agonising experience when targeted by a series of slandering articles aimed at tarnishing his credibility. Mr. Asrani had to pay a heavy price in terms of health and mental consequences that he suffered. Actor Himanshu Malik also wrote an article enumerating his unsavoury experiences and the ugly machinations of the Hindi film industry. Rajput's death has opened the floodgates of numerous such accounts – mostly social media posts and personal blogs. The insider-outsider debate has been long ensuing. However, there's another serious concern that shouldn't be brushed under the carpet – the nature of film reporting in India or, to be more specific, film reporting in Bollywood.

Film journalism or whatever that means has been reduced to gossip, sensationalism and hype. Most film reviews are just badly written plot summaries with a few comments about song, dance, costume. In fact, that's exactly how one shouldn't write about films. These reviewers think cinema happens in a vacuum.

There's no mention of the sociocultural dimensions of the film. The rest of the stories are interviews with actors. Most of these are PR-driven exercises engineered before the launch of a film or intended to serve vested interests. Questions are often sent beforehand. Tailor-made answers are offered. Then there are lifestyle features about actors' homes, their holidays, children and their birthday parties and unending inanities. Rumours, link-ups and scandals form a

bulk of film-related reporting in this nation. This deviance has been normalised. However, exceptions exist – there are a handful of writers who are interested in discussing the merits and demerits of a film. At the same time, alternative online platforms like *Film Companion* have emerged that are interested in discussing films and not stars.

Post-liberalisation phenomenon
The question to ask is, how did film writing descend so low? This could be seen as a post-liberalisation phenomenon with major changes in the media landscape of the country and the advent of lifestyle or 'sunny journalism' as some would call it. The range of film magazines that soon emerged did very little to create interest in cinema per se; their sole focus remained on the life of the stars and fashioning a halo around the persona of the leading actors. The magazines were sold on the merit of who featured on the cover and other juicy details they offered. These magazines also started their own film awards. An unholy nexus thus flourished. The film award show is nothing less than a TRP-generating spectacle. All claims of honouring the finest in filmdom are pure convenience.

This kind of film writing that thrived by spawning personal details of stars soon became an industry. Space for contemplative film writing and analysis began to shrink and a tabloid-type reporting took over by splashing photos of stars arriving at airports or leaving from home. We were told that this is what readers want to see.

Such reporting encourages unabashed voyeurism. It breeds ugly consumerism. In such a climate, films that deserve to be written about don't get featured because they are either too arty or their actors do not have a fan following whose 'airport looks' will bring the publication more attention. There are a lot of things to fix in any social structure including the Hindi film industry. But let us not leave film journalism out of the radar.

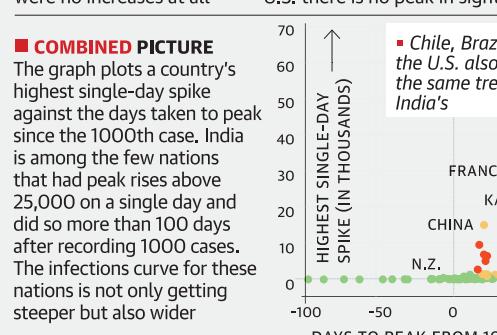
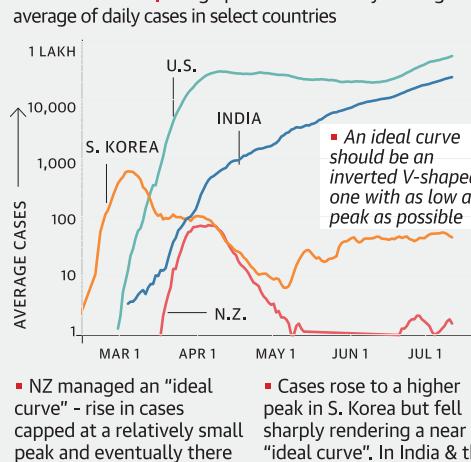
Kunal Ray teaches literary and cultural studies at FLAME University, Pune



DATA POINT

No bend in sight

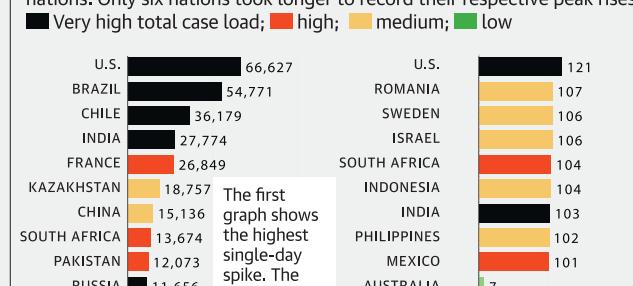
IDEAL CURVE | The graph shows the 7-day moving average of daily cases in select countries



With COVID-19 cases continuing to rise steadily in India, there seems to be no infection peak in sight yet. The curve of new cases for countries will eventually bend, but the area under the curve is an indication of the effectiveness of the COVID-19 response. India's high case rate and spread suggest that the response has so far been ineffective. By **The Hindu Data Team**

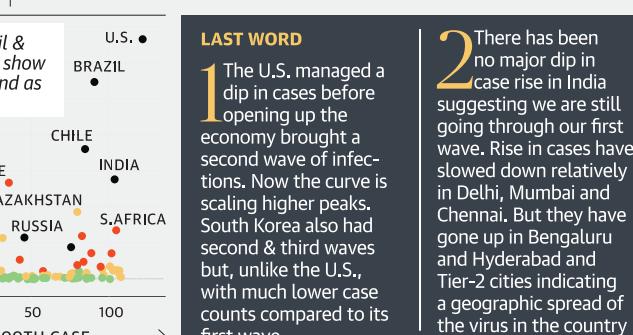
PEAKS & DAYS | More than 100 days since its 1,000th case, India registered a single-day spike of 27,774 cases - the 4th highest among all nations. Only six nations took longer to record their respective peak rises

■ Very high total case load; ■ high; ■ medium; ■ low



The first graph shows the highest single-day spike. The second shows the days taken since the 1000th case to reach the peak.

Some nations reached their peak well before their 1000th case



There has been no major dip in cases in India suggesting we are still going through our first wave. Rise in cases have slowed down relatively in Delhi, Mumbai and Chennai. But, unlike the U.S., with much lower case counts compared to its first wave.

The Hindu

FROM THE ARCHIVES

FIFTY YEARS AGO JULY 13, 1970

Studying punitive fine proposal

A conference of Inspectors-General of Police will be held here (New Delhi) for three days from July 22 to discuss the law and order situation in the country. The conference will be inaugurated by the Prime Minister, Mrs. Indira Gandhi, who has taken over the Home Portfolio. This conference, it is learnt, was arranged by Mr. Y. B. Chavan as Home Minister to discuss the law and order situation with special reference to certain communal incidents. Police chiefs confer once in two years. During the last meeting of the Inspector-Generals of Police held in Delhi the student problem was discussed. Several important suggestions emanated as to the role of the police in curbing student unrest. The present conference is expected to devote attention to the growth of naxalite movement besides communalism. The Prime Minister is expected to stress the importance of prompt police action to tackle difficult communal and other law and order situations. Several important proposals, including punitive fine, have already been mooted to curb communalism. Opposition leaders as well as the sub-committee of the National Integration Council were sounded on this proposal and the Prime Minister also wrote to the Chief Ministers on the subject.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO JULY 13, 1920

Painting the lily.

(From an editorial)

The reactionary reforms rules drafted by the Government of India in consultation with the Local Governments, regarding the composition of and elections to Legislative Councils and the procedure thereof, have secured the approval of the Joint Committee. The Joint Committee, we are told, opine that the Draft Rules "accurately and liberally interpret the recommendations of their report and the intentions of Parliament in framing the Act." We are unable to say that this is not so for the Committee, we must grant, know their intentions better than we others. We dare say, however, that this will come as a surprise to some who claim to have laboured hard along and in co-operation with the Committee; for, they have been assuring the country that while many of the rules were in accordance with the Act and the intentions of the Joint Committee, they considered many others were distinctly against the expressed intentions of the Parliament and of the Committee and that they had done all in their power to get them rescinded.

CM YK

M BM-BME

FROM PAGE ONE

Xi's order, long planning ahead of border moves

With the TMO likely to be in place till at least 2021, India is preparing for a new normal along the border, and is considering the possibility of positioning an additional division under its Leh-based 14 Corps, which sources said was likely to happen.

The PLA's mobilisations began in January after the order was signed, a government source said, and was initially focused on the more than 200 km-long axis stretching from Galwan Valley to Pangong Lake. On the night of May 5, skirmishes or confrontations simultaneously took place in the Galwan Valley and on the north bank of Pangong Lake, as has been confirmed in Indian and Chinese official statements.

China has blamed the tensions in Galwan Valley, which culminated in a clash on June 15 that claimed the lives of 20 Indian soldiers and an unknown number of Chinese soldiers, on India's construction activities transgressing the LAC. The LAC along the India-China border has never been demarcated. In Ladakh, it broadly aligns with China's perceived border, while in Arunachal Pradesh it broadly aligns with India's perceived border.

There are around 11 spots in Ladakh where there are differing perceptions of the LAC.

There are also areas where the LAC differs from China's claimed border, and the Galwan Valley is one of them. While China's official maps show the border passing through the bend in the Galwan river where it turns sharply to meet the Shyok river, known as the Y-nallah, the LAC lies around 1 km east of it. India has been routinely patrolling up to Patrolling Point 14, which is a few hundred metres east of the bend, and was the site of the June 15 clash, which took place around 1 km inside India.

'Exaggerated' claim
The LAC is broadly in alignment with the coordinates China provided India in 1960 regarding its territorial claims in Galwan, although Chinese maps now show its border further west, at the bend, which China calls the 'estuary'.

Since May, China has referred to the LAC as running at the estuary in line with its territorial claims, which India has said was an "exaggerated and untenable" claim.

Starting in late April, China began objecting to India crossing the Y-nallah and reaching PP14. On July 7, Chinese State media re-

leased images, thought to be from early May, purporting to show Indian troops carrying out construction, such as foot bridges across the narrow river, in the area that falls in between the Y-nallah and the LAC. The images have not been authenticated.

In a statement on June 19, the Chinese government accused Indian troops of "crossing the LAC" on the night of May 5 and said Chinese troops "have been forced to take necessary measures to respond to the situation on the ground and strengthen management and control in the border areas". According to Indian officials, China had never previously patrolled up to the Y-nallah bend.

On the same night of May 5, another skirmish unfolded more than 200 km away near Finger 4 on the north bank of Pangong Lake. Here, the difference in perception of the LAC was mutually recognised. China's maps claim up to Finger 4, while India has been patrolling up to Finger 8. The Fingers 1-8 refer to mountain spurs running from west to east, towards the lake.

China has previously dominated up to Finger 4 and built a road there in 1999, while the terrain means India can only patrol on foot from Finger 3 to 4. Since May, China has objected to India crossing Finger 4 and built a road to the top of the spur, occupying the ridgeline.

Buildup of forces

Throughout May, there were simultaneous Chinese deployments at other areas along the LAC as well as a buildup of Chinese forces in depth areas.

A week after the Galwan and Pangong skirmishes, the PLA bolstered deployments both in the far north, from Dahonglutan near the Xinjiang-Tibet border starting May 12, and in the eastern sector of the India-China border near Naku La in North Sikkim from May 13, where a skirmish took place on May 9. Chinese troops also made inroads at Pangong Tso, Galwan Valley, Hot Springs and Gogra and built up at Chip Chap, Spanggur gap and Changlung La. The rear areas were all occupied by mid June, officials said.

With the disengagements currently under way, the concern in Delhi is the PLA's strategy might be a "many steps forward and a few steps back" approach. With the new PLA training module in place until 2021, officials believe this summer's events may not be the last.

Pilot's rebellion puts Gehlot govt. on edge

The source said there has been no communication between Mr Gehlot and Mr Pilot for months. "Mr. Gehlot is very accommodative but gave up on Mr. Pilot after a while," the source said.

Other sources said efforts by senior Congress leader Ahmad Patel to broker peace did not succeed. The central leadership despatched party communications chief Randeep Surjewala and Ajay Maken to Jaipur on Sunday.

In the 200-member State Assembly, the Congress has 107 MLAs, while the BJP has 72. The ruling party has the support of one Rashtriya Lok Dal, two CPI(M) and two Bharatiya Tribal party MLAs. All 13 Independents earlier supported the Congress, but three of them are now accused of being part of the conspiracy to topple the government.

Mr. Gehlot, who had earlier accused the BJP of trying to topple the State government, said in a tweet on Sunday that the police notices, which had been issued to several persons in the case

registered on Friday, had been interpreted in a wrong way.

Mr. Gehlot called a meeting of Congress MLAs and independent legislators supporting his government on Sunday night in an apparent show of strength, while the Opposition BJP questioned his claim that huge sums of money were being offered to the ruling party MLAs.

Transport Minister Pratap Singh Khacharyawas, at an interaction of some MLAs with journalists at the Chief Minister's residence, said Mr. Pilot would attend Monday's CLP meeting. Mr. Pilot was likely to meet the MLAs loyal to him before deciding on a course of action, the source close to him said.

"If the action had been taken by a BJP government, one could understand that. But this is being done by the Chief Minister of the Congress party against his own deputy," the source added. The probe has been initiated against MLAs Om Prakash Hudla, Suresh Tak and Khushveer Singh, who had supported the Congress.

Panel suggests 21-day lockdown for Bengaluru

Karnataka records 2,627 cases and 71 deaths; 1,933 test positive in A.P., 1,269 in Telangana; local transmission tops in Kerala

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
BENGALURU

With Bengaluru reporting 1,525 out of 2,627 cases and 45 of 71 deaths in Karnataka on Sunday, members of the State's COVID-19 expert and technical advisory commit-

COVID-19

tees recommended a minimum three-week lockdown.

Andhra Pradesh witnessed 19 new deaths and 1,933 new cases, taking the toll to 328 and the tally to 29,168.

With the discharge of over 1,019 patients in 24 hours, 15,412 patients had recovered, and active cases stood at 13,428. Of the total cases, 26,336 patients were locals while 2,403 were people from other States and 429 foreign returnees.

New deaths were reported from Kurnool (4), Srikakulam (4), Krishna (3), Visakhapatnam (3), Chittoor (2), Anantapur (1), Nellore (1) and

West Godavari (1). Among new cases, 1,914 were locals and 18 were from other States and one a foreign returnee. East Godavari reported 268 new local cases, Kurnool 237 and Krishna 206. They were followed by Chittoor (159), Guntur (152), Srikakulam (145), Vizianagaram (138), Prakasam (134), Anantapur (129), Nellore (124), Kadapa (94), West Godavari (79) and Visakhapatnam (49).

The number of cases in Telangana touched 34,671 as 1,269 samples tested positive on Sunday. On the same day, eight more patients died, taking the toll to 356.

The State Health department said there were 11,883 active cases, 22,482 were discharged and 356 died till July 12. However, adding the numbers totalled 34,721 while total cases were mentioned as 34,671.

The 1,269 new cases included 800 from Greater Hyderabad, 132 from Ranga-reddy and 94 from Medchal. Kerala's COVID-19 burden

continued to rise with increase in local transmission. For the third consecutive day on Sunday, community-acquired cases exceeded imported ones. The State reported 435 new cases, of which, 215 were imported cases of people with travel, while cases of local transmission

stood at 218. In Thiruvananthapuram, 31 out of 40 new cases were through local transmission, as were 35 of 57 cases in Alappuzha, 41 out of the 50 cases in Ernakulam, 41 out of 56 cases in Kasaragod and 24 out of 39 cases in Pathanamthitta. Ten health-care workers and two

paramilitary force personnel contracted the disease through local transmission.

Local transmission raised the patient load. Thiruvananthapuram with 548 patients had the highest active cases, followed by Malappuram, 521, Alappuzha, 372, Kannur, 334, Ernakulam,

329, and Palakkad, 328.

Two more deaths were recorded on Sunday, raising the tally to 31. Two persons who died on July 5 and July 7 in Thrissur and Alappuzha were found to have tested positive.

In Karnataka with 2,627 new cases, the total touched 38,843. As many as 274 of the total 684 deaths in the State were from Bengaluru.

Dr. V. Ravi, Head of Neuro Virology at NIMHANS, who is on the State's COVID-19 expert committee said: "Scientifically, a minimum three-week lockdown is essential to cut down the level of transmission."

Prof. Giridhara K Babu, member of Karnataka's COVID-19 technical advisory committee was also of the view that a three-week lockdown was required for any "meaningful" effect. This would be an opportunity for the BBMP to gear up and prepare for the worst, he said.

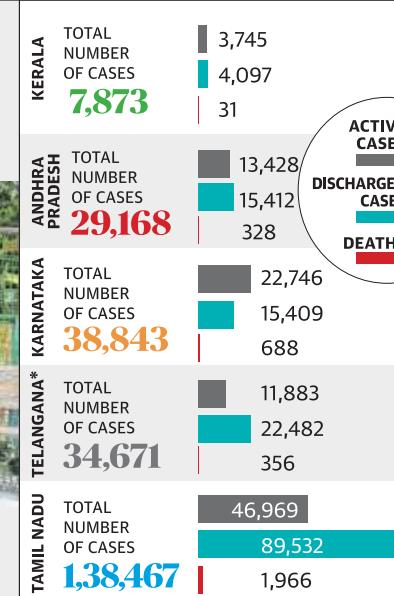
(With inputs from Vijaya-wada, Hyderabad, and Thiruvananthapuram bureaus)

Tight control

With no decrease in the number of COVID-19 cases, many States have started reimposing strict lockdown measures. The graphic shows the spread of COVID-19 in the southern States:



Vigil increased: A policeman stopping a vehicle as the rider tries to leave a red zone in Tadepalli, Andhra Pradesh. ■ K.V.S. GIRI



*Certain discrepancies in the official numbers given by the State

Diplomatic baggage to come under the scanner

Gold seizure in Kerala prompts the decision

S. ANIL RADHAKRISHNAN
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM



Tension continues: Police caned protesting Youth Congress and Yuva Morcha activists in Kochi on Sunday. ■ H. VIBHU

misused for smuggling gold through other airports too, sources said.

Diplomatic bags reach only the Consulates of the UAE and Maldives in Thiruvananthapuram through the scheduled airlines. The protocols of the Union Ministry of External Affairs and procedures of the Bureau of Civil Aviation Security (BCAS) are followed for handling such bags.

In the case of the Honorary Consulates of Germany and Russia in the State capital, sources said the needs are taken care of by the Consulates of the respective countries in Bengaluru and Chennai.

Laid-out procedures
Diplomatic bags should have visible external marks of their character and may contain only diplomatic documents.

A diplomatic bag of any classification, whether it is carried by a courier or sent as cargo, cannot be opened under any circumstances by security personnel. "Misusing the diplomatic channel for smuggling is the work of orchestrated minds and a serious look is needed to plug the loopholes," sources said.

NIA court remands Swapna, Sandeep

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
KOCHE

Swapna Suresh and Sandeep Nair, accused in the smuggling of 30 kg of gold through diplomatic baggage at the Thiruvananthapuram international airport, were remanded in custody for three days by the National Investigation Agency (NIA) Special Court here on Sunday.

Special Judge P. Krishnakumar issued the order at a special sitting at the court complex at Kaloor here.

test results are available.

High drama marked the day's development. The accused were brought here by road. TV cameras followed the vehicles, which reached the office of the NIA here by afternoon.

Black flags
Political activists, who gathered at different points along the National Highway, shouted slogans against Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan and the LDF government. Some waved black flags in protest.

Police had a tough time keeping the activists under control as some attempted to break the barricade and force their way into the office of the investigation agency. They were taken into custody. Some of them were injured in the melee. The accused were arrested by the agency from Bengaluru on Sunday.

Residents oppose funeral of patients near their village

Protest after 'hill poramboke' land is picked for the purpose

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
ONGOLE

issue. The officials explained that all infection prevention control protocols would be duly followed while disposing the bodies.

The health workers would wear personal protective equipment (PPE) during the process and the bodies would be packed in leak-proof plastic bags.

The villagers feared that the drinking water source would get polluted if the bodies of the COVID-19 patients were cremated at the selected site.

A posse of police led by Ongole Deputy Superintendent of Police K.V.V.N.V. Prasad ensured that the meeting passed off smoothly.

Residents of more than

100 villages consume the water from the Obul Reddy Gundalakamma reservoir nearby, the villagers said, adding that the cremation of bodies might trigger the spread of the virus.

Fear of virus
"The positive cases would go up in geometric proportion in Maddipadu mandal which has reported 22 positive cases till date, if the bodies of COVID-19 patients were brought here for the funeral," the residents said.

In a similar incident earlier, officials could not perform the funerals at another isolated 'hill poramboke' site selected near Yerjerala.

Villagers opposed the move to dispose the bodies of COVID-19 patients close to a site selected for the YSR housing scheme.

A Division Bench comprising Chief Justice Abhay Shreenivas Oka and Justice Vishwajith Shetty

No need for physical presence of surety: HC

This is due to pandemic restrictions

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
BENGALURU

The Karnataka High Court has waived the legal requirement of physical presence of surety for the execution of conditions of bail for the time being, given the restrictions imposed on the entry of people into the court premises because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The court said advocates representing the accused could produce the bail bonds and an affidavit signed by the surety, along with true copies of authentic ID documents such as PAN and Aadhaar cards, aside from address proof, a recent photo, and documents with details of property held by the surety.

A Division Bench comprising Chief Justice Abhay Shreenivas Oka and Justice Vishwajith Shetty



passed the order on a PIL petition, initiated *suo motu* by the court for finding a solution to legal and technical difficulties faced in the conduct of proceedings on account of the COVID-19 restrictions.

Also, the advocates will have to identify the signature of the surety by signing below it, mentioning their registration/enrolment number issued by the Karnataka State Bar Council.

KPAC artistes don role of mask-makers for a living



SAM PAUL A.
ALAPPUTHRA

The Kerala People's Arts Club, better known as KPAC, is synonymous with the long-term legacy of popular Malayalam theatre. Its revolutionary plays helped create social awareness and popularised communist ideology in Kerala.

Until March, the KPAC aud-

itorium at Kayamkulam used to witness intense drama practice by 45 artists of two troupes. But, with COVID-19 bringing the curtain down on stage performances, albeit temporarily, artists and staff have turned to mask-making for

sustenance. "The profit from the sale of masks will be distributed to the artists, staff and former artists in need of financial assistance before Onam," Mr. Shahjahan said.

Twelve artists and staff living in and around Kayamkulam are engaged in mask-making. They have produced around 12,000 masks. Rates of masks range from ₹7 to ₹25.

APPEAL
7 years old Prathika needs your support to bring a new hope to her life. She suffers from Relapse B-Cell Acute Lymphoblastic Leukemia. She requires ₹20,00,000/- towards Haemopoietic Bone Marrow Transplantation at Meenakshi Mission Hospital & Research Centre, Madurai. Donations sent by ChD.O. favouring Meenakshi Mission Hospital & Research Centre, Madurai will be

Experts question basis of COVID-19 drug

Biocon's Itolizumab appears to have been tested on too few patients to reliably conclude on its benefits

JACOB KOSHY
NEW DELHI

Biocon Ltd's psoriasis drug, Itolizumab, re-purposed for COVID-19 and headlined as a "breakthrough drug" for treating the moderately sick and the severely ill, appears to have been tested on too few patients to reliably conclude on its benefits, according to a review by *The Hindu* of data presented by the company to the Drug Controller General and comments by independent experts who have seen the data.

To test the drug's efficacy at preventing deaths or improving health outcome, the company recruited 30 patients across four hospitals, 20 of whom were given it along with the "standard of care treatment" and 10 were given only standard of care. In the set of patients that got the drug, nobody died. Of the 10 who didn't get the drug, three died. That nobody on the drug died was significant proof of the its success, said company officials.

On July 11, Biocon an-



Under treatment: Patients at a COVID-19 care centre near Akshardham in New Delhi on Sunday. • PTI

nounced that it had received the regulator's approval to use the drug for emergency use in cases where the infection caused a cytokine storm, namely an uncontrolled attempt by the immune system to neutralise the virus that often ended up damaging the lungs and other organs and even death.

With such a small sample size it would be "unwise" to conclude that it was indeed the drug that was saving the patients, said S.P. Kalantri, a physician at the Mahatma Gandhi Institute of Medical Sciences, Sevagram. "Given that it's such a small sample,

10 here and 20 there, even if one patient had died in the set that got the drug, it would have changed the picture. So it isn't yet valid to call the results statistically significant. We can't rule out the effect of chance [basis this study]."

An official from Biocon said the trial was designed employing a method called the Simon's Two-Stage Design, an approach in executing phase-2 clinical trials (where the efficacy of a drug is tested). "If we were able to show two or more deaths in the control arm [the group without the drug], then a

trial as small as 30 patients could yield results that were clinically significant," said Dr. Sandeep Athalye, chief medical officer, Biocon Biologics.

Given that the drug had been in use since 2013 and tested on at least 500 for psoriasis, its safety was not in doubt. "The 20 who got the drug have been discharged and are at home today within 30 days. We reported this level of improvement to the regulator and that's probably why this drug has been approved for emergency use." Other criteria such as improvement in oxygen levels and reduced inflammation were also much significantly convincing to several doctors who used the drug on their patients, he said.

The evaluation also rests on Itolizumab being added to the "best standard of care" which Dr. Athalye said "slightly varied" across hospitals. "In general this consisted of hydroxychloroquine, ritonavir (antivirals), oxygen therapy, antibiotics,

heparin [to avoid clotting] and some got methylprednisolone [a corticosteroid]."

Dr. Kalantri said given that HCQ and antivirals had been conclusively shown to not benefit patients with moderate or severe manifestations of the disease, and dexamethasone (a steroid) was conclusively shown to improve patient mortality in the recovery trial conducted in the U.K., the latter should have been used as comparator. "Given that the benefits of dexamethasone are now proven, it would be unethical to not give it to someone who needs it."

Dr. Athalye countered that when the trial began, in May, the benefits of dexamethasone hadn't been demonstrated (the results were published on June 16).

Secondly, the said drug interacted with HCQ on which most patients were on. "So people avoided giving those two together. Because of this interaction, it's generally employed in the later stages when on ventilator and not early."

Aishwarya, daughter have tested positive: Abhishek

Four Bachchan family homes declared containment zones

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI

A day after veteran Bollywood actor Amitabh Bachchan and son Abhishek tested positive for COVID-19, the latter's wife and actor Aishwarya Rai-Bachchan and their daughter, too, have tested positive.

In a tweet on Sunday evening, Mr. Abhishek Bachchan said: "Aishwarya and Aaradhya have also tested COVID-19 positive. They will be self quarantining at home. The BMC has been updated of their situation and are doing the needful. The rest of the family including my mother have tested negative. Thank you all for your wishes and prayers."

Updating the health status of his father and himself, he said: "My father and I remain in hospital till the doctors decide otherwise. Everyone please remain cautious and safe. Please



Virus alert: Corporation workers sanitising the area outside Jalsa, the residence of Amitabh Bachchan. • SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

follow all rules!"

On Sunday, the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) declared all four bungalows of the Bachchan family – Jalsa, Pratiksha, Janak and Vatsa – as containment zones. Those were sanitised and all maids and employees tested for COVID-19. "A team of 30 civic workers was deployed for testing and sanitisation of four bungalows. It was com-

pleted on Sunday morning. Four bungalows namely, Jalsa, Pratiksha, Janak and Vatsa, have been declared as containment zones," said an official release from the BMC. The civic body said as per the guidelines, the process of collecting data on people who had come in contact with the Bachchan family and testing them or directing them to go in to quarantine has begun.

'Varavara Rao's health a concern'

Family seeks proper treatment for him

Varavara Rao

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD

Family members of poet Va-

avarara Rao have raised grave

concerns about his failing

health and appealed to the

the Maharashtra govern-

ment and the Centre to pro-

vide him immediate medical

treatment at a super-special-

ity hospital.

Addressing an online press meet on Sunday, Mr. Rao's nephew and writer N. Venugopal Rao said their concern now was not about his false implication in the Bhima-Koregaon case or him being repeatedly denied bail, but about his tottering health. "We make only one demand: Don't kill him in jail," he appealed.

Romila Thapar, others write to Maharashtra govt., NIA

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Five eminent persons, in-

cluding Historian Romila

Thapar, have appealed to

the Maharashtra govern-

ment and the National In-

vestigation Agency to en-

sure that Telugu poet P.

Varavara Rao, who is lod-

ged in Navi Mumbai's Taloja

jail in connection with the

Ela-gaard Parashad case, gets im-

mediate medical care.

"To knowingly risk the

life of a person in state cus-

tody by refusing medical treatment would amount to a

a encounter," they said in a

statement.

Mr. Rao, now 81, was ar-

rested in 2018.

In a petition signed by

Ms. Thapar, economists

Prabhat Patnaik and Devaki

Jain, sociologist Satish Deshpande and activist Maja Daruwala said that his treat-

ment was abruptly ter-

minated and he was ta-

ken to jail. It is a life threa-

tening situation at his age.

Arvind, alias Guddan Ramvila Trivedi, and Sushilkumar, alias Sonu Suresh Tiwari, were detained by the Maharashtra Anti-Terrorism Squad on Saturday from Thane.

An ATS official said the Kanpur police have reached Maharashtra and would move court tomorrow for their transit bail.

Two aides of slain Uttar

Pradesh gangster Vikas Dubey were remanded in judi-

cial custody till July 21 by the Thane magistrate court on Sunday.

Arvind, alias Guddan Ramvila Trivedi, and Sushilkumar, alias Sonu Suresh Tiwari, were detained by the Maharashtra Anti-Terrorism Squad on Saturday from Thane.

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The online and blended learning models now being adopted by higher educational institutes are likely to endure even after the pandemic, feels Coursera's Raghav Gupta

■ MADHUMITHA SRINIVASAN

With tectonic shifts in the way learning is currently being perceived owing to the pandemic, ed-tech is the buzz word in the education sector. While several new players are catching on to the trend of online learning, established ones like Coursera are seeing their business model being validated. With 7.9 million learners, India is Coursera's second-largest market after the U.S.

While there are challenges, Raghav Gupta, Managing Director-India and APAC, Coursera, feels that change is imminent as educational institutions transition to online/blended learning models. "For many institutes, what started as a short-term response to a crisis will likely become an enduring digital transformation of higher education. In India, the government's decision on online learning programmes speaks volumes about the gradual integration of online learning in the Indian education system," he says, as he shares his thoughts on online learning and the way ahead for India. Excerpts:

How effective is online learning?
 Online learning can genuinely transform lives and bridge the opportunity divide by democratising education and providing learners with the currency that connects them to career outcomes and offering a richer and more applied learning experience and em-



Online learning strongly complements the existing system and can help educational institutions scale up and broaden their reach.

ployer-recognised credentials. Online learning strongly complements the existing system and can help educational institutions scale up and broaden their reach. For professionals to continue learning throughout their careers and to gain the latest skill set in the dynamic job market, online learning is the go-to solution.

We have seen a steep rise in the uptake of online courses by stu-

dents and professionals alike. Enterprises, too, are turning to online learning platforms to help employees successfully transition to remote working, increase digital readiness, and improve mental wellbeing during this particularly stressful time.

How do online certifications add value to traditional academic learning?

The future of learning and the future of work is converging. There is a growing acceptance of online education credentials among enterprises, particularly for new-age skills like Data Science, Artificial Intelligence,

and more. But traditional models of education are insufficient to prepare people with the skills they need to thrive throughout the course of their working lives. Today, more and more employers are looking to upskill their workforce and are accepting online certificates.

How well is India equipped to transition from traditional classrooms to online learning?

The majority of educational institutions in India follow the traditional teaching methodology of face-to-face class-



room learning. However, campuses have already integrated the technological components of online learning in their curricula. High-quality, relevant and curated content is readily available through online learning platforms to support this transition towards blended learning.

This means that, in the near future, even on-campus programmes will have a substantive online component. The one-size-fits-all model will give way to a far more adaptive and personalised learning experience that will enable anyone, anywhere to embrace lifelong learning.

What are some of the challenges you identify?

While online and blended learning seem to have gained acceptance in the country, Internet penetration and bandwidth issues still seem to be the niggling challenges that online education platforms will need to face. While, on the one hand, India is preparing to

welcome 5G, many parts of the country still have limited access to high-speed Internet. To allow for digital and blended learning, India will need to build a smarter and connected society.

What are some of the trends you have noticed in the Indian market?

Business, Technology, and Data Science are the most popular domains among learners in India and across the globe. These continue to be significant economic and innovation drivers and are also the most in-demand career skills. At a competency level, we've seen tremendous interest in deep learning, machine learning, data science, data management as well as soft skills like management training.

What are Coursera's plans in India?

We are currently focused on helping universities deliver education through Coursera for Campus platform, providing skill-building opportunities and tools to the unemployed, and assisting enterprises with skill-building initiatives.

We endeavour to expand our course catalogue by launching new Degrees, MasterTrack™ Certificates, Courses, Specialisations, and Guided Projects to help learners gain the necessary skills in the dynamic job scenario. Additionally, we are rolling out a number of new tools to provide learners with a transformative learning experience.

Tracking the transformation



VALUE ADD

■ NIMESH VED

If there is one subject or activity or theme that we could pursue at school, what do you suggest it be? This is a question I have faced couple of times, or more, during recent years. One that, on each occasion, has got me to think. Answers to some questions change, as we travel on the road to life and evolve. Today, my vote would go to exposure.

How will it pan out?

Students should visit villages, towns and cities located in different parts of our country. Visit homes at these places and interact with people who live different lives from those their own; who wear clothes different from what the students are familiar with; who show their love and affection in a different manner... The students can also be active participants and learn new languages, eat (and cook) food that they may not have come across previously or celebrate festivals and sing songs in a new manner. And much more. We could create platforms that enable our students to learn in this manner as opposed to from books or videos. These platforms can also be independent of schools.

Why is this needed?

We are increasingly living in our small worlds where we primarily interact with people

Life beyond barriers

Once lockdown measures come to an end, can we look at getting to know our country and people better? How will this help us grow?

who are similar to us in more ways than one. This also begins from early years. Not only do we know less and less of the worlds around us but also believe, more and more, that our world is better. The scene has altered little in the recent years. And, if anything, it has gone from bad to worse.

How will this help?
 This exposure has the poten-

tial to help us – in myriad ways – to know our country and ourselves better. It could influence us to do away with the boundaries we have created, the us and them, based on geographies, dietary preferences, religions, sects, gender, castes and more. These, like other invisible boundaries, are ingrained deep within us. We need to know these 'other people' so that we get rid of our insecurity and hatred. And possibly make friends. To move beyond some of the labels we have created, which make little sense or carry a negative connotation and yet are widely accepted. To get rid of the upper hand many of us believe we have vis-avis others. Living in a city, for example, does not make one superior to someone based in a village. Both cities and villages, with their people, make up our country. Ditto for our physical attributes – skin colour, height...

It could help us celebrate our diversity. A diversity that is, to put gently, mindboggling. Wise women and men before us, too, have said it is only because five fingers are different from each other that the hand is able to do all that it does. We are getting more and more sure as individuals and as a society. Surety of a kind which only comes with ignorance. These exposures can help create space for doubt.

Email: nimesh.explore@gmail.com

Do you feel uncertain about a career option? Do you lack the freedom to choose a subject that you want to pursue? Do you feel low on self-confidence? Are you constantly doubting yourself? A Q&A column to assuage your doubts



OFF THE EDGE

NANDINI RAMAN

I am in my second year B.Sc. Plant Biology and Biotechnology. What are the options available for higher studies and career prospects? - Elizabeth

Dear Liz,

Higher study option would be a Master's in the same course, followed by M.Phil. and Ph.D. later on.

Typical career choices are to work in the laboratories, farming industry, classrooms as well as medical facilities. There is also the possibility of being a plant biochemist, food scientist, a food science technician, an agricultural manager or applying for a teaching position.

Biotechnology is also a rewarding and a promising career option. The compensation of a bio-technologist working in a research organisation or a public sector industry is set according to government standards.

Graduates can seek employment in chemical industries, agricultural sectors, pharmaceutical and manufacturing industries.

Opt for teaching jobs in universities and colleges, seek employment in research laboratories (run by government or private sector),

job opportunities in private sectors such as food processing and agro based industries, pharmaceutical farms and aquaculture and so on.

Environmental experts are employed in different government agencies and private institutions too.

Bio-technologists can also be science writers in media houses.

I am in my third year B.Com, and am also a Certified Management Accountant (CMA) Intermediate student. I don't know whether I ought to pursue a Master's? If so, should I choose M.Com. or MBA. I primarily want to land a government sector job. - Saloni

Dear Saloni,

A master's is always handy. Both have their merits. What is it that you would enjoy? An M.Com provides high-level knowledge and understanding of Commerce, Accounting, Eco-

nomics and Management subjects. After that, one can get a job in the government or private sector, with an attractive salary and high career growth. A MBA, on the other hand, is an internationally recognised degree designed to develop the skills required for careers in business and management. I would recommend that you identify and shortlist the government job that attracts you and then choose the course, as most positions have an entrance exam as a pre-requisite. You will need to work very hard on cracking that to make your entry with or without the course. Best wishes.

I am pursuing my first year B.Tech in Bengaluru.

I am passionate about social issues, politics, and the defence sector. My aim is to eventually join the IPS. Should I start my preparation now? I am partially interested in software. Do I need to attend courses related to coding, web development, and so on, or seminars related to social issues? - Abhishek Kallolikar

Dear Abhishek,

Yes, given how tough the course curriculum and the entrance exams are, now is a good time to start your preparation. I think you need to strike a balance between the social issues, volunteering opportunities, contributing to causes close to you and making a difference and building and strengthening your technical knowledge base (though this is not a criteria for IPS specifically).

Focus on enhancing your attitude and building a positive approach, especially your mental strength. Sharpen your memory, work on your physical fitness, exhibit an overall composed personality, learn and focus on management skills, decision making and healthy conflict resolution whilst being logically compassionate and empathetic.

Wishing you the best.

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

The writer is a practising counsellor and a trainer. She has worked extensively with students and young adults across a range of issues.

Send your questions to eduplus.thehindu@gmail.com. The subject line should be: 'Off the edge'.

SAVE THE DATE

Diploma in Culinary Arts

Indian School of Hospitality offers a Diploma in Culinary Arts in partnership with Singapore's At-Sunrice Global Chef Academy. Nine months in India will be followed by three months of training in Singapore, followed by six months of industry exposure.

INSTITUTE: Indian School of Hospitality

ELIGIBILITY: Those who have completed class XII or equivalent and graduates, professionals and postgraduate students who want pursue a career in culinary arts.

APPLICATION: Online

DEADLINE: August 1

<http://ish.edu.in/how-to-apply.html>

Biomedical Engineering Scholarship

The University of Strathclyde, Glasgow, offers the Biomedical Engineering Celebration Award for India for one-year full-time MSc programmes in the Department of Biomedical Engineering. Only one scholarship is available.

REWARDS AND PRIZES: Value of £6000

ELIGIBILITY: An Indian citizen, applying for a full-time postgraduate course.

DEADLINE: August 31

<https://bit.ly/38Gm7V4>

PhD courses

Nitte (Deemed to be University) invites online applications from eligible candidates for part-time or full-time Ph.D. courses in the faculty of Medical, Dental, Pharmacy, Nursing, Physiotherapy, Allied Health Sciences and Biological Sciences. Admissions will be based on an online All India Entrance Test (AIET) on August 10, 2020, and an interview/presentation will be held through video conferencing.

INSTITUTE: Nitte (Deemed to be University)

REWARDS AND PRIZES: Fellowships of ₹15,000 per month as per University guidelines.

APPLICATION: Online

DEADLINE: July 20

www.nitte.edu.in

Certificate in Data Science and Analytics

Shiv Nadar University launches a new online certificate programme in Data Sciences and Analytics for Business (DSAB) to provide hands-on-training about the relevant domain knowledge and the technical skills to help companies solve business challenges using insights from data. The intensive 14-week programme, will commence from the third week of July.

INSTITUTE: Shiv Nadar University

ELIGIBILITY: Students with a Bachelor's Degree or equivalent or enrolled in any recognised undergraduate degree programme with at least 50% marks or equivalent CGPA and having Mathematics in 10+2 board. Candidates will also have to qualify a personal interview for final selection.

APPLICATION: Online

<https://sme.snu.edu.in/DSAB>

Trump dons a mark in public, finally

Move comes even as the U.S. records another daily high of 66,528 confirmed COVID-19 cases

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
BETHESDA

U.S. President Donald Trump finally yielded to pressure and wore a face mask in public for the first time on Saturday as the U.S. posted another daily record for COVID-19 cases, while Disney World reopened in a state hit hard by the pandemic.

White House experts leading the national fight against the contagion have recommended wearing face coverings in public to prevent transmission of the illness.

But Mr. Trump had repeatedly avoided wearing a mask, even after staffers at the White House tested positive for the virus and as more aides have taken to wearing them.

WHO's call for testing

Hours after the World Health Organization (WHO) urged countries to step up control measures to rein in the disease, Mr. Trump donned a dark mask bearing the presidential seal as he visited wounded military veterans at the Walter Reed military hospital in a suburb outside Washington.

"I've never been against masks but I do believe they



Giving in: U.S. President Donald Trump during a visit to the Walter Reed National Military Medical Center in Bethesda, Maryland, on Saturday. • AP

have a time and a place," he told reporters as he left the White House.

Mr. Trump is trailing Democrat Joe Biden in the polls ahead of a November election and surveys show most Americans are unhappy with how he has handled the public health crisis.

But the President has continued to praise his own response to the pandemic despite a cascade of figures showing the extent of the disease's spread across the

United States. The country posted yet another daily record of confirmed cases on Saturday night, with 66,528 new infections, while the death toll rose by almost 800 to nearly 1,35,000.

Disney park reopens

In Florida, where nearly one in six of those new infections were recorded, the Walt Disney World theme park partially reopened after four shutdowns prompted by the virus.

Hundreds of people queued to enter the park in Orlando, some sporting Mickey ears but all wearing face masks, with social distancing and other hygiene precautions also in place.

Days earlier, top U.S. infectious disease expert Anthony Fauci said that Florida had begun reopening before meeting the criteria that would have enabled it to do so safely.

The COVID-19 pandemic has infected nearly 13 million

people, killed over 5,60,000 and triggered massive economic damage since the disease was first detected in China late last year. The United States is the country worst hit by the illness, followed by Brazil – which surpassed 70,000 deaths on Friday.

WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus called on countries to adopt an aggressive approach to tackling the virus, citing successful mitigation efforts in Italy, South Korea and elsewhere.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu admitted a decision to allow bars and other businesses to reopen may have come "too soon" after his country reported a record 1,500 new infections on Friday.

Australian authorities said they would slash by half the number of people allowed to return from overseas each day after a fresh surge in cases that saw a lockdown imposed on Melbourne, the country's second-largest city.

In Hong Kong, a spike has marked a setback for the city after daily life had largely returned to normal, with restaurants and bars resuming regular business and cultural attractions reopening.

• AP

China, Iran close to reaching trade and military partnership

This undercuts U.S. efforts to isolate the Tehran government

FARNAZ FASSIHI
STEVEN LEE MYERS



Iran and China have quietly drafted a sweeping economic and security partnership that would clear the way for billions of dollars of Chinese investments in energy and other sectors, undercutting the Donald Trump administration's efforts to isolate the Iranian government because of its nuclear and military ambitions.

WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus called on countries to adopt an aggressive approach to tackling the virus, citing successful mitigation efforts in Italy, South Korea and elsewhere.

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cises, joint research and weapons development and intelligence sharing – all to fight the lopsided battle with terrorism, drug and human trafficking and cross-border crimes." The partnership – first proposed by China's leader, Xi Jinping, during a visit to Iran in 2016 – was approved by President Hassan Rouhani's Cabinet in June. Iran's Foreign Minister, Mohammad Javad Zarif, said last week. If put into effect as detailed, the partnership would create new and potentially dangerous flashpoints in the deteriorating relationship between China and the U.S.

It represents a major blow to the Trump administration's aggressive policy toward Iran since abandoning the nuclear deal reached in 2015 by President Barack Obama and the leaders of six

other nations after two years of grueling negotiations.

Renewed U.S. sanctions, including the threat to cut off access to the international banking system for any company that does business in Iran, have succeeded in suffocating the Iranian economy by scaring away badly needed foreign trade and investment. But Tehran's desperation has pushed it into the arms of China, which has the technology and appetite for oil that Iran needs. Iran has been one of the world's largest oil producers, but its exports, Tehran's largest source of revenue, have plunged since the Trump administration began imposing sanctions in 2018; China gets about 75% of its oil from abroad and is the world's largest importer, at more than 10 million barrels a day last year. • NY TIMES

Misaligned radar led to Ukrainian jet's downing in January, says Iran

Tehran presents preliminary report on the plane incident

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
TEHRAN

Iran said that the misalignment of an air defence unit's radar system was the key "human error" that led to the accidental downing of a Ukrainian passenger plane in January.

"A failure occurred due to a human error in following the procedure" for aligning the radar, causing a "107-degree error" in the system, the Iranian Civil Aviation Organisation (CAO) said in a report late on Saturday.

This error "initiated a hazard chain" that saw further errors committed in the minutes before the plane was shot down, said the CAO document, presented as a "factual report" and not as



People near the site of the crash in Shahedshahr, Iran, in January. • AFP

January 8, at a time of heightened U.S.-Iranian tensions. The Islamic republic admitted several days later that its forces accidentally shot down the Kiev-bound plane, killing all 176 people on board. The CAO said that, despite the erroneous information available to the radar system operator on the aircraft's trajectory, he could have identified his target as an airliner, but instead there was a "wrong identification".

The report also noted that the first of the two missiles launched at the aircraft was fired by a defence unit operator who had acted "without receiving any response from the Coordination Center" on which he depended.

Mr. Stone, 67, had been set to begin serving a 40-month prison term on Tuesday after his conviction on seven felony charges originally brought by Mr. Mueller as part of the Russia collusion probe.

Multiple charges

The charges include tampering with a witness and obstructing the House investigation into whether the Trump campaign conspired with Russia to help him win the 2016 election.

In an op-ed piece in *The*

Stone remains a convicted felon, says Mueller

Former Special Counsel pens a rare op-ed defending his probe as being of 'paramount importance'

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
WASHINGTON

Donald Trump may have commuted Roger Stone's prison sentence but the President's long-time ally remains a convicted criminal, former Special Counsel Robert Mueller said on Saturday.

Mr. Stone, 67, had been set to begin serving a 40-month prison term on Tuesday after his conviction on seven felony charges originally brought by Mr. Mueller as part of the Russia collusion probe.



Key prosecutor: Former Special Counsel Robert Mueller headed the investigation that led to Trump ally Roger Stone's conviction. • AFP

Washington Post on Saturday, Mr. Mueller defended his probe as being of "paramount importance," dismissing White House claims that he was out to get Mr. Trump and those who worked with him. "Stone was prosecuted and convicted because he committed federal crimes.

He remains a convicted felon, and rightly so," Mr. Mueller wrote as Democrats – and two Republican Senators – piled on Mr. Trump for again intervening in the justice system to help an ally.

Senator Mitt Romney, who infuriated Mr. Trump when he became the only

Republican to vote to convict the President in his impeachment trial, pulled no punches on Saturday. "Unprecedented, historic corruption: an American President commutes the sentence of a person convicted by a jury of lying to shield that very President," he tweeted.

'A mistake'

Another Republican Senator, Pat Toomey, also criticised Mr. Trump but in milder terms, saying that as Mr. Stone has been duly convicted it was "a mistake" to commute his sentence.

Most Republicans have remained largely mute on the matter, while Democratic critics led by House Speaker Nancy Pelosi unanimously condemned Mr. Trump. "President Trump's decision to commute the sentence of

top campaign advisor Roger Stone, who could directly implicate him in criminal misconduct, is an act of staggering corruption," she tweeted. Ms. Pelosi called for legislation "to ensure that no President can pardon or commute the sentence of an individual who is engaged in a cover-up campaign to shield that President from criminal prosecution."

Democratic presidential candidate Joe Biden weighed in without mentioning Mr. Stone by name. "I've said it before, and I'll say it again: Donald Trump is the most corrupt President in modern American history," he tweeted. "Every day that he remains in office, he further threatens the future of our democracy. We have to vote him out this November," wrote Mr. Biden.

Sri Lanka cancels rallies over new virus wave

ELSEWHERE



Pope 'pained' by Turkey's move on Hagia Sophia

VATICAN CITY
Pope Francis said on Sunday he was hurt by Turkey's decision to make Istanbul's Hagia Sophia museum a mosque, the latest religious leader to condemn the move. "My thoughts go to Istanbul. I think of Santa Sophia and I am very pained," he said during his weekly blessing in St. Peter's Square. • AFP

Hong Kong poll sees five lakh 'protest' votes

HONG KONG
Hundreds of thousands of Hong Kong citizens queued to cast ballots on Sunday in what the Chinese-ruled city's Opposition camp says is a symbolic protest vote against tough national security laws directly imposed by Beijing. Organisers said 500,000 people had voted by late afternoon on Sunday, in the city of 7.5 million. • Reuters

Spain holds first regional polls since pandemic

MADRID
The first regional elections in Spain since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic got underway on Sunday in the northern regions of Galicia and the Basque country, with voters wary of new spikes in infections. People who have tested positive for COVID-19 are not permitted to vote, excluding 420 electors from a total of about 4.5 million across the two regions. • AFP

Sri Lanka's ruling party on Sunday called off its rallies ahead of upcoming parliamentary elections and delayed the international airport's reopening over a surge in virus cases.

The country lifted its COVID-19 lockdown in late June after declaring there was no longer any community spread of the virus. But a swathe of cases emerged last

week, including an outbreak at a drug rehabilitation centre last week that saw 253 patients test positive in a single night. "All public meetings where the President and the Prime Minister were due to attend today, tomorrow and the day after have been cancelled," President Gotabaya Rajapaksa's Sri Lanka Podujana Peramuna party said in a statement.

Mr. Gotabaya Rajapaksa's brother Mahinda is the country's Prime Minister. The party said all their candidates were also told to call off upcoming gatherings ahead of the August 5 poll.

being of our citizens to put off the reopening of airports," he said.

Airport to remain closed
Aviation Minister Prasanna Ranatunga said on Sunday the international airport, which authorities had planned to reopen on August 1, would remain closed.

"We have decided in the interest of safety and well-



The showman's birthplace: A view of the 'Kapoor haveli' in Peshawar on Sunday. • PTI

building is deteriorating with each passing day due to ecological impacts, torrential rains, earthquakes and wind storms.

The 'haveli' is currently owned by Haji Muhammad Israr, a wealthy jeweller in the city. The provincial government wanted to buy it, keeping in view its historic importance and conserve it in its original shape for tourists. Mr. Israr, however,

wants to demolish the building and construct a new commercial building at this prime location.

There are reports that the provincial government has failed to convert the building into a museum due to differences with its owner over its price. Mr. Israr has denied that he has had any issue with the government over the price of the property, estimated to be over Pakistani Rs. 5 crore. He says he simply wanted to demolish it and construct a huge commercial market at the site.

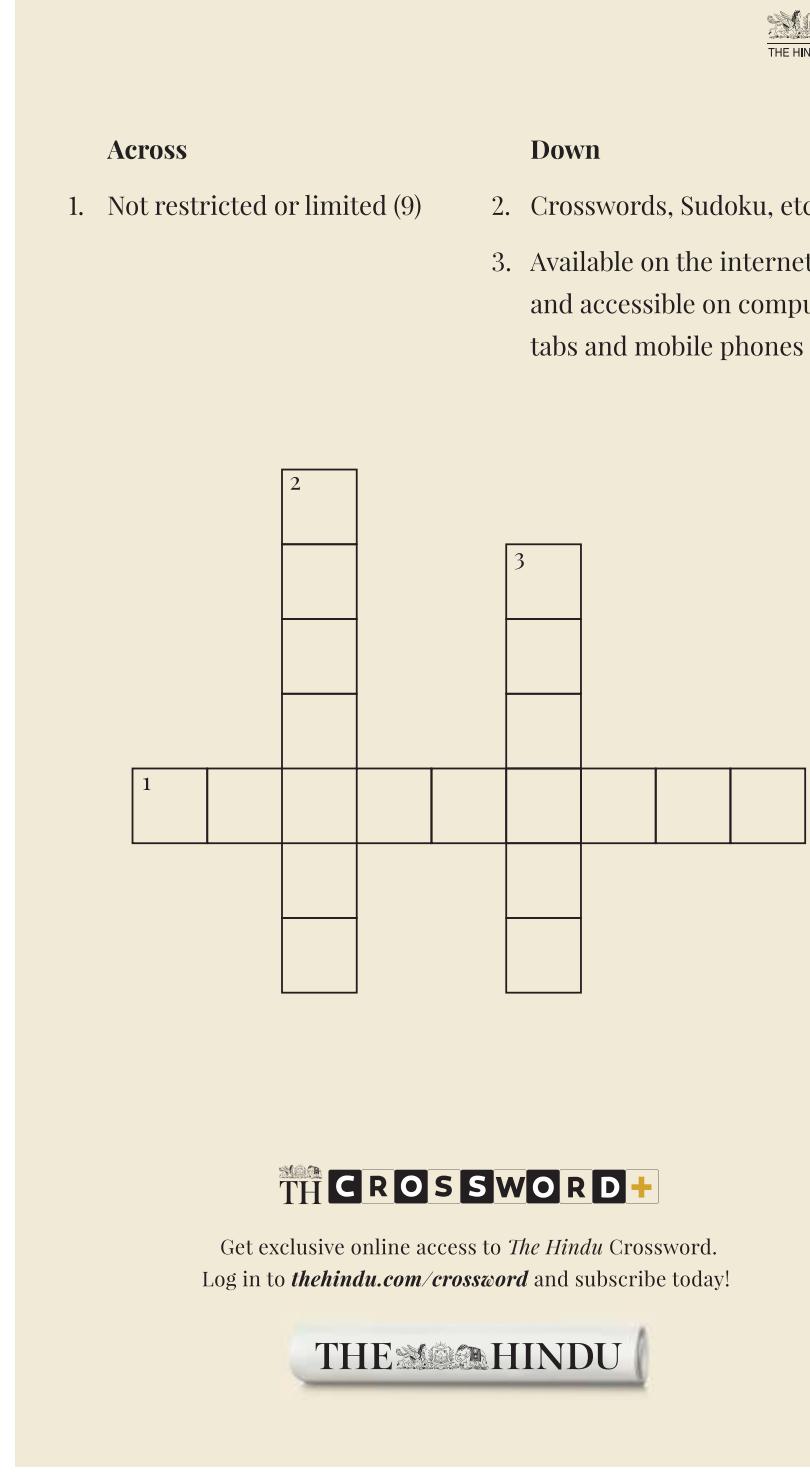
"It is a matter of concern that the 'Kapoor haveli' which we consider as the pride of our city is in dilapidated condition and is fast heading to the disappearance because of being ignored," said Mujeeb-ur-Rehman, a resident of Dhaki Nalbandi where the palatial house is located. Shakeel Waheedullah, Secretary Cultural Heritage Council Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, expressed regret over the dilapidated condition of the house.

The 'Kapoor haveli' was

built by Basheswarnath Kapoor, the grandfather of Hindi film industry pioneer Prithviraj Kapoor and father of Raj Kapoor.

The Kapoor family, originally from Peshawar, migrated to India after the Partition in 1947. The Kapoor haveli faces demolition threat

Its owner, a jeweller in Peshawar, plans to build a commercial complex at the site



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THE HINDU

ASK US

AARATI KRISHNAN

Q. I am a 43-year old corporate lawyer drawing a monthly salary of ₹1.3 lakh. Due to personal reasons, I could not invest until now. How much should I be investing every month and also in what vehicles, for me to retire at 65? I have an eight-year-old son.

SINDHU JOSEPH

A. It is never too late to start investing. To gauge how much you need to invest, you'll have to make a basic financial plan first. This involves listing out your main financial goals with the timeline by which you'd like to achieve them. You will need to assess your return targets and risk appetite. Finally, you create individual portfolios towards each financial goal. Given the details you've mentioned, you will perhaps need to create a corpus for your son's higher education about 10 years from now and a corpus for your retirement, 22 years from now. This apart, you will need insurance and an emergency fund to take care of unexpected contingencies.

We suggest you first take a basic term life cover to take care of your son's needs in your absence. Do sign up for a health insurance cover for a minimum of ₹10 lakh too, if you don't already have one. You must also set aside enough savings in a bank FD towards an emergency fund to cover 9 months of your living expenses to take care of any period of interrupted income or profession in future.

Having done this, you can plan out your long-term investments towards your son's education and retirement goals. For your son's education, do estimate the sum you'll need 10 years hence (after factoring in inflation at 7-8%), for an undergraduate and post-graduate degree using online or offline help. You can invest in hybrid aggressive equity mutual funds (via systematic investment) or in a combination of multi-cap equity and debt funds to get to this goal.

For your retirement, make an estimate of the monthly expenses you will need in today's rupees to live comfortably. To arrive at the size of retirement corpus, you will need to adjust this for inflation over the next 22 years and then multiply the annual amount by a factor of 20 or 25 times. This will be your retirement goal. The size of this corpus will decide how much you will need to invest every month.

Given that you have 20-odd years to go, you can invest in equity fund SIPs with a PPF component to get to your retirement goal. Start investing ₹1.5 lakh a year in PPF right away and invest the rest via SIPs in multi-cap and index funds. You can use online calculators for the above estimates. You may also need the help of a full-fledged financial advisor to map out your investment plan and to select the right products. Do remember that financial planning is not a one-off exercise and needs constant monitoring and course corrections along the way.

Q. I am 33 and a dentist with an academic job and a private set up. My monthly earnings are about ₹40,000. I am married and have a child. I am yet to start financial planning. How much should I save every month?

SRINIDHI BHAT

A. The first step in financial planning, as detailed above, would be to map out your key financial goals today with the timelines by which you would like to achieve them.

If you have dependents who contribute to the family's spending, you also need to take both a term life and a health insurance cover to tide you and your family over unexpected events. You will also need to save 9 months' of living expenses in a bank FD to meet any unforeseen emergencies that interrupt your income or work.

In our view, while real estate can be one of your investments, it cannot be the only one, given that returns from this asset are very location-specific and that land can be quite illiquid as an investment. It is best to maintain a diversified basket of investments across real estate, stocks, bonds, FDs and gold. Both your stock and bond investments can be routed through mutual funds.

Kindly start by investing ₹1.5 lakh a year in PPF which can contribute to your retirement planning and help in tax savings. You can start SIPs in hybrid equity or multi-cap equity funds towards your longer term goals such as child's education. Financial planning is an ongoing process for which you may need the services of a qualified financial advisor, to help you quantify goals, decide on the asset allocation and choose the right products.

Readers can send in queries on personal finance and investing to moneywise@thehindu.co.in. Our experts who write on personal finance will answer these queries. Moneywise will not give specific recommendations for investment in a particular mutual fund scheme, share or fixed deposit.

MIND YOUR MONEY

Stay focussed on your INVESTMENTS

There are many imponderables in life but they should not deflect us from achieving our life goals



THINK INVESTOR

Is there a safe investment?

With uncertainties rising, investors are anxious about the safety of their money

VENKATESH BANGARUSWAMY

In tune with current times, Claudius in the Shakespearean play, Hamlet, would have, perhaps, said: "When anxieties come, they come not in single spies, but in battalions!" With uncertainty in employment on one side and volatile financial markets on the other, it is natural that we are overanxious about the world around us.

It is in this backdrop that we address a reader's question: How safe are bank deposits in these uncertain times? In this article, we show there are no safe investments and that your investment decision involves risk trade-offs.

Default risk

A safe investment is not one that will protect your nominal capital. Rather, it is one that will help you accumulate money at a required rate with zero risk.

Suppose you have to earn 4% compounded annual return to achieve your goal eight years hence, the safest investment would be a cumulative bank deposit with zero default risk. Unfortunately, all banks carry default risk, though low. That means there is no safe investment! You should, therefore, look for investments with a minimal risk.

You may be aware that the Reserve Bank of India has identified SBI, ICICI Bank and HDFC Bank as domestic systemically important banks. While these



No safe haven: Investors cannot avoid risk. It all comes down to what risks one is comfortable with. • GETTY IMAGES

banks may reduce your anxiety levels on a default risk, you may not fancy the interest rates they offer.

There is an alternative. In the Budget, the government increased insurance cover that banks offer on deposits (including savings account) from ₹1 lakh to ₹5 lakh.

You can, therefore, spread your deposits across banks such that the maturity amount of your cumulative deposits does not exceed ₹5 lakh in any one bank. Of course, it will be cumbersome to monitor deposits across multiple banks.

Reinvestment risk

What about direct investment in government bonds? True, such investments do not have default risk, but they expose you to high reinvestment risk.

To understand this risk, consider a five-year cumulative bank deposit for ₹10,000 at 5.5% interest per annum. In the first year, you earn ₹550 as interest income, which the bank adds to your deposit amount.

In the second year, you will earn 5.5% on ₹10,550. But if the bank were to credit the interest to your savings account, you have to reinvest ₹550 at 5.5% per cent every year. Why?

To earn 5.5% compounded return on your initial investment, you should reinvest your interest income at 5.5% every year. But you could face problems finding investment opportunities every year, especially, if the RBI were to cut interest rates.

So, the risk you run today is that you may be forced to reinvest the yearly interest income

at a lower rate in the future. This reinvestment risk is very high for government bonds because you will receive interest every half year.

It all comes down to trade-offs. Suppose, you want to accumulate money for 7 years, you can invest in a recurring (or cumulative) deposit that matures in 7 years. It may be difficult to find a government bond with the same maturity.

You could invest in an open-end bond fund and redeem your units after 7 years. Suffice it to know such funds cannot provide fixed returns because they offer net asset value (NAV)-based returns.

So, if your anxiety levels are high, consider keeping your deposits with the three systemically important banks. If your anxiety levels are not-so-high, then consider other public sector banks in addition to these three systemically important banks. And if you want to get a somewhat higher interest rate, you may have to consider private-sector banks.

Remember this: You cannot avoid any risk. It all comes down to what risks you are comfortable with – zero default risk, high reinvestment risk (government bonds) or low default risk, zero reinvestment risk (recurring and cumulative bank deposits).

(The author offers training programmes for individuals to manage their personal investments)

What is switching?

K. BHARAT KUMAR

What is switching?

■ In the context of mutual fund investments, 'switching out' is the act of moving your investments from one mutual fund scheme to another within the same fund house – switching in – without having to see your money move in and out of your bank account.



• GETTYIMAGES/ISTOCK

How does it work?

■ You can switch or move your investments from one scheme to another when both schemes are managed by the same asset management company. Website mutualfundssaihiai.com says that to switch funds, the investor needs to fill up and sign a switch form specifying the number of units to be switched from the source scheme and the name of the destination scheme. Online platforms allow you to do this switch with just a click, by choosing your source scheme and destination scheme.

Are there exit load expenses?

■ Yes. Whatever exit load charges were applicable – had you sold and encashed units in the source scheme – would apply when you switch out.

Can you switch from a scheme in one fund house to a scheme in another?

■ No. It is not possible to move investments between two schemes belonging to two different fund houses, using the switch option.

Will there be tax

LOOSE CHANGE

RAVIKANTH



"Let me guess. Your child has started collecting currencies as a hobby, right?"

PERSONAL LOAN - RATES AND CHARGES

Name of Lender	Interest rate (%)	EMI (Rs) Loan amount 5 lakh Tenure - 5 years	EMI (Rs) Loan amount 1 lakh Tenure - 5 years	Processing fee (% of loan amount)
State Bank of India	9.60-13.85	10,525-11,595	2,105-2,319	Upto 1.5% (Maximum Rs 15,000)
Citi Bank	9.99-16.49	10,621-12,290	2,124-2,458	Upto 3%
HDFC Bank	10.75-21.30	10,809-13,611	2,162-2,722	Rs 2,999-25,000
Bank of Baroda	10.10-15.10	10,648-11,921	2,130-2,384	Rs 1,000-10,000
Axis Bank	12.00-24.00	11,122-14,384	2,224-2,877	1.5%-2%
ICICI Bank	11.25-22.00	10,934-13,809	2,187-2,762	Upto 2.25%
Bank of Maharashtra	9.70-10.70	10,550-10,797	2,110-2,159	1% (Minimum Rs 1000)
Canara Bank	10.20-13.90	10,673-11,608	2,135-2,322	Upto 1% (Maximum Rs 5,000)
Punjab National Bank	8.80-11.65	10,331-11,034	2,066-2,207	Upto 1%
Indian Bank	9.20-13.65	10,428-11,544	2,086-2,309	Upto Rs 255 for pensioners; 0.512% for other borrowers (Minimum Rs 512)
Union Bank of India	8.90-13.00	10,355-11,377	2,071-2,275	Upto 0.5% (Maximum Rs 7,500)

Rates and charges as on July 8, 2020

NEW CAR LOAN-RATES AND CHARGES

Name of Bank	Interest rate (%)	EMI (Rs) Loan amount 5 lakh Tenure-5 years	Processing fee (% of loan amount)
Bank of Baroda	7.10-9.10	9,924-10,403	0.50% (Rs 2,500-10,000)
Punjab & Sind Bank	7.10-7.45	9,924-10,007	Nil
Punjab National Bank	7.15-7.65	9,936-10,055	Up to 0.25% (Max: 1,500) For Insta Vehicle Loan: Rs 1,000
Canara Bank	7.30-9.90	9,972-10,599	0.25% (Rs 1,000-5,000)
Bank of India	7.35-7.95	9,983-10,126	Up to 0.25% (Max: 5,000) For Rural Areas: Rs 1,500-20,000
UCO Bank	7.45-7.70	10,007-10,067	Up to 1% (Max: Rs 1,500)
Indian Bank	7.55-8.15	10,031-10,174	Up to 0.230% (Max: Rs 10,236)
State Bank of India	7.70-11.20*	10,067-10,921	Up to 0.50% For Green Car Loan: Rs 1,000-Rs 1,500
HDFC Bank	8.80-10.00	10,331-10,624	1% (Rs 5,000-Rs 10,000)
Lakshmi Vilas Bank	8.80	10,331	0.50% (Rs 1,000-Rs 10,000)
Federal Bank	8.90	10,355	Rs 1,500-Rs 2,500
Axis Bank	9.05-11.30	10,391-10,946	Rs 3,500-5,500

*Additional concession of 0.25% on application via YONO. Further concession of 0.20% on purchase of EVs.

Source: Paisabazaar.com

Rates and charges as on July 8, 2020

Source: Paisabazaar.com

Gaurav Mashruwala

If Goods and Services Tax (GST) rate on international airfare rises, how many of us will cancel our foreign vacation with family?

Similarly, if the government reduces GST on hiring of banquet halls in hotels, how many of us will hurry into getting our son or daughter married even though they are pursuing higher education to take benefit of the lower GST?

Though it is true that the GST rates do impact our lives and also the cost of living, that is something which is not in our control.

Equally true is the fact that many financial goals of our life have to be fulfilled, even if something beyond our control, such as a rise or fall in GST rates, occurs.

Financial responsibilities

Some of these goals could be in form of our family financial responsibilities such as funding the education of our children, getting them married, our retirement and the like.

There could also be certain dreams and aspirations such as going on a foreign vacation with family and purchasing a bigger car.

A lot of these do not change simply because either GST or, for that matter, most other taxes and levies in the country increase or decrease. Yet, we keep foc

TV PICKS

Premier League: Star Sports 1 & SS Select 1 (SD & HD) 12.20 a.m. (Tuesday)
Serie A: Sony Ten 2 (SD & HD), 1.10 a.m. (Tuesday)

IN BRIEF



Chetan Chauhan tests positive for COVID-19

NEW DELHI
Former India cricketer and Uttar Pradesh cabinet minister Chetan Chauhan has tested positive for COVID-19. The development of Chauhan testing positive for the virus emerged late on Saturday from the tweets of former India players Aakash Chopra and R.P. Singh, who wished him a speedy recovery. The 72-year-old underwent COVID-19 test on Friday and has been reportedly admitted to the Sanjay Gandhi PGH hospital in Lucknow. PTI



Vidit Gujrathi to lead India in chess Olympiad

CHENNAI
Vidit Gujrathi (right, with Anand) was on Sunday named captain of the Indian team that will take part in the Online Chess Olympiad 2020, scheduled to begin on July 22. The India No.2 was nominated skipper in consultation with teamate Viswanathan Anand and the AICF selection committee. PTI



Thomas moves two clear at the top

WASHINGTON
Justin Thomas fired a six-under 66 to take a two-shot lead over Viktor Hovland at the US PGA Tour Workday Charity Open at Muirfield Village in Dublin, Ohio, on Saturday. Thomas had six birdies and no bogeys on the way to a 54-hole total of 16-under 200. **Top scores:** 200 - Justin Thomas (68-66-66); 202 - Viktor Hovland (69-67-66); 203 - Collin Morikawa (65-66-72); 205 - Sam Burns (69-66-70) and Kevin Streelman (70-64-71). AFP



Ex-Australia and Palace captain Jedinak retires

SYDNEY
Former Australia captain and Crystal Palace stalwart Mile Jedinak announced his retirement on Sunday, saying it was "time for a new chapter". The 35-year-old spent five seasons at the London club, joining from Turkey's Genclerbirligi in 2011, skippering Palace to promotion back to the Premier League via the playoffs in 2013. He moved to Aston Villa in 2016 but was released at the end of the 2018-19 season. He played 79 times for his country, featuring at three World Cups. AFP



Dixon wins third straight IndyCar race

LOS ANGELES
Scott Dixon became the first IndyCar driver since 2006 to open the season with three straight wins on Saturday by capturing the first race of a weekend doubleheader at Elkhart Lake, Wisconsin. The Kiwi beat Will Power by 2.538 seconds in the first race of the season that allowed fans to attend. Alex Palou finished third while Ryan Hunter-Reay and Colton Herta rounded out the top five. AFP

Blackwood steers West Indies home on thrilling final day

Chase, Dowrich and Holder play the support cast after the England pacers rattle the top-order with quick wickets

WI IN ENGLAND

REUTERS
SOUTHAMPTON

Jermaine Blackwood's fighting 95 in the second innings helped West Indies seal a four-wicket win over England on a gripping final day of the first Test at the Ageas Bowl on Sunday.

Chasing 200 to win, West Indies lost three early wickets but Blackwood shared a 73-run stand with Roston Chase (37) to revive its hopes before skipper Jason Holder and John Campbell steadied the ship to guide the visitors home.

West Indies took a 1-0 lead in the three-match series, with the second and third Tests to be held in Manchester without fans in the stadium due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Archer strikes

When the pursuit began, Barbados-born paceman Jofra Archer dismissed Kraigg Brathwaite for four with a moving ball that the opener edged onto the stumps and trapped Shamarr Brooks in



Taking charge: Jermaine Blackwood handled the England bowlers with aplomb as West Indies drew first blood. ■ GETTY IMAGES

front with a beauty.

After Mark Wood bowled Shai Hope for nine to leave West Indies in trouble at 27

for three,

Chase and Blackwood set about repairing the damage. Archer, who tormented

the batsmen with his pace and bounce, had Chase caught behind with a fine delivery, but Dowrich provided

solid support as the West Indies edged towards its target. Earlier, England was bowled out for 313 in its second

SCOREBOARD

England — 1st innings: 204.

West Indies — 1st innings: 318.

England — 2nd innings: Rory Burns c Campbell b Chase 42, Dom Sibley c Dowrich b Gabriel 50, Joe Denly c Holder b Chase 29, Zak Crawley c & b Joseph 76, Ben Stokes c Hope b Holder 46, Ollie Pope b Gabriel 12, Jos Buttler b Joseph 9, Dom Bess b Gabriel 3, Jofra Archer c Dowrich b Gabriel 23, Mark Wood c Dowrich b Gabriel 2, James Anderson (not out) 4; Extras (b-4, lb-10, w-5, nb-1); 13; Total (for six wkts. in 64.2 overs): 200.

Fall of wickets: 1-7, 2-7, 3-27, 4-100, 5-168, 6-189.

England bowling: Anderson 15-3-42-0, Archer 17-3-45-3, Wood 12-0-36-1, Bess 10-2-31-0, Stokes 10.2-1-39-2.

Man-of-the-Match: Gabriel.

West Indies won by four wickets to take a 1-0 lead in three-match series.

Second Test:

July 16 to 20, Manchester.

short-pitched ball to the keeper on 23.

Gabriel scalps five

Gabriel finished with figures of five for 75 – his sixth five-wicket haul in Tests – while Chase and Alzarri Joseph picked up two wickets apiece.

Hamilton zips to 85th career win

Bottas makes it a Mercedes 1-2; disaster for Ferrari

STYRIAN GP

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
SPIELBERG

A dominant Lewis Hamilton secured his first win of the season and the 85th of his career with a perfectly-judged victory from pole in Sunday's Styrian Grand Prix.

Valterri Bottas, who won the curtain-raising race last week, finished 13.7 seconds adrift in second to deliver first Mercedes one-two in Austria since 2015 with Max Verstappen in third.

Bottas leads the championship ahead of Hamilton with Lando Norris third.

The paddock seemed to be split again pre-race as some drivers were absent as Hamilton led the protests in support of the Black Lives Matter movement by taking a knee.

Good feeling
"It's great to be back up here and thanks to the team," said Hamilton. "This feels like it has been a long time coming after a difficult weekend last time."

Bottas said he had enjoyed his battle with Verstappen. "Starting fourth,



Easily done: Lewis Hamilton won with consummate ease on Sunday. ■ REUTERS

this was damage limitation for me," he said. "I tried, but we are just a bit too slow," admitted Verstappen.

Verstappen was slowed by slight car damage in the final stages, ahead of teammate Alex Albon, who defended stoutly to finish fourth.

Norris came home a remarkable fifth for McLaren after passing both of Racing Point's pink Mercedes cars during a thrilling final lap, Sergio Perez taking sixth after starting from 17th on the grid, and Lance Stroll seventh.

Both Ferraris were eliminated after crashing together at Turn Three on the

opening lap, Charles Leclerc apologising to four-time champion Sebastian Vettel, who is in his last season with the team, for his ill-judged dive down the inside that resulted in a disaster for the Italian team.

THE RESULTS
1. Hamilton (Mercedes) 1h22m50.683s; 2. Bottas (Mercedes) +13.719s; 3. Verstappen (Red Bull) +33.698s; 4. Albon (Red Bull) +44.400s; 5. Norris (McLaren) +1m 01.470s; 6. Perez (Racing Point) +1m 02.387s; 7. Stroll (Racing Point) +1m 02.453s; 8. Ricciardo (Renault) +1m 02.591s; 9. Sainz Jr. (McLaren) +1 lap; 10. Kyat (Alpha Tauri) +1 lap; 11. Raikkonen (Alfa Romeo) +1 lap; 12. Magnussen (Haas) +1 lap; 13. Grosjean (Haas) +1 lap; 14. Giovinazzi (Alfa Romeo) +1 lap; 15. Gasly (Alpha Tauri) +1 lap; 16. Russell (Williams) +2 laps; 17. Williams) +2 laps.

Did Not Finish: Ocon (Renault), Leclerc (Ferrari), and Vettel (Ferrari).

Standings (top-5): Drivers: 1. Bottas 43; 2. Hamilton 37; 3. Norris 26; 4. Leclerc 18; 5. Perez 16.

Constructors: 1. Mercedes 80; 2. McLaren 39; 3. Red Bull 27; 4. Racing Point 22; 5. Ferrari 19.

Next race: Hungarian GP, July 19.

Hima confident of landing a berth for Tokyo Olympics

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

Star sprinter Hima Das is not unduly worried about having to qualify for the Tokyo Olympics, as she feels she can make it to her maiden Games once the international season, suspended due to COVID-19 pandemic, resumes.

Hima, the reigning 400m junior World champion, is yet to qualify for the postponed Olympics and the international season has been suspended till November 30.

"Worrying about it would only create unnecessary tension. There still is a year to go for the Olympics," Hima told PTI in an interview from NIS, Patiala.

The 20-year-old Hima, known as the 'Dhing Express', holds the 400m National record (50.79 sec).

"Let us first pray that this pandemic ends. Then the



Hima Das. ■ AFP

conds). However, a lower-back injury has been troubling her for some time, leading to speculation that she may not run the 400m and switch to the 200m, she had left it to her coach to take a call on that, Hima said.

Hima won six races in Poland and the Czech Republic in July and August last year. But she ran just one 400m, four of the five other wins came in the 200m.

Specialised training

Hima said the campers at Patiala had begun easing into specialised training after their outdoor fitness regimen.

"There are no immediate competitions and so we are just doing medium-intensity training," she said.

Ronaldo to Juventus' rescue

Barcelona manages a win; Sheffield stuns Chelsea

EURO LEAGUES

REUTERS
TURIN

Cristiano Ronaldo converted two penalties, both awarded for handball and the second in the last minute, as Serie A leader Juventus twice hit back to draw 2-2 with Atalanta to move closer to a ninth successive title on Saturday.

The win took Juventus eight points clear of second-placed Lazio, which lost 2-1 to Sassuolo, with six matches to play.

With help from Messi

In the LaLiga, Lionel Messi notched a 20th assist of the season to help a lacklustre Barcelona secure a 1-0 win away to Real Valladolid. Arturo Vidal struck the winner in the 15th minute.

David McGoldrick scored twice for Sheffield United as it upset Chelsea with a 3-0 win in the Premier League at Bramall Lane. Chelsea's grip on a top four place – and



At it again: Cristiano Ronaldo's spot kicks helped Juventus salvage a draw and inch closer to the title. ■ AFP

Champions League qualification – was weakened by the result.

The results:

Serie A: Lazio 1 (Alberto 33) lost to Sassuolo 2 (Raspadori 52, Caputo 90+2); Brescia 0 lost to Roma 3 (Fazio 48, Kalinic 62, Zaniolo 74); Juventus 2 (Ronaldo 55-pen, 90-pen) drew with Atalanta 2 (Zapata 16, Malinovskiy 81).

LaLiga: Espanyol 0 lost to Eibar 2 (Exposito 25-pen, 36); Osasuna 2 (Gallego 23, Arnaiz 44, Bernardo Silva 56).

Rijiju to hold online meet with State ministers

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

Union Sports Minister Kiren Rijiju will hold discussions with sports ministers of all states and union territories from July 14 to figure a way forward as sporting activities begin to resume amid the gradual lifting of the COVID-19 lockdown.

The two-day online meeting will review the action taken during the pandemic, and discuss resumption of sporting activities at the state level along with identification of budding talent through competitions at block and district levels.

"The country is in the second phase of unlock now and it is important to have a dialogue with the states to align the way forward for sports and youth related activities," Rijiju said in a statement.

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