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Deadliest day:
highest cases,
deaths in State

SHOUMOJIT BANERJEE

Maharashtra recorded its highest single-day surge in COVID-19 fatalities and cases on Wednesday, adding a staggering 3,254 new cases. With 149 new fatalities, the death toll has climbed to 3,438.

Of the total 94,041 cases, 46,074 are active. As many as 1,879 patients were discharged on Wednesday, taking the total number of recoveries till date to 44,517. State Surveillance Officer Dr. Pradeep Awate said the recovery rate has gone up to 47.34%. At the same time, case fatality too has climbed to 3.65%.

With 1,567 new cases, Mumbai's case tally has now reached 52,667, of which 27,109 are active. The city reported 97 more deaths to take its toll to 1,857. Besides, 15 deaths were reported from Thane to take its total toll to 169. Deaths were also reported from Navi Mumbai and Ulhasnagar in the Mumbai Metropolitan Region.

As per State Health Department officials, seven deaths each were reported from Pune and Aurangabad districts, five from Jalgaon, and six from Solapur. Deaths were also reported from Akola, Beed and Amravati.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 3

China reaches accord with India on LAC spat

Beijing says positive consensus reached in talks last week

ANANTH KRISHNAN
DINAKAR PERI
CHENNAI/NEW DELHI



Uneasy calm: The Pangong Lake in Leh district of Ladakh, one of the points of friction. ■ AP

The Chinese Foreign Ministry said both sides had agreed to handle the situation "properly" and "in line with the agreement" to ease the situation, but did not provide specific details on some of the stand-off points, such as Pangong Lake, where Chinese troops are still present on India's side of the LAC.

Also on Wednesday, India and China held Major General-level talks to discuss further de-escalation at several stand-off points in Eastern Ladakh including Patrolling Point (PP) 14, following a broad accord reached on Saturday in talks held at the Corps Commander-level. As per the agreement, a series of ground-level talks would be held over the next 10 days, with four other points of conflict identified at PP15, PP17, Chushul and the north bank of Pangong Lake.

The Chinese Foreign Ministry did not provide specifics on the sites of conflict. It only referred to the western section, which was the focus of Saturday's talks, although a stand-off is also continuing at Nakl La in Sikkim in the eastern section.

Taking action'

"Through diplomatic and military channels, China and India have recently had effective communication and reached agreement on properly handling the situation in the west section of the China-India boundary," spokesperson Hua Chunying said. "At present, the two sides are taking actions in line with the agreement to ameliorate the border situation."

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

COVID-19 turns India's urban blight

In Chennai, DMK MLA dies; four cities worst hit

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI

The three-time MLA of the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam, J. Anbazhagan, died at a private hospital here on Wednesday morning, days after he tested positive for COVID-19. Incidentally, Wednesday was his 62nd birthday.

Anbazhagan, who had a chronic kidney condition, is among the most prominent politicians to have contracted COVID-19 and died. His death came on a day when Chennai accounted for another high of 1,392 of the 1,927 cases reported in Tamil Nadu. Overall cases in the city increased to 25,937 and

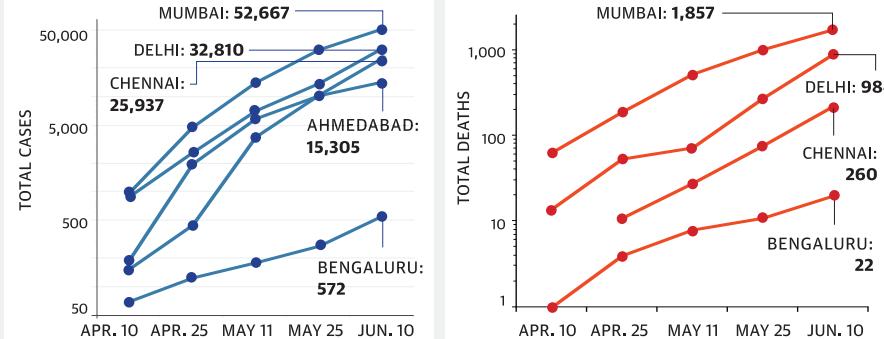
Government officials said a partial disengagement had happened at some points in the Galwan area and at Hot Springs, but there was no change at Pangong Lake.

The *Global Times*, a Communist Party-run newspaper, reported on Tuesday that the ongoing dispute "will not escalate into a conflict" but added "due to the complexity of the situation, the military stand-off could continue for a little longer".

The military-level talks showed "both sides do not want to escalate," Qian Feng, director of the research department of the National Strategy Institute at Tsinghua University in Beijing, was quoted as having said.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

Worrying rise | As on June 10, Mumbai recorded 52,667 COVID-19 cases, the most among major cities. The city's death toll of 1,857 was also the highest



total deaths to 260.

Mumbai, Delhi, Chennai and Ahmedabad have accounted for nearly 1,25,000 cases and 4,193 deaths, close to 43% of the overall cases and more than half of the total number of fatalities in India, signifying how the novel

coronavirus has affected urban metropolitan centres. These cities continue to register the bulk of new cases and deaths.

The daily increase in registered cases and deaths reached new highs on Wednesday, with 10,787 new in-

fections taking the total to 2,86,897 and 357 deaths added to the overall tally of 8,105. A total of 14,521 samples were tested on Wednesday, up from 14,1682 the previous day.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

Five militants gunned down in Shopian



Encounter on: Army jawans taking position at Sugoo village in Shopian on Wednesday. ■ NISSAR AHMAD

PEERZADA ASHIQ
SRINAGAR

Five militants, a joint group of the Hizb-ul-Mujahideen (HM) and the Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), were gunned down by security forces in Shopian on Wednesday. In three combat operations in four days in the south Kashmir district, as many as 14 militants were killed.

The encounter again showed that militants from the HM and the LeT were working together as The Re-

sistance Front (TRF). During the operation, security forces showed the highest order of professionalism, with no collateral damage reported," Inspector-General of Police (IGP), Kashmir, Vijay Kumar, told *The Hindu*.

The stepped-up counter-militancy operations is putting sustained pressure on militant outfits in south Kashmir, especially in Pulwama, Kulgam and Shopian.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

ED brings back gems, jewellery in PNB case

DEVESHE K. PANDEY

NEW DELHI
The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has brought back from Hong Kong 108 consignments of precious gems and jewellery, with a declared value of ₹1,350 crore, in connection with the Punjab National Bank (PNB) fraud case.

The consignments belonged to various entities of Nirav Modi and his uncle Mehul Choksi and were stashed away in the UAE and Hong Kong. "These valuables include polished diamonds, pearls and silver jewellery. They were kept in the godown of a logistics company in Hong Kong," a senior ED official said.

The consignments, weighing about 2,340 kg, were sent by the accused to Hong Kong from Dubai in early 2018. The ED officials received information about them in July 2018. Since then, the agency had been making efforts to get their possession. The officials were in constant touch with their counterparts in Hong Kong.

After the legal formalities, the articles were sent to Mumbai on Wednesday. Of the 108 consignments, 32 belonged to entities controlled by Mr. Modi and the rest were of those controlled by his uncle, who is facing extradition in Antigua.

The agency had earlier brought back 33 consignments of valuables from Dubai and Hong Kong. The valuables were seized on arrival and an independent valuer had assessed their worth at ₹137 crore.

On Monday, a special court in Mumbai had allowed the ED to confiscate property worth ₹1,400 crore of Mr. Modi under the Fugitive Economic Offenders Act. He is facing extradition in the U.K.

No distancing



Packed together: People throng the fishing harbour in Visakhapatnam without physical distancing on Wednesday. ■ K.R. DEEPAK

+ COVID-19 hinders traditional Parsi disposal of the dead

Two priests write to Parsi Punchayet to seek clarity from BMC

JYOTI SHELAR
MUMBAI

On June 1, a 55-year-old Parsi man from Grant Road succumbed to COVID-19. His body was carefully wrapped in a sealed bag and taken to the electric crematorium in Chandanwadi, in compliance with the infection control protocol in place.

This, however, denied him the traditional funeral of the Parsi community, wherein the dead are consigned to the Towers of Silence or *dakhmas*, exposed to scavenger birds and the sun. For the religious Parsis, the outbreak has posed a serious question regarding disposing of their dead, with the government guidelines only mentioning cremations and burials for deceased

who have the infection.

Two senior priests have now urged the Bombay Parsi Punchayet (BPP) to discuss with the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) about the possibility of ensuring rightful final rites for community members.

While there are no accurate numbers, community members estimate fewer than a dozen Parsi deaths due to COVID-19 in Mumbai.

"The *dakhmas* are the safest place to consign the dead. It is the responsibility of the BPP to educate the civic officials about this particular method and that there is no fear of the spread of the infection through such disposal," Parsi priest Dr. Pervez Bajan told *The Hindu*. Dr.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 3

Gujarat's pride grows as it now hosts 674 Gir lions

June 5 census of Asia's exclusive population indicates numbers have risen by 29% over five years

MAHESH LANGA
AHMEDABAD

Gujarat prides itself on hosting Asiatic lions exclusively, and their numbers have now risen to an estimated 674 in the Gir forest region and other revenue areas of coastal Saurashtra.

Once seen as threatened by extinction, the lion population has grown by almost 29% from the last count in 2015. Today, Asiatic lions are present in Protected Areas and agro-pastoral landscapes of Saurashtra covering nine districts, over an expanse of about 30,000 sq. km.

The State Forest Department says the population is 674 including males, females and cubs. During 2015, the baseline was 523 lions. Moreover, the

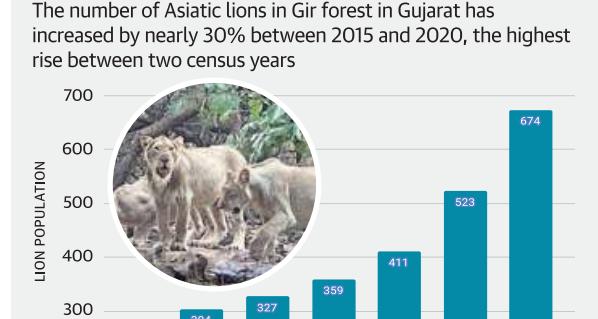
distribution of the lions expanded from 22,000 sq. km in 2015 to 30,000 sq. km in 2020.

As soon as the State shared the details of the census conducted on June 5-6 by over 1,400 staffers of the Forest Department, Prime Minister Narendra Modi praised his home State. "Two very good news: Population of the majestic Asiatic Lion, living in Gujarat's Gir Forest, is up by almost 29%. Geographically, distribution area is up by 36%. Kudos to the people of Gujarat and all those whose efforts have led to this excellent feat," Mr. Modi said in a Twitter post.

"Over the last several years, the lion population in Gujarat has been steadily rising. This is powered by community participation,

More the merrier

The number of Asiatic lions in Gir forest in Gujarat has increased by nearly 30% between 2015 and 2020, the highest rise between two census years



emphasis on technology, wildlife healthcare, proper habitat management and steps to minimise human-lion conflict. Hope this positive trend continues!" he added.

Forest officials said there was a consistent increase in

conflict mitigation and healthcare including import of vaccines after some lions were infected with Canine Distemper Virus (CDV).

This year, the department carried out a "population estimation exercise" on the night of June 5-6 because the five-yearly regular census in May could not be held due to COVID-19. In October 2018, Gir witnessed an outbreak of CDV in which 36 lions died. The Prime Minister had then directed the State authorities to import vaccines.

As per Forest Department data, there are 161 male, 260 female, 45 sub adult male, 49 sub adult female, 22 unidentified and 137 cubs. Experts said the male-female ratio was healthy in the Gir region with 161 males vs 260 females.

Adityanath's comments inappropriate: Nepal PM

U.P. CM had spoken about Kalapani

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Adityanath's comments on Nepal are condemnable and India's claim on the Kalapani region is based on unsound facts, Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli said on Wednesday in the House of Representatives, the Lower House of Nepal's Parliament.

His remarks showed disrespect to Nepal. I want to tell Yogi that Nepal does not accept these insults," he said.

On Nepal's claim on Kalapani, Mr. Adityanath said last week, "Before deciding political boundary, Nepal should think of the long-term consequences and it should also remember what happened to Tibet".

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'108' ambulances run relay to ferry patients across State in lockdown

About 150 people needing to travel under medical care for long distances transported by roping in multiple ambulances since March

JYOTI SHELAR
MUMBAI

On Sunday, a one-month-old baby boy with congenital heart disease was transported from Kothapur to Mumbai's Kokilaben Dhirubhai Ambani Hospital by six ambulances that covered the 370 km distance in phases. The baby is now admitted to the neonatal intensive care unit and awaiting surgery. Last month, a pregnant woman was shifted from Mumbai, over 420 km to her maternal home in Jalna, where she had registered for childbirth. Seven ambulances relayed the pa-

tient, one after another, to safely transport the woman who was in her eighth month of pregnancy.

The '108' ambulance service operated by the Maharashtra Emergency Medical Services (MEMS) – a project of the Maharashtra government that is being implemented and operated by BVG India Ltd. – has helped transport patients over long distances during the lockdown by using multiple vehicles without compromising on the availability of ambulances to cater to emergencies by sending them back after they have covered

shorter distances.

Since the lockdown began in March, 150 patients have been transported by roping in multiple ambulances from the local fleet. "A majority of these patients were newborn babies who required emergency treatment in advanced centres," said Dynaneshwar Shelke, chief operating officer, MEMS. "There were a lot of pregnancy-related emergencies as well," Dr. Shelke added.

MEMS has a fleet of 937 ambulances in the State including 93 in Mumbai, 84 in Pune and 42 in Nagpur. Dr. Shelke said that due to the



The '108' ambulance service is operated by the Maharashtra Emergency Medical Services. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

ongoing COVID-19 emergency, pulling out even one ambulance from the local fleet

becomes difficult.
"Through a well-coordinated relay, ambulances

pick up the patients from one point to another where the next ambulance is ready for pick up. The coordination is done from the main control as well as the ambulance drivers," he said, adding that multiple ambulances were roped in only for patients who did not require any life support.

Trauma to COVID care

The '108' service is aimed at responding within the 'golden hour', when accident and disaster victims needing trauma care are more likely to survive if they reach the emergency room of a hospital

C Ambulances pick up patients from one point to another where the next ambulance is ready for pick up

DNYANESHWAR SHELKE
Chief operating officer, MEMS

tal that can provide the specialised care. But since the COVID-19 outbreak, almost 71,953 patients who used the service were either suspected or confirmed cases of the infection. Of these, 16,968 patients were from Mumbai.

"These transfers involved home to COVID-19 care centres or from these centres

to hospitals or the other way," said Dr. Shelke, adding that in March, April and May, almost 45% of the total 1.8 lakh transfers were COVID-19 related. MEMS has dedicated 318 ambulances for COVID-19 transfers.

The availability of ambulances has been one of the major challenges during the pandemic as hundreds of private ambulances stopped operating due to fear of infection.

The State's '108' fleet has had 46 doctors and drivers testing positive, with one of them even succumbing to the infection.

'COVID-19 threat still persists, follow norms'

CM reiterates demand to start local trains for essential staff

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MUMBAI

Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray on Wednesday said the COVID-19 threat still persists, though lockdown restrictions have been partially eased under the government's Mission Begin Again, and urged people to avoid crowding and maintain physical distancing.

He reiterated his demand for resumption of suburban train services in Mumbai for movement of staff on essential services duty. Mr. Thackeray hinted that the lockdown, currently in force till June 30, will have to be extended if people do not follow guidelines strictly.

Living with the virus

Addressing a press conference after a meeting of the State business advisory committee, he said lockdown measures have been eased because economic activities need to resume as "now we have to learn to live with the virus".

"The virus threat still persists but we need to start economic activities. Outdoor physical activity has been allowed for your good health and not to spoil it," he said, referring to reports of people crowding roads.



Keeping distance: Morning walkers seen at Marine Drive earlier in the week. ■ FILE PHOTO

The CM said people should follow protocol for their own good.

"The lockdown will have to continue if this (non-adherence of norms) happens. But I am confident people will listen to the government's rules and guidelines, since it is taking care of their welfare," he said.

Mr. Thackeray said he has been demanding that suburban train services resume in Mumbai to allow people on

essential services duty to commute.

"Even now, many of them are not able to travel because of lack of transport," he said.

No friction

The Chief Minister also refuted reports in a section of the media about friction between ministers and State bureaucrats during the Cabinet meeting which took place on Tuesday. "It is not true," he said.

Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) employees have been badly affected, with the vast majority

With no trains, essential workers bear the brunt

Low frequency, time-consuming commutes make buses impractical as the only travel option: experts

AJEEPT MAHALA
MUMBAI

The suburban railway system of Mumbai is often called the lifeline of the city. And in the last three days, its absence has been acutely felt as office-goers – resuming commutes after two months – have had to stand in serpentine queues to catch a bus.

"The travel situation was never very good, but it has worsened in the last few days. While large hospitals such as KEM and Nair have arranged buses for their employees, the staff members going to smaller ones still need to depend on public transport buses, which have been very few," Pradeep Narkar, secretary of the Municipal Mazdoor Union, said.

Lifting lockdown restrictions partially, the State government allowed 10% private sector employees to travel to work and shops to open from Monday.

The number of buses deployed by the Brihanmumbai Electric Supply and Transport (BEST) Undertaking and the Maharashtra State Road Transport Corporation (MSRTC) has been woefully inadequate to cater to the resultant rise in demand.

The train network usually carries nearly 75 lakh passengers every day.

Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) employees have been badly affected, with the vast majority



Mad scramble: The number of buses deployed has been woefully inadequate to cater to the resultant rise in demand since restrictions were lifted on Monday. ■ FILE PHOTO

ty living in the larger metropolitan region.

"On their salaries, workers can't afford a home in the city, and many reside in areas such as Virar, Badlapur and even remote areas like Ulwe. We have been demanding that the government run limited train services for municipal and essential staff in the morning and evening, in the same fashion they run special trains for railway workers," Sainath Rajadhyaksha, executive president of the Brihanmumbai Municipal Engineers' Union, said.

Mr. Narkar and Mr. Rajadhyaksha said with the monsoon approaching, travelling by bus will not be feasible. Already, workers spend nearly three hours travelling in each direction. "In monsoon, the travel time by road will increase to five hours. Many of our workers come on their own two-wheelers, which will also be risky," Mr. Rajadhyaksha said.

Mr. Narkar said nearly 14,000 hospital workers, nurses and technicians travel from the larger metropolitan region. "In a hospital like KEM, out of 1,200 nurses, around 800 live outside Mumbai. Same is with other staff. Moreover, these employees cannot

leave until the next shift staff arrives, which is bound to put undue pressure on health workers," he said.

Transport experts also think buses are not a long-term solution, and suburban trains need to resume operations with proper planning. "If you can't maintain physical distancing in buses with one door manned by a conductor, it's not going to be possible in local trains that have 36 entry gates," transport expert, A.V. Shenoy, said, adding that the government should look at starting trains for essential workers.

On March 21, the State had prepared guidelines to allow

only essential staff on suburban trains, restricting access to stations by having only one entry and exit point with a checkpost manned by four government officials. However, the Centre suspended all suburban railway services from March 23.

Transport expert Ashok Datar agreed that train services need to be started, but adequate planning is required. He said the current issue could also be resolved through minor mitigation measures. "Private companies should have two shifts to begin with so that the crowds can be managed. Secondly, the government should look at hiring school buses to help provide point-to-point services. They are lying idle any way. And lastly, they should create a bus lane on the Western Express Highway to increase their average speed," he said.

Harsh Kotalkar of the Mumbai Bus Malak Sanghatana said private companies had engaged around 2,000 buses for their own employees, and around 3,000 buses could provide point-to-point services if the government organises it. "This will reduce the load on BEST and MSRTC. If they scrap the one seat per person norm, the requirement will automatically halve. If airlines and trains are allowed to run at full seating capacity, why not buses?" he asked.

Policeman accused of triple talaq granted anticipatory bail

SONAM SAIGAL
MUMBAI

The Bombay High Court on Tuesday granted anticipatory bail to a police sub-inspector accused by his second wife of divorcing her by messaging her 'talaq' thrice on the phone, just after she had delivered a baby.

A single-judge Bench of Justice Bharati Dangre was hearing an anticipatory bail plea filed by Yusuf Usman Shaikh, a sub-inspector with the Ghatkopar police station. His second wife has filed an FIR against him under Sections 376 (2) (police officer commits rape), 377 (unnatural offences), 323 (punishment for voluntarily causing hurt) and 504 (intentional insult with intent to provoke breach of the peace) of the Indian Penal Code, along with Section 3 (talaq to be void and illegal) of the Muslim Women Protection of Rights on Marriage Act.

The complaint said Mr. Shaikh has two children with his first wife. He remarried, and when his second wife became pregnant in January 2019, he told her to terminate the pregnancy. She conceived again and delivered a girl on December 12, 2019.

Soon thereafter, Mr. Shaikh sent her three mes-



sages on her mobile pronouncing 'talaq'. He started avoiding her and refused to provide for the newborn baby, the complaint said. The complaint also included allegations of unnatural sex.

The court noted that the complainant was not forced into a sexual relationship and has admitted the couple had relations after getting married as per Muslim customs. The case thus did not attract the provisions of Section 376(2) relating to rape, the court said.

The allegation that she was divorced on phone attracts a different provision, as per which the offence is asial. The court said no custodial interrogation is necessary, and moreover there is no chance of the applicant fleeing, and directed that he be released on bail by furnishing a bond of ₹25,000.

BMC, MHADA asked why Bhendi Bazaar building is not razed yet

Court asks both to file affidavits on dilapidated structure

SONAM SAIGAL
MUMBAI

The Bombay High Court on Tuesday expressed its displeasure at the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) and the Maharashtra Housing and Area Development Authority (MHADA) for failing to evict tenants and demolish a dilapidated building in Bhendi Bazaar. The court said with the monsoon approaching, the matter is urgent.

Justice Gautam Patel asked the BMC and MHADA to file affidavits explaining why no action was taken in the case. The Bench was hearing a petition filed by Saifee Burhani Upliftment Trust (SBUT), which has undertaken cluster development on about 16.5 acres in Bhendi Bazaar.

"I am unable to understand why the BMC and MHADA, both statutory authorities, and both armed with sufficient statutory powers, have not proceeded to take action in accordance with their respective governing laws not only for removal of occupants, but also for demolition of the building," the court said.

"SBUT not responsible" The Bench expressed its displeasure after SBUT, which has been acquiring titles to

they fail to evict the ground floor occupants and undertake steps to demolish the building.

Mosque on premises One occupant of the building informed the court that there is a mosque in this building, that the building itself is Waqf property and that there is a title dispute.

The court said, "Assuming there is a mosque, this has no bearing or relevance at all to questions of public safety, for these are paramount, or to the question of structural soundness of the building in question. It is abundantly clear – and in this city at least there is no shortage of examples – that the collapse of a building especially in a crowded area will inevitably endanger the lives and properties of innocent third parties in the vicinity."

The submission that there is a mosque is also seriously disputed, the court said, observing that Mr. Tulzapurkar has pointed out that at best, there is a space that can be described as a prayer hall, but there is certainly no mosque within the premises.

Mr. Tulzapurkar said their main grievance was that many of these orders and notices issued by BMC or MHADA, including the most recent one in May 2020, have been addressed to SBUT threatening them with punitive action should

HC: lockdown has created weariness

Court grants bail to architect arrested for walking on Marine Drive

SONAM SAIGAL
MUMBAI

The Bombay High Court has granted bail to a man arrested for violating curfew orders, saying the lockdown due to the novel coronavirus pandemic has created an atmosphere of weariness and exasperation.

Ordering his release, the court also said jail facilities are otherwise overburdened and in view of the peculiar situation currently prevailing inside prisons, a first-time offender cannot be incarcerated.

The arrest

A single judge Bench of Justice Bharati Dangre was hearing a plea for bail filed by Karan Nair (27), an architect, through his advocate Nirajan Mundargi. He was arrested on May 8 for allegedly attacking three policemen when they questioned him for roaming on Marine Drive at night during curfew.

He was also not wearing a mask and when the police tried to question him, Mr. Nair charged at the policemen and tried to run away. He was chased and arrested.

The court recorded that he may have been disturbed due to some personal issues. His advocate said he

was not carrying any weapon, but a tool used by architects. Justice Dangre noted that Mr. Nair had no criminal antecedents. A perusal of the FIR clearly reveals that even the complainant (police) was under tremendous pressure to maintain law and order due to prohibitory orders.

₹50,000 bond

The court observed "the situation due to the spread of pandemic has brought on an atmosphere of weariness and exasperation and a young person like the applicant has fallen trap to the scenario".

The High Court ordered his release on a personal bond of ₹50,000 and said, "In the absence of any criminal antecedents, and the fact that he is a young person aged 27 years belonging to a reputed family, and fleeing the court of justice being obscure, he is entitled to be released on bail."

The court added, "Another reason for his release being the jail facilities are otherwise overburdened, and a person who is a one time confronter of law cannot be incarcerated and particularly so in the peculiar situation prevailing inside the jail."

IN BRIEF

Firemen rescue three children stuck in lift

THANE Three children trapped inside the lift of their housing complex were rescued by firemen here, an official said on Wednesday. The incident took place on Tuesday night in Tilak Chowk area of Kalyan, said local sub fire officer Namdeo Chowdhary. PTI

Timings

| MUMBAI | |
|------------------------|--|
| THURSDAY, JUN. 11 | |
| ● RISE 06:01 SET 19:16 | |
| ● RISE 00:00 SET 11:02 | |
| FRIDAY, JUN. 12 | |
| ● RISE 06:01 SET 19:17 | |
| ● RISE 00:00 SET 11:53 | |
| SATURDAY, JUN. 13 | |
| ● RISE 06:01 SET 19:17 | |
| ● RISE 00:47 SET 12:42 | |

| Mumbai Weather | |
| --- | --- |
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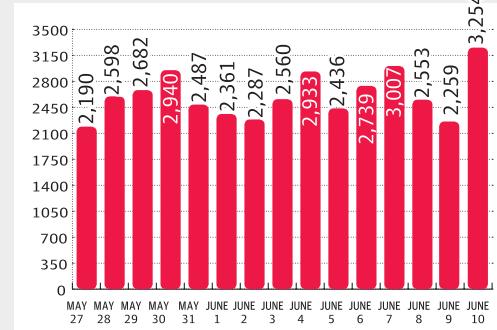
Maharashtra COVID-19 tracker

| TOTAL CASES | NEW CASES | ACTIVE CASES | RECOVERED | DEATHS |
|-------------|-----------|--------------|-----------|--------|
| 94,041 | 3,254 | 46,074 | 44,517 | 3,438 |

DISTRICTS AFFECTED: 35

| DISTRICT | CASES | DEATHS | DISTRICT | CASES | DEATHS |
|------------|--------|--------|------------|-------|--------|
| Mumbai | 52,667 | 1,857 | Hingoli | 214 | 0 |
| Thane | 14,720 | 378 | Sangli | 188 | 4 |
| Pune | 10,406 | 439 | Nanded | 174 | 8 |
| Aurangabad | 2,173 | 117 | Yavatmal | 168 | 2 |
| Nashik | 1,704 | 95 | Latur | 147 | 4 |
| Palghar | 1,738 | 45 | Osmanabad | 140 | 3 |
| Raigad | 1,575 | 58 | Sindhudurg | 133 | 0 |
| Solapur | 1,483 | 112 | Buldhana | 98 | 3 |
| Jalgaon | 1,288 | 120 | Parbhani | 80 | 3 |
| Akola | 882 | 40 | Gondia | 68 | 0 |
| Nagpur | 831 | 12 | Beed | 63 | 2 |
| Satara | 681 | 27 | Gadchiroli | 45 | 1 |
| Kolhapur | 671 | 8 | Chandrapur | 45 | 0 |
| Ratnagiri | 381 | 14 | Nandurbar | 44 | 4 |
| Dhule | 334 | 25 | Bhandara | 42 | 0 |
| Antragati | 305 | 20 | Wardha | 14 | 1 |
| Jalna | 225 | 5 | Washim | 14 | 2 |
| Ahmednagar | 220 | 9 | | | |

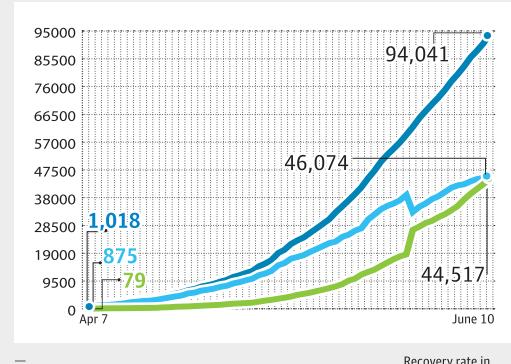
POSITIVE CASES OVER LAST 15 DAYS



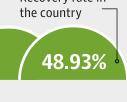
1,567 (48.15%) of Wednesday's cases are from Mumbai



CASES TREND



47.33% is the State recovery rate

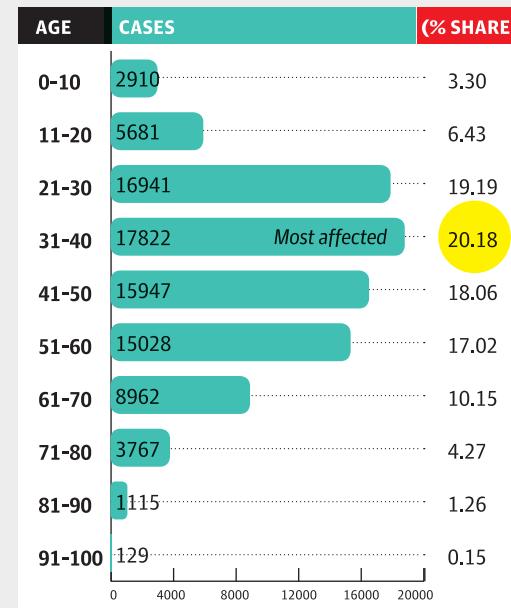


MORTALITY RATE

Maharashtra 3.65%

India 2.78%

AFFECTED (AGE-WISE)



QUARANTINE NUMBERS

5,69,145 Home quarantine



27,228 Institutional quarantine

CASES (GENDER-WISE)



DEATH (GENDER-WISE)



70% of deaths due to co-morbidities

HELPLINE NUMBERS

Toll free number: 104/1075

Maharashtra: 020-2127394

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

State helpline email id: ssumarashtra@gmail.com

CITY-WISE HELPLINE NUMBERS

Mumbai city: 022 22664232 Palghar: 02525 297474

Mumbai suburbs: 022 26556799 / 26556806 Raigad: 02141 222118

Ratnagiri: 02352 226248

Thane: 022 25301740 Sindhudurg: 02362 228847

Source: Public Health Department, Maharashtra, BMC

97 more die in Mumbai, the most in a day so far

Over 1,500 new cases take total COVID-19 infections near 53,000 mark; city's death toll surges to 1,857

JYOTI SHELAR
TANVI DESHPANDE
MUMBAI

With 97 deaths, Mumbai recorded the highest COVID-19 fatalities in a day, pushing the death toll to 1,857 on Wednesday. The city also recorded 1,567 more cases, taking its tally to 52,667. The virus is now three months old with the first case recorded in Mumbai on March 11.

Of the latest victims, 62 were men and 35 women. Eighty of them had comorbidities. Civic officials said 20 were old deaths that were updated on Wednesday.

While the civic body has put efforts in augmenting beds for quarantine, medical experts attribute the increasing number of deaths to lack of immediate access to critical care. As on June 9, nearly 99% of the city's 1,158 intensive care unit (ICU) beds were occupied and so were 76% of the 5,181 oxygen sup-

port beds. "We are seeing a lot of deaths in patients who hang on for two to three weeks and then suddenly succumb," said a city-based infectious disease expert. Doctors also said more ICU beds are the need of the hour to bring down mortality.

Close monitoring needed
In a circular, State's health secretary Dr. Pradeep Vyas has emphasised on hiring doctors, nurses and paramedical staff as per requirement in order to reduce fatalities. He said measuring body temperature and oxygen saturation are crucial and each ICU patient should be monitored very closely for these parameters.

Patients on oxygen support should be monitored every two hours while those with symptoms should be monitored every four hours. Asymptomatic patients should be monitored every

eight hours. Dr. Vyas said if a patient's oxygen level remains lower than 94% despite support, he or she should be immediately shifted to a facility with an ICU.

A ray of hope
According to information shared by Aaditya Thackeray on Twitter on Wednesday,

continued to grow the fastest at 5.9% and G North ward, consisting of Dharavi, Dadar and Mahim, continued to have the most cases at 3,568.

However, only 1,235 cases are active in this ward currently. There are only three city wards with less than 1,000 cases now while there are 13 with more than 2,000 cases each.

Dharavi reported 11 new cases on Wednesday, pushing the tally to 1,964. The area has reported 73 deaths so far, while its growth rate has gone down to 1.57%.

In a meeting held by Municipal Commissioner I.S. Chahal on Wednesday, he has directed officers to hold health camps for monsoon-related illnesses such as dengue and malaria as well. Mr. Chahal has also ordered officers to ensure details of COVID-19 deaths are uploaded on ICMR's website within 48 hours of death.

NMMC records highest surge in one day

RAINA ASSAINAR
NAVI MUMBAI

The Navi Mumbai Municipal Corporation (NMMC) recorded the highest single-day surge on Wednesday with 156 cases, bringing its tally to 3,219.

Of these, 40 cases were reported from Turbhe, 32 from Airoli, 24 from Nerul, 16 from Vashi, 15 each from Koparkhairane and Ghansoli, eight from Belapur and six from Digha.

With five more fatalities, the city's death toll has touched 101.

Meanwhile, 67 people were discharged, bringing the total recoveries to 1,915. Currently there are 1,203 active cases.



Healthcare workers conducting a medical camp at Parshuram Yallappa Chawl in Dharavi on Wednesday. ■ VIJAY BATE

Pune crosses 10,000 cases

Some clusters are flattening the curve, say authorities

SHOUMOJIT BANERJEE
PUNE

More than 120 new COVID-19 cases were reported across Pune district as its total case tally breached the 10,000-mark on Wednesday to touch 10,081. The death toll currently stands at 442.

Authorities said 122 new cases had been reported till Wednesday evening. Of the total cases though, only 3,259 were active. With 6,380 people being discharged till date, district's recovery rate is 62.93%.

Despite the continual surge, Pune District Collector Naval Kishore Ram said the situation was under control and that no alarming spike had occurred despite several areas being lashed by Cyclone Nisarga.

"Yesterday, we tested over 2,500 samples, of which only 220 returned positive. So, our hit ratio or the samples tested to positive cases, has come down to 10% from 15-16% a week ago," Mr. Ram told *The Hindu*.

He said intensive screening drives were being carried out in new 'containment zones' like Wadarwadi in Shi-

vajinagar, while a number of previously infected clusters within Pune city like Kasba-Vishrambaugwada were showing distinct signs of the curve flattening.

Mr. Ram also said he had instructed deputy collectors and incident commanders (of Pune's Cantonment areas) to desist from declaring areas as 'containment zones' if very few cases were found there. "It has been observed that authorities at times tend to designate an entire area as a containment zone even if only a few cases are found there. This severely hampers functioning of industry and business in such areas," Mr. Ram said.

Division toll is 609
Meanwhile, the total death toll in Pune division has now risen to 609.

The division's total case tally has reached 13,028. But only 4,221 of these were active cases, said Pune Divisional Commissioner Deepak Mhaiskar.

After Pune, Solapur has the highest death toll, reporting four new fatalities on Wednesday to take its death

count to 125. The district also reported a sharp spike of 107 new cases, taking its tally to 1,410. However, the number of active cases has reduced to 493 with 792 people being discharged.

Satara district reported 20 new cases, taking its tally to 669, of which 273 were active cases while 368 had

Juhi Chaturvedi on recreating the sights and sounds of her home town, its colloquial speak, humour and that quintessential Awadhi sarcasm

NAMRATA JOSHI

When it comes to the depiction of Lucknow, writer Juhi Chaturvedi calls her work in the forthcoming film, *Gulabo Sitabo*, as "aatma tripti karne wala kaam" (soul satisfying job). The film marks a return to her roots in the city in an intense, concentrated and profound way. Lucknow is where Chaturvedi grew up, did a course in fine arts, supported her education by working as an illustrator at the local edition of the *Times of India* before moving on to the world of advertising and Hindi cinema.

Recreating a culture

The film, is about the sights and sounds Chaturvedi grew up with, the people she saw around her, all coming together in a beautiful fit. "Whatever I observed there, in the day-to-day interactions, I have tried to write here," she says. It's not about specific incidents and instances so much as what she gathered from years of experiences in the city, about an entire culture coming together. There are memories of specific places. "I had written the Lucknow skyline into the script," she says. And then there are audio memories as well. The sound of the azan from the masjid and Hari Om Sharan bhajans wafting from the Hanuman mandir. "The team has done a great job in capturing Lucknow beyond just the city," she says. "Even things like people sitting idle; the purpose in their purposelessness."

There is a certain universality to the tale of one-upmanship between an old landlord Mirza and his young tenant Baankey and a *haveli* (mansion) becoming the bone of contention between the two. It could have been set anywhere. But by setting



All smiles: Juhi Chaturvedi says *Gulabo Sitabo* helped push the boundaries of her cinematic humour. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Juhi Chaturvedi: The girl from Lucknow

the film in Lucknow, there was a confidence that a lot more could be done in terms of the habits, the language of the people and the pulse of the place. "There is an ideology, a way of thinking, the normal day-to-day speak, the repartees, the banter, the Awadhi sarcasm which I have used to my utmost advantage. It helped me craft much more authentic characters," she reminisces.

The bickering between Mirza and Baankey invert the constantly fighting women – Gulabo and Sitabo – of the

glove puppetry tradition of the area. The dominant faces are of Amitabh Bachchan and Ayushmann Khurrana but Chaturvedi promises there will be women of consequence too. "They may not be heroic... but I feel my women can't be regressive, submissive or tolerant," she had told *The Hindu* in an earlier interview. "You wouldn't be disappointed with the women in *Gulabo Sitabo* at all," she laughs, without giving us anything more away.

Chaturvedi feels the film is not so much about gender as about people who have a certain lowliness and impunity embedded in their DNA.

"It's in the kind of things they say, things which I have grown-up listening to," she says. In keeping with her style, the film is character than plot driven. It's about relationships. "All of us are living in chaos of our relationships, surrounded by people, living in the noise," she says. But there is also a lot more. "It's about the whole world around these people," she emphasises.

Driven by character

She also thinks that there are only finite plots in the world. "Plot is secondary in life. It's about situations. People who happen to be there, what do they do with it, how do they behave. What is different is how people handle it. There are squabbles everywhere but how people solve them or complicate them further is what matters," she says.

After an emotional, "extremely heavy" *October*, it's back at deploying quirk to some witty effect. According to Chaturvedi, it wasn't intentional. In fact, she had started working on *Gulabo Sitabo* before *October*. It did come as a breather and facilitated a change of mood though.

"While writing *October* I cried a lot; while writing *Gulabo Sitabo* I laughed a lot," she says. It also helped her push the boundaries of cinematic humour in her own way.

"Humour is the best defence mechanism in personal life as well," she says. Here it isn't thrust in to make people laugh uproariously but emerges organically. No wonder then, she asserts, "It's my most natural writing yet."

While writing
October I cried
a lot; while
writing *Gulabo*
Sitabo I
laughed a lot

JUHI CHATURVEDI
Writer

POOCH CAFE



HAGAR THE HORRIBLE



PEANUTS

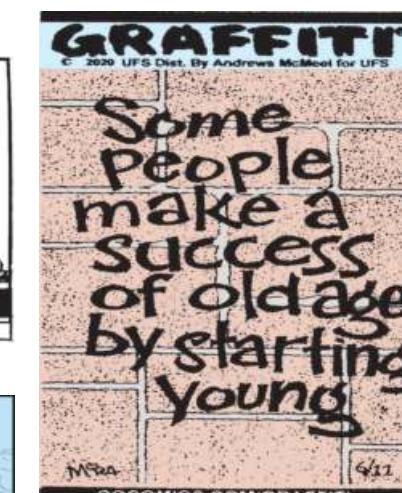


TIGER



CALVIN AND HOBBES

WUMO



THE GUARDIAN QUICK CROSSWORD-13359

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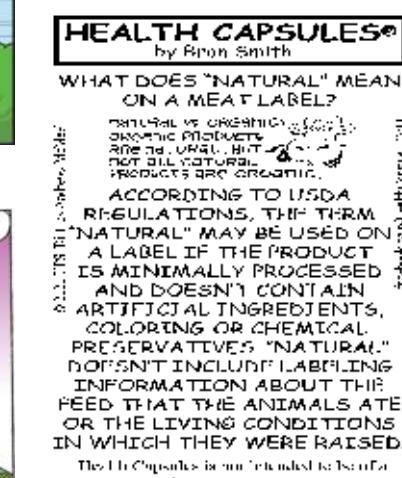
To play The Guardian Quick Crossword, The Hindu Cryptic crossword, Sudoku & other puzzles online, scan the QR code.

- species (5)
- 4 Is insensitive to criticism (3,1,5,4)
- 5 Underground worker (5)
- 6 Secretive milk (7)
- 7 Place obliquely (4)
- 8 Maiden (poetic) (6)
- 13 Lost one's footing (8)
- 15 Stiff hair (7)
- 16 Vehicle for the last trip? (6)
- 18 In the lead (5)
- 20 Cremates – Scottish poet, d.1796 (5)
- 21 Remain (4)

Solution will appear on June 13, 2020.

Solution No. I3358

PEARLS BEFORE SWINE



| | |
|--------|---|
| 17 | Illegally seize control of (6) |
| 19 | Compilation of recordings (5) |
| 22 | A levy of one tenth (5) |
| 23 | Bird of prey (7) |
| 24 | Giving way (8) |
| 25 | Put into service (4) |
| ■ Down | |
| 1 | Ornamental bottle for storing wine (8) |
| 2 | Biological group containing one or more |

| | | | | | | | | | | |
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CM YK

HOMING IN

Happy Pride, folks! Here's a **Podcast list** we recommend from the LGBTQIA+ community, that will help us understand queer history, introspect and laugh along to shared experiences

■ SWETA AKUNDI

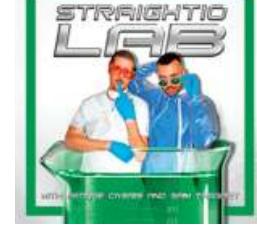
Queering Desi

As this podcast will tell you, it is impossible to put one label on diverse queer experiences. Queering Desi takes itself seriously, leaning more on the arts and advocacy. New York-based host Priya Arora gets guests belonging to the South Indian diaspora from across the world and encourages them to examine their careers and the culture clash, with their queer glasses on. Previous guests include pastry chefs, physicians, choreographers and drag queens.

Episode length: 40 minutes, on average

Available on: Spotify, Apple, Stitcher, Saavn

StraightLab



Imagine a world where being queer is the mainstream, and 'straight life' is under the microscope. That's what StraightLab does, with hosts George Civeris and Sam Taggart. The duo gets down to banter with guests, claiming to 'unpack a topic' – in quotes, because they take

don't get around to doing that until they are well into the episode. But then their chit-chat full of giggles and sniggers, is so comfortably friendly, you don't really mind that. Having started post physical distancing, the podcast dissects straight bars, gender reveal parties, gyms and football with the enthusiasm of a tourist in a new city.

Episode length: 25 minutes, on average

Available on: Spotify, Apple, Stitcher

Keeping It Queer

"We're not in Kansas anymore, Dorothy." Stand-up comedian Navin Noronha is joined by Farhad Karkaria, who also hosts GayBCD. Having started in 2017, this show has seen India's social tapestry change from pre-to-post 37. Navin and Farhad discuss straight prides, queer group therapy, gay pageants and adolescent crushes. Often they have guests on board to bring out personal experiences. In a stand-out episode of season 3, Anish Gawande, director of Dara Shikoh Fellowship, divulges what it is like to climb up the political ladder in India as an openly gay man.

Episode length: 50 minutes, on average

Available on: Spotify, Apple, IVM Podcasts



A week after, Raigad scrambles to recover from Nisarga impact

Farmers and hotel owners are the worst-affected; many areas still in darkness

ALOK DESHPANDE
SHRIVARDHAN (RAIGAD)

Diveagar, a tourist spot in Shrivardhan tehsil of Raigad district, known for its scenic beach and offbeat home stays offering authentic Konkani food, is devastated and still without electricity a week after cyclone Nisarga struck the western coast.

Uday Bapat, sarpanch of Diveagar gram panchayat, said the cyclone hit hard and they suffered the most. "At first, it was the lockdown due to COVID-19 that stopped the tourists' flow, and now the cyclone. As the State is on its track of reopening, the cyclone delayed that process for us by at least a month or two," he said.



Over 5,507 high tension poles and 11,089 low tension poles fell in the cyclone impact in Raigad district. ■ ALOK DESHPANDE

Trees uprooted

The village has around 214 small and medium size hotels. "Half of them have suffered losses like damage to the tin roofs, or broken windows. The coconut and betel nut trees in every backyard have been uprooted. The government has to provide us with a loan or any other assistance to recover from the losses," Mr. Bapat said.

The falling of coconut, betel nut, and cashew trees poses a different type of problem than any farmland would suffer under such circumstances. "It takes more than eight to 10 years for these trees to grow. Then they start giving us produce and bring profits. These trees have suffered major damage. The cyclone just destroyed all physical and financial effort put in by us and we won't be able to earn money through these trees for several years to come," said Ali Kauchli of

Areas such as Mangaon, Mhasla, Shrivardhan and surrounding villages have partial to no electricity. Over 5,507 high tension poles and 11,089 low tension poles fell in the cyclone impact.

Water supply issues

As a result of the power supply disruptions, these areas are now experiencing problems in water supply as well. Ms. Tatkare said the

water lines are not damaged. "We are restarting power stations on a war footing. Water supply will resume soon," she said.

Atul Lokhande of Mangaon owned a motorcycle showroom along the Mumbai-Goa national highway. The shop has been roofless for a week now and the damage, in his estimation, could be around ₹2 to ₹3 lakh. "Government officials came and asked me my about bank account number. But they didn't note down the IFSC code. I don't think I will get any compensation for the losses. The State is yet to start power connection here," he said.

CM hikes relief amount by up to three times

STAFF REPORTER
MUMBAI

The State government has declared ₹100 crore as an immediate relief for Raigad district. Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray had said that this amount was not final and would be increased.

The Chief Minister on Wednesday announced that the State had decided to keep aside the prescribed rates of the National Disaster Response Force and the State Disaster Response Force, given under such circumstances, and instead increased the compensation by around one-and-a-half to three times.

Compensation for fully damaged pucca and kachha houses has been increased to ₹1.5 lakh from ₹95,100, while for partial damage, the amount has gone up from ₹6,000 to ₹15,000. The same amount will be applied for damaged hut as well.

Similarly, compensation towards clothes and utensils per family that has lost its house, has now been doubled from ₹2,500 to ₹5,000.

For farmland up to two hectares, the earlier relief of ₹18,000 per hectare for multi-year crop has gone up to ₹50,000 per hectare. Small shop owners will now get 75% of the total damage or maximum ₹10,000. Raigad MP Sunil Tatkare, however, said the losses are much higher and could be around ₹5,000 crore.

As a result of the power supply disruptions, these areas are now experiencing problems in water supply as well. Ms. Tatkare said the

Water supply issues

Credit society officials suspected to have forged documents

ALOK DESHPANDE
MUMBAI

In what may cast a shadow on the implementation of the State's Mahatma Jyotirao Phule crop loan waiver scheme, instances of farmers not having any land, but benefiting under the scheme, have surfaced in Sangli. This is the first time irregularities have been observed in the scheme.

Sangli Collector Abhijit Chowdhury on Tuesday issued time-bound orders to review the entire crop loan waiver process in the district to check the scale of irregularities. This will include re-checking names and farm land of 86,547 farmers, who have registered themselves as possible beneficiaries of the crop loan waiver scheme.

Sangli district authorities have till now distributed ₹422.32 crore under this scheme to 71,424 farmers. The orders issued by Mr.

Chowdhury said, "It has been observed that despite having no farm land, certain farmers' name was used to create fake 7/12 documents (land documents) and a crop loan was wrongly availed. This loan was also wrongly waived off in the ongoing scheme. The possibility of such instances cannot be denied at different places. Therefore, it is important to amass the information regarding the farmers who have no farm land of their own or land less than 10 guntha." Mr. Chowdhury has sought a report by June 26.

Fake documents

The incident came to light in Gotkhindi village of Walva tehsil, where farmers had approached the local authorities after money from the crop loan waiver scheme had been deposited in their names, even though they possessed no land of their

own. According to sources within the district administration, the local credit society office-bearers may have created the forged documents to avail the benefits under the scheme.

Practices rampant

Maharashtra Navnirman Sena leader Kirtikumar Shinde, who exposed the discrepancy, said, "This is not limited to Sangli district. Such practices are rampant in every part of the State. The government must take the lead and start reviewing the entire crop loan waiver scheme and its beneficiaries. Those involved in misappropriation of funds must be punished," he said.

Mr. Shinde further said that his party has started issuing demand letters in other districts also such as Solapur, Latur, Beed, Aurangabad and Raigad, to review the scheme.

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Look back in relief

Introspection on the lapses that led to the migrant labour crisis is in order

The worst may be over for the country's inter-State workers. Many have returned home. More may be accommodated in Shramik trains scheduled to run, and some, it appears, do not mind staying where they are for work, now that the 'unlock' phase has begun in many parts of the country. The Supreme Court has fixed a 15-day deadline for the completion of the process of transporting all of them back home, besides asking governments across the country to drop criminal cases against them for violating the lockdown since it was imposed at short notice on March 25. Pursuing the lockdown violation charge would have been an exercise in triviality in the face of the desperation and despair this section of the population faced. Notwithstanding lingering criticism that the Supreme Court's intervention, on its motion, may have come too late, there ought to be a sense of relief over the improvement in their situation. Going by official claims by the Centre, as many as 57.22 lakh migrant workers have returned to their home towns from the States in which they have been earning a living. Given the scale of the unprecedented misery millions of them found themselves in over the last two months, the idea that both authorities and the courts are making an effort to ameliorate their living conditions is an undoubted source of comfort and relief. What stands out in the response of the Union government to the crisis and to the myriad voices that raised concern over the tribulations of such a large section of citizens is the ferocity and bull-headedness with which it sought to deny the magnitude of their suffering.

Chastened by open criticism from former members of the higher judiciary, as well as many senior lawyers and jurists, the top court has sought to redeem its stature by a series of directions; as well as by indicating its willingness to go into all pending issues. As part of its efforts, it made all State governments file comprehensive affidavits on the action they had taken to facilitate the return of the workers, provide them with immediate relief and the arrangements made for food and water for them during train journeys. It has further asked the States to spell out their plans for registering all the workers, their skills, their areas of employment and the different welfare and employment schemes meant for them. Several problems remain, not the least of them being the lapses on the part of the authorities across the country in dealing with the crisis. The inadequacy of facilities for registering and identifying those who wished to travel and the paucity of timely information and effective communication relating to the movement of trains and their destinations were other issues. Overall, the Court's belated intervention has occasioned a moment of much-needed introspection for everyone concerned on their responses, attitudes and shortcomings.

Ugly run

Sport is beautiful only when it is clean, and athletes compete in safe and fair ways

A year ago, her story moved many. When Gomathi Marimuthu spoke about her struggle following the death of her father and coach in succession, the 800m gold she won then at the Asian Championships in Doha appeared to have a lot of sparkle. But all that changed when reports emerged a month later about the middle distance runner from Tiruchirappalli testing positive for a banned substance twice, both at Doha and the Federation Cup in Patiala, an event prior to the Asian Championships. The latest verdict from the International Disciplinary Tribunal which has punished the 31-year-old with probably a career-ending four-year ban, will also strip her of the Asian gold. It should not come as a surprise as four of her urine samples had the presence of 19-Norandrosterone (19-NA), a metabolite of nandrolone, which is prohibited at all times. However, what remains strange is the two-month delay by the National Dope Testing Laboratory, which is now suspended by the World Anti-Doping Agency, and the National Anti-Doping Agency in bringing out the results of Gomathi's sample taken during the Federation Cup. Had it come earlier, she would not have gone to Doha and it would have saved the country a lot of embarrassment. Meanwhile, Gomathi has claimed innocence and suggested that the steroid may have been accidentally imbibed through some non-vegetarian food she had consumed.

Sport is beautiful only when clean athletes compete. However poor an athlete is, a sprint loses its charm when a dubious candidate walks away with the gold. It is also unfair to clean athletes and their years of sacrifice. Every time a big fish is caught, it spreads awareness about the perils of taking illegal drugs and goes a small way in cleaning up sport. The temptations to cheat, especially in India, are many, with government jobs, promotions and heavy cash prizes on offer for medalists in major Games. During these COVID-19 times, with many national camps closing their doors to outsiders, there is a feeling that it will be tough to test athletes and the next two years are crucial with events such as the Olympics, World Championships, Commonwealth Games and the Asian Games lined up. But WADA and NADA have brought out guidelines for testing during this phase. Sebastian Coe, the president of World Athletics, emphatically said: "There is monitoring going on all the time by major national anti-doping agencies, AIU (Athletics Integrity Unit) and WADA. The days of adding up a number of tests is long gone. Intelligent testing and intelligent analysis are more important now than they have ever been." Clearly, NADA has to do more so that India is not tainted with drug violations and Gomathi's case is the latest wake-up call.

An unravelling of the Group of Seven

With the world in disorder, a new mechanism will have value only if it focuses on key global issues



JAYANT PRASAD

The next G7 summit, tentatively scheduled in Washington DC in mid-June, has been postponed by the host, U.S. President Donald Trump. His decision followed German Chancellor Angela Merkel's decision to stay away from the meeting, ostensibly because of restrictions on travel imposed by COVID-19. She may not have wanted to go just for a photo opportunity. The recent meetings of G7 have had desultory results.

Logic of expansion

While postponing the summit "to at least September", Mr. Trump declared that in any case, the G7 "is a very outdated group of countries" and no longer properly represented "what's going on in the world". He asked, rhetorically, why not a G10 or G11 instead, with the inclusion of India, South Korea, Australia and possibly Russia?

Elaborating this logic, the White House Director of Strategic Communications said the U.S. President wanted to include other countries, including the Five Eyes countries (an intelligence alliance comprising Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the United Kingdom and the United States), and to talk about the future of China. A Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs official immediately reacted, labelling it as "seeking a clique targeting China".

China's objection to an expanded G7 is no reason for India to stay away from it, if invited to join. India has attended several G7 summits earlier too, as a special invitee for its outreach sessions. India's Prime Minister was guest invited

to Biarritz, France to the G7 summit last year, along with other heads of government (Australia, Burkina Faso, Chile, Egypt, Rwanda, Senegal, Spain, and South Africa).

The G7 emerged as a restricted club of the rich democracies in the early 1970s. The quadrupling of oil prices just after the 1973 Arab-Israeli War, when members of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) imposed an embargo against Canada, Japan, the Netherlands, and the United States, shocked their economies.

Although the French were spared the embargo, the chill winds of the OPEC action reverberated around the world. French President Valéry Giscard d'Estaing invited the Finance Ministers of five of the most developed members of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, the United States, Germany, Japan, Italy, and the United Kingdom, for an informal discussion on global issues. This transformed into a G7 Summit of the heads of government from the following year, with the inclusion of Canada (1976), and the European Commission/Community (later Union) attending as a non-enumerated member, a year later.

On the initiative of U.S. President Bill Clinton and British Prime Minister Tony Blair, the G7 became the G8, with the Russian Federation joining the club in 1998. This ended with Russia's expulsion following the annexation of Crimea in 2014.

Economic circumstances
When constituted, the G7 countries accounted for close to two-thirds of global GDP. According to the 2017 report of the accountancy firm, PwC, "The World in 2050", they now account for less than a third of global GDP on a purchasing power parity (PPP) basis, and



less than half on market exchange rates (MER) basis.

The seven largest emerging economies (E7, or "Emerging 7"), comprising Brazil, China, India, Indonesia, Mexico, Russia and Turkey, account for over a third of global GDP on purchasing power parity (PPP) terms, and over a quarter on MER basis. India's economy is already the third largest in the world in PPP terms, even if way behind that of the U.S. and China.

By 2050, the PwC Report predicts, six of the seven of the world's best performing economies will be China, India, the United States, Indonesia, Brazil, and Russia. Two other E7 countries, Mexico and Turkey, also improve their position. It projects that India's GDP will increase to \$17 trillion in 2030 and \$42 trillion in 2050 in PPP terms, in second place after China, just ahead of the United States. This is predicated on India overcoming the challenge of COVID-19, sustaining its reform process and ensuring adequate investments in infrastructure, institutions, governance, education and health.

The limitations of G7

The success or otherwise of multilateral institutions are judged by the standard of whether or not they have successfully addressed the core global or regional challenges of the time. The G7 failed to head off the economic downturn of 2007-08, which led to the rise of

the G20. In the short span of its existence, the G20 has provided a degree of confidence, by promoting open markets, and stimulus, preventing a collapse of the global financial system.

The G7 has not covered itself with glory with respect to contemporary issues, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change, the challenge of the Daesh, and the crisis of state collapse in West Asia.

It had announced its members would phase out all fossil fuels and subsidies, but has not so far announced any plan of action to do so. The G7 countries account for 59% of historic global CO₂ emissions ("from 1850 to 2010"), and their coal fired plants emit "twice more CO₂ than those of the entire African continent".

Three of the G7 countries, France, Germany, and the U.K., were among the top 10 countries contributing volunteers to the Daesh, which had between 22,000-30,000 foreign fighters just two years ago. West Asia is in a greater state of turmoil than at any point of time since the fall of the Ottoman Empire, leading to a migrants crisis that persuaded many countries in Europe to renege on their western liberal values, making the Mediterranean Sea a death trap for people fleeing against fear of persecution and threat to their lives.

Need for a new institution

The world is in a state of disorder. The global economy has stalled and COVID-19 will inevitably create widespread distress. Nations need dexterity and resilience to cope with the current flux, as also a revival of multilateralism, for they have been seeking national solutions for problems that are unresolvable internally. Existing international institutions have proven themselves unequal to these tasks. A new mechanism might

help in attenuating them.

It would be ideal to include in it the seven future leading economies, plus Germany, Japan, the U.K., France, Mexico, Turkey, South Korea, and Australia. If Mr. Trump loses his re-election bid, this might have to wait for a few years. The 2005 ad hoc experiment by Prime Minister Tony Blair in bringing together the G7 and the BRICS countries was a one-off.

A new international mechanism will have value only if it focuses on key global issues. India would be vitally interested in three: international trade, climate change, and the COVID-19 crisis. A related aspect is how to push for observing international law and preventing the retreat from liberal values on which public goods are predicated. Global public health and the revival of growth and trade in a sustainable way (that also reduces the inequalities among and within nations) would pose a huge challenge.

Second order priorities for India would be cross-cutting issues such as counter-terrorism and counter-proliferation. An immediate concern is to ensure effective implementation of the 1975 Biological Weapons Convention and the prevention of any possible cheating by its state parties by the possible creation of new microorganisms or viruses or using recombinant technologies.

On regional issues, establishing a *modus vivendi* with Iran would be important to ensure that it does not acquire nuclear weapons and is able to contribute to peace and stability in Afghanistan, the Gulf and West Asia. The end state in Afghanistan would also be of interest to India, as also the reduction of tensions in the Korean Peninsula and the South China Sea.

Jayant Prasad, a former diplomat, served as Director General of the Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses

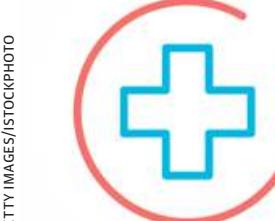
Needed, a transfusion for public health care

Health services cannot be left to private medicine in a developing country, or indeed, in any country



RAJ B. SINGH

For Disease Dynamics, Economics & Policy.



A news channel in India alleged recently that several private hospitals in the country were "exposed" by a "sting operation" to be levying fees in excess when COVID-19 patients went to them for care. It is not clear why a "sting operation" was necessary; the high cost of medical care in the top hospitals of the country is well known. Anyone who has had major surgery or received intensive care in any of the hospitals can testify to that. The debate now is whether such exorbitant rates are justified during a pandemic such as the one we are in the midst of, or indeed, ever.

Before we address this question, however, an equally important question arises: why do we have so many private hospitals in a poor country such as India. We have more hospital beds in the private sector than in the public sector. It is estimated that there are 19 lakh hospital beds, 95,000 ICU beds and 48,000 ventilators in India. Most of these are concentrated in seven States, Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Karnataka, Telangana and West Bengal. Except for Tamil Nadu, Delhi and West Bengal, there are far more beds and ventilators in the private sector than in the public, according to the Center

for Disease Dynamics, Economics & Policy.

A mirror to public care

The reason for this abundance of private health care is obviously the lack of adequate public health care. This situation has developed due to two main reasons. Since Independence, India has, quite rightly, focused attention on the larger picture. The priority in a developing country would be the provision of primary care at the peripheral level, preventive measures, immunisation, maternity and paediatric care as well as dealing with common infections such as tuberculosis. We have done this well, resulting in impressive improvements in many health-care indices in the last few decades. However, not enough hospital beds and specialised facilities were provided by the public sector during this time. At the same time, the burgeoning middle class and increasing wealth produced an explosion in the demand for good quality health care. Private medicine was quick to capitalise on this demand.

The second reason for the dominance of private medicine in India is the lack of adequate investment in public health.

The Indian government spends an abysmally low 1.3% of GDP on public health care, which is woefully inadequate. Allocation has to be at least double this to address some of our pressing needs. Greater transparency and tighter administration are necessary to ensure that our resources are utilised appropriately. Specialists should be adequately

ly compensated to obviate their need for private practice.

Private medicine in India is by no means uniform. It is estimated that there are more than one million unqualified medical practitioners, mostly in the rural areas. Most of them provide basic health care, charging a modest fee. Some may have claims of expertise (often unproven) in alternative systems of medicine such as ayurveda and homoeopathy. It is not unheard of them to sometimes venture into minor surgery. At the other end of the spectrum are state-of-the-art corporate hospitals, that are well equipped and well-staffed and which provide excellent service at high cost. These are often set up in metro cities at huge cost and have successfully engineered a reverse brain drain of many specialists from pursuing lucrative jobs abroad and staying back in or returning to India. Between the two extremes are a large number of private practitioners and institutions providing a wide range of services of varying quality. Some are run by trusts, charitable organisations and religious missions, often providing excellent quality at modest costs.

The wide range of quality in medical services in India reflects

the wide range of income and wealth in India. It is estimated that the wealth of the top 1% in India is four times the combined wealth of the bottom 70%. The wealthy demand, pay for, and often get, world-class health care. The middle class, seeing what is possible, is beginning to demand similar care at affordable cost. The poorer 70% are left to the vagaries and mercy of an unpredictable public health-care system and low cost charlatans.

What needs to be done

The public health-care system desperately needs higher government spending. Health care cannot be left to private medicine in a developing country, or indeed, in any country. The United States, despite spending more than 15% of its enormous GDP on health care in the form of largely insurance-based private medicine, has poorer health-care indices than Europe, where government-funded universal health care (e.g. The National Health Service of the United Kingdom) is available, though the per capita health-care expenditure in Europe is substantially less than in the U.S.

Health-care spending by the government must be appropriate, based on evidence, and transparent and accountable. Training of doctors and health-care workers also need to be the responsibility of the government mainly. Recent reforms in the selection of medical students need to be scrutinised to see if they are having the desired result.

Private hospitals and institu-

tions will need to be regulated. Costing and auditing of care and procedures need to be done by independent bodies. This will not only ensure appropriate care at the right cost but also prevent unreasonable demands of suspicious patients and family.

The crisis now
No hospital, business, institution or individual should profit from a national calamity such as the COVID-19 pandemic. Hospitals, like any other institution, have a social responsibility to provide care in times of need. But one should also be aware of the actual costs involved which have to be met. The cost of medical care often follows the law of diminishing returns; as the treatment gets more sophisticated, further and further increments, although small, cost enormously more. Some of the drugs used in the care of severely-ill COVID-19 patients may cost more than ₹50,000 a shot, for example, and may provide only a marginally better outcome. "Capping" costs may necessitate sacrificing some of these expensive options. Private hospitals should, and will, be prepared to forego profits and even suffer losses during a national disaster. But if losses become unsustainable, they may be forced to lay off employees, close beds or even entire hospitals, like any other business. That will hardly benefit anyone.

Dr. Raj B. Singh is a pulmonologist in Chennai. The views expressed are personal.

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.

LAC stand-off
Given that the eyeball-to-eyeball confrontation between Indian Army soldiers and the People's Liberation Army at the de facto China-Indian border has been across multiple points, and all at one go, it is good to note that efforts have been initiated to begin "partial disengagement" (Page 1, "India, China agree to ease stand-off", June 10). Evidently, the senior military-level talks did not go in vain. It is abundantly clear that on the pretext of differing perceptions of the undemarcated border, Beijing has been gauging India's preparedness

adopting a method of "incursions", China's immense infrastructure development along the LAC, deploying a large number of troops, and having a heavy build-up of tents, vehicles and fire power are actions that have all been very provocative for India, which has not been able to wholly exorcise the ghost of China's 1962 betrayal and aggression. After all, it has to safeguard its territorial integrity by adopting reciprocal measures to counter any eventuality from its large and more powerful neighbour. To avoid similar "episodic" skirmishes along the LAC,

tactical level hotlines at contentious border meeting points have to be maintained, and, as proposed, formal meetings held at regular intervals for better interaction between the two armies. NALINI VIJAYARAGHAVAN, Thiruvananthapuram

■ There appears to be a lot more to the India-China stand-off than meets the eye. Though troops are moving towards partial disengagement in eastern Ladakh, there is no change in the situation at the focal point at Finger-4 where the impasse continues. The situation is no better at Naku La in Sikkim. Shifting troops

to peacetime locations and achieving status quo ante, will be no walk in the park. N.J. RAVI CHANDER, Bengaluru

Rewind to the past
The "social media spat" between Congress leader Rahul Gandhi and Defence Minister Rajnath Singh after Mr. Gandhi had taken a dig at Home Minister Amit Shah for his comment that India is strong in protecting its borders brings to my mind the anecdote of the 1960s about Jawaharlal Nehru. "Panditji was speaking in Parliament about the Chinese invasion and while referring to Aksai Chin, is reported to have said: 'Not a blade of grass grows there.'

MP Mahavir Tyagi got up from his seat and pointing to his bald head, retorted, "Panditji, not a blade of grass grows here too, but does that mean that my head should be chopped off?" A. BALAGANGADHARAN, Pollachi, Tamil Nadu

Death of an elephant
It is shameful that in this age of advanced technology, "innovation" and billion-dollar budgets, wild animals straying into "human habitats" are still being repelled using barbaric and lethal methods such as "food-bombs". This does not reflect well on a country that is renowned for worshipping

animals. There is no dearth of successful non-violent deterrents such as engaging locals (apart from forest officials) as trackers, using SMS alert systems, beehive fences for elephants, using thorny bushes, kerosene-soaked ropes and rearing dogs specifically to deter other wild animals such as boars. Gandhiji had rightly remarked, "The greatness of a nation and its moral progress can be judged by the way its animals are treated" (OpEd page, "Addressing the elephant in the room", June 8). C.V. KRISHNA MOJU

Policing the police is not enough

Understanding the role of the political leadership in police excesses is crucial to effect change



R.K. RAGHAVAN



"The widespread demand is to overhaul the system." Protests rage against violence by the police, in New York. ■ AP

The deliberate violence against a hapless African-American, George Floyd, by white police officers in Minneapolis, leading to his death, was the trigger for the worldwide protests we see today against alleged institutionalised racism in policing across nations. It all started when a convenience store employee called 911 alleging that Floyd had bought cigarettes with a \$20 counterfeit note. A patrol party responding to the call intercepted Floyd. After being forced out of his car, the 46-year-old was pinned to the ground by Derek Chauvin, a police officer. Mr. Chauvin pressed his knee on Floyd's neck for as long as nine minutes despite the victim's agonising cries to be released. Floyd then became motionless, but Mr. Chauvin continued to pin him down. Floyd was declared dead when he was taken to the hospital. The whole episode was caught on camera leaving no doubt about the facts of the brutality. Mr. Chauvin has been charged with second-degree murder, while three other officers have been charged with aiding and abetting second-degree murder.

Protests against police excesses
The magnitude of protests across the U.S. - including in Washington, outside the White House; London; and elsewhere in Europe - has surprised many observers. This is not because the protests are not justified. It is the unison and spontaneity of the outcry that has bewildered many. A number of police assaults/killings in the past, such as of Rodney King (1991), Eric Garner (2014) and Corey Jones (2015), had triggered huge protests too, but these episodes evaporated from public memory quickly. Going by the volume and intensity of demonstrations against the police atrocity against Floyd, it looks like this incident has evoked universal disdain and will linger for a long, long time.

The demands from various quarters include complete dismantling of the police in many jurisdictions or

total or partial defunding of the force. What is significant this time is that a large number of white people are participating in the marches against the police in the U.S. and U.K. This marks the difference in reaction to Floyd's killing compared to past police misbehaviour. The average American is stoutly opposed to politicising the issue and has therefore lambasted President Donald Trump's threat to use the military to quell the protests, especially destruction of public property. A *New York Times* senior editor has had to quit because he allowed the publication of an incendiary article by a Republican Senator endorsing the use of the military to stop the protests.

The widespread demand is to overhaul the system. This may sound a cliché and an impractical and emotional reaction to an isolated incident. Several such demands have been made in the past in many countries, including India, whenever these countries have been rocked by police excesses. Police Commissions have come and gone. Their ponderous recommendations have not brought about radical changes to the way we are policed. This is the reason why discerning police scholars and practitioners are cynical about the prospects of making the police behave in a more civilised manner.

An eternal dilemma

When demanding reform, many communities are vague. When inci-

dents such as the Floyd killing take place, people demand total abjuring of force by the police. When there is a spurt in crime or a particularly horrific incident such as the gang rape of a young student in Delhi in December 2012, there is criticism that the police have become too soft. When there is a sharp increase in crime anywhere, the police are called ineffective. This is the dilemma that the average policeman faces in many parts of the world. When an imaginative Police Commissioner such as William Bratton in New York uses tough methods such as 'stop and frisk' to bring down crime, there is strident criticism that the mechanics was an exercise in profiling African-Americans. So, how does one strike a balance between stern and effective maintenance of order without violating human rights? How much is too much force is an eternal dilemma.

Many members of the public plead for efficient policing, with the caveat that such a style should not hurt human sensitivities. I know of judges who denounce police employment of 'third degree' in trying to solve a crime and then themselves demand tough questioning of a suspect when they happen to be the victims of a crime, especially theft or burglary. This is the lack of ethics that clouds perceptions in high places in public systems.

There is absolutely no case for ignoring what happened in Minneapolis. It has to be studied with all se-

riousness. However, there is no evidence that the four policemen who went berserk were acting on instructions from their supervisors. This is why such incidents are aberrations; they are acts committed by individual policemen. The only question is, if such events happen far too often and nearly in the same police force, what has the leadership done to correct the malady? We know that if an Inspector General of Police or Director General of Police encourages violence in a discreet manner, the message goes down the ranks leading to the torture of innocent citizens. This is what the leadership should be wary of. We are not unfamiliar with some senior police officers displaying a psychosis of violence that leads to ugly episodes like the one in Minneapolis. Such policemen need to be removed at the earliest stages of their career. Otherwise the government or the police chief gets a bad name.

Role of political establishment

Many academics, especially psychologists, have advocated the continuous indoctrination of policemen at the grassroots level to convince them of the need to avoid high-handedness in dealing with members of the civil society as well as crime suspects. Nothing short of indoctrination will work. But such exercises can be effective only for some years in a policeman's life. The impact of such exercises breaks down over time when officers are faced with stressful situations or when they are pitted against unorthodox and brutal supervisors who don't believe in civilised interaction with society.

Ultimately, it is often a case of culture. We do not know the culture of the current formations in the Minneapolis Police. The situation is too complex for the offer of a credible formula. Nevertheless the problem is grave involving the whole of humanity. Police leadership should be advised to resist the temptation of giving up the cause without a fight. It is difficult to underestimate the role in this case of the political establishment. If the latter is slack and it is complicit in illegitimate violence, all of us are doomed.

R.K. Raghavan is a former CBI Director and graduate in criminal justice from Temple University, Philadelphia

The fault in our drafts

The ordinance inserting Section 10A in the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code has opened itself up to a legal challenge



V.V. SIVAKUMAR & CHITRANSHUL SINHA

complete amnesty under the IBC for any default occurring during such period. The role of a proviso in a statute is to restrict the application of the main provision under exceptional circumstances. However, the proviso here expands the substantive provision in the main section. Further, if the main provision is unclear, a proviso may be given to explain its true meaning. In this case the main provision appears clear, only to be obfuscated by the proviso. The proviso therefore does not appear to be legally tenable. As creditors can still approach courts, and as banks/FIs can still approach Debt Recovery Tribunals, the protection given by this proviso seems illusory.

Notably, Section 10A also suspends provisions of Section 10 of the IBC which enables voluntary insolvency resolution. This is difficult to understand as such voluntary insolvency resolution should have been made easier for companies facing distress.

Nature of default

The ordinance appears to consider every default occurring during the suspension period to be a consequence of the pandemic. There could be cases where defaults were imminent due to other reasons, but which will now still enjoy this protection. The ordinance should have protected only such defaults which may occur as a direct consequence of the pandemic or the lockdown and should have left this determination to the National Company Law Tribunal. Also, a company defaulting on its payment obligations on March 24 (a day before the lockdown started) would not be provided any relief under the IBC as compared to a company defaulting on or immediately after March 25 due to similar reasons. This makes the suspension, in the absence of definition of a COVID-19 default, *prima facie* arbitrary.

Earlier, the government increased the minimum default amount to trigger corporate insolvency resolution from ₹1 lakh to ₹1 crore. This was purportedly done to protect MSMEs from insolvency petitions. However, this also operates against such MSMEs because they will now be forced to approach civil courts to recover undisputed debts below ₹1 crore. The suspension of these provisions would now impact even claims above ₹1 crore for at least six months to a year.

The ordinance has opened itself up to a legal challenge on grounds of arbitrariness and untenability of the proviso due to the flaw in its drafting. It is unfathomable how these flaws arose despite the government having ample time to think this through.

V.V. Sivakumar and Chitranshul Sinha are Partners in Dua Associates, Advocates and Solicitors

A convergence of crises

Policy ideas should marry employment and industrial priorities with green outcomes

ADITYA VALIATHAN PILLAI

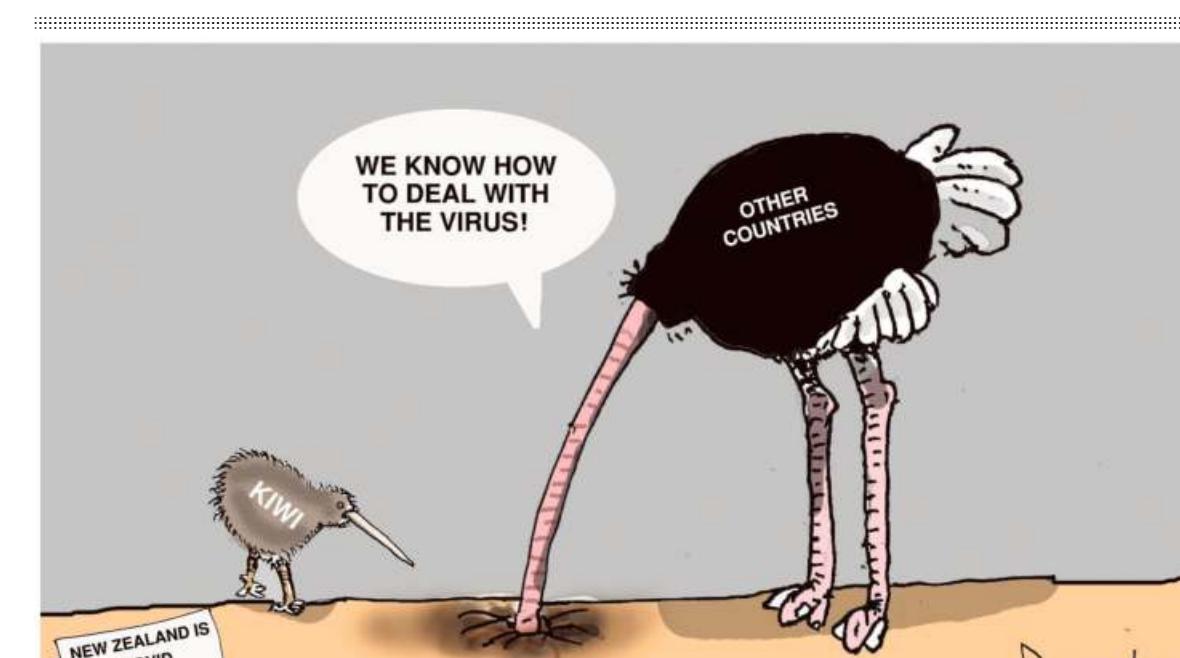
There is a growing debate about what the scarcity and privation wrought by the COVID-19 crisis will mean for our response to climate change. The very language used to describe the effects of climate change is now being deployed, correctly, to shape our understanding of a disease-ravaged near future: poverty, the failure of markets, uncertainty, and an overwhelmed government. There are two main strands of opinion in this debate. The optimistic one sees this as a moment to remake our states and societies in a measured response. This includes directing economic packages to areas that increase our resilience to natural disasters and technologies that reduce our emissions. On the personal front, this could be an opportunity to reinforce sustainable behaviour - fewer morning commutes and less air travel, for example. The other strand is more dire, arguing that this will amount to a lost decade or two as our attention is focused on keeping the teetering ship of economy afloat. In this reading, present concerns will trump preparations for an uncertain future. Between these two strands there is consensus that we are at a critical juncture. What we do now will determine the flow of events decades into the future.

The final point relates to something more ephemeral: the psychology of government. The Indian government, reacting to a million crises erupting across the economy, will be hard-pressed to plan for a hazy but sinister future. Promises of a greener, less turbulent future will falter against the turbulence of today; this instinct will be shared by governments across the world. This might well numb the effects of the global climate negotiation architecture.

Dealing with twin challenges

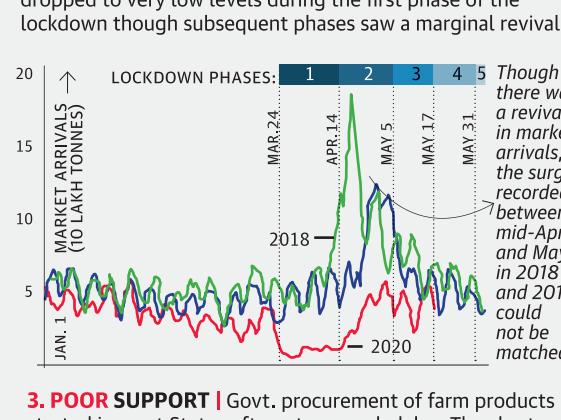
Crafting a response that carefully balances present and future will take a great deal of collective effort. Foremost, it will require policy ideas that deliberately marry employment and industrial priorities with green outcomes. Ideas such as pushing to manufacture solar equipment or electric vehicles in India should, at some point, coalesce into something that looks like a climate plan for the country. This task will fall to universities, NGOs, think tanks and individuals working together in disciplined debate. This process is our only hope for being creative about the twin challenges battering the country. We should be careful not to drag ourselves through one crisis only to emerge into another longer, less predictable, and unstoppable one.

Aditya Valiathan Pillai is at the Centre for Policy Research, New Delhi

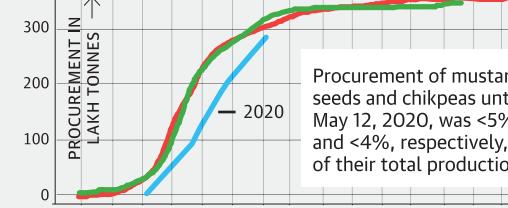


Market crash

1. OUT OF THE MARKET | The chart depicts the daily market arrivals of 302 farm products into 2,938 Indian markets in 2018 (green), 2019 (blue) and 2020 (red). Market arrivals dropped to very low levels during the first phase of the lockdown though subsequent phases saw a marginal revival



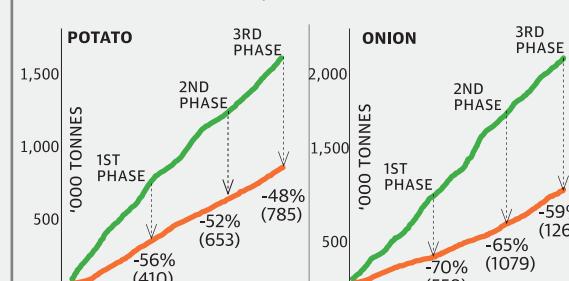
3. POOR SUPPORT | Govt. procurement of farm products started in most States after a two-week delay. The chart shows the nationwide procurement of wheat between the 13th and 28th weeks of 2018 (red), 2019 (green), 2020 (blue)



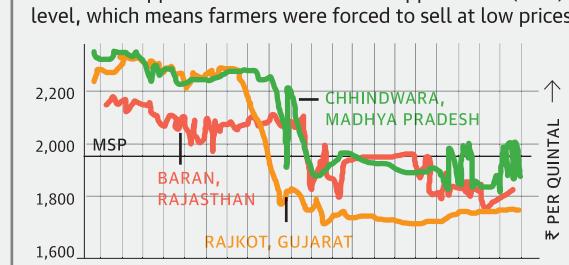
Sources: COVID-19 Lockdown: Impact on Agriculture and Rural Economy, Vikas Rawal et al. | DDL COVID India (devdatalab.org/covid)

Due to the stringent lockdown, the quantity of agricultural produce arriving in markets reduced substantially. This combined with delayed and poor procurement of farm produce forced farmers to sell at cheaper prices than expected. Both market arrivals and prices have seen a revival lately, but are still a far cry from the pre-lockdown levels. By The Hindu Data Team

2. VEGETABLE SHORTFALL | The chart depicts the daily market arrival of potato and onion between March 15 and May 17 for 2019 (green) and 2020 (orange) into 3,000 mandis across India. At the end of lockdown 3.0 (May 17), the gap in potato arrivals between 2019 and 2020 was 7.85 lakh tonnes (-48%). For onion, it was 12.65 lakh tonnes (-59%)



4. POOR PRICES | The graph shows the price of wheat in select markets. After the lockdown was imposed, the price of wheat dropped below the Minimum Support Price (MSP) level, which means farmers were forced to sell at low prices



The Hindu

FROM THE ARCHIVES

FIFTY YEARS AGO JUNE 11, 1970

A statue without a site

Marcus Cato, according to Plutarch, is reported to have said that he would rather have men ask why he did not have a statue than why he did have one. Many of the men whose statues are being erected may well echo Cato's sentiments. The proposal to erect a statue of Mr. Vinayak Damodar Savarkar at Gwalior is illustrative. The proposal has got involved in party politics and as days go by it gets involved deeper. There is no agreement between the political parties as to where the statue should be installed. The installation of the statue is a problem that has been hanging fire since the days of the S.V.D. Government. Everyone was agreed that a statue of Mr. Savarkar should be erected in Gwalior. At first it was decided that the statue should be installed in the Jiyaji Chowk where stands the majestic statue of the former Maharajah of Gwalior. For understandable reasons the Gwalior Palace disapproved of the proposal. Rajamata Vijaya Scindia was at that time leader of the S.V.D., which was running the Government in the State and the S.V.D. Government under Mr. G. N. Singh had to support the Palace's opposition to the proposal. It was then decided that the statue be placed in the Gandhi Park. That too provoked opposition from some quarters and the proposal was not carried into effect.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO JUNE 11, 1920

From an editorial
(Indians in East Africa)

The interview of Mr. C.F. Andrews with a representative of the Associated Press throws much light on the gravity of the situation of Indians in East Africa and shows the existence of bitter racial feeling and hatred among the European settlers towards Indians. Love of exclusive privileges and colour pride have made the European settlers blind to reason and callous to the consequences of their hostile attitude. The enunciation of their "three-fold policy," that the Indians should not be admitted to the franchise, that the Indians should not be allowed to hold land in the large upland districts and that there should be a complete segregation of races in all townships is not calculated to bring about any cordial relationship between the Indians and the Europeans on the soil of a third continent, secured for the Empire more by the striking gallantry of the Indian soldiers than by the boastful pomp of the European advance.

FROM PAGE ONE

China reaches accord with India on LAC spat

"It showed that China and India remain determined to peacefully resolve border issues," Mr. Qian Feng said. "That being said, the ongoing stand-off is not likely to end immediately, as concrete issues must still be resolved."

The Indian delegation at Wednesday's military-level talks was led by the General Officer Commanding, 3 Corps based in Karu.

Last Saturday, the two sides held talks at the level of Corps Commanders on the Chinese side at Moldo opposite Chushul, where

the two sides agreed to partial pullout of troops and equipment from some of the stand-off areas in Galwan.

The talks on Wednesday is the first of several at the rank of Colonel, Brigadier and Major General.

Finger 4 area in Pangong Lake remains a major area of contention where Chinese troops had taken position in Indian territory and that is expected to be discussed at the Corps Commander level at a later stage, officials, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said.

COVID-19 turns India's urban blight

Mumbai has been the worst-hit metropolis, with 52,667 cumulative cases and 1,857 deaths, and the city's health infrastructure remains under severe strain. While the city has built multiple jumbo facilities and augmented beds for quarantine, there has been a dearth of hospital beds, particularly in the Intensive Care Units (ICUs).

As on Tuesday, 99% of the 1,158 ICU beds for COVID-19 patients and 76% of the 5,181 oxygen beds were occupied. Nearly 96% of the 506 ventilators were also occupied. Ahmedabad continues to have the highest case fatality rate in the country among major cities at 7.13%, with 1,092 deaths and 15,305 cases as on Wednesday.

Delhi, with 32,810 cumulative cases and 984 deaths, has reported more than 1,000 new cases every day for 12 of the past 13 days. After the Lieutenant-Governor on Monday reversed the AAP government's decision that treatment in government-run and private hospitals would be only for resi-

(With inputs from bureaus)

Five militants gunned down in Shopian

With 14 militants killed in Shopian's Reban and Pinjura areas on June 7 and 8, only 27 militants remain active in the district, according to police figures. "The Hizb tops with 12 active militants in Shopian, the Jaish-e-Muhammad (JeM) with seven, followed by the LeT with six militants, and Ansar Ghazwatul Hind with two", the police said.

The police did not identify the slain militants' names. However, the villagers said they may be locals.

"All the bodies of militants have been sent to Baramulla [north Kashmir] for the last rites", Mr. Kumar said.

Adityanath's comments inappropriate, says Oli

Mr. Oli said the issues confronting India-Nepal ties were not for him to comment upon. "If India shows more willingness for dialogue, a solution can be found." He argued that his government was focused on resolving the Kalapani dispute.

"Since 1961 and '62, India has stationed its military forces in Kalapani. But that land belongs to us. India is showing an artificial Kali river as the basis of its claim on the region. They have also built a temple of Goddess Kali in that area which belongs to us. But our claim is based on historical documents and facts", Mr. Oli said in reply to queries from MPs on the Second Constitution Amendment that will give legal status to the new map of Nepal that claims Kalapani-Lipulekh-Limpiyadhura.

Kali river issue
The competing claims over the strategically located Himalayan region of Kalapani is based on the origin of the

In unlock phase, focus shifts to testing rates

Eight die of infection in Telangana, three in Karnataka; Andhra Pradesh tests more, shows increase in cases

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT BENGALURU

Eight more COVID-19 patients died in Telangana, taking the toll to 156 on Wednesday. Three deaths were reported in Karnataka, raising the toll to 69, while in Andhra Pradesh the toll rose to 78 as another death was reported in East Godavari district.

While the total number of tests done in Karnataka

COVID-19

crossed four lakh, the average number of tests per day was down by half for the second consecutive day. On an average the State was testing 15,000 samples a day in the last week.

While 7,036 tests were done on Tuesday, 8,249 tests were done on Wednesday, of an overall total of 4,08,506.

The number of positive cases too reduced. While 161 were reported on Tuesday, it was

Safe worship

As part of relaxation of norms as part of Unlock 1.0, many States have allowed places of worship to open



Thermal screening: A security guard checking the temperature of a devotee at a temple in Vijayawada on Wednesday. ■ V. RAJU

120 on Wednesday.

Sources in the State's COVID-19 expert committee said this was because the number of migrants returning had reduced.

C.N. Manjunath, Director of Sri Jayadeva Institute of Cardiovascular Sciences, the

nodal officer for labs and testing in the COVID-19 task force said, while this may have brought some relief to the State's COVID-19 burden,

the positivity rate at 1.47% remained almost the same.

On Wednesday, with 120 new cases the total number

of positive cases in Karnataka touched 6,041.

With 257 discharges, the number of discharged persons was more than double the positive cases on Wednesday. Of the three fatalities, a 32-year-old man from Bengaluru Urban district

was brought dead to a designated hospital on June 10 and tested positive, and a 57-year-old male patient with Influenza-like Illness (ILI) died on June 8. His samples tested positive on Wednesday. The third death was that of a 58-year-old male Maharashtra returnee a hospital in Dharwad on June 9.

The 120 new cases included 68 inter-State and three international travellers. With 42 cases, the highest number was reported from Bengaluru and over half were ILI cases. Among the new cases were 27 from Yadgiri, 13 from Vijayapura and 11 from Kallaburagi. A majority were Maharashtra returnees.

Andhra Pradesh reported 218 fresh COVID-19 cases on Wednesday, the highest single-day tally.

Of these, 136 were of locals, 56 foreign returnees and 26 migrant returnees and people from other States, the Health Department said.

The State's 'tests per million' ratio at 9,339, was one of the highest testing rates among States, officials said.

Kerala reported 65 new COVID-19 cases and 57 recoveries on Wednesday, with active cases in hospitals put at 1,238, seven more than the previous day. Senior Health officials said a good turnover in the number of recoveries would stabilise the total number of active cases.

With the Health Department confirming that the death of a 87-year-old male in Thrissur on Sunday night (shifted to Medical College Hospital, Thrissur, after he tested positive for SARS-CoV-2) was due to the disease, the death toll now stood at 17.

The number of COVID-19 cases in Telangana touched 4,111 as 191 more tested positive for coronavirus on Wednesday.

(With inputs from Vijayawada, Hyderabad and Thiruvananthapuram bureaus)

IN BRIEF



SSC exams in A.P. as per schedule, says Minister

ONGOLE
The Secondary School Certificate (SSC) examinations, which have been postponed in the wake of the nationwide lockdown imposed to combat Coronavirus by the Centre, will be held from July 10, according to State Education Minister A. Suresh (in picture). Talking to presspersons here on Wednesday, Mr. Suresh said: "The SSC exams will be conducted as per schedule." The examinations would be conducted from July 10 to 15, he said.

Don't cut trees based on permission, BMRC told

BENGALURU
The Karnataka High Court on Wednesday directed the board and the Tantri over the conduct of the festival. The TDB would take an appropriate decision on the issue in consultation with the Tantris and the government.

Tantri against allowing devotees at Sabarimala

Chief priest flags issue of health risk



The five-day monthly puja in Sabarimala temple will begin on June 15. ■ FILE PHOTO

from the Tantri in this regard. However, Mr. Vasu said the board was not that particular about permitting devotees to Sabarimala in the prevailing circumstances. The decision to conduct the annual festival was taken in consultation with the Tantri and it was he who gave the date for the same.

Mr. Vasu said there were no differences between the board and the Tantri over the conduct of the festival.

The TDB would take an appropriate decision on the issue in consultation with the Tantris and the government.

Doctors hit the street seeking safety

They condemn attack on a colleague allegedly by relative of COVID-19 victim

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA HYDERABAD

Junior doctors at the government-run Gandhi Hospital here continued their protest on Wednesday against the attack on a doctor allegedly by the kin of a COVID-19 patient who died, even as Telangana Health Minister E. Rajender invited the protesters for talks. Two persons assaulted the doctor at the hospital on Tuesday night and were arrested, police said.

The junior doctors, who began their protest after the alleged attack, squatted on the road in front of the hospital and raised slogans condemning the incident.

Many of them held placards that read, 'We Want Justice,' 'We Condemn the Attack', 'Increase Security and 'Save



Seeking justice: PG doctors staging a protest against alleged manhandling of those treating COVID-19 patients. ■ PTI

Doctors', among others.

A protesting doctor told reporters that a duty doctor was attacked by some attendants of a patient with a plastic chair after the patient collapsed and passed away in a washroom.

The patient could not be revived though resuscitation and the attendant attacked the doctor when the latter was explaining the situation to him, he alleged.

Chair thrown at doctor
A metal chair was also thrown at the duty doctor,

he said. The patient was not supposed to move out of the bed in view of his condition, he said. Attendants are usually not allowed for COVID-19 patients in the hospital, he said. Appealing to the junior doctors to call off their protest, the Health Minister invited the representatives of the medics to the Secretariat to discuss the issue. A case was registered under IPC Sections and under relevant Sections of the Epidemic Diseases Act and the Telangana Medicare Service Persons and Medicare Service Institutions Act, 2008, police said.

"Under any circumstances, the attack on medical staff will not be tolerated and firm and legal action will be taken," police said, adding: "In this time, doctors are our frontline leaders."

Supply foodgrains to all school students: panel

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM
The Kerala State Commission for Protection of Child Rights has said all students studying in State schools who are eligible for the mid-day meal scheme should be provided the foodgrains at their homes till schools reopen.

Many students who belonged to backward sections depended on the mid-day meal for their survival. Over 26 lakh students were beneficiaries of the mid-day meal scheme. They were eligible for the foodgrains even during summer vacations. With uncertainty over school reopening owing to the COVID-19 pandemic, students were taking part in online classes.

NIA arrests two for theft on board aircraft carrier

Computer components were stolen from the under-construction IAC at Cochin Shipyard

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT KOCCHI

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) has arrested two persons in connection with the theft on board the Indigenous Aircraft Carrier (IAC) under construction at the Cochin Shipyard Ltd. (CSL) here.

The arrested include Sumit Kumar Singh, 23, of Munger in Bihar and Daya Ram, 22, of Hanumangarh in Rajasthan.

They were taken into custody from their homes by the investigating team. The accused were engaged by a contractor for painting work as part of the IAC project two years ago, it is learnt.

The NIA had taken over the case from a special investigation team of the police that had initially found that the theft was an insider job and that the hardware components that went

missing were standard computer components available in the market.

The components were part of the carrier's Integrated Platform Management System (IPMS), which is used for monitoring and controlling the platform's hull and its mechanical and electrical systems.

The special investigation team had taken some finger prints from the crime spot.



A file photo of the Indigenous Aircraft Carrier built by the Cochin Shipyard Limited. ■ PTI

IN BRIEF



Centre releases over ₹6,000 crore to States

NEW DELHI
The Centre released ₹6,195 crore to 14 States on Wednesday, as the third equated monthly instalment of the Post Devolution Revenue Deficit Grant as recommended by the 15th Finance Commission. "This would provide them additional resources during the Corona crisis," Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said in a tweet. Kerala received the highest amount of almost ₹1,277 crore, followed by ₹952 crore for Himachal Pradesh and ₹638 crore for Punjab.

J&K's new media policy aimed at censorship'

Srinagar
J&K's regional parties, including the National Conference, the Peoples Democratic Party and the Peoples Conference, expressed apprehensions about the possible misuse of the J&K administration's newly framed media policy, which calls for background checks on reporters and legal action against "fake news". "The new media policy is an assault on the freedom of speech and the role of the press in a democracy," said NC spokesperson Imran Nabi Dar. "Freedom of press is what underlines the difference between a democracy and despotism," he added.

SC orders release of loans to Amrapali home-buyers

NEW DELHI
The Supreme Court on Wednesday directed banks and financial institutions to release the sanctioned loans without delay to beleaguered Amrapali home-buyers, including those whose accounts have been declared non-performing assets. The order comes as a relief to hundreds of home-buyers who were "duped" after the builder "diverted" their money. The court said the amounts should be released in stages, adhering to the norms fixed by the Reserve Bank of India.

As 'Unlock 1' unfolds, BJP preps for poll

The party is gearing up for elections in Bihar, West Bengal, Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh

NISTULA HEBBAR
NEW DELHI

The announcement of a graded opening up of the economy, termed 'Unlock 1', has also seen a stepping up of political activity, especially on behalf of the BJP. While some of the activity has been aimed at marking the first anniversary of the second full majority government of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, a series of 'virtual rallies' called 'Jan Samvaad', conducted over video and weblinks aimed at Bihar, West Bengal, Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh are clearly meant as pre-election organisational preparation.

This means two things: one, that the BJP expects that electoral activity, with the conduct of the Assembly poll in Bihar and bypolls to 24 seats in Madhya Pradesh on time, and second, that COVID-19 is a long haul that cannot be allowed to cast too



Virtual pledge: Union Home Minister Amit Shah administering a pledge to BJP workers during a virtual rally.

long a shadow on this process.

According to senior office-bearers of the party, the outbreak of COVID-19 and the administrative scam that followed it has to be now "lived with" and that essential activities, including to do with elections, have to be

carried out keeping in mind all these exigencies.

"There are many leaders in the party who have been looking at the way South Korea successfully conducted its polls in the midst of the pandemic and feel that we too need to get on with things," said a senior office-

bearer. What was left unsaid was the fact that the incumbent government in South Korea was voted back in April.

The interaction between governments and citizens has been at an all-time high during the pandemic, with each State government being judged every day on its performance on healthcare and facility with providing day to day necessities.

A very fluid political situation exists in many States with regard to the perception of the State and Central governments.

Digital outreach

A senior leader said, "We felt that we must talk about what we as a party have done not just during the pandemic but also in the last six years as the ruling party at the Centre. These 'Jan Samvaad' rallies are a part of that messaging. Also, election campaigning will have to depend

more and more on technology with a premium on physical contact. These rallies are the first step in a larger campaign plan of forming very localised WhatsApp groups, and committees that will also help people access the measures announced under the Atma Nirbhar Bharat package, small groups will reach out to interior areas where digital outreach is a challenge."

State units that haven't completed booth management committee constitution exercises are being asked to finish the task, with Bihar, with polls in October-November, already two-thirds of the way through with the task.

In Madhya Pradesh too, the mandal committees have been activated.

So while the COVID-19 precautions include wearing of masks, in the electoral arena, for the BJP at least, the gloves are off.

BJP conspiracy has been exposed: Nath

Chouhan audio clip surfaces

STAFF REPORTER
BHOPAL

Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan is reportedly heard saying in an audio clip that the BJP's Central leadership had decided that the Kamal Nath government should fall. This is in contrast to his previous remarks denying the party's role.



Shivraj Singh Chouhan

ment have fallen..." he is heard saying.

Mr. Nath said on Twitter: "I have been saying from the beginning that BJP toppled my government which had a majority and a mandate by

scripting a play of conspiracy and allurement because my government was waiving loans of farmers, giving employment to youth, providing security to women, was running a drive against mafia and food adulteration, bringing investment to the State and continuously working for people."

BJP is trying to topple Gehlot govt.'

Attempts are being made to lure MLAs with money, says Congress Chief Whip

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The BJP is trying to topple the Ashok Gehlot government in Rajasthan, the Congress said on Wednesday evening, as it sought to shore up its defences. The party has 107 MLAs and the support of 12 Independents in the 200-seat Assembly.

Mahesh Joshi, Chief Whip of the Assembly, said in a letter to the State's Anti-Corruption Bureau that "attempts were being made to lure them [MLAs] with money power."

The party has asked all its MLAs to be in Jaipur.

According to Congress sources, between 25 and 30 MLAs, including Independents, were approached by the BJP. There was no word from the BJP on the charges. The Congress government in Madhya Pradesh collapsed



Ashok Gehlot
General secretary, AICC

When the country is facing a pandemic, the BJP's interest is not in fighting it but in grabbing power. The govt. is safe and stable. This exposes the BJP's unethical hunger for power

K.C. VENUGOPAL
General secretary, AICC

in March, and the coalition government in Karnataka, of which the Congress was a part, fell in July last year after MLAs crossed over to the BJP.

"When the country is facing a pandemic, the BJP's interest is not in fighting it but in grabbing power. The Gehlot government is safe and stable. But this exposes the BJP's unethical hunger for power," said AICC general secretary K.C. Venugopal.

with its current strength, but the party has fielded two candidates and upped the ante. The BJP has 72 MLAs and the support of six others. Congress MLAs from Gujarat are also being held in Jaipur ahead of the Rajya Sabha election in an effort to prevent them from crossing over.

The Kamal Nath government in Madhya Pradesh fell after Jyotiraditya Scindia led a group of MLAs out of the Congress and joined the BJP. In Rajasthan, Deputy Chief Minister Sachin Pilot was a claimant for the top post when the party won the 2018 Assembly election.

Mr. Pilot, who was the party chief in the State, has admitted the fact that his claims were overlooked.

He said on Wednesday, "We have the numbers. The government is safe."

AIMIM set to contest in Bihar election

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
PATNA

The Bihar unit of the All-India Majlis-e-Ittehad-ul-Muslimeen (AIMIM) announced on Wednesday that it would contest the upcoming Assembly election in the State.

The party, which is headed by Hyderabad MP Asaduddin Owaisi, released its first list of 32 seats it intends to contest from 22 districts. The party said it would strike alliances with "like-minded" parties.

"The Nitish Kumar government has failed on all fronts. It will be dangerous if Nitish Kumar returns to power," AIMIM Bihar president Akhtarul Iman said in a video post to journalists.

"But we'll also raise the 40 years of Congress party rule."

Brief Opposition on Nepal row: Congress

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Congress on Wednesday asked the government in spirit of Parliamentary democracy to brief political parties on the dispute over the Kalapani-Lipulekh area

blished by the Nepalese government depicting the Kalapani-Lipulekh area as their own territory is a matter of national concern.

"It is regrettable, that the present impasse has reached a stage, which has strained the friendly relationship. This needs to be addressed urgently."

'China disregarding historic commitments on Naku La'

Diplomatic experts say Beijing may also be opening up a front in Sikkim due to ambiguous official position of boundary

DINAKAR PERI
SUHASINI HAIDER
NEW DELHI

The skirmishes and the stand-off between Indian and Chinese troops at Naku La in Sikkim last month, in an area of the Line of Actual Control (LAC) that is considered settled, may be Beijing's way of attempting a new claim, said defence sources, highlighting the historic Sikkim-Tibet Convention of 1890 as proof of India's ownership of the territory.

Referring to a major scuffle that took place at Naku La on May 9, the sources said it was unusual for Chinese troops to open up a part of the LAC that has not been in contention before.



According to the Convention, the boundary in the area is based on the watershed principles.

Its Article 1 states, "The boundary of Sikkim and Tibet shall be the crest of the mountain range separating the waters flowing into the Sikkim Teesta and its af-

fluentes from waters flowing into the Tibetan Mochu and northwards into other rivers of Tibet. ...follows the above mentioned water-parting to the point where it meets Nyalam Niima La.

The sources said the geographic alignment of the features were so prominent that it could easily be identified and recognised. Even analysing the available Google images of the pass, the location of Naku La could be discerned by anyone as the watershed parting line in the area was very prominent. "There exists no ambiguity with respect to the location of the pass, since geographic realities cannot be altered," the sources said.

"The clearly orchestrated actions on an otherwise dormant area masks a hidden agenda, which is far removed from Naku La," the

sources noted referring to the Chinese push at several points along the LAC and also the ongoing Chinese aggression in the South China Sea and Taiwan Straits.

Diplomatic experts point out that China may also be opening up a front in Sikkim due to the ambiguous official position of the boundary.

Undemarcated boundary
Although meetings between former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao in 2003 and maps exchanged subsequently indicated that India recognised the Tibetan Autonomous Region as a part of China, and Beijing recognised Sikkim as a State of the Indian Union, the boundary

at Sikkim while undisputed, remains undemarcated on the ground.

In 2017, after the Doklam stand-off near the India-Bhutan-China trijunction, then Foreign Secretary S. Jaishankar informed the Parliamentary Standing Committee that "there are still steps to be covered before the boundary is finalised."

He said India accepted the 1890 treaty as "the basis for alignment", but the treaty had only been "partially implemented on the ground". "Certainly the segments India is talking about, the Batang La segment, etc. was not there and there is nothing to show that that was actually delineated or demarcated or agreed upon."

Law Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad launches counter attack

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Former Congress president Rahul Gandhi, in a tweet, questioned the silence of Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Chinese incursion in Ladakh, and this provoked a counter attack from Union Law Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad.



Rahul Gandhi said, "Rahul Gandhi should know that questions related to international matters like China should not be asked on so-

cial media. Also he is the same person who asked for evidence after the Balakot airstrikes & over 2016 Uri attack". In a longer video message posted with the tweet in Hindi, he said the government was trying to peacefully resolve the issue.

The Congress held a press conference via webcast to respond to Mr. Prasad's words. Party's national spokesperson and Lok Sabha member Manish Tewari said the government, rather than coming clean on the issue and addressing the concerns of the country, was launching abrasive attacks on Opposition parties.

Moscow won't interfere'

India, China dispute should be dealt with bilaterally'

SUHASINI HAIDER
NEW DELHI

Russia won't "interfere" and wants India and China to resolve their border dispute bilaterally, a senior Russian lawmaker said, referring to the five-week-long military standoff between the Indian and Chinese troops at the Line of Actual Control (LAC), drawing a contrast to the U.S. offer of mediation that India declined last week.

"Our official position is that these bilateral disputes should be dealt with bilaterally. We respect the sovereignty of India and the sovereignty of China. Russia should not interfere in these kinds of disputes... We would encourage dialogue and prevent the use of mili-

tary force," said Konstantin Kosachev, Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Russian Federation Council (Upper House of Parliament), speaking to Indian journalists through video conference ahead of Russia's National Day.

Russian Ambassador to India Nikolai Kudashev had met Foreign Secretary Harsh Vardhan Shringla last week when the situation at the LAC was discussed. The meeting came the same day Prime Minister Narendra Modi spoke to U.S. President Donald Trump and reportedly conveyed India's position that it didn't require mediation offered by Mr. Trump.

During the conversation,

Mr. Modi had also welcomed an invitation from Mr. Trump to an "extended" G-7 summit that would include India, Russia, Australia and South Korea. Unlike New Delhi, however, Mr. Kosachev said that Moscow has many misgivings about the invitation, which it sees as an attempt to build an "anti-China" front. Mr. Kosachev said the Russian government would take a final decision once its doubts had been cleared, including on whether India and Russia and other invitees would be accepted by G-7 nations as "equal members" of a new group, or whether they would simply be "special guests, with no power to influence outcomes".

CM

BRUHAT BANGALORE MAHANAGARA PALIKE

Office of the Executive Engineer(Ele), East Zone, 16th floor, P.U.B., M.G. Road, Bangalore - 560 001

No: BBMP/EE/ELE/East/TEND/04/2020-21 Date: 10.06.2020

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(Through GOK e-Procurement Portal only)

The Executive Engineer (Elect), East Zone, invites Tenders in accordance with KTPP rules 2000, from eligible Contractors registered in Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike/KPWD/CPWD/Railways/MES/National Highway or any other equivalent Central/State Govt. Organizations on behalf of the Commissioner, BBMP for Electrical work as detailed in the table.

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Merkel, Macron urge EU to prepare for next pandemic

They call upon the bloc to prepare a 'common European approach' for future

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
BRUSSELS

France, Germany and four other EU countries on Tuesday urged the European Union to take a greater role in preparing for any future pandemic, conceding that coronavirus responses had fallen short.

There should be a "common European approach" to such challenges in future, wrote France's Emmanuel Macron and Germany's Angela Merkel along with the leaders of Spain, Poland, Belgium and Denmark.

They addressed their letter and policy paper to European Commission chief Ursula von der Leyen, in the strongest attempt yet by the bloc's most powerful leaders to spur the EU executive to fix the disunity displayed during the crisis, especially in its earliest days.

As the global outbreak first took hold, member states privileged national responses by shutting borders, hoarding medical supplies and waving through major spending plans regardless of EU rules.

The letter put a special emphasis on the shortages of



Safe house: Delegates seated at the Hamburg state Parliament, Germany, each separated by panels. • AP

desperately needed medical supplies that were felt unevenly across the EU as the virus made its way across the continent.

"Understanding the shortcomings is essential," the leaders wrote.

"These include a sufficient supply of personal protective equipment (PPE), medical devices, critical medicines, and vaccines."

The leaders also pressed Brussels to streamline data across the bloc so that rates

WHO for more curbs in Pak.

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
ISLAMABAD

Pakistan has registered its highest single-day spike of COVID-19 cases with over 5,000 infections in the last 24 hours, a day after the World Health Organisation urged the government to follow "intermittent lockdown" to stem the spike in the disease. As of today, Pakistan does not meet any of the pre-requisite conditions for opening the lockdown," the WHO said.

Europe to work towards "diversifying supply lines", in a veiled call to stop EU countries from relying too heavily on China or India.

"This includes identifying new trading partners with the aim to decrease the dependency of EU countries on single suppliers," the paper said.

The 27 leaders of the European Union will be holding virtual talks on June 19 to discuss the fallout of the crisis.

The leaders also called on

of infection and other key figures matched from one country to the other.

They also urged the commission to provide a "strengthened mandate" for the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control, an EU agency.

Common procurement and better cooperation on maintaining critical stocks was another field the leaders urged the commission to study.

The leaders also called on

'Virus may have emerged in August'

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
WASHINGTON

A surge in hospital visits and internet searches related to COVID-19 symptoms from the Chinese city of Wuhan suggests the coronavirus may have been circulating since August 2019, according to a preliminary study by researchers at Boston University and Harvard.

ro" could be traced back to November 17.

The paper comes under the new field of "digital epidemiology." A team led by Elaine Nsoesie at Boston University analysed 111 satellite images from Wuhan between January 2018 to April 2020, as well as frequently looked up symptoms on the Chinese search engine Bai-

du. "A steep increase in volume starting in August 2019" was detected at Wuhan hospital parking lots, "culminating with a peak in December 2019," the authors wrote. "In August, we identify a unique increase in searches for diarrhea which was neither seen in previous flu seasons or mirrored in the cough search data," the team said.

Concern over 'police brutality' in Sri Lanka

Police action against peaceful protesters expressing solidarity with Black Lives Matter slammed



Police arrested 53 persons for allegedly violating a court order restraining them from holding a protest. • SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Black Lives Matter uprising in the U.S. following Black American George Floyd's murder by white policemen.

While the earlier court order had disallowed protests in the vicinity of the U.S. Embassy in Colombo, also citing the risk of people gathering during the coronavirus pandemic, government critics pointed out that neither venue was in the "vicinity" of the U.S. Embassy. Multiple video recordings and television footage showed that

while the protesters stood peacefully, police used force while they resisted arrest. One recording showed policemen shoving a young woman into the police vehicle, and also attacking an elderly person. When contacted, police spokesman Jaliya Senaratne said police "used reasonable power" when they were prevented from performing their duties. The main aim of the court order was to prevent any risk of COVID-19 spreading. We

took action on that basis," he told *The Hindu*.

Former Minister Mangala Samaraweera, a vocal critic of the Rajapaksa administration, said in a tweet on Wednesday: "In a brazen display of brute force, Police attack a peaceful protest in support of #BlackLivesMatter. The lawyer appearing for the victims also arrested. Is this the 'virtuous and just' society as envisaged by GRs task force? Sri Lanka, wake up: a nightmare is unfolding!" He was referring to a military-led task force, recently appointed by President Gotabaya Rajapaksa, to build "a secure country, disciplined, virtuous and lawful society."

Autistic boy attacked

Criticism on Tuesday's police action came from the government's side as well.

Tweeting on the development, Namal Rajapaksa,

former MP and son of Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa

said: "The recent behaviour

Demands for justice at funeral of Floyd

Al Sharpton delivers a fierce eulogy, accuses Trump of showing indifference over death

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
HOUSTON

Houston said farewell to George Floyd in a rousing hometown funeral on Tuesday, with poignant tributes and calls for justice for the 46-year-old African American whose death "touched the world" and ignited global protests against police brutality and racism.

Politicians, civil rights activists and celebrities joined in sharing memories of the man they called a "gentle giant" after his golden casket was carried into the sanctuary by six pallbearers in masks, as a row of police officers stood at attention and saluted.

Civil rights leader and Al Sharpton delivered a fierce eulogy, punctuated by the deep chords of a church organ, in which he accused President Donald Trump of showing indifference over Floyd's death, and sending police a signal of impunity.

"We are fighting wickedness in high places!" Mr. Sharpton thundered, uttering the phrase over and over as he accused Trump of "scheming on how you can spin the story rather than how you can achieve justice."

"You sit now trying to figure out how you're going to stop the protest, rather than how you're going to stop the brutality," he said, charging:

"The signals that we're sending is that if you are in law enforcement, that the law doesn't apply to you."

Acknowledging the presence



Final journey: The casket of George Floyd being carried by a carriage to his final resting place in Pearland. • AFP

of the parents of previous victims of police violence – including Eric Garner, Botham Jean and Michael Brown – Mr. Sharpton said they "know better than anyone else the pain" of the Floyd family.

"Until we know the price for black life is the same as the price for white life, we're going to keep coming back to these situations over and over again," the preacher told

The Fountain of Praise Church in southern Houston.

Though the occasion was solemn, the church echoed with music and words of fond remembrance for a man whose savage death galvanized a movement.

"As we lay you to rest today, the movement won't rest until we get justice," Mr. Sharpton said.

'Rest in power'

Floyd died on May 25 as a white Minneapolis officer pressed a knee into his neck for almost nine minutes, his pleas of "I can't breathe" becoming a rallying cry for protesters.

On the way to the Houston Memorial Gardens cemetery, the cortège passed hundreds of well-wishers who chanted Floyd's name. "Rest in power" was scrawled in blue chalk on the road, while one held up a sign saying: "We will never forget."

Democratic presidential candidate Joe Biden, who has visited the family, offered condolence to Floyd's children in a video message.

Twitter to mark June 19 as a holiday

REUTERS
SAN FRANCISCO

Jack Dorsey, the chief executive of Square Inc and Twitter Inc, said June 19, popularly known as 'Juneteenth', would be a permanent company-wide holiday in the U.S. to show support for racial diversity.

June 19 commemorates the U.S. abolition of slavery by President Abraham Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation, which was belatedly announced in Texas on June 19, 1865, after the end of the Civil War.

Bill to combat police violence, racial injustice in the works

REUTERS
WASHINGTON

the first and key witness among more than half a dozen civil rights experts and activists.

George Floyd's death on May 25 after a policeman knelt on his neck for almost nine minutes was the latest in a string of killings of African-American men and women by police. He was being arrested over a complaint that he had bought cigarettes with a counterfeit \$20 bill.

Philonise Floyd spoke before the House Judiciary Committee, appearing as

Sri Lanka to hold general election on August 5

Parliament was dissolved on March 2

MEERA SRINIVASAN
COLOMBO

Sri Lanka's parliamentary election, which was postponed twice in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic, will be held on August 5, Election Commission Chairman Mahinda Deshapriya said on Wednesday.

The election, in which about 16 million people are eligible to vote, will be conducted as per health officials' guidelines, according to election officials.

On March 2, President Gotabaya Rajapaksa, using his executive powers, dissolved Parliament, six months ahead of its full term and called for snap polls on April 25. However,

The video clip went viral on social media, triggering widespread outrage at the police. Several politicians and celebrities tweeted demanding justice for the teenage boy.

Police authorities suspended three policemen involved in the incident. Their suspension was, however, for having "failed to arrest the teenager", *The Morning* reported.

preme Court challenging the poll date, citing public health risks in holding polls during a pandemic. The apex court dismissed all petitions earlier this month after hearing preliminary submissions. By then, the Election Commission too told the court that it did not have sufficient time to prepare for the nation-wide polls.

Sri Lanka reported the first case of a local testing COVID-19 positive on March 10. As of Wednesday evening, the Health Promotion Bureau shows a tally of 1,859 confirmed cases and 11 deaths.

In the August 5 election, to be held across the island, a total of 196 legislators will be directly to the 225-member House, from the 25 districts. As many as 29 will be appointed from the National List, nominated by the parties based on their share of the national vote

Sweden closes ex-PM Palme's murder probe after 34 years

Prosecutor says Stig Engstrom, who died in 2000, shot him

ASSOCIATED PRESS
STOCKHOLM

Sweden on Wednesday dropped its investigation into the unsolved murder of former Swedish Prime Minister Olof Palme, who was shot dead 34 years ago in Stockholm, saying that decision was made because the main suspect died in 2000.

Palme was gunned down on February 28, 1986, after he and his wife Lisbet Palme left a movie theatre in the Swedish capital. The murder shocked the nation and shook the Scandinavian country's image as being so safe and peaceful.

More than 100 people



Olof Palme, left, in 1983; and Stig Engstrom. • REUTERS/AP

have been suspected in the crime and the unsolved case has generated scores of conspiracy theories, with possible villains ranging from foreign governments or rogue Swedish police with right-wing sympathies to an act by a lone shooter.

The investigation was being closed because the main suspect, Stig Engstrom, died in 2000, the case's chief prosecutor, Krister Petersson, told a news conference in Stockholm on Wednesday.

Seoul to charge activists for anti-North leaflets

Decision comes after Pyongyang fury

ASSOCIATED PRESS
SEOUL

South Korea's government said on Wednesday that it will press charges against two activist groups that have been floating anti-Pyongyang leaflets and bottles filled with rice to North Korea.

Any action against the groups is likely to trigger a debate over freedom of expression in South Korea, and whether President Moon Jae-in's liberal government is sacrificing democratic principles to keep alive his ambitions for inter-Korean engagement.

The announcement by Seoul's Unification Ministry came a day after North Ko-

rea said it was cutting off all communication channels with South Korea over its inability to prevent North Korean defectors from flying the leaflets across the border.

One of the targeted defector-activists condemned what he described as a "treacherous" move by Seoul and vowed to launch even more leaflets across the border in coming weeks.

Yoh Sang-key, the Ministry's spokesman, told reporters facing charges had "created tensions between the South and North and brought danger to the lives and safety of (South Korean) residents in border areas."

No cold war with China: EU

Moscow, Beijing accused of undermining Europe's democracy

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
BRUSSELS

The EU's chief diplomat said on Wednesday he had assured China's Foreign Minister that the bloc does not want a "cold war", as it accused Beijing of waging a coronavirus disinformation campaign.

Brussels said China and Russia have sought to undermine European democracy and burnish their own reputations during the pandemic with "targeted influence operations and disinformation campaigns".

The unusually blunt accusation came in an official EU strategy paper for tackling what officials say is a "flood" of false healthcare claims, conspiracy theories, fraud



Josep Borrell

and hate speech surrounding the pandemic.

The report was published on Wednesday, a day after EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell held video talks with Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi.

Mr. Borrell on Wednesday insisted the EU was "not starting anything" with Chi-

na, and said he had reassured Mr. Wang during their talks. "I told him: 'Don't worry, Europe is not going to embark on any kind of Cold War with China,'" Mr. Borrell said.

The report accuses Moscow and Beijing of "seeking to undermine democratic debate and exacerbate social polarisation, and improve their own image in the COVID-19 context".

Tensions rose ahead of a video summit later this month between EU and Chinese leaders. EU-Chinese relations have hit a rocky patch as Brussels struggles to calibrate its response to Beijing's growing assertiveness under President Xi Jinping.

MARKET WATCH

| | 10-06-2020 | % CHANGE |
|-----------|------------|----------|
| Sensex | 34,247 | 0.86 |
| US Dollar | 75.59 | 0.03 |
| Gold | 47,664 | 0.91 |
| Brent oil | 40.62 | 0.00 |

NIFTY 50

| | PRICE | CHANGE |
|-------------------|----------|--------|
| Adani Ports | 346.55 | 0.50 |
| Asian Paints | 1635.95 | -6.10 |
| Axis Bank | 427.45 | 7.40 |
| Bajaj Auto | 2717.10 | -73.95 |
| Bajaj Finserv | 5223.00 | -87.80 |
| Bajaj Finance | 2435.65 | -7.95 |
| Bharti Airtel | 567.10 | -0.70 |
| BPCL | 378.95 | -2.55 |
| Britannia Ind | 3377.00 | -38.70 |
| Cipla | 642.95 | 2.90 |
| Coal India | 140.70 | -3.60 |
| Dr Reddys Lab | 4112.50 | -11.30 |
| Eicher Motors | 17090.05 | 63.20 |
| GAIL (India) | 98.10 | -3.00 |
| Grasim Ind | 614.75 | 2.85 |
| HCL Tech | 578.70 | 5.85 |
| HDFC | 1809.30 | 37.20 |
| HDFC Bank | 991.85 | 4.55 |
| Hero MotoCorp | 2292.25 | -9.05 |
| Hindalco | 146.95 | 4.35 |
| Hind Unilever | 2119.60 | 13.10 |
| ICICI Bank | 353.00 | 4.45 |
| IndusInd Bank | 499.60 | 35.70 |
| Bharti Infratech | 232.70 | -0.30 |
| Infosys | 715.85 | -1.75 |
| Indian Oil Corp | 89.95 | -0.70 |
| ITC | 199.05 | 0.55 |
| JSW Steel | 190.95 | 0.90 |
| Kotak Bank | 1332.25 | 28.10 |
| L&T | 946.55 | -6.75 |
| M&M | 472.05 | -6.70 |
| Maruti Suzuki | 5675.60 | 13.30 |
| Nestle India Ltd. | 16534.70 | -17.85 |
| NTPC | 98.15 | 0.15 |
| ONGC | 88.25 | -1.75 |
| PowerGrid Corp | 170.05 | -0.50 |
| Reliance Ind | 1572.15 | 35.00 |
| State Bank | 187.70 | 3.25 |
| Shree Cement | 21513.30 | 503.50 |
| Sun Pharma | 499.15 | -1.60 |
| Tata Motors | 111.40 | -0.05 |
| Tata Steel | 324.00 | -8.20 |
| TCS | 2108.75 | 36.70 |
| Tech Mahindra | 590.50 | 4.30 |
| Titan | 977.25 | -19.85 |
| UltraTech Cement | 3792.45 | 1.10 |
| UPL | 425.00 | -5.60 |
| Vedanta | 106.10 | 1.50 |
| Wipro | 217.00 | -1.35 |
| Zee Entertainment | 189.80 | -2.60 |

EXCHANGE RATES

| CURRENCY | TT BUY | TT SELL |
|--------------------|--------|---------|
| US Dollar | 75.39 | 75.71 |
| Euro | 85.58 | 85.95 |
| British Pound | 96.02 | 96.44 |
| Japanese Yen (100) | 70.23 | 70.53 |
| Chinese Yuan | 10.67 | 10.72 |
| Swiss Franc | 79.61 | 79.95 |
| Singapore Dollar | 54.41 | 54.65 |
| Canadian Dollar | 56.21 | 56.46 |
| Malaysian Ringgit | 17.73 | 17.81 |
| Australian Dollar | 52.70 | 52.93 |

Source: Indian Bank

IN BRIEF

SBI virtual EGM June 17

MUMBAI The State Bank of India will hold a virtual extraordinary general meeting on June 17 to conduct election for four directors' posts via e-voting.

S&P affirms India's rating, outlook

GDP growth rate could be ahead of peers if ongoing reform process is executed well, says agency

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

MUMBAI

Global rating major S&P has affirmed the country's long term rating at BBB, the lowest investment grade, and said the outlook on the long-term rating is stable.

The rating agency said though risks to long-term growth are rising, if the ongoing reform process is executed well, the country's growth rate would be ahead of its peers.

It also expects there could be a fiscal consolidation over the next three years after a larger fiscal deficit this financial year due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

"The stable outlook reflects our expectation that India's economy will recover following the containment of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the country will maintain its



Labour markets have weakened, with labourers returning to home States, and may take some time to heal. ■ AFP

sound net external position," S&P said.

"The stable outlook also assumes that the government's fiscal deficit will recede markedly following a multi-year high in fiscal year

meaningfully recover 2021 onwards and the net general government deficits materially exceed forecasts, which would signify weakening of the country's institutional capacity to maintain sustainable public finances.

On the other hand, there could be an upgrade if the fiscal deficits is significantly curtailed.

Earlier this month, Moody's downgraded the country's rating to Baa3 – which was also the lowest investment grade – while maintaining negative outlook.

S&P expects the Indian economy to contract by 5% this fiscal.

It said the country's productive capacity had been severely disrupted as millions of workers had left their jobs to return home, "sometimes crossing the

country to do so."

"India's labour markets have therefore weakened dramatically, and may take some time to heal," it said.

The economy is expected to make a strong comeback in the next financial year as S&P projected 8.5% growth in real GDP in fiscal 2022.

Resilience highlighted

"The economy's long-term outperformance highlights its resilience. India's wide range of structural trends, including healthy demographics and competitive unit labour costs, work in its favour.

"A more favourable corporate tax regime, which is particularly supportive of manufacturing firms, should reinforce growth, alongside additional fiscal and monetary easing," S&P said.

'Border adjustment tax will help local players'

'Aim is to blunt the edge imports enjoy'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI

NITI Aayog member V.K. Saraswat on Wednesday favoured imposing a border adjustment tax (BAT) on imports to provide a level-playing field to domestic industries.

"U.S.-China trade tensions are currently at historically high levels. In the post-COVID world, it is expected to rise further... so first we have to do a border adjustment tax to provide the domestic industry a level-playing field vis-a-vis imports," he said at a virtual event organised by the PHD Chamber of Commerce.

BAT is a duty that is proposed to be imposed on imported goods in addition to the customs levy that gets charged at the port of entry. But many imported goods do not get loaded with such levies in their respective country of origin and this gives such products a price advantage in India. On the Atmanirbhar Bharat vision, Mr. Saraswat said advocating self-reliance should not imply that India will embrace isolationist policies.

Development bank needed to support low-cost funding: APP

Banks should change attitude to infra projects: power producers

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

MUMBAI

The Association of Power Producers (APP) has demanded setting up of a development bank to meet the long-term and low-cost funding needs of infrastructure sectors such as power, that are reeling under stress due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

"Between Dec. 2018 and May 2020, RBI reduced the repo rate by 250 bps, but this has not been transmitted to borrowers. Banks have not been commensurate in reducing their one-year MCLR. There is a need to have seamless transmission of repo rate reduction to reduction of Rate of Interest (RoI)," APP said in the letter.

"With IDBI/ ICICI/ IDFC converting to commercial banks, there is a need for separate and specialised development financing institutions and supporting framework for long-term, low-cost funding needs of the infra sector. This will also enable achieving the investment of

Mishra, Principal Secretary to Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Last month, Ms. Sitharaman held a series of press conferences to explain the benefits of the ₹20 lakh crore package for various segments, including infrastructure.

"In spite of all these efforts, a larger section of the economy including infrastructure sector has been struggling to keep up against the impact of extended lockdown," said the letter.

APP said that the attitude of the banking sector towards infrastructure projects needed to change.

As NBFCs face redemption pressure, Reserve Bank hints at more support

Need to go beyond liquidity-related measures to credit-related ones: regulator

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

MUMBAI

The COVID-19 pandemic related disruptions have impacted market financing conditions for non-banking financial companies, which could result in higher redemption pressure and the sector would need further policy assistance, the Reserve Bank of India said.

The recent development in the mutual fund (MF) sector, which had emerged as a key source for funding to non-banks, has aggravated the situation. Based on data up to April 2020, an analysis by RBI showed while measures taken by the central

tending the benefits of loan repayment moratorium to them while the non-banks extended the same to their borrowers.

The analysis showed financing conditions had become challenging recently, especially for lower-rated NBFCs, due to an overall environment of greater risk sensitivity and heightened risk aversion. "There are near-term scheduled redemptions of commercial papers and corporate bonds issued by NBFCs," RBI said.

"To a certain extent, these could be bridged through increased bank borrowing and / or group support by some

NBFCs. However, given the current financing conditions and developments in the MF sector, the possibility of liquidity pressures remaining elevated for some of these NBFCs..., cannot be ruled out," it said.

RBI said stress was still visible in certain areas of the market and developments indicate the need for policy interventions, which go beyond liquidity-related measures to credit-related ones. "There is a need for ensuring flow of credit/liability to NBFCs with concrete credit backstop to address the risk aversion in the system," the study said.

+ DRL acquires Wockhardt divisions with amended pact

COVID-19 impact on sales spurred change in agreement

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

HYDERABAD

Dr. Reddy's Laboratories' acquisition of certain divisions of branded generics business of Wockhardt in India and a few other international territories of Nepal, Sri Lanka, Bhutan and Maldives has been completed. However, this was with a change to the Business Transfer Agreement (BTA) in view of COVID-19's impact on the sales of products being acquired.

Dr. Reddy's said on Wednesday that as per the BTA signed in February, the acquisition was for an upfront consideration of ₹1,850 crore. It involved the business comprising a portfolio of 62 brands in multiple therapy areas. These, along with related sales and marketing teams, and the manufacturing plant located in

Reddy's and Wockhardt agreed that the deal consideration "shall now be up to ₹1,850 crore." This will be paid by way of ₹1,483 crore on the date of closing; ₹67 crore to be deposited in an escrow account, which shall be released subject to adjustments among other things for net working capital, employee liabilities and certain other contractual and statutory liabilities.

The remaining 'holdback amount' of ₹300 crore will be released if revenue from sales of the products during the 12 months post-closing exceeds ₹480 crore. Dr. Reddy's will be required to pay to Wockhardt an amount equal to two times the amount by which the revenue exceeds ₹480 crore, subject to the maximum of the holdback amount.

Subsequently, through an amendment to the BTA, Dr.

HP India sees surge in demand for PCs

Work-, study-from-home boost sales

YUTHIKA BHARGAVA

NEW DELHI

HP India is witnessing a strong demand in its PC business with more people working and studying from home as part of physical distancing measures due to the COVID-19 pandemic, a senior company official said.

"In the current environment especially, I think it's clear to people and customers how critical and essential PCs have become to their life, whether they're working from home, studying from home or even earning from home," Vickram Bedi, senior director, personal systems at HP India Market, told *The Hindu*.

Asked about the demand during the pandemic, Mr. Bedi said initially, the company saw a big surge in demand from enterprises as they had to ensure continu-

ity while moving systems from office to homes almost overnight. With consumers, the company is seeing "an equally resurgent and strong demand" as more buying options [shops and e-commerce] opened up.

He added that for HP India, the average selling price was becoming better than before as people were opting for the mid-to-high range devices.

'Make details of health claims public'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

HYDERABAD

The Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI) wants insurers dealing in health covers to make public details on the qualitative and quantitative parameters of the services rendered to their policyholders.

IRDAI said all general and health insurers rendering health services, both through third-party administrators (TPAs) and/or in-house, need to publish the information within 90 days after the close of every financial year. The directions come into force with immediate effect, D.V.S. Ramesh, General Manager (

IN BRIEF

**Saliva ban will make bowlers 'robots': Akram**

KARACHI
Former Pakistan paceman Wasim Akram warned on Wednesday that bowlers would become "robots" after cricket officials temporarily banned shining the ball with saliva as a coronavirus precaution. "It will make bowlers robots, coming and bowling without swing," AFP

BWF cancels Swiss Open, European championships

NEW DELHI
The Badminton World Federation (BWF) has called off the 2020 Swiss Open and European Championships, originally scheduled to be held from March 17-22 and April 21-26 respectively, due to non-availability of new dates.

Ban on players' protest during Olympics to stay

LONDON
The International Olympic Committee has reportedly confirmed that the ban on athletes protesting during the multi-national event shall continue in the future as well as they want the showpiece event to be neutral. IANS

**Djokovic thinking of skipping US Open**

BELGRADE
Novak Djokovic is thinking of skipping the US Open — if it is played — and instead return to competition on clay ahead of the rescheduled French Open. Speaking to Serbia's state broadcaster RTS on Tuesday, Djokovic said the restrictions that would be in place for the Grand Slam in New York would be extreme and not sustainable. AFP

Joshua agrees deal for two fights with Fury

LONDON
Anthony Joshua and Tyson Fury have agreed in principle to meet in two blockbuster fights, according to Joshua's promoter Eddie Hearn. No contracts have been signed yet, but Hearn expects WBA, IBF and WBO belt holder Joshua to face WBC champion Fury to determine the undisputed king of the heavyweight scene in 2021. AFP

**Aakash Chopra says he too faced racist remarks**

NEW DELHI
Aakash Chopra has alleged that he was subjected to racist remarks during his stint in England's league cricket. The former Indian batsman, who played for the Marylebone Cricket Club back in 2007, said that he was called "Paki". PTI

No resolution yet on the 2020 T20 World Cup

ICC postpones decision on tournament by at least a month

AMOL KARHADKAR
MUMBAI

The International Cricket Council (ICC) continued to adopt a "wait and watch" approach as its Board deferred the decision on the staging of this year's T20 World Cup in Australia by at least a month.

"We will only get one chance to make this decision and it needs to be the right one, and as such we will continue to consult with our Members, broadcasters, partners, governments and players and to ensure that we make a well informed decision," stated ICC chief executive Manu Sawhney in a statement after Wednesday's meeting.

It is understood that besides considering the rapidly evolving public health situation caused by COVID-19, the Board chose not to make a



decision in haste keeping in mind the forthcoming ICC chairman election.

While the deferment of the T20 World Cup decision means that the BCCI will have to wait longer to see if it can squeeze in the Indian Premier League (IPL) this year, BCCI president Sourav Ganguly still had a reason to smile after the meeting.

Deadline extended
The ICC agreed to the BCCI's demand of extending the deadline for securing the requisite tax exemptions from

the government to stage the T20 World Cup in 2021.

With the BCCI having missed an earlier deadline, the ICC had threatened to take the event away from India.

The BCCI now has six more months to convince the Central government.

While the ICC statement didn't specify anything about the process for electing the chairman, it did announce the inclusion of all the ICC directors in the breach of confidentiality probe which was launched last month.

We ask for equality, respect'

We are powerful and beautiful: Bravo

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
KINGSTON

"Enough is enough," said West Indies all-rounder Dwayne Bravo as he opened up on the raging issue of racism, and called for "respect and equality" for black people.

"It's sad to see what's going on around the world. As a black man, we know the history of what black people have been through."

"We never ask for revenge, we ask for equality and respect. That's it," Bravo told former Zimbabwean cricketer Mpumelelo Mbangwa in an Instagram live chat on Tuesday.

"I just want our brothers and sisters to know that we are powerful and beautiful," he said.

Dwayne Bravo.
• FILE PHOTO: K. PICHUMANI

Boxing camp restart delayed

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
KOLKATA

Top Indian boxers will have to wait for a few more weeks for the resumption of the National camp.

The Boxing Federation of India (BFI) had proposed to the Government in the last week of May on resuming the National camp at Patiala from June 10.

"The Punjab government has its rules related to COVID-19. We haven't got an approval yet. We can resume the camp after getting a clearance," said a BFI official on Wednesday. The BFI is hopeful of getting the same in a week or two.

Imran warns of parental pressure



Valuable insights: W.V. Raman in conversation with Imran Mirza on Sania's brilliant career. • PHOTO: SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

private synthetic court (there were only two in Hyderabad then), Imran said that the family was happy to have built a world class centre with 12 courts.

"Under pressure in a match, Sania always came out firing," he added emphasising the importance of allowing talent to play unshackled, without the worry of winning, at an early stage.

"Too much pressure leaves a mark on their personality," said Imran.

Pointing out that it was a hard journey, especially in the initial years, as they had to wait their turn to use a

more junior Grand Slam trophies.

"We believed that playing early on the professional tour would help her against the top players," said Imran, even as he pointed out that Sania had won the National under-14 and under-16 titles when she was 12.

Most importantly, he said the family acted as a cushion, absorbing all the pressure. "We never allowed our negative emotions to seep into her." He also explained how it was important to speak at the right time as a coach, insisting, "no point saying anything when it is not absorbed."

'Rankings don't reflect level-playing field'

Metrics like relative cost of education might better reflect Indian priorities: NAAC

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

International rankings help Indian institutions to benchmark themselves to a global standard but may not reflect a level-playing field, says National Assessment and Accreditation Council chairperson V.S. Chauhan. He said other metrics such as the relative cost of education might better reflect Indian priorities and strengths.

Speaking at the India launch of the QS World University rankings on Wednesday which showed that most Indian institutions have slipped since last year, Dr. Chauhan said he was "not so sure" about whether we have reached the scenario of a level-playing field with re-



V.S. Chauhan

a student in a university in the top 50 in QS rankings," said Dr. Chauhan.

"I think some of the ranking systems will look totally inverted if some of these parameters are somehow shown."

On Thursday, the Ministry of Human Resource Deve-

lopment will release its own higher education rankings for domestic institutions. The National Institution Ranking Framework, launched in 2016, has a different focus than most world rankings, which give higher weightage to parameters that even elite Indian institutions struggle with such as internationalisation and global academic and employer perception.

Instead, the NIRF uses parameters related to student and faculty strength, use of financial resources, research papers and patents, graduation outcomes, inclusivity and gender, geographical, disability and socio-economic diversity as well as perception and reputation.

Relief for lifter Sanjita Chanu

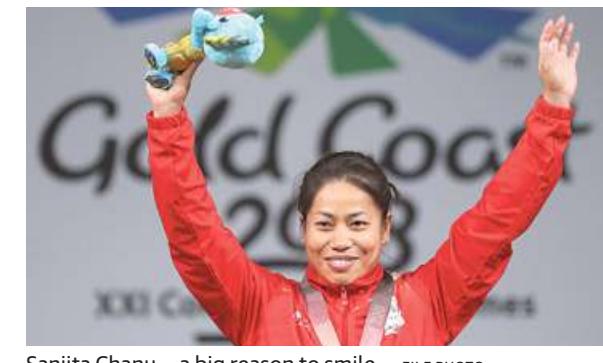
Two-time CWG gold winner exonerated of doping charges

Y.B. SARANGI
KOLKATA

Two-time Commonwealth Games gold medal-winning weightlifter Sanjita Chanu was exonerated of doping charges on Wednesday after more than two-and-a-half years.

In a mail, International Weightlifting Federation (IWF) legal counsel Dr. Lilla Sagi informed Sanjita and the Indian Weightlifting Federation (IWLF) that the "IWF has decided to withdraw the charges". The letter said, "On 28 May 2020, the IWF was informed by WADA that due to certain non-conformities... with the IRMS analytical method of the laboratory (which has since been corrected to the satisfaction of the WADA Laboratory Expert Group), WADA recommends – out of fairness to the athlete – that the case against the athlete based on the sample be closed."

Sanjita's urine sample had tested positive for testosterone in an out-of-competi-



Sanjita Chanu... a big reason to smile. • FILE PHOTO

prize money," the 26-year-old Sanjita told *The Hindu*.

Sanjita's brother Bijen, who represented the athlete with another adviser at the IWF hearing in Budapest in October 2018, said the athlete would move the Court of Arbitration for Sport seeking monetary compensation.

"Sanjita went through tremendous mental trauma, spent around ₹25 lakh and lost a chance to qualify for the Olympics. It also soiled her reputation. We will seek compensation, proper explanation," said Bijen.

Federer out for rest of season

ASSOCIATED PRESS
LONDON

Roger Federer will miss whatever remains of the coronavirus-impacted 2020 tennis season because of a setback in his recovery from surgery on his right knee.

"A few weeks ago, having experienced a setback during my initial rehabilitation, I had to have an additional quick arthroscopic procedure on my right knee..."

now, much like I did leading up to the 2017 season, I plan to take the necessary time to be 100% ready to play at my highest level. I will look forward to seeing everyone back on tour at the start of the 2021 season,"

Top-flight golf tees off again

RAKESH RAO
NEW DELHI

After COVID-19 halted the PGA Tour on March 12, the world's top-five golfers will be part of the field when action returns with the \$7.5 million Charles Schwab Cup in Fort Worth, USA, from Thursday.

World No. 1 Rory McIlroy, second-ranked Jon Rahm, Brooks Koepka, Justin Thomas and Dustin Johnson will feature in the first competition after 13 weeks. Only two from the top-10 – Australia's Adam Scott and England's Tommy Fleetwood – are absent owing to travel-related quarantine rules in the US.

Tiger Woods, ranked 11th, is also not playing.

'Not irresponsible to restart La Liga'

Kanoute says fans can't wait to watch football

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Frederic Kanoute,
La Liga ambassador.

that it could open ways to enjoy and analyse the matches in a different perspective for the fans.

With five substitutions to be allowed instead of three, Kanoute said that it was a "good and clever" move that would give more options for the coaches.

Tip of the iceberg

He viewed racism in football as a mere tip of the iceberg.

Kanoute was categorical that, "it is not irresponsible to restart La Liga," as all protocols were being meticulously followed, and added that finances played a big role in society.

The lockdown spoiled our college farewell plans, so I am sending handwritten 'thank you' letters to everyone.

JZ, Student, Ernakulam

Some habits are worth keeping.



THE HINDU

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