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No troops detained by
China along LAC in
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nod to hire its workers,
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State seeks doctors, nurses from Kerala

GAUTAM S. MENGLE
MUMBAI

An embattled Maharashtra government has sought experienced doctors and nurses from Kerala to help counter the COVID-19 pandemic that is pushing the State's health infrastructure to the limit, particularly in worst-affected Mumbai and Pune.

Dr. T.P. Lahane, the State's Director of Medical Education and Research, has written to Kerala's Health and Social Welfare Minister K.K. Shailaja urging the southern State to lend 50 specialist doctors and 100 nurses on a temporary basis. "Currently, doctors and paramedical staff are working at their fullest capacity... However, we require in addition, more doctors for the management of COVID-19 patients in [Mumbai and Pune]," he said.

THE HINDU
greets its readers on
the occasion of
ID-UL-FITR

EDUCATION PLUS ▶ PAGE 11

Flight and health curbs cloud airline operations

New Health Ministry norms & State-specific protocols, including mandatory quarantines, have left airlines, passengers confused

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

Amid growing uncertainty on the number of flights allowed by different States at specific airports and the health protocols to be followed by passengers at each of them, the Ministry of Civil Aviation held a meeting on Sunday evening with airlines and airports to finalise routes that could be opened from Monday.

"Except Andhra Pradesh which will start on 26/5 & West Bengal on 28/5, domestic flights will recommence across the country from tomorrow," Civil Aviation Minister Hardeep Puri tweeted after the meeting.

Fresh guidelines

With all domestic (air/ rail/ inter-State bus) travel to resume from Monday, the Health Ministry has issued new guidelines for inter-State travel and international arrivals, stating that only COVID-asymptomatic domestic passengers/ international arrivals will be permitted with the advice that they shall self-monitor their health for 14 days. However, the Ministry also instructed States/UTs to develop their own protocol with regard to quarantine and isolation as per their assessment.

With several States announcing a delay in opening airports or restricting the number of flights over apprehension of a spike in infec-

Travel guide

A look at the guidelines issued by the Health Ministry for domestic and international travellers

INTERNATIONAL ARRIVALS (AIR, LAND AND SEA)

- Before boarding, all passengers need to agree to 7 days of paid institutional quarantine, followed by 7 days of home isolation

- A copy of the self-declaration form should be produced to officials on arrival

DOMESTIC TRAVEL (AIR/ TRAIN/ INTER-STATE BUS TRAVEL)

- A 14-day home quarantine will be permitted only for reasons such as human distress, pregnancy, death in the family, serious illness and parent(s) accompanied by children less than 10 years old. Use of Aarogya Setu is mandatory in such cases

COMMON GUIDELINES

- Only asymptomatic passengers will be allowed; use of Aarogya Setu app is advised

- On arrival, all asymptomatic passengers will be permitted to go home. They have to self-monitor their health for 14 days

- Passengers and crew should wear masks and ensure hand hygiene

- Compulsory thermal screening will be done at exit points

Civil Aviation Ministry to restart operations.

West Bengal's Kolkata and Bagdogra airports have delayed re-opening until May 28 due to cyclone Amphan.

The airports will see curtailed operations and allow only 10 arrivals and departures each to begin with. Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee said on Saturday they would request the Centre to postpone domestic flights.

Vijayawada and Visakhapatnam airports in Andhra Pradesh will reopen only from Tuesday, with only 20%

tions, there was a lack of clarity among airlines about destinations they could connect to as well as the number of flights they could operate.

While Mumbai will restart operations from Monday, it will allow only 25 each of arrivals and departures, just a fourth of the flights the Centre said airlines (30% of regular flights) could operate to different airports. The decision to resume flights came just hours after Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray said he had sought more time from the

Centre to postpone domestic flights.

Vijayawada and Visakhapatnam airports in Andhra Pradesh will reopen only from Tuesday, with only 20%

of flights permitted. Hyderabad airport in Telangana will reopen but permit only 15 arrivals and departures.

In a late night announcement, Mr. Puri said a maximum of 25 flights per day will land in Chennai, while there was no limit on departures.

The State government, which had earlier indicated that it would allow departures rather than arrivals, was yet to announce its "quarantine" measures for incoming passengers.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8



If found symptomatic on arrival, passengers will be taken to the nearest health facility

Those with moderate or severe symptoms will be sent to dedicated COVID-19 facilities

Passengers and crew should wear masks and ensure hand hygiene

Compulsory thermal screening will be done at exit points

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CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

Quarantine norms differ across States

Kerala, Karnataka impose tight rules

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

Many States are simply following the Union Health Ministry's guidelines for arriving air passengers, but Karnataka will require travellers boarding from such "high-risk States" as Maharashtra, Delhi, Tamil Nadu, Gujarat, Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh to undergo seven days of institutional quarantine on arrival in Bengaluru.

As air travel resumes in the country on Monday, passengers will be tested for COVID-19 from the fifth to seventh day of arrival, a Karnataka official said. If they test negative, they will be asked to follow seven days of home quarantine. But exemptions have been given to pregnant women, children below 10 and others.

Asymptomatic passengers arriving from other States will be asked to follow 14 days of home quarantine. In a late night announcement, Mr. Puri said a maximum of 25 flights per day will land in Chennai, while there was no limit on departures.

The State government, which had earlier indicated that it would allow departures rather than arrivals, was yet to announce its "quarantine" measures for incoming passengers.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8



A flight being readied for operations in Chennai.

will be rushed from airports to a COVID-19 care centre or hospital.

Gujarat will not require quarantine for asymptomatic passengers. "We are following the government of India's protocols for domestic travellers departing from or arriving at airports in Gujarat," Secretary (Civil Aviation) Mamta Verma said.

Though Tamil Nadu Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami had urged the Centre to defer in-coming flights, both departure and arrivals will resume from Monday. It is mandatory for all passengers flying into the State to register their details online after booking the ticket and apply for and obtain a T.N. ePASS on <https://TNepass.tnega.org>.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

COVID-19 cases: India now in top 10

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

India on Sunday reported the highest single-day spike so far of 7,097 COVID-19 cases, taking the overall tally to 1,38,482, according to reports from the State Health Departments. The number of active cases stood at 76,858, while 57,605 people have recovered. The death toll crossed 4,000, with 150 new fatalities.

Data from Johns Hopkins University show that the total number of cases in India has surpassed that of Iran (with 1,35,701 confirmed infections). India now has the 10th highest number of confirmed cases worldwide.

Maharashtra reported a surge of 3,041 cases – its highest till date – to breach the 50,000-mark. The tally touched 50,231, while 58 more deaths saw the toll surge to 1,635. The number of cases in Gujarat rose to 14,063, with 394 new infections. With 29 new fatalities, the toll rose to 858.

Meanwhile, the Union Health Ministry said the recovery rate in the country stood at 41.28%. "The testing capacity has been ramped up in both, and as on date, around 1,50,000 tests can be conducted every day," said the Ministry release.

USE OF AYURVEDA ▶ PAGE 10

Too close for comfort



Slippers safe, people unsafe: People sit together flouting physical distancing norms after marking their spots in a queue to collect food packets being distributed by TRS leaders at Nampally in Hyderabad on Sunday. ■ G. RAMAKRISHNA

Chhattisgarh CJ throws a lifeline to stranded students

He helps group from AIIMS, stuck for 2 months, return home

KRISHNADAS RAJAGOPAL

NEW DELHI

At a time when thousands of people are stranded across the country due to the ongoing COVID-19 lockdown, Chhattisgarh High Court Chief Justice P.R. Ramachandra Menon has quietly helped scores of medical and nursing students of AIIMS Raipur travel home.

Chief Justice Menon's timely intervention, on the basis of an email received from a Supreme Court lawyer, saw the State government swing into action to provide buses for the students to return to their hometowns in Kerala.

Justice Menon, speaking to *The Hindu* on Sunday, said these students were to morrow's frontline workers in case of a future health crisis and they should be able to trust the system to help them in their need of hour. "Let them be able to do their duty to society in the years



Chief Justice P.R.
Ramachandra Menon

to come," he said in a telephonic conversation from Chhattisgarh.

The email sent by advocate Haris Beeram on May 17 to Chief Justice Menon said the students were stranded in Raipur since March 20. Mr. Beeram said some of them had contacted him, seeking legal help to get home. He said trains were available from Delhi and Punjab, but none passed through Chhattisgarh.

"I generated a file on the basis of this email and passed an administrative or

der calling forth information from the State government... I wanted to ascertain the facts on whether the students had enough food or whether they had been denied entry into their hostels. I instructed the Registrar General to collect the information through the Advocate General of the State... I wanted to see if there was any need to register a case on the judicial side..." the Chief Justice said.

He said the State government reacted promptly by providing buses for the students. "Full credit goes to the Chhattisgarh government." He said the judiciary simply played its part of taking cognisance of a concerned citizen's representation.

"We [the judiciary] cannot simply direct the government to do anything unless there is a breach on the part of the government," the CJ drew the line.

Maharashtra's COVID-19 cases cross 50,000

Highest single-day spike of 3,041 cases

SHOUMOJIT BANERJEE

PUNE

The State reported 3,041 more COVID-19 cases on Sunday, the highest in a day so far, taking its total cases to 50,231. As many as 58 more deaths were recorded, raising the State's death toll from the pandemic to 1,635.

Having crossed the 40,000 cases on May 21, it took the State barely 72 hours to breach the 50,000 cases number. Maharashtra's cases and death toll are the highest in the country, and within the State, Mumbai continued to see the worst spread with 1,725 new cases, taking the city's total cases to 30,251.

As many as 39 of the deaths reported on Sunday were also from Mumbai, pushing the city's death toll close to 1,000. Six deaths each were reported from Pune and Solapur districts, and four from Aurangabad.

The death toll in Aurangabad

bad has now climbed to 46, as the district reported at least 60 new cases to take its total case tally to 1,246.

"67% of the deaths reported today had high-risk co-morbidities such as diabetes, hypertension, asthma and heart disease," said State Surveillance Officer, Dr. Pradeep Awate.

Besides Mumbai, Thane in the Mumbai Metropolitan Region reported a surge of 211 new cases as the district's tally soared to 3,010, while Navi Mumbai reported a similarly big spike of 129 new cases as its total tally reached 2,007 cases.

Till date, 3,62,862 samples have been tested in Maharashtra of which 3,12,631 (nearly 90%) have returned negative while 50,231 have tested positive.

Dr. Awate said there are 2,283 active containment zones in the State currently.

MORE REPORTS ▶ PAGE 3

Just as wrong to lift lockdown abruptly as imposing it: CM

</

NUMBER OF PRISONERS

35,884

The fourth largest number, after Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Bihar

NUMBER OF CONVICTS

8,908

The third largest, after Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh

NUMBER OF UNDERTRIALS

26,898

(Indian). The third largest, after Uttar Pradesh and Bihar

5,065 (from other States).
The highest, followed by Uttar Pradesh and Delhi**508** (foreign)

MAHARASHTRA'S JAILS AT A GLANCE

NUMBER OF JAILS

64

Under Prisons Department

172Sub-jails
sanctioned by Revenue Department**114**

Are functional



ILLUSTRATION: SANJAY TAMBE

SONAM SAIGAL

MUMBAI

On May 5, two months after the Arthur Road jail superintendent warned that an outbreak of COVID-19 could not be contained in the jail due to overcrowding, his worst fears came true: the first positive case was discovered in the precincts.

The number has, as expected, grown in the sardine-can jail, with its 25-ft-high walls: there are now 184 COVID-19 patients among over 2,500 inmates (see box, 'Walled in'). The question of isolating the patients and maintaining physical distancing in such conditions is out of the question.

Seen in the context of over 50,000 positive cases in the State, this may seem like a small number. But it has brought into sharp focus what legal experts and activists have been harping on: the need for prison and judicial reforms.

While there has been an application of mind to prison reforms in India, the ideas were slow in coming, the implementation even slower. Somewhere, the will – whether in the judiciary or legislature – has been lacking. There is still a reluctance to grant bail to undertrials, with the result that jails are overcrowded, and as we are now seeing, hotbeds of disease.

Justice V.R. Krishna Iyer, a former Supreme Court judge credited with reforming the criminal justice system, had once said, "In our world, prisons are still laboratories of torture, warehouses in which human commodities are sadistically kept and where spectrums of inmates range from driftwood juveniles to heroic dissenters."

The reforms mandate

The idea of reforms took birth in 1835, when Lord Thomas Babington Macaulay, in his representation to the Legislative Council, spoke about the inhuman conditions in Indian prisons. His recommendations led to the first committee on reforms being formed by Lord William Bentinck. What Lord Macaulay said also became the basis for the Prisons Act of 1894.

The idea of transformation, though, took some time in coming. The Jails Committee in 1919-20, headed by Sir Alexander Cardew, underlined the need for a reformative approach to prison inmates and discouraged the use of corporal punishment. Decades later, the All India Jail Reform Committee, in 1980-83, recommended prisoners' rights.

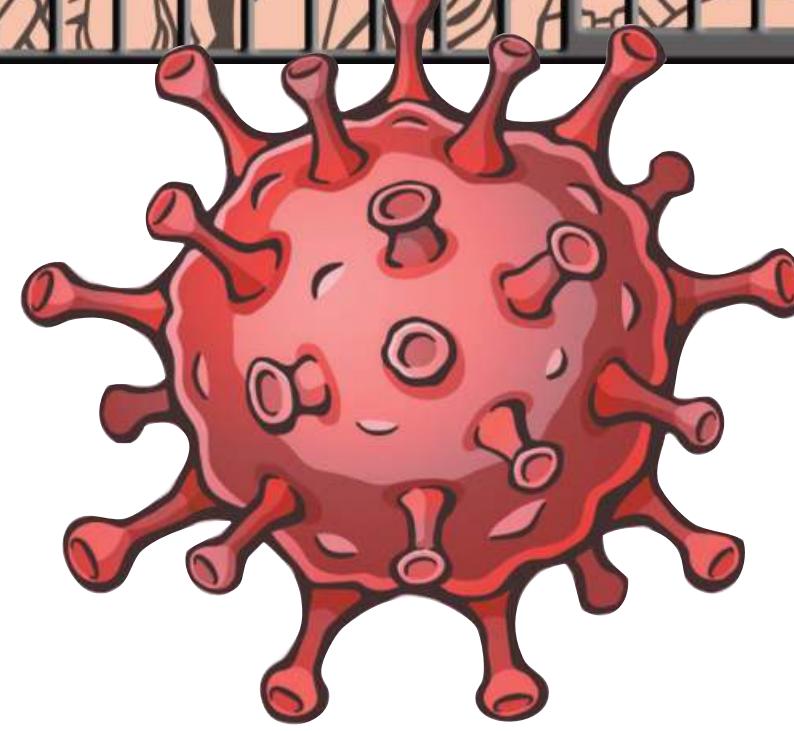
Since then, various State and Centre-led committees have recommended reforms. Yet, when the novel coronavirus reared its head in the country, the Supreme Court had to intervene and direct States to release prisoners.

There has been reluctance by the judiciary and the legislature to address the growing number of prisoners, and to decongest our jails, say legal experts. While the judiciary is primarily responsible for not addressing the issue of prisoners, the legislature is yet to bring in reforms that could decriminalise antiquated laws, or even re-examine British-era criminal laws.

The question of bail

Nowhere is this laxity more evident than in the current scenario. The courts have been tasked with releasing prisoners, which they are doing in the laborious manner they are known for.

"The Supreme Court has passed no order, and has only directed the State governments



Jails turn into HOTBEDS OF DISEASE

Judges withhold bail; several prison reforms recommended over the years have fallen through the cracks

to constitute high-powered committees (HPCs) so that they can come up with criteria by which prisoners can be released," says Madhurima Dhanuka, programme head, Prison Reforms Programme, Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative. "As the committees have no power to release prisoners, the courts have to decide on a case-to-case basis."

The HPC in Maharashtra comprises a High Court judge, the additional chief secretary, Home, and Director General, Prisons. It paved the way for the release of 8,381 prisoners across Maharashtra.

But human rights organisations and activists went to court saying this was not sufficient.

On May 11, the committee decided to release 50% of the 35,239 prisoners in the State. But by May 22, just 114 inmates had been released from Arthur Road jail, which primarily houses undertrials, and 1,036 in total from all prisons. A total of 2,240 convicts were released on parole from other prisons between May 11 and May 22. The total number of inmates released since lockdown stood at 8,381 on May 22, which includes the 5,105 prisoners who were already released after the HPC met for the first time on March 25.

The State wants undertrials to follow the legal process of securing bail despite the constitution of an HPC. "Neither the Supreme Court nor the committee has solved the problem," said former SC judge, B.N. Srikrishna. "Does the committee want all

undertrials to go to court? Then what is it that the committee has done extra?"

The already long process of obtaining bail is now longer because courts are not functioning at full strength. Therefore, it is better to let undertrials out on interim bail and when the term expires, they can be taken into custody again, said Justice Srikrishna.

Where bail petitions have come up for hearing, courts have been rejecting them despite the prevalence of the novel coronavirus in the State and former SC judges terming it an "unnerving" and serious issue. "The judges are not applying their minds when they are rejecting bail. Bail is the rule and jail is the exception," said Justice Srikrishna.

When an accused is arrested, he needs to be tried immediately, but because an investigation needs to be carried out, it is not possible to start the trial soon. The idea is to have the accused available when the trial begins. So an accused should be allowed to go home as long as he comes back, said Justice Srikrishna. "Bail should be denied only if there is a risk of flight, or if he will tamper with the evidence."

Retired SC judge H.S. Bedi said the denial of bail was unnerving. "We are faced with a very difficult situation and it is the lack of maturity on part of the judges because they are not taking into consideration the situation on the ground," he said.

K.G. Balakrishnan, former chief justice of India and ex-chairperson of the National Human Rights Commission, said courts rejecting bail was a "real problem". "At a time

when we are trying to decongest our prisons, courts are rejecting undertrials' bail pleas," he said.

At over 67%, no other country has such a large number of undertrials, around 33% of whom are convicted. "It should be the other way round. Several directions are given by courts to no avail," said Justice Balakrishnan.

The only way this can be achieved is when the SC gives general directions on being liberal while granting bail, he said. "In cases where the undertrial has undergone the maximum sentence, they can be released on personal bonds. At times, it is not possible to arrange for a surety and complete other formalities," he said.

Crowding in jails

The cost of keeping someone in jail is not small, either. The 1,339 jails in India have over 4,60,916 inmates, employ over 60,000 jail officials and incur an expense of over ₹6,000 crore, according to the National Crime Records Bureau statistics of 2018. Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, Maharashtra, West Bengal and Punjab accounted for 57.1% of the total prisoners in India in 2018.

Before COVID-19 struck and the government released 8,381 prisoners, Maharashtra had over 35,000 jail inmates. The annual prisons' budget increased by 62% to ₹6,086.7 crore in 2018-2019 from ₹3,744.96 crore in 2013-2014. The expenditure increased by 58.7% to ₹5,283.7 crore in 2018-19 from ₹3,328.378 crore in 2013-14.

The Law Commission, in its 77th report in 1978, had said, "A high percentage of jail population comprises of an undertrial person. This is not a satisfactory situation."

To deal with the problem of undertrials, it said courts should give preference to cases where the accused are in jail and the target for their disposal should be four months.

A certain amount of stringency is necessary to ensure prompt disposal so that the interested parties do not prolong pendency of cases; trial magistrates should furnish periodical statements of cases not concluded within the prescribed time; adjournments of cases should not be granted unless absolutely necessary where the accused is in jail, it said.

Conceptual shift

Courts' reluctance to grant bail needs to be framed in the larger context of how they view crime, punishment, and the criminal.

"Unnecessarily prolonged custody does not serve any societal purpose, but adversely impacts the psyche of the individual and his or her immediate family by virtually criminalising the person before trial. Bail, not jail, should not be reduced to a mere slogan," said retired SC judge Madan Lokur.

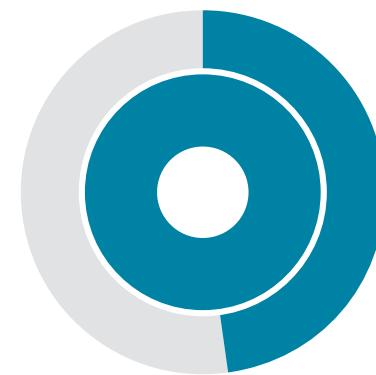
Justice Lokur said he had perceived a gradual shift in the way crime and punishment were perceived. In 1980, the SC held in a case that while awaiting the sentence, regard must be given to not only the crime but also the criminal. "Following this decision, the debate on punishment being deterrent and retributive or reformative and rehabilitative clearly shifted in favour of the criminal," he said.

The past few years, though, have been regressive: the purpose of punishment and sentencing is gradually shifting back to deterrence and retribution. "The shift is clearly visible in several cases in which bail is declined and anticipatory bail is refused.

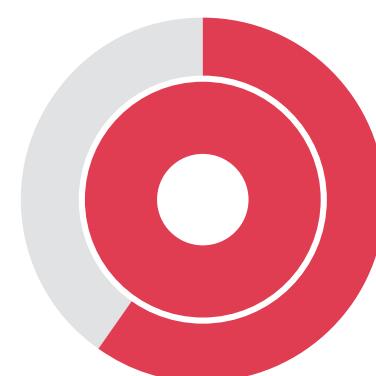
The criminal as a human being has become less important than the crime," said Justice Lokur. It is for this reason that the number of offences for which death penalty is awarded has increased, he said.

"We need to follow the law and also ap-

OVERCROWDING IN PRISONS

**148%**

OVERALL

**159.2%**

WOMEN'S PRISONS

WALLED IN

■ Built in 1926, the Arthur Road jail was upgraded in 1994 to make it a central prison with 16 barracks to house 800 prisoners – woefully inadequate to handle the current load.

■ Once the COVID-19 cases were discovered, efforts to find a suitable quarantine location took the jail authorities to the Eversmile Complex at Mahul in Chembur, where project-affected persons in the city have been resettled.

■ The place is controversial: industries in the neighbourhood have been held responsible for the chronic cases of asthma and tuberculosis in the area.

■ Even a letter from the local arms department of the Mumbai Police suggesting it was "unfit" for quarantine facilities went unnoticed. Eventually, the Bombay High Court, acting on a public interest litigation, said the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation should not use the site as a quarantine facility without the court's permission. An alternative is yet to be found.

preciate, in this context, the reason behind the Indian Penal Code giving wide discretion in the quantum of punishment for various offences, including murder."

To Justice Lokur, it is important that courts appreciate personal liberty. "The liberty of an individual should not be taken away for the asking and the courts should not allow this to happen," he said.

Till such a depth of understanding returns to the legal system, the words of British poet William Blake will ring true. In his book, *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, he wrote, "Prisons are built with stones of law."

Neither the Supreme

Court nor the committee

has solved the problem.

Does the committee want

all undertrials to go to

court? Then what is it

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**Buzz in the city**

:: SURYA PRAPHULLA KUMAR

The world over, urban beekeeping is picking up in popularity – from the roofs of the gilded Opera Garnier in Paris and Fortnum & Mason in London to Melbourne's CBD. Closer home, UTMT had a programme in Mumbai, at the Maharashtra Nature Park in Dharavi, but they discontinued it in 2014 because of vandalism. Now they are exploring Ahmedabad, where people with rooftop gardens and small farms in the outskirts have shown interest. "Nature is complicated. We say urban areas are bad for animals, but cities – with its gardens and parks – can actually be good for bees," says Axel Brockmann of NCBS.

**Rare sightings**

Besides the four main honey bees, India has two indigenous species that aren't seen too often. The Apis laboriosa, or the Himalayan giant honey bee, is primarily found in the upper reaches of Uttarakhand. Its red honey (from flowers found at high altitudes) is said to have a psychotropic effect, and honey hunters (especially the Kulung of Nepal) scale vertical cliffs to get this 'mad honey'. The other variety is the rare Apis andreniformis, or black dwarf honey bee, that is mostly found in the forests in the Northeast states.

Attention was once again diverted from local bees when subsequent governments began to concentrate on just honey. India began to import the Mellifera in 1983, when beekeeping as a cottage industry was announced. In the last decade or so, honey production has reportedly grown by 200%, aided by initiatives like the Honey Mission – launched in 2017, in line with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's call for a Sweet Revolution. Last year, the market was worth approximately ₹1,730 crore, ac-

ting to market research company IMARC, and is estimated to double in the next five years.

A sticky problem

However, making a case for the Mellifera is much like revisiting the jersey cow vs the Indian cow debate. Yes, the European honey bee can produce anywhere between 20 kg and 40 kg of honey per colony per year, as compared to the Cerana's low output of 7 kg to 10 kg, but it has its drawbacks. It requires a lot of maintenance, carries pathogens, and is only suited to a few areas in India (it can't tolerate high temperatures or rain). "These bees require a lot of flora, so monoculture farming is preferred. They are good for commercial apiculture, which practises migratory bee-keeping – where 700-800 boxes are moved [from large mustard fields to apple orchards]," explains Krishnamoorthy. "But the reality is that 86% of our farming community is made up of small farmers; the Mellifera is not ideal for them. We've seen countless examples where the government has brought in boxes and, within months, the bees abscond because there isn't enough flora."

Interactions with organisations such as the National Bee Board haven't helped. "The government is looking at numbers and scale. But which farmer can spend ₹3 lakh to buy 50 boxes [a bee box costs ₹3,500 and the Mellifera another ₹3,000]. Instead, give a small farmer ₹2,000 of support for boxes [UTMT's cost ₹1,000] and training to transfer bees from the wild, and you give them a low-cost way of adding to their yields," she adds.

Sweetening the deal

Moving beyond the "productivist agen-

**WORLD BEE DAY**

Why Indian honey bees need some love

Apis Mellifera, a European import, produces 75% of India's honey. But the conversation needs to move away from 'foreigners' and honey, and look at why our indigenous bees can better the lives and yields of farmers



Studying the behaviour of bees is important. The Cerana doesn't travel more than 700 m, and if there is a paddy field in the way, they are unwilling to cross it. Such information is important in addressing pollination as an ecosystem service

— HEMA SOMANATHAN,
IISER Thiruvananthapuram

da" to concentrate on the bees' most important function – cross-pollination and maintaining ecological balance – is how we can bring the conversation back to our local foragers.

"Indigenous bees have evolved here, they know the plants and are better able to adapt to environmental changes," says Gowda.

UTMT has been making inroads in the last decade. Initiatives that were once met with scorn – farmers thought they were crazy "because bees live in forests and not boxes" – have now spread across Maharashtra, Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh, where they work with 67,000 farmers. Manilal Waghela from Gujarat, is a case in

point. He remembers days when they extracted honey by squeezing hives and killing bees. Now a master trainer, with 11 beehives, he says, "Ever since we started, 99% of the villagers have reported better yields."

To date, UTMT has the "largest ecosystem [with an institution] of Cerana beekeepers – around 1,000, with over 3,000 beehives", says Krishnamoorthy, adding that the recent HCL Foundation Grant of ₹5 crore will be used to expand into newer districts.

The official move

The government is slowly taking note. Though the ratio is still 80:20 in favour of Mellifera, they are looking at pollination as an important part of beekeeping. "Several agencies, including the National Bee Board, are working towards implementing bee-keeping as a pollination support system," says BNS Murthy, Horticulture Commissioner of India. "Going forward, we must balance both Cerana and Mellifera; we need to understand their individual advantages. Under the Indian Council of Agriculture Research, we have an all-India research project on honey bees, spread across 20 centres."

The news is welcome, since local bee populations are coming under threat – because of excessive land clearing and use of pesticides. In Nethrang taluka in Gujarat, a UTMT survey team found no indigenous bees left. "We are concentrating on conservation now, spreading awareness about unsustainable honey hunting practices to bees' impact on farming," says Krishnamoorthy. "If we don't protect our bees now, then in 10 years' time we might have to buy them through mail order, like in the US."

Losing smell memory

India has close to 800 bee species, but we hardly have any data on them. "Over 95% of research on bees is on the Mellifera," says Axel Brockmann, who heads the Honey Bee Lab at the National Centre for Biological Sciences (NCBS), Bengaluru. "In India, when people talk about bee decline, they are talking about the Mellifera. But is there a decline in the indigenous bees? We don't know. There has been no continuous, long-term research on our bees."

This is bad news because, without such information, we can't keep track of how the different communities are faring, how they impact the ecosystem, and so on. The only consensus: losing them will threaten food security and income. Over a decade ago, Parthiba Basu, Director, Centre for Pollination Studies, had assessed the economic value of pollination loss on six-seven crop productions – the annual loss could be around ₹5,400 crore. And this is only set to grow.

Let's talk conservation

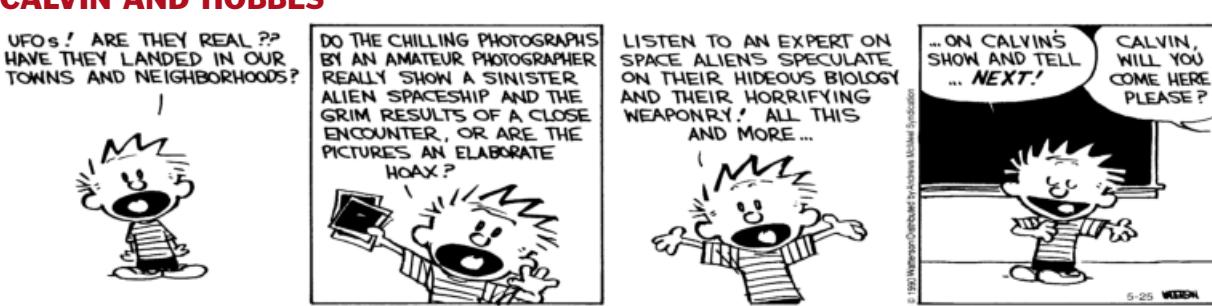
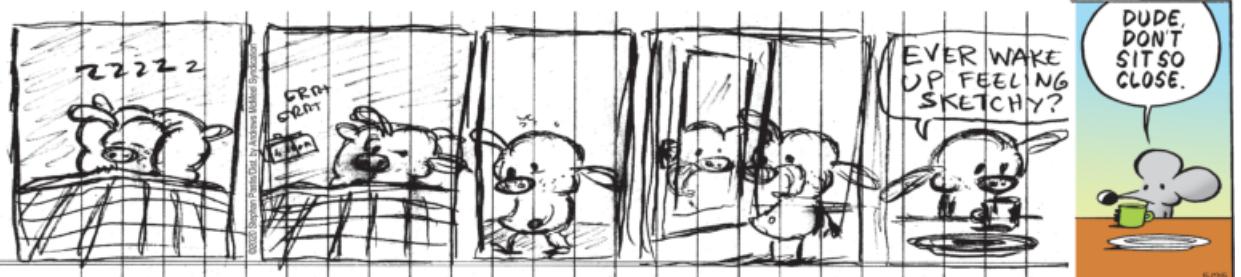
The use of pesticides is one of the biggest dangers to bees. "Neonicotinoids, or neonic, has been outlawed by the European Union and a number of countries – purely because these were found to be harmful to the bee – but is making a backdoor entry into India," says Krishnamoorthy. When Basu began looking into the impact of pesticides on the Cerana and Dorsata, he found that the bees were ageing faster because of oxidative stress. "They are also losing their ability to distinguish colour, smell and retain smell memory [pesticides create an aberration in the calcium channel in the brain, stopping memory formation]."

So we are at a tipping point. "There is a need for sensitisation within policy makers, and for cross learning between the scientific community and agricultural establishments."

Conservation is the need of the hour. Besides banning neonic, we must also restore natural vegetation in intensive agricultural areas can also bring back the bees. "We are suggesting that local governments take a proactive stand in re-vegetating parts of common areas in villages and encourage farmers to have inter rows in their fields or plant pollinator-attracting vegetation on the bunds," says Basu.

**App in the making**

Brockmann, who has been monitoring Dorsata bees in Bengaluru for the last couple of years (in a pilot study in a gated community – researching migratory patterns, etc), is also working on an app. "It will be a citizen science project. We need people who are interested in bees to download it because we want them to observe and monitor – revisit the sites once a month, take a photo and count the colonies," he says, adding that they are testing the first version now and will, hopefully, roll it out in a few months' time.

POOCH CAFE**HAGAR THE HORRIBLE****TIGER****PEANUTS****CALVIN AND HOBBES****PEARLS BEFORE SWINE**

Timings		
MONDAY, MAY 25		
RISE 06:02	SET 19:10	
RISE 08:00	SET 21:38	
TUESDAY, MAY 26		
RISE 06:01	SET 19:10	
RISE 08:54	SET 23:32	
WEDNESDAY, MAY 27		
RISE 06:01	SET 19:11	
RISE 09:51	SET 23:25	

Mumbai Weather	max	min
Mumbai Airport	34	29
Pune	40	24
Mumbai City	34	29

Mumbai Today
34°C The morning will be humid and hazy. Dry and warm weather with partly cloudy sky to prevail.

Mumbai Tomorrow
34°C The weather will be dry and warm with partly cloudy sky to persist during the day. Night will be little warm.

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PM's humanity has vanished now: Raut

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MUMBAI

Taking a swipe at the Centre over the plight of migrant labourers, Shiv Sena leader Sanjay Raut on Sunday said the humanity shown by Prime Minister Narendra Modi by washing the feet of conservatory workers seems to have vanished now.

In his weekly column published in the Sena mouthpiece *Saamana*, Mr. Raut said, "Prime Minister Modi had washed the feet of four conservatory workers in Varanasi and showed us the humanity. It seems this humanity has vanished in the last three months". The PM had washed the feet of safai karamcharis (sanitation workers) during Kumbh Mela in Prayagraj last February as a mark of respect for their work.

Mr. Raut, who is the executive editor of the *Saamana*, also sought to draw parallels between "politicisation" of displacement of Kashmiri Pandits and the plight of migrant labourers, who are bearing the brunt of the lockdown.

"We direct the railway authorities to waive one-way charges of these migrant labourers or in the alternative, for the State government to bear such charges," a Division Bench of Justices J.B. Pardiwala and I.J. Vora said on Friday.

Only 7,512 eligible' The court's order came after the Vijay Rupani government said in a written reply that of the 22.5 lakh migrant workers in Gujarat, only 7,512 were registered under the Inter-State Migrant Workmen Act and were eligible for a travel allowance.

"Most of the migrant workers have come on their own and provisions for payment of travel and displacement allowances were not applicable to them," it said.

The court, in its order, said, "The State government shall ensure that migrant workers do not have to face

History-sheeter with Maoist links held

Accused wanted in over 30 cases of robbery in MMR area would send proceeds of crime to Nepal

GAUTAM S. MENGLE
MUMBAI

The Maharashtra Anti Terrorism Squad (ATS) has arrested a history-sheeter with a long record of armed robbery, who was allegedly involved in financing Maoist activities in Nepal. The accused, who has at least 30 cases to his name, would allegedly commit crimes in Maharashtra and send the proceeds of the crimes to Maoists in Nepal.

Nepal's Maoist issue
Nepal, over the last one year, has witnessed an escalation in Maoist activities, including an attack on the office of a private telecom operator in February 2019 and string

of bomb blasts in Kathmandu in May last year, the credit for which was claimed by the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist), led by Netra Bikram Chand. There have also been repeated indications of the Inter-Services Intelligence, Pakistan's premier intelligence agency, joining hands with Maoists in Nepal to channel counterfeit currency and other contraband into India, which was substantiated by a 2010 WikiLeaks release.

According to ATS officers, the accused, Dalvir Singh Rawat (38), was arrested from near Mastakhar petrol pump in Andheri on Saturday based on a tip-off received by police inspector Daya

Mr. Rawat would often arrange for Maoists from Nepal to come to India and commit offences in various cities

SENIOR ATS OFFICER

Nayak, in-charge of the ATS's Juhu unit. A native of Nepal with no fixed address in Mumbai, Mr. Rawat is also known as Pappu Nepali in the criminal underworld and is said to change locations often to evade arrest.

A search of Mr. Rawat's person revealed that he was carrying a country-made pistol and three live cartridges. He was arrested and preliminary investigations

against him revealed definite links with Maoists in Nepal. We also found out that he has at least 30 cases of robbery and dacoity registered against him in Mumbai, Navi Mumbai and Thane," a senior ATS officer said.

Wanted in Vijaywada

The officer said Mr. Rawat was wanted for an armed robbery in Vijaywada, Andhra Pradesh in 2017, in which him and his accomplices had robbed a gold jewellery workshop and decamped with 16 kg of gold.

"Mr. Rawat would often arrange for Maoists from Nepal to come to India and commit offences in various cities so that they could take

the proceeds back home. He is part of a larger racket that finances the Maoist activities in Nepal, with several others involved, and we are probing this angle further," the officer said.

Based on the weapon and the ammunition seized from him, the ATS believes that Mr. Rawat had come to Mumbai with the intention of committing another robbery. The source of the arsenal is also being traced, while he is being interrogated further about his activities. The Andhra Pradesh police have been informed about his arrest, and will be seeking his custody after the ATS has finished interrogating him, sources said.

WEATHER WATCH

RAINFALL, TEMPERATURE & AIR QUALITY IN SELECT METROS YESTERDAY



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

Forecast for Monday: Thunderstorm accompanied with lightning likely at isolated places over Gangetic West Bengal, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Puducherry and Karaikal. Heavy to very heavy rainfall likely at few/isolated places over Assam, Meghalaya, Arunachal Pradesh, Sikkim, Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram and Tripura

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	—	34.8	27.2	Kozhikode	—	35.3	28.6
Ahmedabad	—	43.3	27.9	Kurnool	—	42.7	30.4
Aizawl	—	29.0	18.2	Lucknow	—	43.0	28.5
Allahabad	—	46.3	28.8	Madurai	—	41.2	27.6
Bangalore	34.8	34.4	22.3	Mangaluru	—	35.3	27.9
Bhopal	—	44.1	29.7	Mumbai	—	33.8	29.0
Bhubaneswar	—	34.7	28.0	Mysuru	—	35.0	24.0
Chandigarh	—	42.1	25.7	New Delhi	—	45.6	27.6
Chennai	—	37.6	29.6	Patna	—	39.4	27.2
Coimbatore	—	37.0	25.7	Port Blair	—	32.8	25.4
Dehradun	—	31.2	22.6	Puducherry	—	36.1	29.2
Gangtok	38.6	21.9	18.0	Pune	—	41.0	24.3
Goa	—	33.5	28.2	Raipur	—	45.0	27.4
Guwahati	27.9	28.0	21.4	Ranchi	—	40.8	26.2
Hubballi	—	37.0	23.0	Shillong	23.6	23.0	—
Hyderabad	—	42.4	29.5	Shimla	7.8	31.8	15.4
Imphal	17.5	31.5	21.7	Srinagar	—	25.8	8.4
Jaipur	—	44.5	31.0	Thiruvananthapuram	0.3	33.3	27.8
Kochi	—	33.0	27.0	Tiruchi	—	42.5	29.2
Kolkata	—	33.1	28.5	Vijayawada	—	40.2	29.0
Visakhapatnam	11	27	6	Visakhapatnam	—	34.3	30.0

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)

Yesterday

Pollutants in the air you are breathing

CITIES	SO ₂	NO ₂	CO	PM _{2.5}	PM ₁₀
Ahmedabad	—	.22	.40	...41	...60
Bengaluru	.6	.32	.37	—	125
Chennai	—	.15	.104	—	—
Delhi	22	.37	.75	150	230
Hyderabad	.9	.26	.43	...84	124
Kolkata	—	.3	.10	—	—
Lucknow	—	.3	.55	...235	—
Mumbai	16	.9	.10	16	66
Pune	—	.33	.12	...56	...41
Visakhapatnam	11	.27	.6	19	75

In observation made at 4.00 p.m., Singrauli in Madhya Pradesh recorded an overall air quality index (AQI) score of 310 indicating an unhealthy level of pollution. In contrast, Aizawl, Mizoram recorded a healthy AQI score of 27.

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

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

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

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

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

Jiomart goes live to take on Amazon, Flipkart

Over 50,000 products available

PIYUSH PANDEY
MUMBAI

Reliance Industries (RIL) has taken its e-commerce platform JioMart live in an attempt to rival on rivals Amazon and Flipkart. Pilots were carried out in Navi Mumbai, Thane and Kalyan.

Jiomart, an online-offline model that combines the strengths of Reliance Jio and Reliance Retail, has started offering products at a minimum 5% discount to the maximum retail price on selected products.

"Farm produce will directly be sourced from farmers that have collaborated with the brand," said the Jiomart website.

JioMart has started offering more than 50,000 products in the fruits and vegetables, dairy and bakery, staples, snacks and branded

foods, beverages, personal care, home care and baby care categories, according to its website.

Customers can get free home delivery on no minimum-order value, with a no-questions-asked-return policy. The website asks customers for their PIN code to inform them whether they are delivering in the area.

During RIL's annual general meeting some time back, chairman Mukesh Ambani had hinted at the company's foray into 'new commerce' which, he said, was a \$700-billion opportunity.

Facebook and WhatsApp had signed a commercial agreement with Reliance JioMart so that the online venture's customers can place order through the social media platforms.

Block AIMIM supporter's hate speech video: HC +

State asked to investigate inflammatory video that has gone viral on social media

SONAM SAIGAL
MUMBAI

The Bombay High Court in a recent order has directed all social media platforms to block a hate speech video made by Abu Faisal, a supporter of All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen (AIMIM), which could cause discord between Hindus and Muslims using the novel coronavirus as a garb.

A Division Bench of Justices R.D. Dhanuka and Abhay Ahuja was hearing a criminal petition filed by one Imran Khan, through advocate Vi-

vek Shukla. Mr. Khan wanted the court to direct authorities to delete the video, and also permanently block Mr. Faisal from social media platforms such as YouTube, Google and Facebook.

According to Mr. Khan, the video shows Mr. Faisal making claims about the media being used to target Muslims and defame Islam under the garb of COVID-19. He said the video was uploaded on the accused's social media accounts and claimed the police had not taken action despite a complaint.

The petition states that the video alleges that a vicious campaign led by the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) is under way to control the Muslim population in the country. Mr. Khan

has also alleged that Mr. Faisal is seen provoking and encouraging Muslims to assault doctors of other religions.

The court then directed all the authorities to look into the allegations, view the said video on YouTube, Google and Facebook and file an affidavit in reply within one week. The court also directed the State to undertake an investigation against Mr. Faisal to see if the police find any substance in the allegations made by Mr. Khan.

Amidst COVID-19 chaos



For farms and farmers

Income support serves a purpose, but the farm sector needs a lot more

The Rajiv Gandhi Kisan Nyay Yojana launched by Chhattisgarh last week aims to supplement the income of the State's 18 lakh rice, maize and sugarcane farmers by ₹10,000 to ₹13,000 per acre, through direct cash transfers. Besides the Centre's PM-KISAN scheme that provides ₹6,000 to farm families owning less than five acres of land, Telangana, Odisha and Andhra Pradesh have similar cash transfer programmes for farmers. For balancing the interests of the consumer and the farmer, India has an extensive Minimum Support Price (MSP) regime which works in combination with the PDS. But the efficiency of neither MSP procurements nor the PDS is uniform across the country. The Centre says it fixes MSPs at 1.5 times the cost of production for farmers, but this calculation is not free of controversy. Last year, several States including Chhattisgarh and BJP-ruled U.P. and Haryana questioned the Centre's MSP calculations. Though food is a universal necessity, those who produce it languish at the bottom of the economic pyramid.

These income support schemes target land owners, and bypass tenants and labourers. In Chhattisgarh, there is preliminary evidence that tenants managed better rates from owners last year after the government gave incentives over and above MSPs to farmers. The State is now designing a cash transfer scheme for landless labourers, according to Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel. But these interventions are only palliative and cannot address the underlying problem, which is the non-remunerative nature of farming. A more market-driven approach has often been proposed as the solution, and the agriculture-related components in the Centre's response to the economic crisis caused by the pandemic appear to toe that line. However, many previous arguments about the agriculture economy have been rendered questionable by the pandemic. The food supply chain crisis in the U.S. is instructive. Considered supremely efficient, it ended up with wasted produce and unmet demand as the pandemic erupted. India's agricultural management must take into account such fresh learning from the pandemic, and vulnerabilities arising out of supply chain-dependent food security. The list of pre-existing morbidities in the agriculture sector is also long, including messy land records, unscientific and unsustainable crop patterns, market linkages that make the farmers vulnerable to exploitation by officials and middlemen, inadequate irrigation, adoption of technology, conflict with wildlife, and changing weather and climate patterns. For now, the Centre must announce the MSPs for the current season at the earliest – late announcements have added to the uncertainties for the farmers in recent years. The creation of a buoyant agriculture sector will take much more, and those efforts must be made on a war-footing.

Danger in the air

The PIA crash is a reminder that the aviation industry provides little margin for error

From a "we are comfortable now, established on ILS 25L" that soon led to a repeated declaration of "Mayday", the partial transcript of air traffic control conversation that is available offers an insight into the catastrophic end to PK-8303. The Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) flight, from Lahore to Karachi, with 91 passengers and eight crew, was operated using an Airbus A320-214, an aircraft type that is one of aviation's reliable and modern workhorses. Initially, while visual evidence, as photographs and video footage, offered some clues about what might have overwhelmed the pilots of the nearly 16-year-old jetliner, it is the recovery, later, of the crucial blackboxes that is significant. In the backdrop too is the offer of full technical assistance by the manufacturer, Airbus, and the involvement of western air safety agencies and Pakistan's inquiry team. These factors will aid investigators in getting a handle on the series of events. May 22, the day of the accident – there are two survivors – also marked the 10th anniversary of another air disaster, the crash of IX-812, an Air India Express flight on the Dubai-Mangaluru sector.

Air safety commentators point in a relevant direction. Though authorities in Pakistan and PIA, an established flag carrier, have detailed the plane's technical, flight and maintenance history, there is a swirl around the operator's not-so-impressive air safety record. There is also another core and related issue. The COVID-19 pandemic has scorched commercial airline operations and balance sheets, but with airline managers across the world attempting to give wings to their fleets after prolonged grounding, experts highlight a key phrase: 'no half measures'. The necessity of flying machines being returned to service after a complete maintenance check and, more importantly, aircrew being allowed at the controls only after key proficiency checks in a full flight simulator have to be stressed repeatedly. This is a subject that aviation regulators can ill-afford to overlook, and a challenge too, given that it is airlines with deep pockets or with access to financial lifelines that can bridge such issues. The tragedy in Pakistan has also spotlighted another long-standing safety concern. The crippled jet's fiery end, while on approach, in a densely populated neighbourhood lining the airport, highlights the danger of buildings and obstacles affecting airline operations and safety. In India, the authorities concerned have often glossed over High Court orders to demolish structures around aerodromes that violate stringent guidelines laid down by the International Civil Aviation Organization. In the interest of aviation safety, airline crews do deserve a comfort margin and, in an extreme event, every chance at pulling off a Sully as the world wished the PIA crew to have done.

The need for a million worksites now

Averting a humanitarian disaster in India calls for an explosion of NREGA work in the next few weeks



JEAN DRÈZE

The abominable plight of migrant workers in recent weeks has invaded television screens and stirred the nation's conscience. Alas, this is just the tip of the wave of hardships that is sweeping through the country. The situation looks increasingly alarming in the light of a series of surveys conducted by Azim Premji University (APU) and other institutions. The APU survey, for instance, found that 74% of the respondents (thousands of poor households scattered over many States) were "consuming less food" today than before the lockdown. Another survey, conducted by Farzana Afridi and her colleagues in low-income neighbourhoods of Delhi, found that 80% of the respondents had not earned any income during the lockdown, 90% reported "financial stress", and about half were too anxious to sleep at night.

Some support from PDS

Thankfully, the Public Distribution System (PDS) is preventing the worst. The same surveys show that an overwhelming majority of poor households (86% according to the APU survey) are currently receiving food rations. The doubling of food rations for three months was a good move on the part of the central government – there is every reason to extend it beyond the end of June. The PDS, however, leaves out 500 million people, including many who live in poverty. Further, even for those who are

covered, the PDS is little more than a protection against hunger. It cannot ensure adequate nutrition, let alone a decent standard of living.

To cope with the crisis, poor households urgently need a chance to earn cash beyond small mercies. Unconditional cash transfers are not easy to use for this purpose, because there is no simple way of identifying those in need, and covering everyone would amount to spreading the money very thin. Universal basic income is a nice idea, but when you do the maths, anything practical tends to reduce the "basic income" to a pittance. India's National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) offers an obvious alternative, at least for rural areas: employment on demand at basic wages.

Unprecedented demand

The demand for NREGA work is stronger than ever. This is not surprising: most people would prefer to do some work and earn a little than to sit idle with empty pockets. This huge demand contrasts with the resilient indifference of rural workers towards NREGA in recent years, due to low wages and erratic payments. Wages are still low, and payments are still far from timely and reliable; what has changed is that for most workers today, there is nothing better on the cards.

We had a telling experience of this renewed demand for NREGA work in a number of deprived villages of Latehar district (Jharkhand) in the last few days. In this area, the idea of work on demand is still alien to most rural workers, so few of them take the initiative of applying for NREGA work. But whenever we helped people to prepare work applications, men



R.M. RAJARATINAM

and women from almost every household in the village flocked to the spot with their job cards to fill the forms.

Without assistance, however, most workers would find it difficult to submit work applications.

The sad truth is that except in areas where rural workers are relatively empowered, work applications (reflected in "e-muster rolls") are not generally initiated by the workers themselves. Instead, they are initiated on their behalf by others, who have a stake in activating NREGA works: for instance, landowners who want some work done on their land, middlemen who take cuts at various steps, government officials who are under pressure to meet targets, and village heads who wish to please or serve their constituency. In other words, NREGA works attract the workers, and not the other way around. That, at any rate, is how it tends to work in the poorer States.

In the old days (good or bad), workers were allowed to turn up at the worksite and enrol on the spot. That made things easier for them: applying for work was a right, not an obligation. But now, it has become an obligation: no-one can be employed unless his or her name has been entered in advance in the e-muster rolls. Most workers have no idea how to go about this.

This is one reason why the scale of NREGA works remains very low in many States in spite of a huge

demand for employment. This situation calls for large-scale opening of NREGA works on a proactive basis. Every village needs at least one major worksite, where a good number of people can work at short notice (with adequate distancing precautions). Ideally, workers should be allowed to enrol at the worksite. Further, large-scale employment generation should continue throughout the monsoon, the hardest period of the year for poor people in large parts of rural India. Averting a humanitarian disaster in the next few months calls for a veritable explosion of NREGA work.

Much can be done to facilitate this: expanding the list of permissible works, hiring more *gram rogar sevaks* (employment assistants), simplifying the implementation process, mobilising para-teachers for work application drives, and so on. And of course, top-down orders to expand the scale of works could work wonders. NREGA is not supposed to be top-down, but it does have a long history of top-down orders, and after all, this is an emergency.

Switch to cash payment?

It is also worth considering a return to cash payment of NREGA wages, at least as an option for the duration of the crisis. This would not only help to ensure timely and reliable payment of wages, but also spare workers the ordeal of extracting their wages from overcrowded banks or business correspondents.

Further, cash payment of wages would act as a tremendous incentive for rural workers to demand NREGA work, whatever it takes.

The idea of a return to cash payment of wages is likely to horrify those who trust digital payments

to eliminate corruption. But recent experience suggests that this trust is misplaced. The digital payment system has merely changed the modalities of corruption in NREGA: the crooks used to fudge the paper records, now they fudge the electronic records. The latter may or may not be harder to fudge than the former depending on the circumstances. Even if cash payments are a little more vulnerable to leakages, that may be a tolerable price to pay in an emergency, to protect workers from the hazards of NREGA's byzantine payment system. These include a payment rejection rate of 4%, according to official data, and the tyranny of "Qwicly", as the Know Your Customer (KYC) process is known in rural Jharkhand. Of course, the possible hazards of a hasty switch to cash payments also need to be considered.

The NREGA budget

Funds are not an immediate concern since the NREGA budget for 2020-21 has been raised to ₹1-lakh crore or so. But more is likely to be required to meet the tremendous demand for NREGA work. It is important to ensure that funds never dry up: this happened every year in the last few years, leading to huge wage arrears. NREGA is supposed to be a demand-driven programme with an open-ended budget; nothing in the Act authorises the government to impose a budget cap.

These are some of the issues that arise in activating NREGA for crisis relief. The main thing is to provide work aplenty and pay wages at speed. This is a matter of life and death.

Jean Drèze is Visiting Professor at the Department of Economics, Ranchi University

Hardly the 1991 moment for agriculture

The reforms in agricultural marketing are no more than reiterations of earlier pronouncements



HIMANSHU

The announcement of reforms in agricultural marketing by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, in May, has been hailed by some as the "1991" moment for agriculture. While it does not mean much on the ground, it has successfully managed to deflect attention from the pitfall offered by way of fiscal support to the agricultural sector, as a part of the grand fiscal package announced by the Prime Minister. Even then, the reforms are no more than reiterations of earlier announcements.

The three reforms regarding agricultural marketing were the reforms in the Agricultural Produce Marketing Committee (APMC) Act, the Essential Commodities Act, and on contract farming. All of these have been in discussion for almost two decades, with the APMC Act having already seen substantial reforms in many States. The first comprehensive model act on APMC was proposed during 2003, and since then, similar efforts to push for more reforms have been proposed in 2007, 2013, and as late as 2017 by the present government.

APMCs and changes by States
The main argument against the APMC Act is that it creates barriers to the entry and exit of traders and makes the sale and purchase of agricultural produce compulsory for farmers as well as traders. Some of the criticism regarding the functioning of the APMC is valid, to which State governments

have been responsive; as many as 17 State governments having amended the APMC Act to make it more liberal. In fact, the regulations and the functioning of *mandis* vary a great deal across States. Kerala does not have an APMC Act and Bihar repealed it in 2006. But several others such as Maharashtra, West Bengal, Odisha, Gujarat, and Andhra Pradesh deregulated fruits and vegetables trade, allowed private markets, introduced a unified trading licence and have introduced a single-point levy of market fee. Tamil Nadu has already reformed its APMC with no market fee. Several others such as Jharkhand, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Haryana and Rajasthan have undertaken one or more of these reforms. Many States have introduced direct marketing of farm produce, examples being the Uzhavar Sandhai (Tamil Nadu), the Rythu Bazaar (Andhra Pradesh and Telangana), the Raitha Santhe (Karnataka), the Apni Mandi (Punjab) and the Krushak Bazaar - Odisha.

Despite these reforms, APMC *mandis* continue to be vilified for all the ills plaguing marketing infrastructure and the low prices received by the farmers for their produce. The problem with *mandis* is not the regulation per se and the structure of *mandis* but the political interference in the functioning of the markets. These are more obvious in case of large *mandis* specialising in commercial crops and fruits and vegetables, where production is regionally concentrated. But even with these deficiencies, APMC *mandis* continue to play an important role in providing access to market for farmers.

The Bihar example
But did the reforms lead to a better outcome for farmers in those States where the reforms were undertaken? The best example is Bihar. The general argument in favour of reforms is that it will allow private investment in marketing infrastructure as well as provide more choices to farmers, leading to better prices received by farmers. In the case of Bihar, while no investment came in building market infrastructure, the loss of revenue due to the repeal of the APMC also led to deterioration of existing infrastructure (of the 54 market yards) in the State. The revenue collected from the APMC earlier was used not only for the modernisation of these market yards but also for the laying of roads and construction of other infrastructure to provide farmers better access to markets. But after the repeal, there have been no takers for these market yards, with no investment in creating private *mandis*. On the other hand, it has led to proliferation of private unregulated markets which charge a market fee from traders as well as farmers, and without any infrastructure for weighing, sorting, grading and storage. Even in other States where there is deregulation to allow private traders, there is hardly any investment to create market spaces let alone provide other facilities. There is also no evidence that farmers have received better prices in private *mandis* outside the APMC.

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EKTAR KHAN

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While there have been instances of collusion and corruption in the running of the APMC, they continue to provide essential services to farmers. However, the vil-

ification of APMCs has allowed the government to escape the responsibility of creating marketing infrastructure for millions of farmers. As against the recommendation that a regulated market should be available to farmers within a radius of 5 km (a corresponding market area of about 80 sq. km), currently regulated markets cover 457 sq. km. There are more than 7,000 regulated markets and 20,000 rural markets when the need is at least twice these figures. Most of the existing ones require investment in upgrading of infrastructure.

Even the argument that the only bottleneck for farmers not receiving remunerative prices is due to the APMC Act is flawed. More than 80% of farmers, most of whom are small and marginal farmers, do not sell their produce in the APMC *mandis*. For a majority of farmers, prices received are more a function of the demand for agricultural commodities than access to markets.

A good example is the case of decline in milk prices, pointed out by the Finance Minister herself. Despite the presence of cooperatives and private dairies, the collapse of milk prices reflects the decline in demand in the economy, not the distortions in private markets. While it may have exacerbated during the national lockdown following the COVID-19 pandemic, the fact that demand was declining even before the lockdown is now well known.

Decline in demand

For much of the period during the last two years, terms of trade have moved against agriculture, with agricultural commodity price inflation actually being negative for a large part of the last two years. With underlying weakness in demand and obsession with inflation

targeting through fiscal and monetary policies, most agricultural commodities have seen a sharp decline in demand and, consequently, prices received by farmers. The argument for choice of markets is only valid as long as there are buyers with purchasing power in the market. No amount of marketing reforms will lead to higher price realisation for farmers if the underlying macroeconomic conditions are unfavourable to agriculture and farmers.

Increase fiscal spending
Even before the lockdown, the primary task of the government, especially the Finance Ministry should have been to increase fiscal spending to revive demand in the economy. This has become even more necessary after the sharp decline in incomes, job losses and decline in demand following the lockdown and expected contraction in economic activity for the year ahead. With international prices also showing declining trend, the urgency is to protect the farmers from the decline in commodity prices.

As against these, the announcement of these reforms without a draft and without proper consultation with States or other stakeholders is nothing but a smokescreen to deflect attention from the core issue of fiscal support by the government to support farmers' income. If the government is serious in providing remunerative prices to farmers, it needs to increase fiscal spending to create demand in the economy. These, rather than the hollow announcements of reforms, will go a long way in ensuring higher incomes to farmers.

Himanshu is Associate Professor, Centre for Economic Studies and Planning, School of Social Sciences, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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

Watch the stethoscope

We (Dr. T.V. Devarajan, Dr. S.P. Thiagarajan and I) write to draw the attention of health workers, nurses and medical personnel to the potential role of the stethoscope as a carrier of infections particularly in periods of epidemics, viral or bacterial. Many years ago, in the 1970s, we did a study in the Government Stanley Hospital, Madras, on the subject of the potential infectivity of the stethoscope by taking swabs from its different

parts – the diaphragm, bell, ear knobs, etc. We also took up the stethoscopes of physicians, surgeons and their juniors for study, also including the period of usage and the habit of cleansing the stethoscope, diaphragm and other parts. Organisms found on the diaphragm were skin inhabitants, occasionally staphylococci and others such as coliform etc, but not typhoid or Tubercle bacilli. In the present episode of the novel coronavirus pandemic, it is quite

important to cleanse the stethoscope diaphragm apart from sanitising other objects such as door knobs and washing hands, as usual. The problem in the use of alcohol-containing sanitisers on the diaphragm of the stethoscope repeatedly is that it may soften the diaphragm and it may be a less effective conductor of heart and lung sounds, etc. The diaphragm may require replacement from time to time, or any other modality of cleansing may be resorted to. In fact after

every use, the diaphragm of the stethoscope should be cleaned during this epidemic. In the study mentioned above, the bell of the stethoscope did not show any infectivity. However, the bell of the stethoscope is rarely used in practice today. Caution in the use of this valuable instrument in the investigation and management of COVID-19 is necessary because the medical equipment itself may transmit the virus. Dr. K.V. THIRUVENGADAM, Chennai

China and the world

It is not just India

Failing to perform as a constitutional court

The Supreme Court ignored migrant workers when they most needed protection



AJIT PRAKASH SHAH

As India, along with the rest of the world, grapples with the public health crisis caused by COVID-19, it faces many unique challenges. The most acute problem is faced by migrant labourers: they have no work, no source of income, no access to basic necessities, no quality testing facilities, no protective gear, and no means to reach home. Every day, we hear of migrant labourers walking hundreds of miles, many dying in the process. The saddest is the apathy shown by the institutions meant to look out for their interests. I refer here to the Supreme Court, which has failed to satisfactorily acknowledge that the fundamental rights of migrant labourers have been violated, and ignored these workers when they most needed protection.

Undeniably, the state must ensure that adverse consequences of this pandemic are minimised. But any duty performed by the arms of the state, even during emergency, must always be bounded by constitutional propriety, and respect fundamental rights. The judiciary becomes the all-important watchdog in this situation.

No relief for workers

In this lockdown, enough and more evidence points to fundamental rights of citizens having been grossly violated, and especially those of vulnerable populations like migrant labourers. But instead of taking on petitions questioning the situation, the Supreme Court has remained ensconced in its ivory tower, refusing to admit these petitions or adjourning them. By effectively not granting any relief, the Court is denying citizens of the most fundamental right of access to justice, ensured under the Constitution. In doing so, it has let down millions of migrant workers, and failed to adequately perform as a constitutional court.

In one of the strictest lockdowns in modern India, the Centre issued many directives, but designated the States as the implementing authorities. But the issue of migrant labour-



ers is inherently an inter-State issue, and States have had to tackle it both internally as well as inter-se. Who will guarantee safe transport for the return of migrant workers? When in quarantine, who will grant them a sustenance allowance, or look after their health issues, or look after needs besides food? Who will ensure job loss compensation? Who will conduct regular and frequent testing? Only the Supreme Court can enforce accountability of the Centre in these matters.

In rejecting or adjourning these petitions, the Court has made several questionable remarks: the condition of migrant labourers is a matter of policy and thus, does not behove judicial interference; or, governments already provide labourers with two square meals a day, so what more can they possibly need (surely, 'not wages'); or, incidents like the horrific accident where migrant labourers sleeping on railway tracks were killed cannot be avoided because 'how can such things be stopped'. Equally, lawyers have been castigated for approaching the Court 'merely' on the basis of reports. But the Court has rarely insisted on such formality: its epistolary jurisdiction (where petitions were entertained via mere letters) is the stuff of legend, so its reaction here, during an emergency, seems anomalous.

Many of the so-called excuses of the Court have been tackled by previous judgments, notably the question of policy and non-judicial interference. There are numerous judgments where it has laid out matters of policy: for instance, the Vishaka guidelines on sexual harassment in the workplace; the right to food; and various environmental protec-

tion policies. In these cases, the Court formulated policies and asked the States to implement them. Today, there is an unfortunate presumption discernible in the Court's response that the government is the best judge of the situation. In believing thus, the Court seems to have forgotten that the Constitution does not fall silent in times of crises. Similarly, nothing prevents the Court from monitoring the situation itself directly, especially regarding the state's obligations: it could easily direct bureaucrats to collect empirical data on the ground, as it has done before.

One is struck immediately by the lack of compassion or judicial sensitivity in handling this situation, and it prompts two observations. First, the Court is not merely rejecting or adjourning these petitions; it is actively dissuading petitioners from approaching the courts for redress because the Court determines that it is the executive's responsibility. Ordinarily, the Court would have at least nudged petitioners towards the High Courts, but here, even that choice is not available – the Court is practically slamming the door shut.

Second, there is the matter of how the Court is treating such public interest litigations. PILs are a specific instrument designed to ensure the protection of the rights of the poor, downtrodden and vulnerable, and "any member of the public" can seek appropriate directions on their behalf. This lies at the heart of the PIL. The concept of a PIL is to be non-adversarial, but the Court is treating these as adversarial matters against the government. PILs, in fact, ought to be a collaborative effort between the court and all the parties, where everyone comes together in seeking

intra-State one. This is a time when the apex court must intervene and monitor the calamitous situation, instead of taking the government's word as gospel. Justice Brandeis' words quoted by Justice H.R. Khanna in *ADM Jabalpur* ring especially true in these times: "Experience should teach us to be most on our guard to protect liberty when the Government's purposes are beneficent ... [the] greatest danger to liberty lies in insidious encroachment by men of zeal, well-meaning but lacking in due deference for the rule of law."

Ajit Prakash Shah is former Chief Justice, Delhi and Madras High Courts and former Chairperson, Law Commission of India

a resolution to the problem. Today, we find ourselves with a Supreme Court that has time for a billion-dollar cricket administration, or the grievances of a high-profile journalist, while studiously ignoring the real plight of millions of migrants, who do not have either the money or the profile to compete for precious judicial time with other litigants.

Role of High Courts

At this stage, I must acknowledge the stellar role being played by some High Courts, even though governments have tried to discourage them on grounds that since the Supreme Court is not interfering, High Courts need not do so either. At least four High Courts (Karnataka, Madras, Andhra Pradesh and Gujarat) have started asking questions about migrant rights. This is almost a replay of what happened during Emergency, where High Courts boldly stood up and recognised violations, but were overruled eventually by the Supreme Court. The Madras High Court, for example, has quashed criminal defamation cases against media houses, stating that democracy cannot be throttled this way. Contrast this with the Supreme Court's reaction to the bizarre claim of the Solicitor-General who argued that the exodus of workers was due to fake news: the Court seemed to have accepted this, and media houses were advised to report more responsibly.

In such times, High Courts come across as islands of rationality, courage and compassion. However, in truth, the subject matter of migration is inherently an inter-State issue, not an intra-State one. This is a time when the apex court must intervene and monitor the calamitous situation, instead of taking the government's word as gospel. Justice Brandeis' words quoted by Justice H.R. Khanna in *ADM Jabalpur* ring especially true in these times: "Experience should teach us to be most on our guard to protect liberty when the Government's purposes are beneficent ... [the] greatest danger to liberty lies in insidious encroachment by men of zeal, well-meaning but lacking in due deference for the rule of law."

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FROM THE READERS' EDITOR

Fourth estate and the fifth column

Speaking the truth is the role of the fourth estate; being a megaphone for propaganda is the role of the fifth column



A.S. PANNEERSELVAN

Some readers ask how my columns about the larger information ecology and about social media are linked to the journalism of this newspaper. When the government fails to deliver, it invents multiple means to deflect the attention of the citizens from scrutinising its functions. The deflections may vary from waging a full-fledged war to demonising neighbouring countries. Social media is used to manage headlines and amplify misinformation. A few recent complaints regarding this newspaper's reportage on renewed militancy in Kashmir and border skirmishes with China clearly fall into this category.

Puncturing the narrative

Before clearing their doubts, let me share a personal story. Two decades ago, I was Bureau Chief of *Outlook* magazine when it broke the story, "Command Failure". The report explained that the 1999 war with Pakistan took place as the military and political leadership did not take cognisance of the timely warnings of the man on the ground, Brig Surinder Singh, commander of the Kargil-based 121 Brigade. The report widely differed from the narrative that the then National Democratic Alliance-government wanted the people to believe. The official position was that the nuclear test in Pokhran had changed the regional dynamics and that India was talking to Pakistan from a position of strength. The Kargil intrusion not only punctured that narrative but also exposed the limitations of hypernationalistic rhetoric masquerading as news.

I asked Editor Vinod Mehta what gave him the courage to carry a report that questioned the government about a war with a neighbouring country when many media outlets were behaving as force multipliers for the government. He said, and I paraphrase: There are two forms of journalism – fourth estate and the fifth column. Speaking the truth and holding those in power accountable are the core roles of journalism as the fourth estate. To be a megaphone for governmental propaganda and keeping people in the dark is the

role of the fifth column. The choice is obvious.

A sentence in the news analysis, "Behind new incidents, a changed dynamic along India-China border" (May 20), read: "By December 2022, all 61 strategic roads along the border, spread across Arunachal Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir, Sikkim, Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh, will be completed..." Some readers felt that the newspaper was wrong in mentioning J&K. They said the report should have said Ladakh as the State has now been divided into two Union Territories. They failed to recognise that J&K includes not just Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh, but also a huge swathe of territory across the Line of Control. The Indian state calls the region "Pakistan-occupied Kashmir". That region includes the Trans-Karakoram Tract, which India has been consistently claiming as its own. The Hunza-Gilgit region borders Xinjiang Province of the People's Republic of China to the north, and the Siachen Glacier region to the east. A newspaper has to take a holistic view instead of shoehorning its analysis into the official narrative.

Selective use of the term 'martyr'

Some readers were also troubled with the newspaper's reluctance to use the term 'martyr' when reporting on the killing of CRPF soldiers. A Delhi-based advocate, Piyush Pathak, wrote: "I have been a regular reader of your prestigious newspaper for more than 30 years. A soldier martyred shall be properly addressed as this would give a positive effect to the society."

Another reader, Vimal Kumar, felt that despite a Readers' Editor column on this topic, "The difference between journalism and propaganda" (March 4, 2019), the term 'martyr' had been used in some reports ("Solidarity march held for Pulwama martyrs", March 11, 2019, and "A tribute to Pulwama martyrs, a plea against hate-mongering", February 22, 2019). He wondered why there is lack of consistency in the newspaper in using the term 'martyr'.

Mr. Kumar is right. The term has managed to slip through the gate-keeping processes and this is unacceptable. However, to the credit of the desk, Mr. Kumar could not find the term after March 11, 2019. The desire to be the fourth estate trumps external pressure to become the fifth column.

readerseditor@thehindu.co.in

No answers yet for Somalia

The two big questions before the country could be deferred indefinitely due to the pandemic

GARIMELLA SUBRAMANIAM

As Somalia grapples with the staggering challenge from the COVID-19 pandemic, chances are that the June 8 public hearings at the International Court of Justice (ICJ) on Somalia's maritime dispute with Kenya will be deferred yet again. The public health emergency also raises a question mark on the general elections scheduled for later this year, especially as the nation seeks to restore universal suffrage after five decades.

Maritime dispute

Somalia and neighbouring Kenya have locked horns for over a decade on the delimitation of the maritime boundary in the Indian Ocean. At issue is a roughly 1,00,000 sq km area, which, as per seismic surveys, contains huge deposits of oil and gas. Under a 2009 Memorandum of Understanding, each granted the other no objection to presenting separate submissions to the UN Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf (CLCS) concerning the outer limits of the continental shelf beyond 200 nautical miles. The parties also committed to finding a settlement in accordance with international law on the basis of the CLCS's recommendations.

But friction intensified following Kenya's 2011 despatch of troops into Somalia, ostensibly to counter the al-Qaeda affiliate, al-Shabab. Kenya's backing for the semi-autonomous Jubaland region has also caused consternation in Somalia. Given the diminishing prospects of a mutual compromise on the dispute, Somalia petitioned the ICJ in 2014.

Somalia won a symbolic victory sorts in February 2017. The Hague court in the Netherlands rejected by a majority Kenya's contention challenging the admissibility of Somalia's application, as also the court's jurisdiction in the case, in view of the MoU. The court held that this MoU was in no way breached just because one of the parties decided on an alternative mode of dispute resolution. Moreover, while the agreement was legally binding, there was nothing to suggest that judicial proceedings could take place only after the CLCS issued its own recommendations,

said the court.

In a diplomatic row last year, Kenya recalled its ambassador and expelled Somalia's envoy, accusing the Somalian government of illegally auctioning oil blocks in the disputed waters. In parallel, the African Union has intervened to find a settlement out of court via a mediator. As regards the judicial proceedings at The Hague, a decision is expected on the public hearings, postponed twice last year, scheduled to commence next month.

Universal suffrage

The people of Somalia will, later this year, for the first time since the 1969 general elections, exercise their right to political participation under universal suffrage. The one-person one-vote law, which received President Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed's assent in February, is a milestone in the country's gradual path to democratic governance after enduring military rule for over two decades and the long transition following the civil war. Notably, there was a 100-fold increase in the number of delegates (14,025) in the 2016 electoral college which chose the 275-member House of the People and the 54 senators-strong upper chamber. There are fewer women legislators in the current parliament than the 30% seats allotted to them. But a steady increase in the number of female representatives witnessed in successive elections is an encouraging sign.

Somalia has systematically suppressed a free press that is vital to a vibrant democracy. Eight journalists have been killed and as many have fled the country during Mr. Mohamed's term as the al-Shabab and the police behave with impunity, says Amnesty International. The Committee to Protect Journalists said in 2016 that as many as 59 media personnel were killed since the 1991 civil war.

In the backdrop of such systemic constraints and the current pandemic, the practical difficulties of implementing universal suffrage would be formidable. Authorities and activists can, however, take comfort in the fact that the alternatives would be far less desirable.

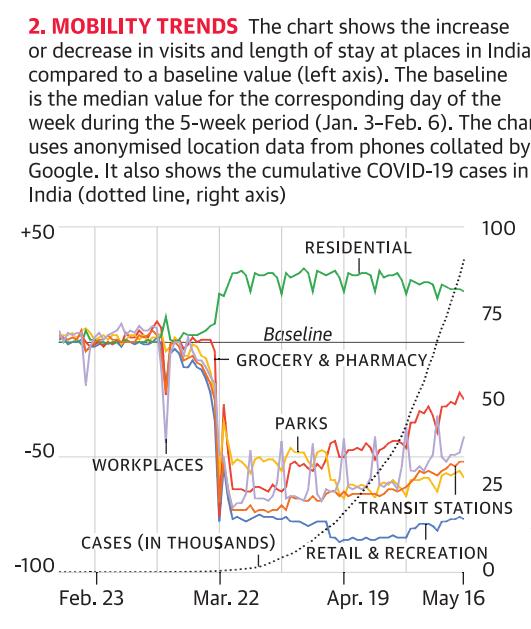
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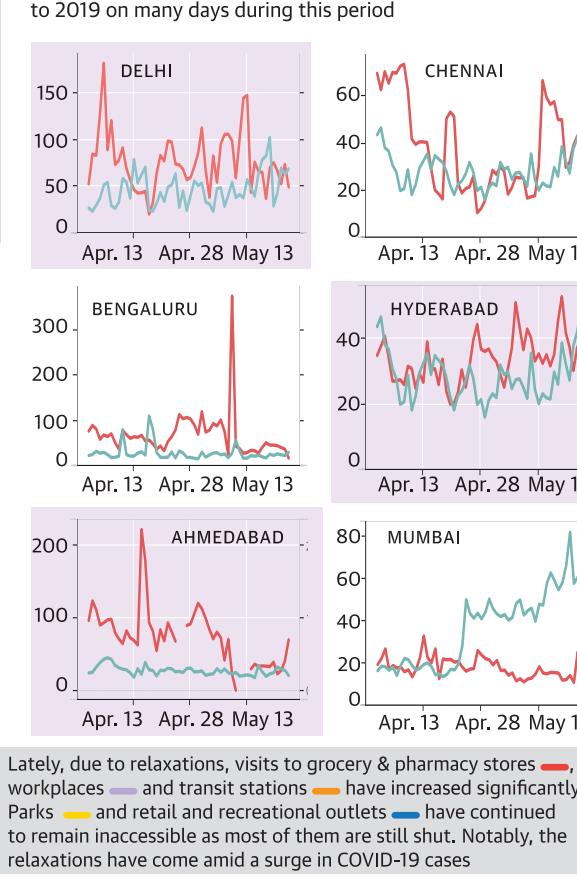
DATA POINT

A break from pollution

Due to the COVID-19-related lockdown, global CO₂ emissions in 2020 have dropped to levels last seen in 2006. Particulate matter pollution levels in select Indian cities exhibit a similar decline. The drop coincides with decreased public mobility in India following the lockdown. However, the recent relaxations have led to a significant increase in activity. By The Hindu Data Team



1. POLLUTION DROPS ACROSS CITIES The graphs show daily PM_{2.5} levels between April 1 and May 24 in 2019 (red) and 2020 (blue). Except Mumbai, other cities recorded significantly low levels of particulate matter pollution in 2020 compared to 2019 on many days during this period



From the Archives

FIFTY YEARS AGO MAY 25, 1970

The Outcaste

(From an editorial)

In calling off the South African all-white cricket tour of England, the M.C.C.'s Cricket Council has at last let good sense prevail. But it needed intervention by the Government to bring that about. The Home Secretary, Mr. John Callaghan, made a formal request to the Council to cancel the controversial tour in view of the harm that it boded not only to race relations and the law and order situation at home but to Britain's relations with the other Commonwealth countries. Fourteen of them had decided to boycott the forthcoming Commonwealth Games as a mark of protest and international cricket itself was faced with the distinct possibility of breaking up into two camps, white and non-white. When so much was at stake, why the Cricket Council should have clung to the tour so long is difficult to understand unless it be that it wanted to put the onus for cancellation on the Labour Government or wanted a face-saving way out of the mess it had created. The arguments of the tour-supporters that politics should be kept out of sports, that a militant minority should not be allowed to impose its will on the majority which wanted the tour, that there is more merit in maintaining links than in snapping them and so on, all become nonsensical in relation to South Africa.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO MAY 25, 1920

Externment of Nehru

(From third editorial)

From further particulars about the externment of Pundit Jawahar Lal Nehru from the district of Dehra Dun, the Pundit's crime appears to be that he happened to reside in the same hotel with his family solely for the purpose of recuperating his health as the Afghan delegates in Mussoorie. He had not spoken a word to the delegates, but the presence of the delegates seems, however, to have struck the Government with a peculiar sense of danger at Mussoorie, and the order served upon the Pundit is, we understand, only one of the many carbon copies that the police have been supplied with for using at their discretion. While the Defence of India Act is still in force the tendency to use it for purposes irrespective of justice or truth need not be a surprise – except of course to those unctuous souls for whom the Reforms have opened the gateways of freedom. The Act should have ended six months after the termination of the war, but an ingenuity of explanation has helped to keep in on.

FROM PAGE ONE

Flight and health curbs cloud airline operations

Making its stand clear, the Karnataka government announced that in-coming travellers from seven States, including Maharashtra, Delhi and Tamil Nadu, where COVID-19 cases are high, will have to undergo a week-long institutional quarantine.

"Incoming domestic flight passengers from Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Delhi, Gujarat, Tamil Nadu, Delhi & Madhya Pradesh will undergo 7 day institutional Quarantine followed by home quarantine," Karnataka Director General of Police Praveen Sood tweeted.

Health Ministry norms
In its guidelines for traveller, the Health Ministry said, "In case, they develop any COVID symptoms, they shall inform the district surveillance officer or the State/national call centre."

Both for domestic and international travel those found symptomatic will be isolated and taken to the nearest health facility. They will be assessed for clinical severity at the health facility and advised as per protocol.

Fear of cancellations
The new protocols set out by the Ministry and the various State health departments pose not just a logistical nightmare for airlines who will be forced to cancel their flights and accommodate passengers in alternate flights with very little time left to plan, but could also result in passengers yet again finding their money parked in credit shells which they can only redeem against future bookings.

"There is some apprehension amongst travellers with the constantly evolving

State-specific quarantine protocols. There might be a slight increase in cancellation/reschedule requests from travellers in the coming few days specifically for States that are not allowing air travel to resume starting tomorrow," said Alok Bajpai, CEO & Co-founder of ixigo.

For international travellers, the Ministry guideline states that they shall give an undertaking that they would undergo mandatory quarantine for 14 days including 7 days paid institutional quarantine at their own cost, followed by 7 days isolation at home with self-monitoring of health.

However in exceptional and compelling reasons – of human distress, pregnancy, death in family, serious illness and parent(s) accompanied by children below 10 years, as assessed by the receiving States, home quarantine may be permitted for 14 days with the mandatory use of Aarogya Setu app.

The Ministry has added that only asymptomatic travellers will be allowed to board or come through land borders.

For domestic travel, instructions will be provided along with tickets to the travellers by the agencies concerned, the Ministry said and added that all passengers should download Arogya Setu app.

The Ministry added that during boarding and travel, all passengers shall use face covers/mask. Passengers will also follow hand hygiene, respiratory hygiene and maintain environmental hygiene.

(With PTI inputs)

Quarantine norms + differ across States

All passengers will be screened on arrival. While those who are asymptomatic will be asked to be in home quarantine for 14 days, those who do have symptoms will be taken to the nearest health facility for testing.

The Maharashtra government, which had not amended its Standard Operating Procedure for air travel at the time of filing this report, climbed down from its initial stand of not allowing a single flight in Mumbai and Pune by agreeing to 25 commercial flight arrivals and departures each to the commercial capital of India. The Pune and Nagpur airports, operated by the Airports Authority of India, said one-third of the pre-COVID-19 flights would operate from Monday. GVK-led Mumbai International Airport Ltd. told airlines that the Mumbai airport would not accommodate flights between 10 p.m. and 6 a.m.

In north India, Delhi, Chandigarh, Madhya Pradesh and Bihar, too, will follow the Health Ministry's guidelines. The Rajasthan government has not issued any separate guidelines for air passengers.

In Assam, Health Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said there would be no quarantine for air passengers who fly out to their "desired or destined place" within 24 hours of arrival in Guwahati, provided they notified authorities of their departure upon arrival.

He added that those who did not "return as declared" and stay beyond this time frame would be charged under relevant laws for giving false information.

Odisha has decided to reduce the quarantine period to 14 days.

Earlier, those coming from outside the State were required to undergo 21 days of institutional quarantine and seven days of home quarantine.

The quarantine period for returnees to the State will be limited to 14 days. This will be implemented by local authorities – District Collectors," said an order issued by the Chief Secretary on Sunday.

Domestic air passengers landing in Goa from May 25 will be given two options:

COVID-19 claims four more lives in Telangana

Kerala has 1 more death; Karnataka, A.P record 130 and 83 cases respectively

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Four more people suffering from COVID-19 died in Telangana, taking the toll to 53. Kerala also reported one fatality.

COVID-19

On Sunday, COVID-19 cases continued to rise steadily in Kerala. The State reported its fifth death when a woman who had returned from Dubai for cancer treatment and had COVID-19 died at Kozhikode.

Of 53 new cases, 47 were imported, with 18 people having come from the Gulf and 29 from other States, including Maharashtra. Five persons, including a health worker at Palakkad, were believed to have contracted the disease through contact with known or unknown sources of infection. One person was

a native of Tamil Nadu.

Thiruvananthapuram and Kannur accounted for 12 cases each, Malappuram and Kasaragod districts had five cases each, Alappuzha, Ernakulam and Palakkad had four cases each. Kollam district had three, Pathanamthitta two and Kozhikode one case. Five persons had recovered. At present, 322 patients were undergoing treatment. So far, 520 recovered and five passed away. After the lockdown norms were relaxed, 93,404 persons had entered the State by air, sea, rail and road. The State put 95,394 persons on quarantine, of whom, 94,662 were on home or institutional quarantine, while 732 were in isolation wards in hospitals. On Sunday, 188 persons were admitted to hospitals.

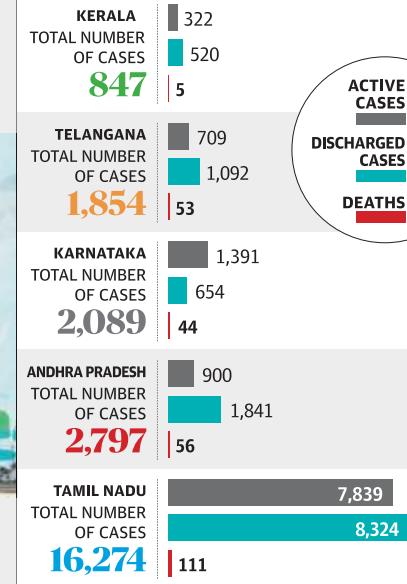
Many cases from abroad
The spread of coronavirus showed no signs of slowing

Spreading the message

With the easing of lockdown restrictions, States are using unique ways to spread awareness about the norms to follow while in public places



Saying it with art: Artists painting a mural on a wall to stress the importance of maintaining physical distance in Vijayawada. ■ K.V.S. GIRI



down in Andhra Pradesh with 83 new cases detected in 24 hours. The case tally rose to 2,797. Among new cases detected, 17 were those who returned recently from West Asia. Twelve were from Kuwait, three from Dubai/Saudi Arabia and two from Qatar, an official bulletin

said. In addition, 11 new cases were linked to Koyambedu. Also, 37 patients recovered while no deaths were reported.

Meanwhile, the State's testing capacity went up: 11,357 samples were tested in 24 hours, for the first time.

With 130 new COVID-19

cases in this category. Also, 790 contracted the infection through contact and 99 who had an international travel history.

Karnataka had done 3,209 tests per million population. Delhi was first with 9,852 tests per million, while Andhra Pradesh had done 5,909 tests per million.

Total COVID-19 deaths in Telangana rose to 53, with four more fatalities. The number of new cases too rose by 41. Among COVID-19 patients whose death was reported on Sunday were a 75-year-old man from Jagtial, a 72-year-old woman, a 60-year-old man who suffered from Severe Acute Respiratory Illness (SARI), and a 48-year-old woman who had leukemia. The latter three were from Hyderabad.

Of 41 new cases, 23 were from Greater Hyderabad, one was from Rangareddy district, 11 were migrants and six foreign evacuees.

(With inputs from Vijayawada, Bengaluru and Hyderabad bureaus)

'Murders of 9 migrant workers were planned'

Telangana police solve deaths in well

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
WARANGAL URBAN DISTRICT

The nine migrant workers found dead in an abandoned well in Gorrekunta of Warangal Rural district in Telangana were murdered as part of a planned plot.

Police investigation revealed that Sanjay Kumar Yadav, another migrant worker from Bihar, plotted the murderer of Maqsood's son-in-law Khathun. He is said to have had financial disputes with Maqsood.

Hence, he decided to kill the entire family.

Sanjay saw an opportunity when Maqsood was celebrating his grandson's birthday on May 20 and decided to execute his plan. He went to the party uninvited. He mixed the cool drinks with sleeping pills and after all those present at the party fell unconscious, he along

with an auto driver Mohan, a resident of Chintal, threw them into the well one-by-one. Further, the duo collected all their mobile phones and threw them on the outskirts of the city. CCTV cameras and call data from the phones of the deceased helped the police identify the killer. Interrogation is going on regarding the exact way the murder was executed. The police may officially arrest the accused on Monday.

Since the time the deaths were uncovered, the police had been questioning those close to the Maqsood's family. Two migrant workers from Bihar – Sanjay Kumar Yadav and Mohan – who were frequently in touch with Maqsood were brought to the crime scene as part of the inquiry on Saturday.

Sanitised corridor mooted for students from outside Kerala

State Health department issues advisory for pending exams

STAFF REPORTER
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

A sanitised corridor (red channel) should be created for students from outside the State and those in 14-day quarantine (and their guardians) to appear for the pending SSLC, higher secondary, and vocational higher secondary examinations from the location they are quarantined in. The sanitised corridor will have to be maintained in the examination centre and the examination hall too.

The corridor is part of an elaborate health advisory issued by the Health and Family Welfare department on the basis of directions of the General Education department and suggestions from a committee of experts for students and other stakeholders involved in the examination process to reduce the COVID-19 transmission risk. The examinations will begin on Tuesday.

List of students from other States and in quarantine

was taken so that the students did not put themselves at risk.

Primary and Secondary Education Minister S. Suresh Kumar said the Goa government had already given them permission to set up the centres. "We are awaiting the nod from the Kerala government."

should be prepared in advance and communicated to schools.

The advisory calls on school authorities to prepare a micro plan that includes the number of students from within and outside the State, the number of classrooms, seating arrangements, travel of students, and other details. The micro plan should be vetted by the health authorities.

All invigilators should wear triple layer masks and gloves.

Social distancing, hand hygiene, and triple layer masks are mandatory for students from other States or Lakshadweep and those in quarantine. Those found having mild flu-like symptoms should be seated separately and visit a nearby health centre at the end of the day's examination.

All invigilators should wear triple layer masks and gloves.

Husband arrested after woman dies of snakebite

He threw cobra at sleeping wife: police

STAFF REPORTER
KOLLAM

The police on Sunday arrested a man for allegedly murdering his wife and trying to pass it off as accidental snakebite death, and an accomplice who helped him in procuring snakes, here in Keralam.

One of the accused, Sooraj, was married to Uthra, 25, for two years. They have a one-year-old son.

The woman's parents alleged foul play after she died of snakebite on May 7 at her parents' home at Anchal in Kollam district, where she was recuperating from an earlier snakebite.

She was first bitten by a snake on March 2 at her husband's home and was under treatment when another snake took her life. She was first bitten by a viper and then a cobra, and her husband Sooraj was present on both occasions.

Following her death, Uthra's parents filed a case with the District Police Chief (Kollam Rural). They said it

was impossible for the snake to enter a closed, air-conditioned room with tiled floor and that Sooraj had planted the snake inside when his first attempt failed. Sooraj had reportedly removed Uthra's gold from the bank locker on

March 2, the day she was first bitten by a snake.

Her parents also alleged that Uthra had been facing dowry harassment and that she was murdered for her gold and property.

The police said Sooraj had confessed after a long questioning session and admitted that he brought the snake in a bottle and threw it over Uthra while she was asleep. According to the police, Sooraj procured the poisonous snakes from Suresh, a handler, paying ₹5,000 for each snake. "Sooraj had been plotting the murder for three months and his web history shows a lot of data related to snakes," said Hari Sankar, District Police Chief (Kollam Rural).

TTD board chief defends decision to sell properties

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
TIRUPATI

The Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams' (TTD) decision to dispose of non-remunerative properties has kicked up a controversy with the entire Order taking objection to it.

TTD Trust Board Chairman Y.V. Subba Reddy on Sunday said the decision to

sell 50 immovable properties in remote locations through public auction was well within the board's purview. He appealed to devotees not to get carried away by reports that "hurt the sentiments of pilgrims."

The practice of selling immovable and non-maintainable properties has been in vogue since 1974, as 129

such properties were disposed of between 1974 and 2014," he said. It was at the board meeting held on July 28, 2015, that resolution No.84 was passed to form a sub-committee to study the prospects of auctioning such properties. The meeting on January 30, 2016, gave the nod to the sub-committee's proposal to dispose of 50

immovable and non-maintainable properties, tucked away from the mainland and difficult to monitor. "The State has nothing to do with the decision," Mr. Subba Reddy said.

Meanwhile, State BJP president Kanna Lakshminarayana said his party would organise protests on May 26 against the attempts to sell the properties of temples.



5 years old Kishore needs your support in bringing a lasting change and a new life. He suffers from Relapsed Acute Lymphoblastic Leukemia and requires Rs. 20,00,000/- towards Bone Marrow Transplantation at Meenakshi Mission Hospital & Research Centre, Madurai. Donations sent by Ch/DD favouring Meenakshi Mission Hospital & Research Centre, Madurai. Will be acknowledged.

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All correspondence is done through WWS, Regd. Public Charitable Trust, Flat No. GF, 1, Cordell Apartments, O.N.O. 13, N.No. 29, Pyrcroft Garden Lane, Chennai-600006, Ph: 044-42137401/ 28235324 E-Mail ID: womenswelfaresyndicate@gmail.com Website: www.womenswelfaresyndicate.org - WWS

APPEAL

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No troops detained by China: Army

Skirmishes have been caused by 'differing perceptions' of the Line of Actual Control, say officials

DINAKAR PERI
SUHASINI HAIDAR
NEW DELHI

The Army on Sunday "categorically denied" reports that Indian patrol teams had been detained by Chinese troops along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in eastern Ladakh, during the current standoff.

"There has been no detention of Indian soldiers at the borders. We categorically deny this," Army spokesperson Colonel Aman Anand said, a day after reports referred to the alleged detention of Indian soldiers in three separate incidents. The spokesperson said the reports hurt "national interests".

Tensions between India



Tension continues: A file photo of Army patrol teams being briefed along the Line of Actual Control. • DINAKAR PERI

and China along the LAC have been rising for the past month, since People's Liberation Army troops tried to disrupt road construction in the Ladakh sector; dozens of soldiers have been injured in incidents of jostling and pushing in at least four

points of conflict. Officials have said that the skirmishes have been caused by "differing perceptions" of the LAC, which is not fully demarcated.

In three statements last week, the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs alleged

that Indian troops had carried out "infringement activities", "trespassing" into Chinese-claimed territory in Sikkim and Ladakh, and even accused India of "attempting to unilaterally change the status of border control".

The Ministry of External Affairs had said that it was the PLA that had "undertaken activity hindering India's normal patrolling patterns".

In the current standoff, incidents have been reported from three points on the LAC in Ladakh — Pangong Tso (lake), Galwan Nalah and Demchok, and one at Nakula Pass in Sikkim.

According to an analyst at the Australian Strategic Poli-

cies Institute, an independent think tank based in Canberra, satellite images made available on Twitter showed that the Chinese build-up in Ladakh included the Galwan area inside territory patrolled by the Indian Army. The satellite images of May 22 show about 80 tents set by Chinese soldiers along the Galwan river.

India too has increased infrastructure, as it completes the construction and refurbishment of the 255 km Darbuk-Shyok-Daulat Beg Oldi road near the river valley. The Army has mobilised additional troops and equipment and dug into positions close to the Chinese troops, sources told *The Hindu*.

No delay in delivery of Rafale: France

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI

There will be no delay in the delivery of 36 Rafale fighter jets to India as the time line finalised for the supply will be respected, French Ambassador Emmanuel Lenain has said.

France is reeling under the increasing COVID-19 cases, and there were apprehensions that the fighter jet delivery could be delayed due to the pandemic.

'Helping the IAF'

However, Mr. Lenain said the original time line would be adhered to. "The contractual delivery schedule ... has been perfectly respected so far, and in fact, a new aircraft was handed over to the IAF at April-end in France, in keeping with the contract," he said.

"We are helping the IAF in arranging for the ferry flight of its first four Rafale jets from France as soon as possible. So there's no reason to speculate that the schedule will not be maintained," he said.

Aggressive PLA flouts protocols

Standoff different from the usual summer skirmishes; 70 Indian soldiers injured

SUHASINI HAIDAR

NEW DELHI



The face-off spread to previously uncontested territories this time.

sector" and at Nakula Pass in Sikkim, have been a factor of some concern. Officials have spoken of soldiers being outnumbered when normal patrols with the strength of a few dozen each on the Indian side have run into Chinese forces that number in hundreds.

The second difference from the past is the levels of aggression shown by the Chinese side, which include violence that has left at least 70 Indian soldiers injured, including some who needed to be flown out for treatment (injuries received by the Chinese side have not been reported on). More Chinese boats have been observed patrolling the Pangong Tso

(lake) while the PLA has dug in tents and trenches, according to sources.

The third point of concern is the number of points, including those in "previously uncontested" areas which have opened up since April. "They have reportedly pushed into a new area, Galwan river valley, where the LAC was not disputed, pitched tents and dug in with reinforcement ... The fact that there have been incursions at multiple locations is worrisome," Mr. Kantha said.

NEWS ANALYSIS

Significantly, China's Foreign Ministry has also accused India of "attempting to unilaterally change the situation on the ground".

Another point of concern for diplomats has been whether the modified Chinese patterns reflect a tactical push, or beyond that, are driven by its ambitions on a strategic level. In particular, the actions are seen as an attempt to push back Indian troops in Ladakh, where in-

frastructure has been improved considerably in the last decade.

"One cannot discount that [Chinese] actions are guided by concerns regarding the Indian UTs of Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh. The change in the status of J&K, the maps that have been issued, public statements made that refer to the entire disputed area may all be playing on their minds as well," said Gautam Bambawale, former Ambassador to Bhutan, Pakistan and China, who also had earlier handled the "East Asia" or China desk.

In addition, rising U.S.-China tensions may have placed Beijing in a defensive position, and the PLA's aggression may mean China is "signalling" that growing Indo-U.S. strategic ties do not diminish the risks India faces along the 3,488-km boundary with China.

Most experts also agree that as long as there are military and diplomatic parleys, the situation will remain under control, but a prolonged confrontation will heighten the chances of an escalation.

Nehal Modi's profile back on Interpol site

DEVESH K. PANDEY

NEW DELHI

The profile of Nehal Modi, step brother of Punjab National Bank fraud case 'mastermind' Nirav Modi who is facing extradition proceedings in the United Kingdom, is back on the Interpol website months after it was removed last year.

On the request of the Enforcement Directorate, the Interpol had issued a Red Notice against Nehal in September 2019 and it reflected in the Interpol's online database.

However, the profiles of Nehal and his brother Neeshal, against whom the notice was issued in July 2018, were later not available online. The notice against Neeshal is still not on the website. While the agencies then did not have an explanation for this, officials said the action might have been taken pending hearing of their petitions in the Interpol, contesting the basis on which the notices were issued.

"Noted. I can assure you that not a single decision has been taken without complete due diligence. The minutes of the same speak for that," said Mr. Javadekar in his reply.

"... We all know that since 2014, minutes of such meetings are written beforehand elsewhere," Mr. Ramesh responded.



Jairam Ramesh

bang Valley in Arunachal Pradesh, coal mining proposal in the Dehing Patkai Elephant Reserve in Assam, a highway through the Bhagwan Mahavir Wildlife Sanctuary in Goa and a limestone mine in the Gir National Park, among others.

"Noted. I can assure you that not a single decision has been taken without complete due diligence. The minutes of the same speak for that," said Mr. Javadekar in his reply.

"... We all know that since 2014, minutes of such meetings are written beforehand elsewhere," Mr. Ramesh responded.

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दिनांक: - 19/05/2020

संशोधित सूचना

नगरपालिका की सुधारणा से अविवादित शायद के फायर एंड गेनरेशन पर अनिवार्य/रेस्व्य कार्य होते 24 घण्टे क्रूज 80 फॉर्मेशन/क्रूज अंगठी अव्यवहारित रूप से अविवादित हैं—जो सूचना में 14/ 2019-20 दिनांक 18.03.2020 दिनांक UBN no.- UNP1920SLRC00145 के अन्तर्गत क्रूजना वायरल की भवाधारी की कार्रवाई के बाहर दूरा तु भारत में लॉक-डाउन किए जाने के कारण दिनांक की निवारण की शर्त नहीं है। अन्यान्य सूचना में युनः निम्नासार संस्थान किया जाता है:-

क्र. निवारण अंतर्गत सूचना में संशोधित निवारण की प्रौद्योगिकी संस्थान की नवीनीकृति दिनांक व समय समय 04.00 बजे प्रातः 11.00 बजे व वार्ष 201.05.2020 समय 22.06.2020 समय 04.00 बजे वार्ष 2020 समय 04.00 बजे तक

नोट:- 3. संशोधित दिनांक व समय गत्यन्तराम संस्थान की वेबसाइट www.eproc.rajasthan.gov.in एवं www.sppp.rajasthan.gov.in पर देखा एवं डाउन-लोड किया जा सकता है। अन्य निवारण की विधियों और आगे नहीं बढ़ाई जाएगी। किसी भी प्रकार की जानकारी, सुधारणा वायरल दूरा तु भारत में निवारण की विधि जानकारी है।

महाप्रभु नगर, उदयपुर

ग्राम. संवाद/सी/320/2020-2021

आयुष्मान नगर, उदयपुर

'Are Modi, Shah aware of what's happening in their home State?'

Cong. cites Gujarat HC order flagging poor medical facilities

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

A day after the Gujarat High Court (HC) passed a strong order against the State government over poor medical facilities to fight the COVID-19 pandemic, the Congress on Sunday asked Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah "if they are aware of what's happening in their home State or has Gujarat become COVID-19 immune".

India too has increased infrastructure, as it completes the construction and refurbishment of the 255 km Darbuk-Shyok-Daulat Beg Oldi road near the river valley. The Army has mobilised additional troops and equipment and dug into positions close to the Chinese troops, sources told *The Hindu*.



The court slammed the high mortality rate at the Civil Hospital of Ahmedabad.

"Why has the Gujarat Governor not adopted the same intrusive standards for the Gujarat government as his West Bengal counterpart did?" Mr. Singhvi asked.

The Congress spokesperson said if "controllers" of the Central government are "unable to provide medical justice to the poor of their home area, what COVID justice can the rest of India's teeming millions expect from them?

"The observations of the Hon'ble Gujarat High Court on the conduct of the State government & present situation in public hospitals are extremely worrisome. It should serve as an eye opener for the government," senior Congress leader Ahmed Patel said in a tweet.

U.P. filing 'false cases' against party leaders, says Congress

'BJP resorting to anti-democratic practices to hide its failures'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The Congress on Sunday alleged that the Uttar Pradesh government is filing "false cases" against its leaders to harass them and hide its failures.

"We condemn the arrest of our party U.P. president Ajay Kumar Lallu. All legal assistance is being provided to ensure his early release but the arrest underlines the

grim situation in Uttar Pradesh – where a weak government has resorted to anti-democratic tendencies to hide its failures," senior leader Ahmed Patel said. The government had arrested Mr. Lallu and filed a case against Priyanka Gandhi Vadra's aide Sandeep Singh.

"There is no confrontation with the State government and our only intent is to help the migrants," party leader Rajeev Shukla said at an online press conference.

Congress Legislator Party leader Aradhana Misra slammed BSP leader Mayawati for blaming the party for the migrant crisis. "The Congress has been out of power in the State since 1989 and all the State PSUs and industries have been sold by Mayawati during her four terms as Chief Minister," she said.



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NOTICE INVITING TENDER

L.R.No.TUFIDCO/AMRUT/1055/AM (M)/2019

Date: 25-05-2020

Invitation of Bids for

Establishment of Programme Management Unit (PMU) to provide Handholding support to TUFIDCO for implementation of AMRUT, Smart Cities Mission and Other Schemes in Tamil Nadu.

Please refer to our Tender Notice even No. Dated : 10-03-2020 for the assignment 'Establishment of Programme Management Unit (PMU) to provide handholding support to TUFIDCO for implementation of AMRUT, Smart Cities Mission and other schemes in Tamil Nadu'.

The Last date and time for receipt of bids is extended upto 12-06-2020 - 3.00 p.m. The pre-qualification bids will be opened on

Goyal, Uddhav trade barbs over special trains

Railways can provide trains if State gives details, says minister

AJEET MAHALE
MUMBAI

A minor political storm played out on Sunday after Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray during his telecast said only 50% of the trains demanded by the State government for migrant workers were run by the Railways. A few hours later, Union Minister for Railways Piyush Goyal took to Twitter asking Mr. Thackeray to furnish the list of workers to Central Railway (CR), and they would readily run 125 trains on Monday.

In a series of tweets around 7.15 p.m., Mr. Goyal asked the government to send all the required details such as the destination of trains, medical certificates and the like to the CR's general manager so they could plan the trains. He also said

he hoped the trains would not come to the station and go back empty, as had occurred on previous instances. Later, he tweeted that the Railways had not received the list even after 2.5 hours. Earlier in the day, Mr. Thackeray had said, "We have sought 80 trains daily for migrant labour to go back home, but only 50% trains are being allowed. We have the capacity to register more. The State paid ₹85 crore for 481 trains on which over six lakh workers have travelled till now."

CR issued a statement saying the Railways had run 520 Shramik Special trains carrying 7,32,166 migrant workers until May 23, on demands given on daily basis by nodal officers of the State government. "So far Railways had to cancel 65 trains, after it

was scheduled, for want of adequate preparations by State Government of Maharashtra. Certain States like West Bengal, Jharkhand, Kerala, Odisha, Rajasthan have been reluctant to give consent for receiving Shramik Special trains," CR's statement said. It said trains to places like Tirunelveli, Una, Rewa and Bilaspur didn't run at full capacity, and there was not much demand to run trains from Nashik, Dhule, Amravati, Chandrapur and Akola.

Shiv Sena MP Sanjay Raut late at night tweeted the State had given the details to the Railways, and sarcastically said Mr. Goyal should ensure trains reached the correct destination.

Leader of Opposition Devendra Fadnavis accused the State of playing politics.

Special train to northeast attacked

Returning workers subjected to ethnic abuse and violence at Bihar station

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GUWAHATI

In two incidents in Bihar within a span of 24 hours, a special train from Haryana, carrying some 1,300 people home to the northeastern States, was attacked and 12 passengers on a bus from Madhya Pradesh were abused and threatened.

The journey for the returnees from Haryana was incident-free until their train stopped at Danapur in Bihar early on Sunday morning. Trouble started when the passengers, mostly young persons from northeastern States, refused to let several people waiting on the platform into the train.

Police inaction

"We did not allow the people to board the special train because of the COVID-19 threat. At that they attacked the train and broke the windowpanes with sticks and stones," reported Renponi



Out of control: A worker spraying disinfectant on people at the Danapur station on Sunday. • RANJEET KUMAR

Kithan, one of the passengers. Her co-travellers said the police remained mute spectators as the people hurled abuse and threatened to burn the train down. They also alleged that the police beat up some of the returnees on the train instead of disciplining the violent crowd.

"This happened after we had spent more than 20 hours on the train without food and water," said Franto

Tohoi, another passenger. He added that the train, which was supposed to be a direct service, was making long halts at several stations. "At this rate, we don't know when we will reach our destinations."

Subhanan Chandra, the chief spokesperson of Northeast Frontier Railway, said the matter had been raised with officials of the East Central Railway. "It was a minor issue [which] the security

personnel handled. The train is on the move and is being escorted by the Railway Protection Force," he said.

CPR of East Central Railway Rajesh Kumar told the media that there was a minor scuffle between passengers for seat at Danapur railway station. Amid the scuffle, someone had thrown a stone, breaking a window pane of the train. However, the train later left the station with security, he said.

In the other incident, members of a group from Nagaland, who were returning home in a bus from Madhya Pradesh, said they were racially abused when they stopped in Bihar for food on Saturday. "Twelve of us had stopped by a roadside eatery when some men came up, hurled abuses and called us coronavirus," said Mhatung Ezung, who worked at a wildlife lodge at the Pench National Park.

U.P. revokes mobile ban in COVID wards

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
LUCKNOW

After a Twitter spat, the Uttar Pradesh government has amended its May 22 order prohibiting the use of mobile phones by patients in isolation wards of dedicated COVID-19 hospitals in the State.

In his order to various medical colleges, U.P.'s Director General of the Medical Education Department K.K. Gupta had said the use of mobile phones spreads COVID-19 infection. The order said two dedicated mobile phones for use by patients would be kept with the ward in-charge.

The ban was questioned by Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav, who accused the government of trying to hide the poor state of hospitals and their "mismanagement".

Mr. Yadav pointed out that there was a need for sanitisation and not a ban.

Patanjali proposes drug trial in Indore

Health Minister says there is huge potential in traditional medicine

STAFF REPORTER
BHOJPAL

A day before Baba Ramdev told Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan that ayurvedic medicines had given "very good results" on COVID-19 patients, the research wing of his firm Patanjali had given a proposal to a government medical college to conduct clinical trials.

On May 19, Anurag Varshney, vice-president, Patanjali Research Institute, Haridwar, made the request to the dean of the Mahatma Gandhi Memorial Medical College, Indore, the city worst hit by the outbreak. Jyoti Bindal, the dean, has sent the proposal to the government.

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Union Health Ministry on Sunday sought results of COVID-19 treatment using Ayurvedic medicines.

This was following a visit by Health Minister Harsh Vardhan to a dedicated COVID-19 health centre at the Chaudhary Brahm Prakash Ayurved Charak Sansthan (CBPACS), Noida.

Huge potential
"Ayurveda is a traditional medicinal knowledge source from India and there is huge potential in it. Its inherent strength in holistic healing and wellbeing is being put to good use in treatment of the patients at this centre," said

the Minister.

He said this knowledge and experience would surely prove beneficial to people all over the world, especially in combating the battle against COVID-19.

No casualty'

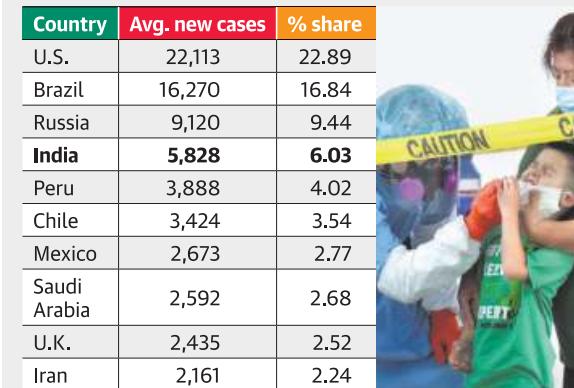
According to figures released by the Ministry, till date 201 patients have been admitted to the CBPACS Centre.

"Of these, 37 have been cured and 100 patients have been advised home isolation. Nineteen patients have been shifted to speciality hospitals on review of their medical condition. There has been no casualty in this centre," noted the Health Ministry.

Status check

India crossed Iran's tally of COVID-19 cases on Sunday to become the country with the tenth highest number of infections. The table lists 10 countries with the highest average cases recorded daily between May 17 and 23, and their share among the world's cases in this period. India recorded 5,828 COVID-19 cases daily on an average, the fourth most among all countries in the period. In total, India recorded 40,786 cases, which accounted for 6% of the world's cases in these seven days. Among the 40,786 cases, Maharashtra accounted for over 40%

Country	Avg. new cases	% share
U.S.	22,113	22.89
Brazil	16,270	16.84
Russia	9,120	9.44
India	5,828	6.03
Peru	3,888	4.02
Chile	3,424	3.54
Mexico	2,673	2.77
Saudi Arabia	2,592	2.68
U.K.	2,435	2.52
Iran	2,161	2.24



Two babies born over 2 days on trains to Odisha

Another baby delivered in police vehicle

SATYASUNDAR BARIK
BHUBANESWAR

A woman migrant worker travelling from Kazipet in Telangana to Balangir in Odisha gave birth to a baby boy in a Shramik Special train on Sunday. This is the second delivery of a baby on a train in the past 48 hours.

When the woman, identified as Hema Kanti, went into labour, the Railway Divisional Medical Officer was called into the train at Titagarh. Forty minutes later, mother and child were shifted to a government hospital at Titagarh by an ambulance.

lance, said East Coast Railway. Both mother and baby girl are fine.

On Friday, Kunti Nag, travelling from Secunderabad to Balangir, gave birth to a baby boy. Mother and child were later admitted in a government hospital in Balangir.

In another instance, at Jharsuguda, a migrant woman gave birth to a child inside the police vehicle in which she was being rushed to hospital. The woman was travelling to Bihar from Secunderabad by train when she went into labour.

Howrah's botanical garden now a graveyard of 1,000 trees

250-year-old 'Great Banyan Tree' survives Amphan

SHIV SAHAY SINGH
SHIBPUR

Inside the walled gates of the Acharya Jagadish Chandra Bose Indian Botanic Garden at Shibpur in Howrah district, the chirping of birds gets distinctly louder.

Set up in 1787, the 273-acre garden, located at the other end of the Hooghly, has turned into a graveyard of trees. Massive trees, hundreds in number, with trunks having a girth of several metres, have fallen all over the garden, blocking access to large parts of the campus.



Living to tell the tale: Broken prop root of the 'Great Banyan Tree' at the Indian Botanic Garden at Shibpur. • SHIV SAHAY SINGH

"We have lost nearly 1,000 trees, including some notable and rare species," Kanad Das, scientist, Botanical Survey of India (BSI), and in charge of the Botanic Garden, said. The garden has over 13,000 trees of about 1,100 species.

Rare and notable

Among the rare trees that have fallen include the only full-grown *kalpabriksha*

(*Adansonia digitata*) tree in the garden, the mad tree (*Pterogyne alata* var. *irregularis*), the para rubber tree (*Hevea brasiliensis*), the Malabar chestnut (*Pachira insignis*), the Chir pine (*Pinus roxburghii*), and several century-old mahogany trees (*Swietenia mahagoni*) in the garden's famous Mahogany Avenue.

Most of these trees were introduced to the garden by British botanists in the late 18th and early 19th centuries.

Commercial cultivation of mahogany and rubber began in India after the species were first introduced in this garden.

The cyclone also did not spare the iron fencing along

the Hooghly; the brick wall along Andul Road of the Botanic Garden has suffered significant damage too.

Amid all the devastation, the "Great Banyan Tree" on the western edge of garden offered the only silver lining. The tree, which has an enormous canopy, has survived with some damage. The 250-year-old tree, which pre-dates the botanic garden, has a canopy of over 1.5 hectares. It is supported by over 4,000 prop roots.

Major attraction

Located at the western edge of garden, about 10% of the Great Banyan's prop roots have been damaged by the cyclone.

The authorities ma-

naging the Botanic Garden are confident that the destroyed prop roots can either be repaired, or new roots will come up. The tree is one of the garden's major attractions.

The main trunk of the banyan tree had to be removed in 1925, after an infection was caused by a wood rotting fungi.

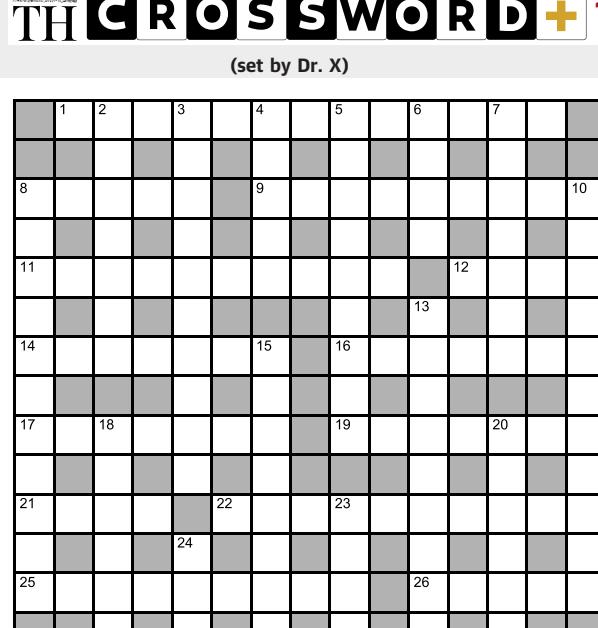
A.A. Mao, Director, Botanical Survey of India, who visited the garden on Saturday, said that the sort of damage that the Great Banyan Tree has suffered was expected in a cyclone of such intensity.

"We are lucky that the tree had a horizontal expansion and wasn't tall like the other trees of the botanic garden," he said.

TH CROSSWORD + 12944

(set by Dr. X)

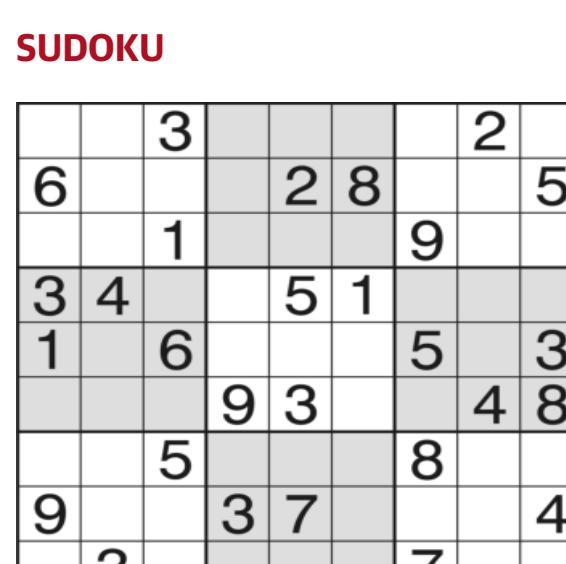
De-stress at home with some fun brain teasers. Try out at never-before prices @ <https://crossword.thehindu.com>



ACROSS
1 Increases speed of walking to twice as much getting more gaps between lines (6-7)
8 Avoid a horribly maintained American state (5)
9 Son felt sad about rebellious tiff primarily hurting pride (4-5)
11 Emulate move to protect veteran endlessly facing prosecution (6,4)
12 Amazon native settled around island (4)

16 Hooligans yearn to enter fights (7)
16 Thrill to receive bonus salary (7)
17 Calm because wise person controls union (7)
19 Fellows spending money on grand celebration to impress (7)
21 One gets pain around pelvic bones (4)
22 Risky choice to install a Republican (10)
25 Exotic woman in ultimately revealing thong, one that's worn in bed (9)
26 A little offensive, sour smell (5)
27 Conserving energy, fight and rush around ring to seek vengeance (2, 3, 5)
DOWN
2 Unwritten rules in Judaism, old and realistic about everything (4, 3)
3 Revolting attempt to spread ghastly bacilli round in this type of warfare (10)
4 Stops losing head and relaxes (5)
5 Mate with damsel over one oriental mattress (9)
6 Overwhelmed by endless expenditure, wife intimidates (4)
7 Help to sprint around track, climbing with energy (7)
8 Notice how soldiers march (11)
10 One using shears and drier? (11)
13 Being finally rather messy, tucking into chicken – need this? (6, 4)
15 Abstains from exercises eventually and weakens (6, 3)
18 Fish for eels and small carp (7)
20 Associate gets largely melancholic on old sherry (7)
23 Malignancy killing club chairperson? (5)
24 Westernmost Aleutian island, part of great Tundra (4)

SUDOKU



DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★★

Solution to puzzle 12943

Solution to yesterday's Sudoku



FAITH

Elements of Ramzan

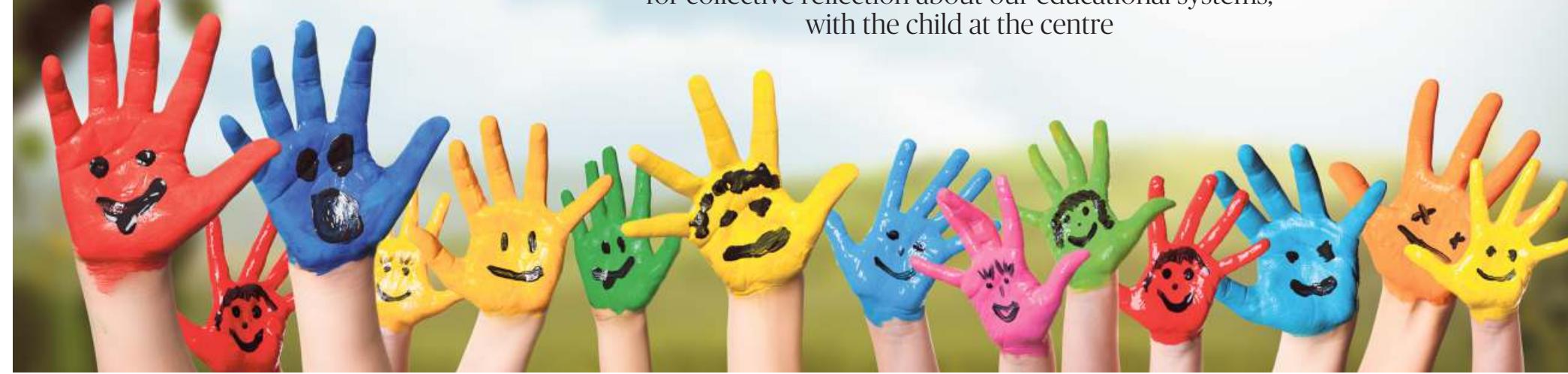
In an exceptionally hot month of fasting, perhaps it is most appropriate to remember that an alternative meaning of the Arabic word 'Ramad', the root of 'Ramadan', is 'scorchingness of the earth due to excessive heat'. Ramadan, or Ramzan, as the month of fasting is more commonly known, was declared in mid-May, and a little unusually, the date of commencement was uniformly observed on the same day by Muslims globally. To Muslims fasting from dawn to dusk in the ninth month of the lunar Islamic calendar, Ramzan is an opportunity not just for voluntary abstention from the appetites that drive their existence but also a reminder of how close nature is to their life.

The Muslim population of the world sets its dates according to the Hijri calendar. This starts in the Islamic New Year of AD 622 when the Prophet Muhammad and his followers migrated from Makkah (Mecca) to Yathrib (now known as Medina) and established the first Muslim community or 'Ummah'. The Hijri calendar has 12 months, in a year of 354 or 355 days. With the calendar moving back by 11 days each year compared with the more universally used Gregorian (solar) calendar, the first day of Ramzan tends to change accordingly. Fasting was made compulsory in the second year after the migration.

Even though the sun and the moon have always been a

P for Pandemic

The COVID-19 crisis has presented us with a starting point for collective reflection about our educational systems, with the child at the centre



GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCKPHOTO

■ DIVYA BADAMI RAO

The ongoing pandemic has led to novel shifts in how we school our children, with little time for discussion or thorough planning. As the pandemic hurtled itself on us, schools were forced to shut their gates overnight. Most privileged schools have adjusted to the situation by switching to online platforms, with regularly scheduled online classes and homework, some of which is graded. These shifts were accompanied by an increase in panic and anxiety around children's productivity, and the policing of learning schedules.

School-from-home works on the presumption that all families will have the same capacity to make adjustments to accommodate school. Yet, each family ex-

periences house-bound life according to individual circumstances. The number of children in a household and their age, the work status of their parents, the presence of other adults (uncles, aunts, grandparents) at home, and the availability of external help are some influencing factors. Some parents welcome structure to keep their children's education on track. Others find themselves divided over it. Similarly, some children might easily adapt to the demands of remote schooling, while others may be less able or unwilling. Parents are also concerned about the availability of devices, and the substantial increase in screen time involved.

Many school teachers too find this moment overwhelming. Teaching online is often not a sa-

tisfactory experience. Lively classroom sessions are not easily translated through the screen, with students sitting in isolation. While students and teachers may enjoy connecting online for a short period every day, staying online for the length of the school day gets emotionally draining for both parties. Teachers are also expected to plan lessons, produce worksheets, and provide feedback without really interacting with the child. While administrators have decided to move schools online to respond to the moment and prevent bankruptcy, this has not resulted in effective teaching or learning scenarios.

A situational triage

The child has traditionally been at the centre of the parent-child-

Why not look upon a break from school and schoolwork as an opportunity for children to be more self-directed in their learning?

teacher nexus, always a passive recipient rather than an active player in the design and execution of his/her education. The nexus is fast morphing into a teacher-parent-child hierarchy, where their capacity to respond is limited even further in the online and distance learning mode of functioning. Yet, we must remember that this emergency is being experienced by our children too. No school, extra-curriculars, outings or time with friends leave a gaping hole in their social lives. The rigid ex-

pectations of schoolwork have always set up dissatisfaction power struggles between parents and children. Given the circumstances, children probably prefer their parents as playmates rather than as educators.

So, here is a thought. Why not look upon a break from school and schoolwork as an opportunity for children to be more self-directed in their learning? We can strive to suspend our pre-conditioned notions of time well spent, and consider letting children find their own cues to fill in their time. We can recalibrate our ideals to value our children's initiatives, with no imposed goals or directions of our own. This is not to say that children need to be dissuaded from doing schoolwork but, rather, not be forced to have to do it. Nor need this

mean that there are no family rules whatsoever. Rather, we should focus on the natural interests and inclinations of our children as they unfold in an environment free from pressure, and support them as best we can. Being self-directed and cultivating the ability to overcome a sense of boredom are skills worth developing.

The potential of self-directed learning

Children may learn to cook, knit, garden, play an instrument, learn chess, or magic over YouTube. Some will watch movies, play video games, write stories, create games, read books, design robots. Others may play all day long in their world of make-believe. The possibilities are endless. But all children will be hav-

The writer has a master's in Social Work from Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai and a bachelor's in English Literature from Delhi University. She has an academic interest in play and self-directed learning. She can be reached at di.badamirao@gmail.com

(A longer version of this article is published online.)

TREND

Exploring the transitional space

Unilodgers, a student-housing marketplace, feels proximity, hygiene, single rooms and pricing will be the key factors to stay afloat



SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

As with all sectors, one would assume that student housing would have been equally impacted by the pandemic. So did Unilodgers, a global student-housing marketplace. But, interestingly, it has witnessed an increase in the number of students on their platform. Its interpretation of this surge is that students are hopeful of being back in school by the fall cycle and that they are continuing to research online for accommodation needs close to their destination universities.

Spread across the U.S., the U.K., and Australia, and not heavily reliant on international students seeking accommodation in these regions, Unilodgers is also catering to the transition of accommodation hunting onto the online space.

Vaibhav Verma, Founder and CEO, Unilodgers.com, shares more insights into the changing trends in student accommodation in the light of COVID-19. Excerpts from the interview:

How will this pandemic affect the demand for student housing?

The real-time unfolding of new information and policy responses make it impossible to reasonably forecast how much "demand for student housing" will get affected. The depreciating tuition fee and trends observed on the Unilodgers platform only indicate that the impetus for higher education is still holding strong.

The interesting part

...students are going to prefer hygienic, organised housing spaces, single-room occupancy over sharing with a roommate...

that a potential cultural shift is likely to take place in which students are going to prefer hygienic, organised housing spaces, single-room occupancy over sharing with a roommate, and alternative housing nearby along with online visits instead of in-person visits while looking for options.

What should students look for when assessing housing options in light of the pandemic?

Health and well-being are paramount. This has led many students to opt for housing options closest to their university campuses to avoid exposure to public transport, outside spaces and so on, just in case social distancing continues for the next few months. Next, students should stay on top of information from their respective colleges/universities to ensure they have the latest news on what steps are being planned and what support they have in place. Many of our supply partners have introduced relaxed policies factoring in the ambiguity of the immediate future, therefore students should

also check out cancellation and refund rights while booking accommodation.

What are the top things students are looking for?

A significant percentage of Indian students are looking to live with other Indian students when going for higher education overseas.

Next, single-occupancy rooms and studios are a preferred choice for students including Indians but not limited to.

What are some of the advantages of staying in accommodations like Unilodgers as compared to other options like on-campus or renting private houses?

All of our 1.5 million rooms are officially classified as purpose-built student housing and, to get this, an official accreditation is required from the local governments by virtue of meeting the highest standards of safety, cleanliness and quality. 95% of our buildings are located right next to the university campuses, so students can walk to their campus. All our rooms come with all-bills-inclusive prices, and students don't have to worry about paying various bills such as electricity, Wi-Fi, housing tax and so on. Neither do our students have to deal with landlords.

All our buildings have socialising spaces, health and fitness services, study rooms, games area, and so on, which ensures that students don't have to necessarily go out of their building premises to get these things.



CM YK

Most students find it difficult to calculate the large number of questions in

ETCETERA

■ Harappa Habit Heroes launched

Harappa Education recently launched a new digital initiative 'Harappa Habit Heroes' through which it will identify 10 individuals whose attitude and 'can-do' spirit has inspired improvement in these difficult times. The organisation will recognise and reward them for their courage, collaboration and initiatives of civic engagement. The initiative invites nominations from anyone who has brought about and encouraged change around them by helping senior citizens, feeding migrant labour, teaching children online or helped set-up processes to improve virtual collaboration. Nominations will be open till May 31. To apply, visit, <https://harappa.education/habit-heroes>

■ Naveen Munjal turns teacher

Masters' Union School of Business recently announced that Managing Director of Hero Electric Vehicles Pvt. Ltd, Naveen Munjal, will be teaching a course on the Economics of Electric Vehicles. The course will delve into how India can develop an ecosystem around electric vehicles, related regulatory aspects, unique Indian advantages that exist, and how the EV ecosystem will impact the country's shared heroes.

■ IIM Kozhikode completes CAT 2019 process successfully

Indian Institute of Management Kozhikode, has successfully completed the process for the CAT exam. CAT 2019 also recorded the highest number of registrations in the last 10 years, with 2,44,190 candidates registering for the online exam. Out of this, 2,09,926 candidates successfully appeared for CAT 2019, which was conducted at 376 test centres spread across 156 cities, last November. The results for the first phase of the exam were announced on January 04.

IIM Kozhikode has also introduced two new programmes: MBA in Liberal Studies and Management (MBA - LSM) and Post Graduate

Programme in Finance (PGP-Finance) for the academic year, and are currently in the personal interview phase of selection, being conducted completely online for shortlisted candidates.

■ India's first Master of Arts in Public Leadership programme launched

Rishikesh University, Sonepat, recently launched India's first Master of Arts in Public Leadership (MAPL). Initiated by Rashtrapati School of Public Leadership at Rishikesh University, the MAPL is a residential programme. Conceptualised by Vision India Foundation (VIF), a Delhi-based public policy organisation, the programme has been designed for students who wish to pursue research-oriented careers in governance, academia, think-tanks, or consulting. Applicants will be thoroughly tested through a rigorous screening process that includes essays, and interviews, before being selected. Graduates who apply for the programme also get an option of research grants and incubation.

Applications are open till May 30. Applications online at: <https://rashtrom.org/apply-for-ma-pl/>. The programme is slated to commence from September 2020 onwards.

■ SRMAP's Next-Tech Lab wins three hackathons

The team of Next-Tech Lab of SRM University- AP recently won three hackathons in a row. The teammates: Eppera Karthik, a second-year student, Khushboo Sharma, a second-year student, and Koushik Bhargav, third-year student, all from Computer science and Engineering department, successfully developed a fresh multiplayer virtual reality game, Whack A Mole, and a cloud-based multiplayer FPS in Virtual Reality, 'Desert Shooter'. The three-member team bagged the second prize in the International / Professional Award at SKYHacks2020; Best echoAR Hack at Silicon Valley Hacks; and Best AR/VR hack at HackNow, organised by Cal Hacks, a non-profit organisation at the University of Berkeley, California.



VALUE ADD

Back to the Vedic age

Monotonous teaching methods in schools is the primary reason for disinterest in Math. Vedic Math can reverse the situation

■ MAYANK GARG

Math is a subject that always falls in the grey area. It is either loved or abhorred by students. Though Indian students have always achieved wonders in the field, there are still many who fear the word.

Problems

The biggest problem that students face is tackling huge numbers, as solving such questions becomes cumbersome. The solution to this lies in the ancient Indian concepts of Vedic Math (VM), as it helps develop reasoning and logical thinking ability.

It is more of an art than just a set of techniques that one needs to master with patience and diligence. There are wonderful formulae using which students can solve mathematical problems in next to no time.

Tedious calculations such as difficult square roots, cube roots and multiple digit multiplications can be easily solved.

Most students find it difficult to calculate the large number of questions in

competitive exams. It works wonders in helping them solve questions with speed and accuracy, while increasing concentration.

Headstart

The biggest reason behind the disinterest towards Math is the monotonous and dry methods used in schools to teach it. It isn't fun and teachers often overcomplicate it.

Through Vedic Math, learning can be made fun. The problem is that these concepts are generally introduced to students when they start preparing for competitive exams such as CAT, which is quite late to grasp the new concept and forego the previously learnt conventional methods.

It is important that these concepts are introduced early – the aim should be to catch them young at school, as at this age they are natural learners and will imbibe concepts faster than college-goers. This will transform students into able mathematicians.

The writer is a Vedic math author, expert, and CFO of TWIN WIN.

U.S. pushing relations to the brink of a new Cold War: China

Foreign Minister says Beijing is open to international probe led by the WHO

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
BEIJING

The United States is pushing relations with China to "the brink of a new Cold War," China's Foreign Minister said on Sunday, rejecting Washington's "lies" over the coronavirus while saying Beijing was open to an international effort to find its source.

Keeping up the worsening war of words with Washington over the pandemic and a Beijing move to tighten control over Hong Kong, Wang Yi said the United States had been infected by a "political virus" compelling figures there to continually attack China.

COVID-19

"It has come to our attention that some political forces in the U.S. are taking China-U.S. relations hostage and pushing our two countries to the brink of a new Cold War," Mr. Wang told reporters during a press conference at China's week-long annual parliamentary session.

Long-standing friction
Long-standing friction between the two powers over trade, human rights and a range of other issues have been pushed to new heights since the virus outbreak.

Mr. Wang did not identify what "forces" he was referring to, but U.S. President Donald Trump has led world criticism of China's initial response to the pandemic, which has caused more than 340,000 deaths and economic carnage worldwide.

Mr. Trump and members of his administration have said China covered up the



Some respite: People cycling through Tiananmen Square in Beijing on Sunday. ■ GETTY IMAGES

emergence of the virus late last year and bungled its initial response.

Washington's criticism has been widely seen in the United States as an attempt by Mr. Trump to divert attention from the White House's own COVID-19 failures.

Mr. Wang took an apparent swipe at the U.S. struggles to contain the virus, which has now infected more people in the United States than anywhere else. "I call on the U.S. to stop wasting time and stop wasting precious lives," Mr. Wang said. He said China was "open" to international scientific cooperation to identify the source of the novel coronavirus, but stressed that any investigation must be "free of political interference", based on science and led by the World Health Organization.

The WHO has called on Beijing to invite the UN body to investigate the source, but Mr. Wang did not indicate if foreign scientists would be invited to come to China. "Some political figures in the U.S. rush to label the virus and politicise its origins, stigmatising China," Mr. Wang said, adding that an investigation must "oppose any presumption of guilt".

Most scientists believe the virus jumped from animals to humans after emerging in China, possibly from a market in the central city of Wuhan where exotic animals were sold for meat.

Governments including the U.S. and Australia have called in recent weeks for an investigation into the exact origins of the virus.

Global response

China has proposed instead that the "global response" to COVID-19 should only be assessed when the pandemic is over. WHO members on Tuesday adopted a resolution, tabled by the European Union, at the UN body's first virtual assembly to review the international handling of the pandemic, but it does not single out China. "Aside from the devastation caused by the novel coronavirus, there is also a political virus spreading through the U.S.," he said. "This political virus is the use of every opportunity to attack and smear China. Some politicians completely disregard basic facts and have fabricated too many lies targeting China, and plotted too many conspiracies."

The introduction at China's legislature on Friday of a proposal to impose a security law in Hong Kong to suppress the semi-autonomous city's pro-democracy movement also has drawn U.S. and world condemnation.

But Mr. Wang defended the plan, saying it must be implemented "without the slightest delay", adding that months of often-violent Hong Kong protests last year against China's growing influence in the financial hub had "seriously endangered China's national security".

Netanyahu calls graft charges 'fabricated'

Israel PM's corruption trial begins

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
JERUSALEM

A combative Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu faced court on Sunday for the start of his long-anticipated corruption trial after lashing out at the "fabricated" charges against him. The veteran leader, who has just forged a new unity government after more than a year of political turmoil, became the country's first Premier to face criminal charges while in office.

Flanked by Ministers from his right-wing Likud party, Netanyahu addressed reporters before entering the Jerusalem District Court to face charges of bribery, fraud and breach of trust.

"I'm here with a straight



Benjamin Netanyahu. ■ AFP

back and my head held high," Mr. Netanyahu said, labelling the charges "fabricated and ludicrous".

The trial is expected to last for months, if not years.

During Sunday's session, Mr. Netanyahu spoke only to identify himself, before the court adjourned after one hour. He was not asked to enter a plea, which will occur in a later session.

ELSEWHERE



Conservative MPs ask Johnson aide to resign

LONDON
Lawmakers from Britain's ruling Conservatives Party on Sunday called for the resignation of Dominic Cummings, the senior adviser to Prime Minister Boris Johnson who travelled 400 km to northern England during the coronavirus lockdown. ■ REUTERS

Australia to resume tourism in Victoria

MELBOURNE
Australia set out measures to resume tourism to Victoria's rural regions, ravaged by bushfires and then the coronavirus, after a testing blitz showed continuing low cases of community transmission. Tourists will be able to stay overnight from June 1 in regional areas in the southern State, State Premier Daniel Andrews said on Sunday. ■ REUTERS

Black patients in U.S. hospitalised more often

Study of infected people in northern California highlights disparity

RONI CARYN RABIN

As the COVID-19 spread across the United States, sweeping through low-income, densely populated communities, black and Hispanic patients died at higher rates than white patients.

Crowded living conditions, poorer overall health and limited access to care have been blamed, among other factors. But a new study suggests that the disparity was particularly acute for black patients. Among those seeking medical care for COVID-19, black patients were hospitalised at nearly three times the rate of white and Hispanic patients, according to an analysis of patient records from a large health care system in Northern California.

The disparity remained even after researchers took into account differences in age, sex, income and the prevalence of chronic health problems that exacerbate COVID-19, like hypertension



Blacks unequally hit: Patients waiting to be screened for COVID-19 in New York in March. ■ NYT

and Type 2 diabetes. The finding suggests that black patients may have had limited access to medical care or that they postponed seeking help until later in the course of their illness, when the disease was more advanced.

Needing acute care

Black patients were also far less likely than white, Hispanic or Asian patients to have been tested for the virus before going to the emergency room for care. Black patients "are coming to us later and sicker, and they're accessing our care

through the emergency department and acute care environment," said Dr. Stephen Lockhart, the chief medical officer at Sutter Health in Sacramento and one of the authors of the new study.

The study, which was peer reviewed, was published in *Health Affairs*.

Delayed care may give the virus more time to spread through households and neighbourhoods, Dr. Lockhart and his colleagues concluded. The delays also suggest that minority patients continue to face barriers despite California's broad ex-

Wuhan institute denies links to SARS-CoV-2 virus strains

3 strains 'do not match' the COVID-19 causing virus: lab

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
BEIJING

The Chinese virology institute at the centre of U.S. allegations that it may have been the source of the COVID-19 pandemic has three live strains of bat coronaviruses on-site, but none match the new global contagion, its director has said.

Scientists think COVID-19 originated in bats and could have been transmitted to people via another mammal.

But the director of the Wuhan Institute of Virology told state broadcaster CGTN that claims made by U.S. President Donald Trump and others the virus could have leaked from the facility were "pure fabrication".

In the interview filmed on May 13 but broadcast on Sa-



A medical worker taking a swab sample from a person in Beijing on Sunday. ■ AFP

VID-19. One of their research teams, led by Professor Shi Zhengli, has been researching bat coronaviruses since 2004 and focused on the "source tracing of SARS", the strain behind another virus outbreak nearly two decades ago.

"We know that the whole genome of SARS-CoV-2 is only 80% similar to that of SARS. It's an obvious difference," she said. "So, in Professor Shi's past research, they didn't pay attention to such viruses which are less similar to the SARS virus."

Chinese scientists have said that the virus first emerged at a market selling live animals in Wuhan, though officials in Beijing more recently cast doubt about its origins.

Results on vaccine likely in autumn'

REUTERS
ZURICH

First indications of the effectiveness of a potential vaccine against COVID-19 may be available in the autumn, the head of the GAVI vaccine alliance told a Swiss newspaper, forecasting a long road from there to broad availability.

Calling for globally coordinated efforts both to produce and share an eventual vaccine, GAVI head Seth Berkley said international agreement was needed to build up manufacturing capacity to rapidly produce a vaccine once one is found.

He urged the World Health Organization to issue clear guidelines on a vaccine's use and distribution to prevent a vaccine first being made available to the rich at the expense of the people most in need.

Thousands rally in Hong Kong against law

China's new national security legislation could lead to sanctions, warns U.S.

REUTERS
HONG KONG

Hong Kong police fired tear gas and water cannon to disperse thousands of people who rallied on Sunday to protest against Beijing's plan to impose national security laws on the city.

In a return of the unrest that roiled Hong Kong last year, crowds thronged the Causeway Bay shopping area in defiance of curbs imposed to contain the coronavirus.

Chants of "Hong Kong independence, the only way out," echoed through the streets.

Challenge to Beijing

As dusk fell, police and demonstrators faced off in the nightlife district of Wan



Back to the streets: Protesters in Hong Kong marching on a road during a pro-democracy rally on Sunday. ■ AFP

Chai. The day's events pose a new challenge to Beijing's authority as it struggles to tame public opposition to its tightening grip over Hong Kong, a trade and business gateway for mainland China.

The arrangement guarantees the city broad freedoms not seen on the mainland, including a free press and independent judiciary.

Washington said on Sunday China's proposed legislation could lead to U.S. sanctions.

"It looks like, with this national security law, they're going to basically take over Hong Kong and if they do ... Secretary of State Mike Pompeo will likely be unable to certify that Hong Kong maintains a high degree of autonomy and if that happens there will be sanctions that will be imposed on Hong Kong and China," National Security Adviser Robert O'Brien told NBC television.

Pak. crash report raises serious questions

Engines scraped the runway thrice

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
KARACHI

A preliminary report on the Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) plane crash, in which 97 people were killed, has raised serious questions about the pilot's handling of the aircraft and what prevented the crew in the cockpit from informing the air traffic controllers about the troubles. Pakistani investigators are trying to find out if the crash is attributable to a pilot error or a technical glitch.

According to the report, prepared by the country's Civil Aviation Authority (CAA), the Airbus A320's engines had scraped the runway thrice on the pilot's first attempt to land, caus-



Wreckage of the plane in Karachi. ■ AFP

ing friction and sparks recorded by the experts.

After the third impact, the pilot took the aircraft off into the air again, which officials found very strange as the pilot did not inform the Air Traffic Control (ATC) at the Jinnah International Airport of any problem with the landing gear. The News International quoted sources as saying.

Kim hosts meeting, vows to boost nuclear deterrence

Rare appearance comes after speculations about his health

REUTERS
SEOUL

North Korean leader Kim Jong-un hosted a meeting to discuss the country's nuclear capabilities, state media said on Sunday, marking his first appearance in three weeks after a previous absence sparked global speculation about his health.

Ruling Workers' Party of officials wore face masks to greet Mr. Kim as he entered the meeting of the party's powerful Central Military Commission, state television showed, but no one including Mr. Kim was seen wearing a mask during the meeting.

Even after the investigators factored out a number of differences between patient groups, black patients were still 2.7 times more likely than others to require hospitalisation when they sought care. ■ NY TIMES



North Korean leader Kim Jong-un. ■ REUTERS

speculation about his condition, as Pyongyang has stepped up measures against the COVID-19 pandemic.

No virus cases
North Korea says it has no confirmed cases of the new coronavirus, but South Korea's intelligence agency has said it cannot rule out that the North has had an outbreak.

U.S.-led negotiations aimed at dismantling North Korea's nuclear and missile programmes have made little progress since late last year.

The Chinese government's top diplomat, Wang Yi, expressed hope on Sunday that the United States and North Korea could resume meaningful dialogue as soon as possible, "and not squander away the hard-earned results of (previous) engagement."



Conservative MPs ask Johnson aide to resign

LONDON
Lawmakers from Britain's ruling Conservatives Party on Sunday called for the resignation of Dominic Cummings, the senior adviser to Prime Minister Boris Johnson who travelled 400 km to northern England during the coronavirus lockdown. ■ REUTERS

Australia to resume tourism in Victoria

MELBOURNE
Australia set out measures to resume tourism to Victoria's rural regions, ravaged by bushfires and then the coronavirus, after a testing blitz showed continuing low cases of community transmission. Tourists will be able to stay overnight from June 1 in regional areas in the southern State, State Premier Daniel Andrews said on Sunday. ■ REUTERS

ASK US



N. SREEKANTH

Q. I am an ex-serviceman. I had started an educational society. The society had sold a piece of agricultural land and purchased another piece of agricultural land at some other place. However, since I-T section 240-B was not extended to the society, we had to pay a huge sum as tax on capital gains. On an appeal, it was revised twice. However, we have paid the tax component in full. We have also appealed to the I-T authorities to waive the interest. The appeal is since pending.

Is it possible to get any relief under Vivad Se Vishwas amnesty scheme?

L. PANDU RANGA REDDY

A. Under the Vivad Se Vishwas Amnesty Scheme, such appeals before the competent authority where there is a dispute on tax, interest and penalty are covered in order to claim relief as per the provisions entailed in the scheme based on which relief is granted by the authorities.

On the basis of the query raised by you, two inferences can be made,

First, there is an application for the waiver of interest for the tax already discharged, thereby indicating that there is no dispute on the interest payable figure, only waiver of the interest payable is being applied before the competent authority under section 201(1)(a).

This does not amount to an appeal and is only an application before the competent authority for waiver of interest. Such applications are not covered under the Vivad Se Vishwas Amnesty Scheme as per the frequently answered question released by the Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT).

Second, since there is a dispute on the calculation of interest levied and the same has been contested on or before January 31, 2020 before a competent appellate authority, you may claim relief under Vivad Se Vishwas Amnesty Scheme even though you are not disputing the tax component as it has been discharged in full.

Q. Is tax payable on dividends on shares and mutual funds from domestic companies for the period April 2019 to March 2020? What is the exempt amount?

S. RAMACHANDRAN

A. Dividends received by a person in the financial year 2019-2020 is exempt under section 10(34) of the act.

However, dividends received from domestic companies by individuals, HUFs, firms (other than registered charitable institutions/trusts, domestic companies) in excess of ₹10 lakh in a financial year is charged at 10% under section 115BBD of the Act (tax is levied only on the excess over ₹10 lakh).

Dividends will be taxed in the hands of the receiver based on their respective tax slabs/tax rates from the financial year 2020-2021 as per the proposal in the Union Budget passed by Parliament.

(The author is partner, GSS Associates, Chartered Accountants, Chennai)

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.

Pick the right INVESTMENTS



You must be clear about what you want out of the investment and about the product itself

JOYDEEP SEN

You invest your hard-earned money in various combinations of equity and fixed income options, either directly in stocks or bonds or through a vehicle such as a mutual fund (MF).

If you are not from a finance / investment background, the investment product may be mis-sold to you. How do you protect yourself?

First, be clear on why you are investing i.e. what your investment objective is. It may be for retirement, for purchase of an asset such as a house, or simply saving and parking your surplus for a rainy day. How is this relevant? It gives you an idea about how long you can spare that money.

If it is for retirement, then you can do without it for a long period of time. If

it is for emergency requirements, then it would be required at short notice. How is that relevant?

Investment horizon

The longer your investment horizon, the ups and downs in the interim period are less relevant.

The other aspect is liquidity. If it may be required at short notice, it should be parked somewhere, from where it can be withdrawn easily.

There should also not be much of impact cost on selling. The equity market is liquid but if the market is down when you need to sell, you would realise less than the potential. A bank deposit or a liquid MF would not have an impact cost.

You have to figure out one more thing. For your long-term investments, how much of market-related loss can you bear without losing sleep. If you are

not comfortable with the ups and downs in the market, then opt for something less volatile e.g. fixed income. In other words, equity being relatively more volatile, have as much equity as suits you.

If you are not concerned with every-day ups and downs, you may have a higher extent of equity investments in your portfolio.

To be noted, market-related loss is not real loss till you sell the investment at the lower price. As long as the fundamental quality of the company / industry is intact, the share price would typically recover over a long period of time.

Now, let's discuss what we set out to. There are multiple types of investment products, ranging from plain and simple bank or post office deposits to various types of MF schemes to buying equity shares from the market.

In fixed income, bank deposits have an insurance cover of up to ₹

combine investment with insurance. Then there are products that are safe from default risk e.g. RBI Savings Bonds or Sovereign Gold Bonds that are not so liquid. That is, if you require money prior to maturity, you may not get it. On what basis would you decide where to invest and how much?

In the banking industry, there is the concept of SLR, which stands for statutory liquidity ratio.

For investments, one may assign a different meaning to SLR, setting the order of priority: S stands for safety, L for liquidity and R for returns. As you can see from the order, safety comes first and return comes after the first two.

To understand the safety aspect while buying a financial product, you have to gauge the risk first.

There are many types of risks; the two major ones are volatility – ie market price coming down suddenly – and default risk.

We discussed volatility risk in equity investments a little earlier. There is no default risk in equity. In debt or fixed income investments, there is volatility risk, though lesser than in equity, as also default risk as there is a committed payment from the issuer of the instrument.

In fixed income, bank deposits have an insurance cover of up to ₹

lakh per bank but even beyond, banks – particularly the government-owned ones – are safe because of their overall importance in the financial system. Fixed income investments such as post office deposits, RBI Savings Bonds or Sovereign Gold Bonds do not have any default risk, by virtue of government involvement. Private sector corporate bonds do have default risk.

Now, you have to understand these aspects when you are about to put in your money. You may do so by taking the inputs from the entity / person selling you the financial product, or conduct your own research. To summarise, you have to gauge:

Volatility: i.e. how much can

the market decline (e.g. 10% or 30%), going by historical track record of the investments.

Default risk: if it is not among the safe options mentioned above, what are the incidences of default historically in that investment.

Liquidity: if you require money at short notice, is the asset available i.e. is it possible to sell quickly.

Real estate is

less liquid, while financial assets are more liquid. Even in financial investments, go through the terms for exit.

Taxation: though not as important as the first three, it is relevant and you should have a perspective on that.

In short, you must have clarity on how an investment is suitable for you. It is not about the "attractive" returns, but about why you should get into it.

(The author is founder, wiseinvestor.in)



COVER NOTE: PROPOSAL FORM

Why a proposal form is sacrosanct

Insured, nominees have to live with its consequences once the form is signed

K. NITYA KALYANI

The proposal form is the basis of your insurance contract. An important function of the form is to extract all material facts from the potential insured – that is you – that are pertinent to the policy you want to purchase.

A properly-filled proposal form is the first and biggest step in fulfilling your responsibility of adhering to the principle of 'utmost good faith.'

The other half of 'utmost good faith' is the responsibility of the insurer to inform you in detail about the offered coverage, its extent, terms and conditions and its exclusions. So, you should be able to make informed decisions while buying the policy.

Proposal forms are designed for full disclosure and ensuring this will help you in receiving claims properly.

For example, in a hospitalisation policy, information regarding your health status and medical history will be required. If pre-existing conditions are withheld, claims can be repudiated on that basis. If it is home fire policy, details of the physical construction of the building, its fire-safety norms and fire-safety systems or equipment will be captured.

Proposal form declarations for life insurance are



Vital link: Ensuring full disclosure in a proposal form will help the insured in receiving claims amount. ■ GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCK

more critical to your coverage given that the claim is meant for the financial protection of the insured's loved ones after his lifetime.

Legal dimension

Thus, your declarations acquire a legal dimension and the proposal form is consulted when claims are processed. For this purpose, you should have a copy too, and all papers preserved where you and your family members can retrieve them.

In fact, the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India's (IRDAI) Policyholders' Protection Regulations mandates that a

copy of the proposal form should be given to the policyholder along with the policy copy at the time of purchase of cover. Please ensure you receive this and preserve it for future reference.

It is common for those who buy insurance to be exasperated when it comes to filling proposal forms, to refuse to do so or refuse to give full information. Unfortunately, buying insurance itself is approached reluctantly and with distaste, and filling forms is considered a bafflingly irritating requirement of doubtful value.

The reverse is true and the only advice that can be

given is, filling the proposal form is the one big favour you can do yourself while buying insurance.

Your insurance intermediary, an agent or broker or a bank staffer, can help you fill the proposal form. But remember, you are the owner of the document as you sign it. And, it is you and your nominees who will live with its consequences.

Sometimes, these details are filled erroneously by an intermediary and that could work to your disadvantage. So, verifying all details before signing and submitting it is your responsibility.

In the case of proposers who cannot read the proposal form or if it is in a language not known to them, then the contents have to be read out to them, explained and a full understanding of it ensured. The person doing this has to also sign a declaration that it has been carried out properly.

The bottomline is that the insurance contract is based on trust that both the parties are upfront about all relevant information.

Utmost good faith upholds the contract and when it is not observed, it can dent financial security and destroy lives.

(The writer is a business journalist specialising in insurance & corporate history)

BLACKBOARD: DEBT SCHEMES

Debt MFs too carry risk

ASHISH RUKHAIYAR

FI), debt AUM was pegged at almost ₹13 lakh crore as on April 30 while the equity AUM was about ₹7 lakh crore. Incidentally, debt funds are also used by corporates and institutions as part of their treasury operations to earn a higher yield compared with just parking the money in bank fixed deposits.

Are debt schemes completely safe?

■ While there is a perception that debt is comparatively safer than equity, it will be wrong to say that debt is completely safe. Debt instruments are also prone to market fluctuations that directly impact the yield or the interest income and the maturity value of the underlying debt paper.

The recent past has seen a few instances when debt funds took a massive hit due to defaults by entities whose debt paper the schemes were holding. If the rating of a debt instrument falls, it directly impacts its valuations that is, in turn, reflected in the net asset value of the scheme.

Should retail investors put money in debt schemes?

■ Every financial adviser would say that debt should be a part of asset allocation of every investor. However, one needs to understand the risks and structure of a debt fund properly before investing.

One should see the portfolio of a scheme before investing. If the scheme has too much of low-rated paper, then it could be risky, especially when the markets are volatile. Debt instruments with AAA rating are the safest but low-rated papers offer higher yield. So, one should carefully analyse the portfolio to take an informed decision.

Are debt schemes popular?

■ In terms of overall assets under management (AUM) of the Indian mutual fund industry, debt accounts for a larger share compared with equity; so, one can say that debt schemes are indeed popular. As per the latest numbers from the Association of Mutual Funds in India (AM-

LOOSE CHANGE

RAVIKANTH



"You want to invest your money? Err... are you sure you got the right address?"

Life insurance term plan premium

Male: 30 Years, Sum insured- Rs. 1 crore, Cover upto - 70 Years			
Insurance company	Plan name	Maximum cover Up to (Years)	Annual Premium (Rs.) (Male)
Aditya Birla Capital	Life Shield Plan	80	12,998
Aegon Life	iTerm Insurance Plan	100	9,114
Bajaj Allianz	Smart Protect Goal	99	8010
Canara HSBC OBC Life	iSelect+ Term Plan	99	9,284
Edelweiss Tokio Life	Zindagi+ Term Insurance Plan	80	9,309
Exide Life Insurance	Smart Term Plan	75	12411*
Future Generali	Flexi Online Term Plan	75	9,427
HDFC Life	Click2Protect 3D Plus	85	12,601
ICICI Prudential	iProtect Smart	99	15,089
India First Life	e-Term Plan	80	8,260
Kotak Life	Kotak e-Term Plan	75	9,558
Max Life insurance	Online Term Plan Plus	85	10,148
PNB Met Life	Mera Term Plan	99	10,148
Reliance Nippon Life	Digi Term	80	11,012
SBI Life	eShield	80	15,070
TATA AIA Life	Maha Raksha Supreme	100	12,980

*Exide coverage upto 60 yrs for age 30 yrs

Source: www.policybazaar.com

Health insurance premium

Insurer name	Key features	Plan names	Premium (Rs.)	Insurer name	Key features	Plan names	Premium (Rs.)

IN BRIEF



Ex-Pakistan opener Umar tests positive

KARACHI
Former Pakistan opener Taufiq Umar has tested positive for COVID-19 but said his "symptoms are not at all severe". The 38-year-old is the fourth cricketer to be infected with the coronavirus after Majid Haq (Scotland), Zafar Sarfraz (Pakistan) and Solo Nqwani (South Africa). PTI



Alonso wins Legends Trophy at virtual Indy

NEW DELHI
Two-time Formula One champion Fernando Alonso won the Legends Trophy at Indianapolis in a virtual game on Saturday. Alonso beat former F1 champion Jenson Button by a margin of just 0.037 in the first race and got the better of World Touring Car veteran Tiago Monteiro in the second. IANS

'Bicycle girl' Jyoti to appear for CFI trials

KOLKATA
'Bicycle girl' Jyoti Kumari, who pedalled around 1,300km with her injured father from New Delhi to Darbhanga, will appear for Cycling Federation of India (CFI) trials once the lockdown ends. "We will surely send her for the trials after the lockdown is lifted. She was enrolled in Class IX on Saturday. At the moment, we want her to complete her matriculation," her father Mohan Paswan said. PTI

Bournemouth player tests positive

LONDON
A Bournemouth player was one of two people working for Premier League clubs who tested positive for COVID-19 following a second batch of testing, the club said on Sunday. The club did not disclose the identity but said he would self-isolate for seven days in line with league protocols before another test is conducted. REUTERS

2749 Khelo athletes get ₹30,000 each

NEW DELHI
The Sports Authority of India (SAI) on Sunday said it has deposited ₹30,000 each as out-of-pocket allowance (OPA) in the accounts of 2749 Khelo India athletes, adding up to ₹8.25 crore in all. The allowance is for the first quarter of 2020-21. PTI

Cljisters determined to return to the US Open

BRUSSELS
Kim Cljisters is looking forward to returning to the US Open. "If the US Open can happen, I want to be ready. I would be happy if I had to play on Court 18. I don't have to be out on Arthur Ashe." AFP

Ganguly cannot continue as BCCI chief, says Gupta

Nomination to ICC Board disqualifies him: MPCA member

AMOL KARHADKAR
MUMBAI

Sanjeev Gupta, a life member of the Madhya Pradesh Cricket Association, has challenged Sourav Ganguly's continuation as president of the BCCI.

In an email to Ganguly and other officials on Sunday, Gupta said that the BCCI rulebook debars anyone nominated to the International Cricket Council (ICC) Board from functioning as president.

Ganguly was included in the ICC Board as BCCI's representative soon after attending the Board meeting on March 28, and has since emerged a contender for the soon-to-be vacant post of ICC chairman.

Gupta stated that according to Rule 14(9) of the BCCI constitution, "it is amply clear that as soon as you are nominated to ICC, your post as BCCI president will get vacated automatically forthwith".

Objection dismissed
A BCCI official, however, dismissed Gupta's objection. "The clause should come into effect only if an [BCCI] office-bearer is 'elected' to the ICC. Otherwise the BCCI will be forced to nominate someone other than an office-bearer, which will be ridiculous," he said.

Interestingly, an appeal made by BCCI in the Su-



Another challenge: Sourav Ganguly finds himself having to deal with one more issue in these troubled times.

• FILE PHOTO: VIVEK BENDRE

preme Court makes no mention of clause 14(9).

The appeal, filed by treasurer Arun Dhumal through Adv. Bina Madhavan on April 21, requests the Court to permit BCCI to "carry out the amendments to Rule Nos. 6.4, 6.5, 7.3, 15(3) & (4), 19(2) and 45 in the Constitution which have been approved in the Annual General Meeting held on 01.12.2019."

The appeal requests the Apex Court to separate te-

nures of office-bearers of BCCI and State associations before cooling-off comes into effect and also to curtail the powers of the CEO. According to the current rulebook, the CEO has extraordinary powers, which the current dispensation seeks to restrict.

Also, the BCCI has appealed for the clause mandating Supreme Court approval for any amendment to the BCCI constitution to be done away with.

World championship silver medallist Anjum on her Instagram page.

It was her idea to do the video with Panwar. "The British, Russian and Iran shooting teams had made videos which were posted by the ISSF. We also decided to make one," said Apurvi.

"We added a few more shooters before Shriyanka, Apurvi and I wrote the script. Everyone was asked to perform their part," said Anjum, revealing that it took two days to put things together.

"Everybody sent their videos before all of them were combined to make the final one," said Anjum.

The beautiful message – shoot the bad memories and start afresh – is apt for the times we live in.

Eden escapes Amphan wrath

Y.B. SARANGI
KOLKATA

The iconic Eden Gardens has escaped the wrath of Cyclone Amphan with only some minor damage.

After taking stock of the damage caused to the stadium, which has hosted two

World Cup finals (1987 ODI and 2016 T20) and the first pink-ball Test in the country, the Cricket Association of Bengal (CAB) top brass decided to consult its structural engineer to get a concrete idea about the cyclone's impact.

Fresh personal details leaks detected on dark web

These include 2,000 Aadhaar cards and data of 18 million Indians

GAUTAM S. MENGLE
MUMBAI

Even as cybercrime agencies and experts are investigating the leak of millions of Indian job-seekers' personal details on the dark web, two more similar instances have come to light in the last 12 hours.

The fresh leaks include nearly 2,000 Aadhaar cards and details of 18 million Indians, all available for free.

The leak of nearly 2.9 crore job-seekers' details was discovered by Cyble Inc., a U.S.-based cyber intelligence firm, which has been trying to trace the source of the leak and identify the perpetrators. Cyble founder Beenu Arora said the Aadhaar cards were posted on the dark web some time in the last 12 hours.

"We are not sure of how this leak happened. There is a known perpetrator who just decided to drop this. In terms of the leak itself, it has



A screenshot of some of the data on the dark web.

approximately 2,000 Aadhaar cards. A large number of files appear to have originated from 2019, and several IDs were scanned from mobile cameras, and often transferred to other parties via WhatsApp. It's highly likely that more IDs may have been compromised, and the perpetrator decided to share only a small subset. We are still looking into this further," Mr. Arora told The Hindu.

Cyble researchers said the Aadhaar cards and the job seekers' details were posted

by different entities, both with a different level of reputation on the dark net.

Second leak

"The Aadhaar leak actor also published a second leak whereby they dropped details of 18 lakh residents of Madhya Pradesh for free on May 19. We identified this leak during our investigations into the jobseeker data," Mr. Arora said.

State and Central cyber-crime agencies have also initiated their own investiga-

tions into the matter, sources confirmed.

Meanwhile, Cyble researchers have received an anonymous tip off according to which the jobseekers' data leak was the result of an unprotected Elasticsearch instance – a tool that collects data from a wide range of locations on the Internet in accordance with the requirements of the person conducting the search, and allowing the user to analyse large troves of data in real time from all over the Internet.

"The claim made by the anonymous entity that unprotected Elasticsearch instance was the root cause behind the jobseeker data leak is unverifiable at this stage, as we haven't been given the technical evidence yet. We are approaching other research communities to gather more facts," Mr. Arora said.

'Saliva ban an interim measure'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

ICC Cricket Committee chairman Anil Kumble says the recommendation to ban saliva for shining the ball is only an interim measure and "things will go back to normal" once the pandemic is brought under control.

The Kumble-led panel recommended a ban on saliva to minimise the risk of infection. On Friday, the ICC, in its guidelines for resumption of the game, also suggested a bar on the practice.

"...this is only an interim measure. In a few months or a year's time, I think things

will go back to as normal as it can be," Kumble told Star Sports show 'Cricket Connected'. The ban on saliva has elicited mixed response from bowlers, who said it would come in the way of generating swing. But most have also acknowledged the health risk that it might pose.



Anil Kumble. • FILE PHOTO

Nakamura beats Aronian

RAKESH RAO
NEW DELHI

Hikaru Nakamura bounced back from 1-2 to beat Levon Aronian 3-2 in their first mini-match of the best-of-three quarterfinals in the Lindores Abbey Rapid Challenge on Saturday.

Aronian won the first regular game and proved equal in the next two. In the fourth, Aronian needed a draw to prevail, but Nakamura fought back to win. In the Armageddon game, Nakamura again proved his superiority.

In another clash, Yu Yangyi beat Ding Liren 3-2.

Track and field athletes to start outdoor training

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

Track and field athletes will return to outdoor training on Monday after two months of being confined to their rooms, but focus will be entirely on their fitness regimens to avoid injury.

Athletics Federation of India president Adille Sumariwalla told PTI that all the athletes based at NIS-Patiala, SAI Centre in Bengaluru and Ooty will start "outdoor fitness" training from Monday.

On May 17, the government permitted the use of

stadia and sports complexes without spectators and under strict guidelines which allowed the athletes to return to outdoor training.

Neeraj elated

Star javelin thrower Neeraj Chopra, who has qualified for the now postponed Tokyo Olympics, is elated that outdoor training will start from Monday. "I am feeling happy. At least something is starting even though it will be a slow beginning," he said from NIS-Patiala, where he has been confined to his room since March 18.

Bayern overcomes Eintracht

REUTERS
BERLIN

Bayern Munich beat Eintracht Frankfurt 5-2 on Saturday, surviving a brief second-half comeback scare, to stay four points clear of Borussia Dortmund at the top of the Bundesliga with seven games left to play.

The Bavarians thought they had the match wrapped up after efforts from Leon Goretzka, Thomas Mueller and Robert Lewandowski had given them a 3-0 lead in the empty Allianz Arena.

Rattled

Eintracht defender Martin Hinteregger caught the Bayern defence napping to strike twice in three minutes and inject new life into the encounter.

Yet the visitors then quickly gave away two goals – with Alphonso Davies pouncing on a defensive error on the hour and Hinteregger scoring an own goal in the 74th minute.

The results: Schalke 0 lost to Augsburg 3 (Loewen 5, Baeze 76, Cordova 90+1); Mainz 0 lost to Leipzig 5 (Werner 11, 48, 75, Poulsen 23, Sabitzer 36). **Saturday:** Bayern Munich 5 (Goretzka 17, Mueller 41, Lewandowski 46, Davies 61, Hinteregger 74-og) bt Eintracht Frankfurt 2 (Hinteregger 52, 55).

Badminton world body defends calendar

BWF secretary-general hints at relaxing player regulations

RAYAN ROZARIO
COIMBATORE

Thomas Lund.
• SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

fair to expect athletes to play every tournament. An announcement on this will be made soon."

In the revised schedule, Syed Modi Open (Super 300) and Indonesian Open (Super 1000) clash, both scheduled to run from November 17 to 22. But Lund said they had no other option.

Tournaments at different levels typically appeal to different levels of players. And, in the process of revamping the calendar, it has been necessary to have some Super 100 or 300 tournaments played in the same weeks as higher level tournaments."

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Hurry! Summer special programme extended due to popular demand. Last batch starts on 25th May.

STEP LIVE Junior