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EXPLAINED

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EXPRESS AUDIO

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UP relaxes rule to discharge Covid patients

EXPRESSNEWSSERVICE
LUCKNOW, JUNE 20

THE UTTAR Pradesh government on Saturday relaxed the rule for discharge of asymptomatic coronavirus patients from institutional quarantine. It said they can be discharged after spending 10 days in hospitals followed by home isolation for a week. Until now, asymptomatic patients were discharged if their second test, taken on the 12th day from the date of the first test result, returned negative, and they had the oxygen level of more than 94 per cent and no symptoms or fever in the last three days. If these conditions were met, patients were asked to isolate at home for a week. Before this rule, a Covid patient had to obtain two consecutive negative reports.

However, symptomatic patients still have to test negative on the 12th day for discharge.

Principal Secretary (Health) Amit Mohan Prasad said, "...Asymptomatic patients with no symptoms can be discharged after 10 days and will have to stay in home quarantine for seven days, whereas symptomatic patients will only be allowed to go home after their Covid-19 report is negative." According to a government bulletin on Thursday, the state had 1,01,236 isolation beds, of which, 5,661 were occupied. In UP, all asymptomatic Covid patients have to be hospitalised. The Supreme Court had earlier this week pulled up the UP government for the mandatory institutional quarantine for patients with no symptoms. "Don't put asymptomatic people in quarantine, you will have a big problem. Noida is doing it and the UP government is in a denial mode," the court said. During a previous hearing, the court observed that the rule may create "chaos 15 days down the line" and ran counter to the national guidelines.

Meanwhile, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath ordered that "doctors posted on administrative posts may also be considered for clinical jobs". Adityanath instructed officials to ensure surveillance system is made more effective and that the number of surveillance committees should be increased to 1 lakh.

"He asked Health, Medical Education departments along with district administrations to work in this direction as it will be an important effort to break the infection chain," said a statement issued by the state government.

Apart from all hospitals in the state, the government also said Covid-19 helpdesks will be established in offices. Adityanath also congratulated PM Narendra Modi for the start of the Gareeb Kalyan Rozgar Yojna.

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POLL CODE BREACH

2 Bihar policemen in Punjab to serve summons to Sidhu

Katiyar: A police team is in Punjab to ensure that summons issued by a court here against Congress MLA Navjot Singh Sidhu in connection with a case filed last year for violation of model code of conduct is served on the cricketer-turned-politician, a senior official said on Saturday.

Katiyar SP Vikas Kumar said the two-member team has been camping outside the former Punjab minister's residence in Amritsar for the past couple of days, but neither Sidhu is present nor anybody else has received the summons on his behalf.

Sidhu was booked for violating model code of conduct in April last year and banned from campaigning for 72 hours by the EC during the Lok Sabha polls for controversial remarks he had made at a rally in support of former Union minister Tariq Anwar, who was the Congress candidate from Katiyar. **PTI**

CLARIFICATIONS & CORRECTIONS

19.06.20, PAGE 1

RESPONDING TO a report in *The Indian Express* titled "For Class 10, NCERT lists topics for self-study, no marking", a spokesperson for the NCERT sent the following rejoinder Saturday: "The article is an attempt to misguide students, teachers and parents in this COVID-19 period... NCERT has not published any guideline, or issued circular or shared with public the content, which this article reports. Therefore, this article is baseless and untrue. Given the sensitivity of the issues related to syllabus and textbooks which has bearing on more than 25 crore students, NCERT attempts to go through a number of steps including thorough discussion not only internally but also with outside experts. NCERT also discusses with states' educational agencies including school education boards before finalizing any document."

The Indian Express replies: The report clearly states that the NCERT has prepared a draft document that is "still under discussion and could undergo further changes."

The Indian Express has accessed the 13-page draft that lists, subject-wise, topics and themes that Class 10 students can cover through "self-study, assignments or projects" this year. Its key points were highlighted in the report. This draft was circulated within the NCERT this week. *The Indian Express* stands by its report.

FROM PAGE ONE

26/11 wanted

against a Danish newspaper and for providing material support to the Lashkar-e-Taiba. The 59-year-old resident of Chicago was arrested in 2009 on charges of plotting the 26/11 terror attacks.

In 2013, Rana was sentenced to 14 years of imprisonment, followed by five years of supervised release.

"He was recently released after he reported that he had tested positive for Covid-19. Following this the US authorities on June 10 executed our request for his provisional arrest. This paves the way for his extradition proceedings to begin in a competent court in the US," an NIA officer said.

Since he cannot be tried for offences he has already been convicted for in the US, India is seeking extradition of Rana on the ground that he was actively involved in planning an attack on the New Delhi-based National Defence College and Chabad Houses in several cities. There is also a forgery case registered against him in India.

In case India and the US had failed to begin the extradition proceedings, Rana would have been deported to Canada.

LAC on edge

is a lot of tension, anger, and any small incident can flare up," former Army Chief General VP Malik told *The Sunday Express*.

At the time of the clashes on June 15, the soldiers were armed — and with ammunition, as per Army officers — but did not open fire in accordance with the established practice on the LAC. The decision to not open fire has come under heavy criticism, especially from military veterans, and is unlikely to be repeated if another clash takes place.

And the chances of another clash are high as troops remain deployed in proximity at multiple locations along the LAC. This risk is the highest at Pangong Tso, where latest satellite imagery shows new Chinese outposts and forward positions, that sit exactly on the ridge-line separating the two forces.

In the current environment of high tension and anger, the next brawl is unlikely to remain limited to fisticuffs, pushing and jostling, or fighting with sticks and stones.

The rules of engagement have never prohibited opening of fire if the lives of soldiers are at stake, and that message has gone home to all soldiers and commanders at a very high cost this week.

The 1967 Nathu La conflict between India and China started with pushing and jostling, before a Chinese soldier opened fire and shot dead the Indian Commanding Officer. Soon, it escalated to use of medium artillery.

In Nathu La, the faceoff was at a single location and both sides had limited weaponry at their disposal. Now, the tensions are high across the border and the availability of modern weaponry is likely to make any escalation much worse than Nathu La.

"Military-level talks at various levels are unlikely to yield any perceptible results. An amicable resolution is now possible only through diplomatic and political channels," former Army Chief General Bikram Singh said. While commanders on the ground can reinforce adherence to existing protocols, that is unlikely to provide an answer. The solution lies in early disengagement by both armies, which can only be achieved at a political level.

WITH MANRAJ GREWAL SHARMA

PM on villages

in six states — UP, MP, Jharkhand, Odisha, Rajasthan and Bihar — that saw the maximum number of migrant workers returning over the last three months.

With 32 of Bihar's 38 districts on the list, the scheme was launched from Khagaria's Telihar panchayat by the Prime Minister via video-conferencing from Delhi, along with the chief ministers of five of the states involved and a representative of the Odisha government.

Govt rejects China claim to Galwan

the all-party meeting was informed that "this time, Chinese forces have come in much larger strength to the LAC and that the Indian response is commensurate".

This is the first time that the PMO has mentioned the large Chinese presence. On June 2, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, in an interview to News18 TV, said "the Chinese have come in sizeable numbers (*achchi khaasi sankhya*). But whatever needs to be done, India has also done".

On Friday, Modi told the all-party meeting that neither has anyone intruded into Indian territory nor has anyone captured any military post.

The Prime Minister, the PMO said, "was clear that India would respond firmly to any attempts to transgress the Line of Actual Control (LAC). In fact, he specifically emphasized that in contrast to the past neglect of such challenges, Indian forces now decisively counter any violations of LAC (*unhe rokhte hain, unhe tokhte hain*)... The words of Prime Minister 'Those who tried to transgress our land were taught a befitting lesson by our brave sons of soil', succinctly summed up the ethos and the values of our armed forces... What is Indian territory is clear from the map of India. This Government is strongly and resolutely committed to that. Insofar as there is some illegal occupation, the APM was briefed in great detail how over the last 60 years, more than 43,000 sq km has been yielded under circumstances with which this country is well aware. It was also made clear that this Government will not allow any unilateral change of the LAC,"

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Opposition parties ask why Army said opposite

China's claim today and not wait until tomorrow... so that our position is made clear," he said.

Saying that Modi's remarks had "left all of us confused" about the thinking in the government, senior Congress leader Anand Sharma said it amounts to "denial of the gravity" of the situation.

Other Opposition parties also questioned Modi's remarks. "The nation stands with the government against the incursions. But was the incident in which our soldiers were martyred an incursion? If not, then why did the MEA ask for status quo ante? Is Galwan Valley Indian or not?" said the Samajwadi Party's

Striking a personal note at the launch, Modi said that he "got this idea from a quarantine centre in Unnao (UP) where migrant workers gave a facelift to the school with their whitewashing skills".

Praising the workers for "standing strong", the Prime Minister said that while the Central government had been trying to give jobs to people in their home states, it had also been looking to boost rural economy and infrastructure.

He flagged some of his government's key initiatives, including Jan Dhan, enabling transfer of relief.

During the video-conference, Modi also interacted with some workers who had returned to Khagaria from other states and managed to obtain jobs. Referring to one of them, Smita Umari, who has started bee-keeping, he said, "We have to import honey and wax. You have chosen the right business."

Earlier, Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar said: "After what people from Bihar went through in other states, most of them desire to work here." Kumar also called on the PM to provide "special relief for setting up industries".

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Dharavi 'unlock'

dense slum clusters, Mukund Nagar. Controlling the spread of infection in an area, where 9-10 people stay in a 10x10 sq ft room, was seen as almost impossible.

BMC swung into action: within 48 hours, it barricaded the entrance and exit to the slum cluster, carried out disinfection of 425 public toilets, began door-to-door screening, and provided food to people in the first month of the lockdown.

In due course, it brought in private practitioners to create an environment of trust. Fever camps were set up to isolate vulnerable people, and shift high-risk contacts to institutional quarantine. The civic body also took over some private hospitals to expand facilities.

Now, a steady decline in cases has prompted BMC to consider an 'unlock' plan for Dharavi. This may include opening of small-scale industries, and pottery work with minimum staff. The focus is now

down to just four hotspots.

The total number of Covid-19 cases in Dharavi now stands at 2,158. Its daily growth rate is 1.57%, compared with the city's 3%. After no deaths between May 30 and June 8, seven deaths since have taken the toll in Dharavi to 79.

In the initial weeks, with a gargantuan task of screening the 8.5 lakh population, the BMC staff carried out door-to-door screening. But many were non-responsive. "People lied about the number of them in a house, about medical conditions," said a community health volunteer.

So, the civic body roped in 350 private and local practitioners, provided them PPE kits, and asked them to open clinics; nine BMC dispensaries were also included along with fever camps, bringing detection to the doorstep of people.

"The 350 local practitioners worked as a bridge. People followed their instructions diligently," said Kiran Dighavkar, Assistant Municipal Commissioner of administrative G-North ward, which includes Mahim, Dharavi and Dadar.

This approach yielded dividends. Local authorities were able to screen 3.6 lakh people apart from another 1.2 lakh senior citizens.

"Since patients were isolated early, they could be monitored, thus avoiding a rise in the mortality rate," Dighavkar said. The BMC has conducted around 7,000 tests of high-risk contacts from Dharavi till date, and an additional 2,000-2,500 tests are being done.

BMC officials said the exodus of migrant workers from Dharavi also meant lesser number of cases. Dighavkar said around 70% of Dharavi's population comprises daily wage earners, of which, over 1 lakh are migrant workers.

The civic body also changed its strategy on classifying contacts of Covid-19 patients following deliberations with a visiting team from the Centre. Earlier, around 15 high-risk contacts of every patient were quarantined. Until the second week of May, patient contacts were classified as high- and low-risk. Later all contacts staying in slum settlements and used community toilets were considered high-risk.

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Now, most new cases are of high-risk contacts.

Food cart to farm

school management told me there is no need to come to school unless called. I have not got my salary since April. A friend, who is an insurance agent, introduced me to a few companies and I am now selling insurance policies," he says, adding that he earns about Rs 5,000, which is "not enough" to support a family of six.

LAGANLAAL MAHATO, 40
SOCIAL SCIENCE, RANCHI
SALARY: RS 5,000. NOW: ZERO

He taught students up to Class 8 at Saraswati Sishu Vidya Mandir at Ranchi in Jharkhand and used to earn Rs 5,000 a month. Mahato stopped receiving his salary in April, and now works on his 1.5-acre paddy field with his family of six, including his wife, their three children — the eldest is a college-going son — and his father. "Until last year, I used to hire labourers," he says.

MUTUKLAAL, 68
MATHEMATICS, RANCHI
SALARY: RS 4,930. NOW: ZERO

He is one of the founding members of Prastavita Uchha Vidyalaya in Ranchi, with about 500 students. He last received his salary of Rs 4,930 in April, and is dependent on his son who runs a mobile repair shop. "I don't have money to buy even a cup of tea," he says. "Our school charges only Rs 150-200 per student in tuition fees. But the students can't pay now," says Laal, who stays with his family of three in Sukruhuttu village.

ABHISHEK RANJAN, 31
IT, PATNA
SALARY: RS 18,000. NOW: RS 9,000

With an additional income of Rs 5,000-7,000 from tuition, Ranjan was "living happily" at a rented home in Danapur with his wife and their four-year-old son. "But since April, the school has been giving us only half our salaries. I had to send my wife and son to my parents in Gaya, where my father is a smalltime farmer growing grain and vegetables. I have saved on Rs 3,000, which was spent on milk every month, and Rs 2,500 on rations.

On casualties in the Galwan Valley incident, Srivastava said "Chinese troops took violent actions on 15 June 2020 that directly resulted in casualties" — the MEA on June 16 had said "both sides suffered from casualties".

Meanwhile, the Prime Minister, speaking at the launch of Garib Kalyan Rozgar Yojana via Saturday, said: "The country takes pride in the sacrifice made by the brave soldiers in Ladakh. Today when I am talking to people to Bihar, I can say with pride that it was *parakram* (valour) of the soldiers of Bihar Regiment, and every Bihari is proud of it."

Modi said: "Let me assure families of soldiers that the country has been with you, the country has been with its Army, and is committed to the bright future of the families of soldiers."

what the Army chief said, runs counter to what the Defence Minister said — that the Chinese, in large numbers, have entered India — and contradicts what the Foreign Minister said, that we want restoration of status quo ante."

Asking if Modi had "given a clean chit to China", he said: "If no Chinese troops crossed the LAC... what was the 'face-off' on May 5-6? Between May 5 and June 6, what was the issue on which local Indian commanders were talking to their Chinese counterparts?... Where did the clashes take place on June 15-16? Where were 20 Indian soldiers killed and 85 injured?"

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contingency," he said.

He said that despite the Chinese action after agreements reached during military talks, efforts are underway to ensure that the situation at the LAC is resolved peacefully.

"The security scenario in our region mandates that our armed forces remain prepared and vigilant at all times. The development at LAC is a small snapshot of what we are required to handle at short notice," he said.

"Please join me in paying tribute to Colonel Santosh Babu and his brave men who sacrificed their lives while defending the LAC in Galwan Valley. The gallant action in a highly challenging situation has demonstrated our resolve to protect the sovereignty of our country at any cost," he said.

— WITH PTI

Army's protective gear has Made in China link, Niti member says

relook

all such imports which are made from China just because of the price differential. We should not encourage import of Chinese raw material for strategic sectors like telecom and protective gear including bullet resistant jackets worn by our troops."

On Saturday, the PHD Chamber of Commerce and Industry, which was earlier part of a committee formed by the Department of Defence Production on "indigenisation of critical raw materials for manufacturing defence products," sent a letter to the Defence Secretary on the subject of "renouncing the usages of Chinese products."

That letter specifically mentions imports of High Performance Polyethylene (HPPE) from China for manufacture of bullet-resistant jackets. Citing steps taken by the Telecom Ministry to "avoid Chinese equipment in upgradation" it says: "Generally all the manufacturers (of protective gear) are importing this material from companies based in the Republic of China and very sizeable foreign exchange is diverted to these companies...we request you to kindly make a policy to reduce dependence on the Chinese materials substantially so that the security and safety of our fighting soldiers is not compromised..."

Meanwhile, industry representatives said that besides HPPE and fabric, boron carbide and other ceramics were also imported from China for manufacture of bullet-resistant jackets. Said S C Kansal, Managing Director of SMPP Pvt Ltd, which is executing the current contract to supply bullet-resistant jackets to the Army: "Yes, we are reliant upon imports from China but will move with the mood of the country. If required we will look at alternative routes for imports and we have a vast Research & Development wing for doing so."

So dependent on imports on China, the industry waits for MoD directions. Mahendra Gupta, Managing Director of Star Wire (India) Limited, said that his firm uses Chinese material for manufacturing protective gear but given the killings and the standoff, "the protective gear industry needs a clear direction on imports of critical raw materials from China and what is permissible."

Neeraj Gupta, Managing Director of MKU, said the firm imports raw materials from either US or European countries which pushes their prices up. "Chinese raw materials are 60%-70% cheaper than other international firms but this is a sector where quality of the gear and minimum loss of life on the frontlines is of utmost importance," he said.

ADVERTORIAL

6th INTERNATIONAL YOGA Day

SAHAJA YOGA - Today's Maha Yoga

50 Glorious years (1970-2020)

MEDITATION as Inner Peace Day

Shri Mataji travelled across various countries to give self-realisation to seekers (All castes, colours and religion) of truth which gave them relief from stress and INNER PEACE. Sahaja Yoga Meditation is observed as Inner Peace Day on March 21 by 32,00,000 students of 970 Schools in 51 countries. Improved memory and concentration, self-confidence, teamwork, and self-discipline has been observed in students who started doing Sahaja Yoga Meditation.

Inner Peace began as Inner Peace Day, an international celebration of 21st March (Birthday of Her Holiness Shri Mataji Nirmala Devi) as the World Day for Inner Peace. The idea is to establish a day in schools dedicated to World Peace, where students could experience inner peace for themselves. Meditate to Regenerate was set up to spread the message of peace in some of the most troubled areas around the world: refugee camps, occupied territories and places devastated by war.

Sahaja Yoga Unites the World on International Yoga Day Sunday, 21st June 2020

Global Experts, Professionals,
Social Activist, coming LIVE with
30+ sessions from more than
20 countries in more than 10
languages performing from Sunrise
to sunrise, to share the unique
method of YOGA by Kundalini
Awakening and Self Realization
through which one can achieve
a Beautiful state of Thoughtless
Awareness.

Sahaja Yoga

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these Global Speakers on

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www.sahajayoga.org.in

www.freemeditation.com

“ You cannot know the meaning of your life until
you are connected to the power that created you ”



HER HOLINESS SHRI MATAJI NIRMALA DEVI
The Founder of Sahaja Yoga

Self-realisation by Kundalini awakening

On this International Yoga Day, we all the Sahaja Yogi children of the world gratefully bow down to You again and again, that You discovered Sahaja Yoga and worked untiringly for the emancipation of the mankind. Millions of Sahaja Yogis across the globe are enjoying the blessings showered by Thee.



Birth Place Chindwara (M.P.)
21st March 1923



Nirmal Dham Delhi (Samadhi)
23rd February 2011

Her Holiness Shri Mataji Nirmala Devi incarnated on 21st March, 1923 at 12.00 noon, at Chindwara (M.P.). Her father Shri P. K. Salve was a man of great character. Nationalist to the core, he became a prominent figure in the India's freedom movement. On 7th April 1947, She married Shri C.P. Srivastava, IAS, who later became Secretary to Shri Lal Bahadur Shastri. Later Shri C.P.S. became secretary, International maritime origination for 16 years. After fulfilling her family duties, Shri Mataji launched Sahaja Yoga – the system of en masse Self-Realisation and through Kundalini awakening, on 5th May 1970. With Sahaja Yoga Meditation, millions of seekers today are leading peaceful and stress free lives.

Yoga recognised Globally

Today, Yoga is practiced in various forms around the world and continues to grow in popularity. Recognizing its universal appeal, on 11 December 2014, the United Nations proclaimed 21 June as the International Day of Yoga by resolution 69/131. The International Day of Yoga aims to raise awareness worldwide of the many benefits of practicing yoga.

The draft resolution establishing the International Day of Yoga was proposed by India and endorsed by a record 175 member states. The proposal was first introduced by the Hon'ble Prime Minister of India, Sh. Narendra Modi, in his address during the opening of the 69th session of the General Assembly, in which he said: “Yoga is an invaluable gift from our ancient tradition. Yoga embodies unity of mind and body, thought and action... a holistic approach [that] is valuable to our health and our well-being. **Yoga is not just about exercise; it is a way to discover the sense of oneness with yourself, the world and the nature.**”

The resolution notes “the importance of individuals and populations making healthier choices and following lifestyle patterns that foster good health.” In this regard, the World Health Organization has also urged its member states to help their citizens reduce physical inactivity, which is among the top ten leading causes of death worldwide, and a key risk factor for non-communicable diseases, such as cardiovascular diseases, cancer and diabetes.

In the words of Shri Mataji Nirmala Devi, “What is Yoga? In simple words, it is taking your attention to the Spirit. What does the Kundalini do? She raises your attention and takes it to the Spirit. Only after knowing the Spirit you can know God.”



Proclamation in memory of Shri Mataji Nirmala Devi

The Mayor of the District of Columbia, Vincent C. Gray, in recognition of Shri Mataji's achievements, has proclaimed March 21, 2012 as 'SHRI MATAJI NIRMALA DEVI DAY', in Washington, D.C. He also called upon residents to join in observing this day, enhancing one's inner awareness and world peace. On this occasion, there was a special segment dedicated to Shri Mataji during the celebration on March 21.

Shri Mataji Nirmala Devi was born on March 21, 1923 to Prasad and Cornelia Salve in India. In 1970, she founded a unique method of achieving inner peace, balance and personal growth called Sahaja Meditation, also

known as Sahaja Yoga, with the message and practise spreading to over 100 countries. Since, 1998, the National Institute of Health has been hosting weekly Sahaja Yoga Meditation programmes for patients and staff.

Shri Mataji has been nominated twice for the Nobel peace prize for her universal vision of a unified humanity and her extraordinary global work.

She has also created number of NGO and authored a book called 'Meta Modern Era', which offers deep insights and solutions for the crisis of modern times, and has merited love and respect of countless friends and family.

Why Sahaja Yoga Meditation? (for good health & well being

Sahaja Yoga is a simple and effective form of meditation that helps to reduce stress and enhance physical, emotional, mental and spiritual well-being. It is an effortless meditation. With pure desire to have self-realisation (SR), a seeker gets it in just a minute or few. There is no physical exercise or mental exercise involved, but the state of thoughtless awareness is achieved.

Sahaja Yoga meditation grants a seeker 'YOGA' or union with the all-pervading power, by awakening the Sacred Energy (Kundalini) lying dormant in three and half coils, in the sacrum bone of every human being. The awakening of the Kundalini is felt by the seeker as a cool breeze either on top of his head or on the palm of the hand. Once the Kundalini starts flowing freely through the subtle instrument of the seeker he/she enters into a meditative state and becomes conscious of the profound and peaceful silence known as "Thoughtless Awareness". After regular meditation, a seeker can give self-realization to others.

The Founder of Sahaja Yoga, Shri Mataji Nirmala Devi, brought forth the divine knowledge of how to give en-masse self-realization on May 5, 1970. Shri Mataji gave self-realisation to a small group

of seekers to start. Today Sahaja Yoga has spread more than 140 countries and seekers practising this meditation have experienced transformation in their lifestyle and are easily able to manage stressful situations. Sahaja Yoga/ Self-realization is always free of charge, in line with the principle laid down by Shri Mataji.

- Sahaja Yoga meditation is very easy and can be done along with professional and family life
- People from all walks of life can derive benefits, irrespective of their religion, caste or creed
- Health improves. Relief from mental illness due to stress and other health and psycho-somatic problems. And natural cure from addictions.
- No need for any sort of rituals, penance, fasts, asceticism or physical deprivations
 - For students – progress in studies due to improvement in memory & concentration
 - Latent artistic talents get developed
 - Peace, contentment and joy are the hallmarks of Sahaja Yoga
 - Entirely scientific technique with no promotion of blind faith
 - Self-realization through Sahaja Yoga is entirely free

4 WEST BENGAL



IN SOLIDARITY

Kolkata residents with Chinese roots protest against China over Galwan Valley clash, at China Town on Saturday. Partha Paul

One feared dead as Andal colliery land caves in

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
KOLKATA, JUNE 20

ONE PERSON was feared dead in Andal in Purba Bardhaman district on Saturday after six houses in a colliery caved in.

Around 2 am, local people in Jambandh colliery heard a loud

noise as the six houses slowly crumbled. Families rushed out, bringing out valuables from their collapsing homes. The land nearby also caved in as much as 70 foot.

Till last reports came in, a woman identified as 45-year-old Sahnaz Bibi was still trapped underneath the debris. According

to locals, she was sleeping when the incident occurred.

Asansol Mayor Jitendra Tiwari blamed Eastern Coalfield Limited (ECL) for delays in the rescue operation. "What is ECL doing? They are not paying heed to human lives. There was a delay in rescue. This is ECL land," he said.

However, an ECL official, who did not wish to be named, dismissed the allegation.

"The incident happened around 2 am. Since the wee hours our men are working there for rescue efforts. We have initiated an investigation to find why the land subsided," the official added.

Rise in cases, deaths mar a day of record recoveries

Kolkata, North 24 Parganas, Howrah report 239 cases and five deaths

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
KOLKATA, JUNE 20

THE STATE government on Saturday said a record 562 people had recovered from Covid-19, even as 441 people tested positive, taking the total count to 13,531, and the toll rose to 540 with 11 more deaths.

Kolkata and North 24 Parganas and Howrah, the epicentre of the pandemic in the state, reported 239 cases, the highest, and five of the deaths. South 24 Parganas, the other district that neighbours the city, recorded 56 cases like North 24 Parganas and Howrah, and two deaths. One death each occurred in Hooghly, Paschim Medinipur, Birbhum and Darjeeling. The only districts where no infection was detected in 24 hours are Cooch Behar, Birbhum, Purulia, Jhargram — which has not had a case in five days — and Purba Medinipur.

North Bengal, meanwhile, reported an addition of 104 cases. The region's active case count on Saturday stood at 634 cases, an increase of 31% since the start of the week. Overall, the state's active caseload declined by 132 to settle at 5,126 even as the discharge rate continued its up-



ward curve, reaching the highest-ever figure of 58.12%. According to the health bulletin, in which figures are updated till 9 am, 7,865 patients have recovered till date.

The health department reported that over 10,000 samples were tested for the second-day running. With these 10,330 specimens, the number of samples examined till date increased to 3,90,942, while the test positivity rate rose marginally to 3.46%.

The number of migrant returnees quarantined in special centres continued to decrease, with 63,501 now in these facilities. The government said 9,123 people were in institutional quarantine, 231 people in safe homes, and 1,36,582 remain isolated at home.

Regulatory body: Pvt hospitals told to look into billing complaints

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
KOLKATA, JUNE 20

AFTER RECEIVING complaints of inflated bills from families of Covid-19 patients, a regulatory body for private hospitals in the state has directed several such facilities in Kolkata to settle the matter, officials said on Saturday.

Communications have been sent to a number of private hospitals to resolve billing issues raised by family members of patients diagnosed with Covid-19.

Complaints of unreasonably high billing were also received from patients suffering from other diseases, a senior official of the West Bengal Clinical Establishment Regulatory Commission (WBCERC) told PTI.

The WBCERC had advised private hospitals to depute an official to redress such grievances, he said. "The official will be given the independent



Rajiva Sinha

ence to settle the billing issues within 24 hours. If patient parties are not satisfied after that, the matter can go to the appellate authority. We hope that most of the complaints will be amicably resolved," he added.

The Kolkata Municipal Corporation was also mulling over the option of forwarding similar complaints received at its borough offices to the state health department for necessary action, said a civic body official.

On Friday, Chief Secretary Rajiva Sinha had urged private hospitals not to impose costs of additional medical expenses on patients.

SALUTE THE SOLDIER



ASI/EXE ISHWAR SINGH SHEPH LALAL
21-06-1995

Martyr of CISF on 21th June

CISF proudly remembers the supreme sacrifice of this brave-heart. On this day, he laid down his life at the altar of duty while fighting with the terrorists. His courage and bravery would remain an abiding source of inspiration for the force. The force will remain eternally indebted to him for his noblest deed.

MUMBAI RAILWAY VIKAS CORPORATION LTD.

REQUEST FOR EXPRESSION OF INTEREST (REOI) (CONSULTING SERVICES-FIRM SELECTION)

Country: INDIA Name of Project: MUTP-III Assignment Title: Selection of Consultant for "TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE STUDY UNDER 'MUTP-III PROJECT' FOR REHABILITATION OF TUNNEL (2.73KM LONG) AT KM 90/8 TO 93/7 IN BETWEEN PANVEL AND KARJAT". Reference No. MRVC/TA/117 dated 19.06.2020

Mumbai Railway Vikas Corporation Ltd. now invites eligible consulting firms ("Consultants") to indicate their interest in providing the Services for above mentioned assignment. Interested Consultants should provide information demonstrating that they have the required qualifications and relevant experience to perform the Services. The consulting services include providing Technical Assistance for REHABILITATION OF TUNNEL (2.73KM LONG) AT KM 90/8 TO 93/7 IN BETWEEN PANVEL AND KARJAT. The estimated duration of consultancy services is 06 Months. Detailed REOI with Draft Terms of Reference are available on MRVC website www.mrvvc.indianrailways.gov.in. A Consultant will be selected in accordance with the QCBS method set out in PIR. Further information can be obtained at the address below during office hours between 10:00 hrs. to 17:00 hrs. on working days. The corrigendum if any, will be hosted on MRVC's website. Expression of interest must be delivered in a written form to the address below (in person or by email) by 15.00 hrs of 30/07/2020. Address for correspondence: Kanhaiya Jha, Chief Project Manager-I, Mumbai Railway Vikas Corporation, 2nd Floor, Churchgate Station Building, Churchgate, Mumbai-400020, Tel: (022)-22052012, email: cpm1@mrvvc.gov.in, dycpm1@mrvvc.gov.in, Website: www.mrvvc.indianrailways.gov.in.

HC to govt: Submit report on child rights violations during lockdown

At hearing, judges refer to *Express* report of June 19

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
KOLKATA, JUNE 20

THE CALCUTTA High Court on Saturday asked the state government and the chairperson of the West Bengal Women's Commission to submit details of child rights violations during the lockdown, following a report published in *The Indian Express* on June 19.

In an order, the court said, "We have come across an article published in *The Indian Express*, where the chairperson of the West Bengal Commission for Women has stated that during the lockdown period there has been a spike in domestic violence cases, including sexual abuse of children and violation of other rights."

A division bench of Justices Soumen Sen and Justice Harish Tandon requested the Advocate General to look into the matter, and asked the state authorities to submit their report by June 25.

The Department of Women and Child Development and Social Welfare has already submitted a report stating that a system has been developed to conduct post-restoration follow-up on a regular basis.

The report comprises a collection of general information on several matters, including physical and mental health of



A grab of *The Indian Express* report that was published on June 19

"restored children", economic condition of affected families, food security, and sensitisation about taking precautions against Covid-19.

The department claimed authorities had established direct interaction with affected children over the phone. Officials said at least once a week district and state-level officials were following up on these children saved from violence. The department said it had developed a structured questionnaire for this exercise.

Appreciating the steps taken by the government, the court called on the department secretary to file an affidavit by June 24, disclosing the nature of the instructions issued, and materials and documents related to the matter, "including the structured questionnaire, with illustrations of few cases" for a better understanding of the steps taken.

The court expressed unhappiness with a report submitted by the Home Department in which only the details of Bankura district, where 32 child marriages were prevented and one child was rescued, were mentioned.

Even the district data is updated only till April 29. "We expected a more accurate and detailed affidavit with candid disclosure of all facts. We are unhappy with the affidavit. We have shared our views during the course of hearing and brought to his attention the various gaps in the said affidavit," the judges said.

A senior home department officer said, "We have started the exercise to construct a detailed report that will be submitted to the Hon'ble High Court in the given time."

Woman shot dead, ex-boyfriend on the run: Cops

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
KOLKATA, JUNE 20

A WOMAN in her early twenties was shot dead allegedly by her former boyfriend in South Kolkata on Saturday morning, said the police.

The woman, identified as

third-year college student Priyanka Purakayasta, was shot dead allegedly by Jayanta Halder in the Regent Park area, said a senior officer.

The accused allegedly barged into the victim's home around 8 am, shot her from a close range without provocation, and escaped.

"Both were in a relationship but after coming to know that the man was married, the woman had ceased all ties with him. This might have led to the killing," the police officer said.

The police are looking for Halder, and the woman's body has been sent for autopsy.

City mariner goes missing on high seas

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
KOLKATA, JUNE 20

A MARINER was reported missing from a crude oil tanker vessel on its way to a port in South Korea from Singapore, his family said on Saturday.

Sambit Majumder, a middle-aged mariner with experience of over two decades, is a second engineer aboard Liberian-flag vessel MT Serengeti. He had left home in early February.

His family member said the shipping liner informed them of the incident on Thursday. According to the briefing, every-

thing was well till Tuesday evening. Majumder had dinner with other crew members around 8 pm before retiring to his cabin, the family said. But he did not turn up for breakfast the next morning, and crew members found him missing.

"Till now, there is no positive news. We have informed all the government agencies, including the local police station, as per protocol for a thorough investigation into the matter," a member of Majumder's family told PTI.

"The probe into the incident will be taken up by appropriate authorities. We suspect there is a crime behind his disappearance,"

the family member added.

His family has lodged a complaint with Netaji Nagar Police Station.

Majumder's wife Jayati expressed her disappointment with the way the shipping company responded to the incident. "We have no clue how Sambit went missing and it is a mystery to us," said a family member.

According to the company, Dynacom Tankers Management (DTM), appropriate measures were taken to trace Majumdar, and the Maritime Rescue Coordination centres in Hong Kong and the Philippines were alerted about the incident.

Gujarat Mineral Development Corporation Limited
e-Tender No. GMDC/ATPS-AOH-21/2020-21
Annual Over Hauling of 2x125 MW Power Plant with tools & tackles and supply of identified spares, consumables, equipments and materials
GMDC invites tender for The proposed Work of 'Annual Over Hauling of 2x125 MW Power Plant with tools & tackles and supply of identified spares, consumables, equipments and materials' VIL: Narichher, Tal: Lahpat, Dist: Kutch, Gujarat The e-Tender documents are available on following websites
Website: www.gmdcltd.com <https://gmdcltd.nprocure.com>
General Manager (Power), Ph: 079-2791 2952/2501, email: power@gmdcltd.com

Gujarat Urban Development Company Limited
(Govt. of Gujarat Undertaking)
CIN : U75140GJ1999SGC036051
"Karmyogi Bhavan", Block No.1, B1 wing, Ground Floor, Sector No.10/A, Gandhinagar-382010, Telefax:- 079-23246127 / 28
Email: contact@gudcltd.com Website: www.gudcltd.com

E-tendering Notice Ref.No.GUDC/ e-TENDERING/SJMMSVY/84.107.115 and SOLAR /III/1to10
Gujarat Urban Development Company Ltd. invites online tenders by e-tendering for (1) Rajpipla SEW II: Rs. 36.39 crore, (2) Kadi SEW IV : Rs. 5.82 crore, (3) Mehsana II (STP-balance works): Rs. 27.58 crore (without O&M) and (4) Solar Phase III Projects at 10 nos. of WTP/STP location of ULB of Gujarat: Rs. 6.41 crore, under SJMMSVY on EPC basis. Tenders will be uploaded soon on the web site <https://gudc.nprocure.com>. All subsequent information, notification, changes and amendments would be posted only on the aforesaid website.

No. D- 12014/1/2020- HFW/DPAB (DHME)
GOVERNMENT OF MIZORAM
HEALTH & FAMILY WELFARE DEPARTMENT
MIZORAM SECRETARIAT, MINECO, KHATLA, AIZAWL- 796001

Dated Aizawl, the 12th June, 2020
CORRIGENDUM

The last date fixed i.e on or before 10.6.2020 upto 12:00 Noon for receipt of Tender in the Tender Notice vide letter even No. of issue No.10 Dated 10.6.2020 should be read as **24.06.2020 upto 12: 00 Noon**.

Sd/- H. LALENGMAWIA
Secretary to the Government of Mizoram
Health & Family Welfare Department.

IPR No. 41

OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR GENERAL, MEDICAL EDUCATION & TRAINING, UTTAR PRADESH, 6th FLOOR, JAWAHAR BHAWAN, LUCKNOW.
No.: ME-3/2020/993 Lucknow: Dated :- 18 June, 2020
The Time Schedule of Second Round of Online Counselling of UP NEET PG - 2020
The Time Schedule for the Admission through Online counselling in the State of Uttar Pradesh for Government / Private Medical / Dental Colleges / Institutions / Universities for Postgraduate (MD/MS/Diploma/MDS Courses) is as follows:-
Date of Online Registration 22nd June 2020 (From 2:00 PM) To 26th June 2020
Online Security Fee Payment 22nd June 2020 (From 2:00 PM) To 30th June 2020
Expected date of Declaration of Merit List 2nd July 2020
Date of Online Choice Filling & Locking 06th July 2020 (From 4:00 PM) to 09th July 2020 Upto 11:00 AM
Declaration of result of seat allotment 10th, 11th July 2020
Date for Downloading Allotment letters & Admission 13th July 2020 to 17th July 2020
• Registration & Security Money will be deposited through Debit Card / Credit Card / Net Banking / E-Challan.
• For further important and detailed information kindly visit the website regularly <https://upneet.gov.in> & www.updgmte.in.
Director General

KARNATAKA STATE ROAD TRANSPORT CORPORATION
Civil Engineering Division, Tumkur - 572101.
No.KST:EE:TMK:JE:79:2020-21 DATE:19.06.2020
E-PROCUREMENT SHORT TERM TENDER NOTIFICATION 02/2020-21
Tenders are invited in E-Procurement mode from registered KPWD/CPWD/MES Contractors for the following work. Interested Contractors can register their names in the e-procurement cell and participate in the tenders. Tender Notification and further details for the work can be downloaded from 20.06.2020 free of cost from the e-procurement web site www.eproc.karnataka.gov.in.
Sl. No. Name of the work Amount put to tender (in Lakhs) E.M.D Last date for submission of tenders
1. Redevelopment of KSRTC Bus Stand in Davanagere City Under Smart City Mission 9341.00 93.41 Lakhs 07.07.2020
More details can be obtained from the office of Executive Engineer, KSRTC, CE Division, Gubbi Kalakshetra Road, KSRTC Bus Station, Tumkur during working hours on all working days.
Sd/- Executive Engineer
KSRTC, CE Division, Tumkur.
DIPR/DDU/367/2020-21

5 EXPRESS NETWORK

Watchdog warns of large-scale phishing attack

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, JUNE 20

INDIAN COMPUTER Emergency Response Team (CERT-In), the government's cyber watchdog, has warned of large-scale phishing attack across the country, taking advantage of the Covid-19 pandemic.

In an advisory issued Friday, CERT-In said that the "phishing campaign is expected to impersonate government agencies, departments and trade associations who have been tasked to oversee the disbursement of the government fiscal aid".

It warned people to be aware of "malicious phishing" emails, text messages, and messages on social media "to provide personal and financial information". It said there may be several emails, including ncov2019@gov.in, that spoof—or create fake email addresses that impersonate various authorities—which could be used in phishing.

"The malicious group claims to have 2 million individual email addresses and the attack campaign is expected to start on June 21," the advisory stated. The "malicious actors", it warned, are planning to send emails with the subject "free COVID-19 testing" for residents of Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai, Hyderabad and Ahmedabad.

CERT-In stated: "The phishing campaign is expected to use malicious emails under the pretext of local authorities in charge of dispensing government-funded Covid-19 support initiatives. Such emails are designed to drive recipients towards fake websites where they are deceived into downloading malicious files or entering personal and financial information."

The agency has advised people to not open attachments from unsolicited emails and be cautious about phishing domains and spelling errors in emails as some of the methods of protection.

FIR AGAINST JOURNALIST: ACT OF INTIMIDATION, SAYS MEDIA BODY

New Delhi: A media body on Saturday described as "an act of intimidation" the filing of an FIR in Uttar Pradesh against a journalist over a report on the impact of the lockdown on a village, saying it was part of an "established pattern" of harassment of independent scribes. In a statement, the Media Foundation put on record its strong protest over the FIR filed by the Uttar Pradesh government against Supriya Sharma, executive editor of news portal Scroll.in. The case was filed against Sharma for allegedly misrepresenting facts in a report on the impact of the lockdown in a village adopted by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, police sources had said on Thursday. **PTI**

Delhi constable death in riots: Chargesheet names Yogendra Yadav

SOMYA LAKHANI
NEW DELHI, JUNE 20

SWARAJ INDIA president Yogendra Yadav, student leader Kawalpreet Kaur and advocate D S Bindra find a mention in a chargesheet filed by the Delhi Police in the murder case of head constable Rattan Lal (42) during the riots in Northeast Delhi in February.

While the three are not part of the list of 17 accused, the chargesheet states that the "links of the organisers of the (Chand Bagh) protest site with the likes of D S Bindra (AIMIM), Kawalpreet Kaur (AISA), Devangana Kalita (Pinjra Tod), Safoora, Yogendra Yadav, etc itself indicates a hidden agenda behind the violence".

According to police, the Chand Bagh protest had been going on since mid-January.

As per the chargesheet, on February 24, "serious communal riots took place in Northeast Delhi,

BSF: Pak drone carrying weapons shot down at LoC

ARUN SHARMA
JAMMU, JUNE 20

THE BSF said that a Pakistani drone carrying arms and ammunition was shot down on Saturday morning at Rathua village in Kathua district's Hiranagar sector along the Line of Control -- months after Punjab Police claimed to have recovered weapons dropped by Pakistani drones.

The incident comes amid reports of militants facing shortage of weapons and increased vigil along the borders.

Pakistan's attempt to use a drone to airdrop weapons adds a new dimension to the militancy in Kashmir, said BSF Inspector General for Jammu Frontiers, NS Jammwal. He said a patrol party from Pansar border outpost (BOP) noticed a hexacopter drone flying at a height of 150-200 ft from Pakistan towards the Indian side



The downed drone

around 5.10 am. The drone fell nearly 250 metres on this side of the border after the BSF party fired several rounds at it.

Fitted with four batteries, a radio signal receiver and two GPS devices, it was 8 x 6.2 ft in size and weighed 18 kg. The drone was carrying a payload of nearly 5 kg, including a US-made M4 semi-automatic carbine, two magazines, 60 rounds and seven Chinese grenades. The payload carried the name of one Ali Bhai, Jammwal said, adding that he, must be present within 1-15 km range of the spot to receive the consignment.

At a high-level meet on Thursday, J&K DGP Dilbagh Singh had called for "extra attention" along the UT's border with Pakistan, saying that the neighbouring country will try to push in more terrorists and give impetus to violence in view of the border situation in Ladakh.

Assam pollution board tells OIL to shutter operations at Baghjan

TORA AGARWALA
GUWAHATI, JUNE 20

ASSAM'S POLLUTION watchdog has told Oil India Ltd (OIL) to shut down production and drilling at all installations in Upper Assam's Baghjan oilfield after discovering that the company had allegedly started operations "without obtaining prior consent to establish/consent to operate" from it. OIL's set-up in Baghjan, where a well has been burning for days after a blowout, is said to have been functioning since 2003.

The closure notice, sent by Pollution Control Board, Assam (PBCA) to the CEO of OIL, also cited a number of alleged environmental transgressions by the PSU.



The Baghjan fire. File

The ecological disaster at Baghjan in Tinsuika district was precipitated by the blowout at well number 5, reported on May 27. On June 9, the well—located close to the Dibru-Saikhowa na-

tional park—caught fire, leading to the deaths of two OIL firefighters.

Around 11,000 people from the surrounding villages are now in relief camps.

Delhi caps testing, treatment fees at pvt facilities for Covid

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
JAIPUR, JUNE 20

THE RAJASTHAN Health Department on Saturday issued notifications fixing a limit on the charges for Covid-19 testing at private laboratories to Rs 2,200 as well as limiting the per day general ward charge for treatment at private hospitals to Rs 2,000. It also limited the per day charge for a bed in the ICU with a ventilator to Rs 4,000.

The notifications came on Saturday, a day after Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot chaired a meeting regarding the issue.

The notification on testing price limit covers all private laboratories accredited by the National Accreditation Board for Testing and Calibration Laboratories (NABL) and approved by the Indian Council of



3,601 people are undergoing treatment in private hospitals in the city. *Gajendra Yadav*

Medical Research (ICMR).

In another notification, the government said a private hospital cannot charge a Covid patient being treated in the general ward more than Rs 2,000 per

day. This price is inclusive of bed charges, meals, consultations charges, PPE kits and monitoring, along with investigations such as CBC, urine routine, serum creatinine and chest X-ray

as well as procedures such as Ryle tube insertion, urinary tract catheterisation and IV cannula, said the notification.

The charges excluded from the daily price of Rs 2,000 in-

clude investigations like HIV spot, anti HCV, Hbs Ag, LFT, USG, 2D ECHO, ECG, CT scan, MRI, PET scan, medicines and interventional procedures like insertion, chemo port insertion, bronchoscopic procedures, biopsies, ascitic/pleural tapping, among others. Charges for individual rooms/isolation wards do not come under the ambit of the new notification.

Similarly, for an ICU with ventilator, the maximum charge per bed has been fixed at Rs 4,000 per day.

The notification states that all private hospitals "identified/acquired/authorised for treatment of Covid-19 patients", treat patients at these prices and not direct them to government hospitals.

Strict action will be taken against those flouting these orders, said the government.

BABRI DEMOLITION CASE

CBI court set to record statements of Advani, 8 others via video-conference

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
LUCKNOW, JUNE 20

A SPECIAL CBI court in Lucknow, hearing the Babri Masjid demolition case, has decided to record statements of nine accused, including former deputy prime minister Lal Krishna Advani, under Section 313 of the Code of Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC) through video conference between June 22 and July 2.

The court has fixed dates to get their statements recorded from their residence and issued direction to the director of National Informatics Center (NIC), Lucknow, to make necessary arrangements for the same. The court will record state-



LK Advani will record statement on June 30

ment of R N Srivastava on June 22, Mahant Nritya Gopal Das on June 23, Jai Bhagwan Goyal on June 24, Amar Nath Goyal on June 25 and Sudhir Kakkar on June 26, Acharya Dharmendra Deo on June 29, Lal Krishna Advani on June 30, BJP veteran Murli Manohar Joshi on July 1 and Kalyan Singh on July 2, said prosecution.

Advani, Jai Bhagwan, Amar Nath and Joshi are residents of Delhi while RN Srivastava, Das

and Kalyan Singh are living in Uttar Pradesh, and Deo in Rajasthan and Kakkar in Punjab, said prosecution.

Singh, Das, Jai Bhagwan and Amar Nath are said to be unwell. Under Section 313, a judge questions the accused on the basis of evidence put before the court during trial, and the accused is given an opportunity to explain the circumstances and the allegations levelled against him.

The statement of accused Ram Chandra Khatri, who is lodged in a Sonipat jail in Haryana in a criminal case, could not be recorded through video conference because glitches in internet connectivity. The court fixed July 3 as the next date for recording statement.

Jharkhand flays Centre's nod for commercial mining

ABHISHEK ANGAD
RANCHI, JUNE 20

JHARKHAND CHIEF Minister Hemant Soren on Saturday said the Union coal ministry's decision to go ahead with commercial mining by private players and subsequent coal block auctions, without taking its concerns into consideration, shows "blatant disregard" for co-operative federalism.

He said there are potential socio-economic and environmental costs to the decision, and that such mining would have an impact on forests and the tribal population.

"We have filed a petition in the Supreme Court. This is a big policy decision and the state government needs to be taken into confidence. Mining has been always a burning issue... A lot of issues like land, rights of the people... need to be sorted. We have



Hemant Soren

decided not to hurry," Soren said Saturday. He added that there should have been a survey to ascertain whether people benefited from the move. "That's why we need to fight this," he added.

"The need for fair assessment of the social and environmental impact on the huge tribal population and vast tracts of forest lands of the state and its residents which are likely to be adversely affected," read an application filed by the state government.



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6 LAC SHOWDOWN

Discussions on with China for another round of military, diplomacy talks

SUSHANT SINGH
NEW DELHI, JUNE 20

AFTER THE failure of dialogue at the Major General level to break the deadlock over the standoff at the LAC in Ladakh, discussions are underway between India and China to have another round of military and diplomatic talks next week.

A government official told *The Indian Express* that the military talks will be held at the level of Corps Commander in Ladakh, where the Indian side will be led by GOC 14 Corps Lt General Harinder Singh while the diplomatic talks in Beijing will be led by India's ambassador to China, Vikram Misri. Preliminary discussions to finalise the schedule of talks are currently on the two sides, the official said.

"The talks at the Major General level have failed to break the impasse and make progress. We thus need talks at a higher level, at the Corps Commander level, and both sides have been talking over the hotline to fix the dates for the talk," the official explained.

"The military talks can be expected to be held in the next 4-5 days, say next week," the official said.

Chinese foreign ministry's

statement late Friday had also said that "a second commander-level meeting should happen as soon as possible to deal with the situation on the ground".

The official also said that the agenda of the meeting will be finalised in due course, but it is likely to build on the decisions agreed upon in the previous meeting of the two Corps Commanders. The last meeting of the 14 Corps Commander with his Chinese counterpart was held on June 6, where certain decisions about disengagement on the the LAC were taken.

These decisions were to be implemented after meetings between the military commanders on the ground. But the whole process was derailed after the violent faceoff between the soldiers of both sides on June 15, which left 20 Indian soldiers dead, 76 injured and 10 in Chinese custody.

The last meeting between the military commanders took place at the Major General level on Thursday, where 10 Indian soldiers, including four officers, were released by the Chinese side. The Indian delegation was led by GOC 3 Infantry Division, Major General Abhijit Bapat.

The Army has clarified that no bridge has been made on the Galwan river, on the track going

to PP 14, during the period of the standoff. Army said that the bridge is on the Shyok River, very close to the Shyok-Galwan meeting point, aligned in North to South direction, and links Daulat Beg Oldie to Shyok and Darbuk.

The clarification assumes significance as the June 6 meeting at the Corps Commander level has decided to create a kind of buffer zone between the junction of Shyok and Galwan rivers on the west and the LAC on the east. It was also mentioned in the Chinese foreign ministry's statement Friday that "the Indian side promised (in June 6 meeting) that they would not cross the estuary of the Galwan river to patrol and build facilities". The violent faceoff of June 15 also happened while undertaking gradual disengagement in this 'buffer zone' after talks between local military commanders.

Meanwhile, the situation on the ground continues to remain tense with reports of massive Chinese military buildup along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) opposite Indian positions in Depsang, Galwan, Hot Springs, Pangong Tso area, Koyul, Fukche and Demchok. The Indian side has also mobilised and deployed a large number of troops in the area to respond to any situation on the border.

Cong leaders demoralising our soldiers, says Nadda

LIZ MATHEW
NEW DELHI, JUNE 20

AMID OPPOSITION parties asking questions over developments at the Line of Actual Control, the BJP on Saturday talked up Prime Minister Narendra Modi's remarks at the all-party meeting and attacked the Congress for "raising questions".

BJP president J P Nadda, who addressed party cadres in Rajasthan and Telangana on virtual platforms, accused the Congress of being an "irresponsible" opposition and said its

leaders are trying to "demoralise" the nation and the soldiers.

"In the all-party meeting, everyone unanimously stood with the Prime Minister. But the Congress wanted to know how did it happen, why did it happen... where did it happen... You have been in power, don't you know how statements are made by the government on such issues?" Nadda said while addressing the BJP Rajasthan unit.

"The Prime Minister has made it clear that no one has entered and no one is there. Indian Forces are committed to protect

the borders. But the irresponsible opposition is trying to find blame," he said.

Nadda's remarks came after leaders across party lines sought answers over the killing of 20 soldiers from PM Modi, who told the all-party meeting on Friday that there was no intrusion on Indian soil and no capturing of any military posts.

The Prime Minister's Office on Saturday issued a clarification saying the violence took place on June 15 because China was trying to erect structures "just across the LAC" and did not desist from such actions.



Himachal Pradesh Chief Minister Jai Ram Thakur consoles the family of Ankush Thakur, one of the 20 soldiers who were killed in a clash with Chinese troops in Ladakh on June 15, during his visit to Karohtha village in Hamirpur district on Saturday. Pradeep Kumar

'If 20 killed on our side, more than double would be dead on other side'

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, JUNE 20

IN FIRST official remarks from the government, Union Minister of State for Road Transport and Highways General V K Singh (ret'd) on Saturday said that the number of casualties on the Chinese side in the bloody clash at Galwan Valley in Ladakh on June 15 would be at least twice that of the Indian side.

"Agar hamare 20 (shaheed) hue hain toh wahan pe kam se kam double se jayada hi honge (if 20 have been killed on our side then more than double would be dead on the other side)," the former Army chief said in an interview to News24 television channel.

"Forty-three ki ek count di gayi hai, jo ki aadhikarik taur per di gayi hai. Wo woh hai jo hamare logon ne dekhe jo ki gire aur unko pade dikhayi diye hain. Uske alawa aur uske andar kitne ghayal hue honge pata nahin kisi ko. Toh yeh kahna ki hamare log khade the aur who aakar dande se maar diye, aisa nahin hai. Agar unhone ne ek mara hai, toh hamaro ne do maare honge (A count of 43 has been given at the official level. Our troops saw these many had collapsed. No one knows how many more were injured. So it is not correct to say that our troops remained standing when they



MoS General (ret'd) VK Singh

came and beat them with sticks. If they killed one, our troops would have taken out two of theirs)," he said.

The minister also said the Indian side handed over Chinese troops who had strayed into Indian territory after the violent standoff.

"Woh apne ilake per the, hum apne ilake mein the. Jab jhadap hui toh kuch hamare unki taraf chale gaye, kuch unke hamari taraf aa gaye. Isiliye, jab kal kisi ne chala rakha tha media ke andar ki hamare itne logon ko subah lautaya, isi tarah hamne unke logon ko lautaya jo hamari taraf aa gaye the (We were in our area, they were in theirs. When the clash happened, some of them came to this side and some of ours to that side. As somewhere it was reported in the media yesterday that some Indian troops were handed over by Chinese in the morning, we too handed over their people who had come to our side)," Singh said in his interview.

However, the minister said China is not going to talk about their casualties.

Delhi to Beijing, via Ladakh: Accusations, and counters

Shubhajit Roy goes through statements by India & China to see the convergences and divergences

CLAIM ON GALWAN VALLEY: As Beijing staked claim over Galwan Valley, India said it is not in accordance with China's own position in the past. Beijing never claimed the valley since 1962.

CHINA: Galwan Valley is located on Chinese side of LAC in west section of China-India boundary. For many years, Chinese border troops have been patrolling in this region. Since April this year, Indian border troops have unilaterally and continuously built roads, bridges and other facilities at the LAC in Galwan Valley.

INDIA: The position with regard to Galwan Valley area has been historically clear. Attempts by the Chinese to now advance exaggerated and untenable claims on LAC there are not acceptable. They are not in accordance with China's own position in the past.

PATROLLING: Beijing accuses India of building infrastructure, but India says all infrastructure built is on its own side of LAC.

CHINA: Since April this year,

Indian border troops have unilaterally and continuously built roads, bridges and other facilities at the LAC in Galwan Valley. China has lodged representations and protests on multiple occasions but India has gone even further to cross the LAC and made provocations.

INDIA: Indian troops are familiar with the alignment of LAC in all sectors of border areas, including in Galwan Valley. They abide by it scrupulously, as they do elsewhere. The Indian side has never undertaken any actions across the LAC. In fact, they have been patrolling this area for a long time without any incident. All infrastructure built by the Indian side is naturally on its own side.

WHAT HAPPENED SINCE EARLY MAY: Both sides confirmed face-offs since early May, New Delhi says it is not changing the status quo.

CHINA: On early morning of May 6, Indian border troops crossed LAC by night and built fortification and barricades, which impeded patrol of Chinese troops. They

JUNE 15 BORDER CLASH: Both sides accuse the other of starting the violence. Beijing doesn't admit of its own casualties.

CHINA: On evening of June 15, India's front-line troops, in violation of the agreement, reached at the commander-level meeting, once again crossed the LAC...and attacked Chinese officers and soldiers who went there for negotiation, thus triggering fierce physical conflicts and causing casualties..

INDIA: The Chinese side departed from these



Planet Labs

GALWAN VALLEY

understandings in respect of LAC in Galwan and sought to erect structures just across LAC. When this attempt was foiled, Chinese troops took violent actions on June 15 that directly resulted in casualties.

in the area. This resulted in a face-off, which was addressed by ground commanders as per provisions of bilateral agreements and protocols. We do not accept the contention that India was unilaterally changing the status quo. On the contrary, we were maintaining it.

JAISHANKAR-WANG YI PHONE CALL: Angry phone



call, and accusing each other, but ending on a note to cool down the situation. Delhi asks Beijing to take corrective steps.

CHINA: During Foreign Minister Wang Yi's phone conversation with External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar, he repeated China's stern position, demanding India to carry out a thorough investigation into the incident, severely punish those who should be held accountable, strictly discipline Indian frontline troops, and immediately stop all provocative actions to ensure that such incidents do not happen again.

INDIA: Jaishankar and Wang had a conversation on June 17 wherein EAM conveyed our protest in the strongest terms on events leading up to and on the violent face-off on June 15. He firmly rejected the unfounded allegations made by the Chinese side

and misrepresentation of understandings reached between the Senior Commanders. He also underlined that it was for China to reassess its actions and take corrective steps.

WAY FORWARD: Both sides hope the other will follow the consensus/understanding reached.

CHINA: China hopes India will work with us, follow faithfully the important consensus reached between the two leaders, abide by agreements reach between the two governments, strengthen communication and coordination on properly managing the current situation through diplomatic and military channels, and jointly uphold peace and stability in the border areas.

INDIA: We expect the Chinese side will sincerely follow the understanding reached between the Foreign Ministers to ensure peace and tranquility in the border areas, which is so essential for the overall development of our bilateral relations.<

FULL REPORT ON
www.indianexpress.com

'IAF has geographical advantage, decision on use depends on govt'

MANRAJ GREWAL
SHARMA
CHANDIGARH, JUNE 20

FROM LANDING the mammoth transport carrier Hercules on Daulat Beg Oldie (DBO) airstrip in 2013 to more recently deploying Apache helicopters to provide air support to troops in Ladakh, and moving fighter jets to airfields close to the LAC in the last few days, the Indian Air Force has been consistently ramping up its operations in Ladakh.

Even as Air Chief Marshal R K S Bhaduria on Saturday said the IAF is "well prepared and suitably deployed" to deal with any eventuality arising out of the Galwan standoff, analysts told *The Sunday Express* that although IAF enjoys a geographical advantage over air power, any decision on its use will have to be taken after careful consideration by the government.

Also, occupation of the Galwan heights could impact the DBO airstrip, they said.



Air Vice Marshal Manmohan Bahadur (ret'd), Group Capt Ravinder S Chhatwal (ret'd)



Air Vice Marshal K K Nowhar (ret'd), of the Centre for Air Power Studies, said utilisation of air power in direct support of the Army along the LAC in these areas has never been contemplated. "But it is feasible. We will definitely be asked if the chips are down," he said.

Any escalation, said Air Vice Marshal Manmohan Bahadur (ret'd), can either be horizontal, wherein you can fan your forces across the LAC from Galwan and Pangong Tso to Sikkim, or vertical. "Use of air power enhances

the force used and would constitute vertical escalation. But if one side uses it, so would the other," he said.

Bahadur said it would be prudent to assume that China would have factored in air power as well.

Sources said the forward bases of Thoise and Leh, which have been operational for several years, are seeing heavy mobilisation of troops and machinery. Nowhar said these bases are of tremendous importance in deployment of men and machinery to the forward areas in the eventuality of a conflict. The IAF transport aircraft can also undertake airdrops, besides landing on various unprepared surfaces.

More recently, IAF has deployed Apache, an attack helicopter, and Chinook, a strategic lift helicopter with an impressive ability to transport troops, machinery and deliver heavy payloads to high altitudes, in Ladakh. The Chinooks were inducted into the IAF airbase at Chandigarh in

March 2019.

Group Capt Ravinder S Chhatwal (ret'd), former Senior Fellow, Centre for Airpower Studies, who is pursuing a PhD on Chinese air power from JNU, said IAF holds a geographical advantage over the Chinese Air Force despite the latter's large fleet of combat jets. "The Chinese have 2,100 combat aircraft — the numbers they have given upfront, though they could have more — against (IAF's) 850. In sheer numbers, they outscore us, but to run an air campaign you have to get these jets close to the border, and they have a limited number of airfields in the area, with most of these in Tibet plateau at an average height of 10,000 feet," he said.

The Chinese are also at a slight disadvantage due to location of their airfields at a great distance from one another, making it difficult for a jet to be diverted to another field in case of any mechanical failure or insufficient fuel. FULL REPORT ON
www.indianexpress.com

Ex-IAF chief: Prudent option is to de-escalate situation diplomatically

DEEPTIMAN TIWARY
NEW DELHI, JUNE 20

INDIA HAS certain advantages over China as far as air warfare is concerned, former Indian Air Force chief Fali Homi Major said, adding that military action to force the PLA to withdraw from their positions in the Galwan valley area should be the last option.

Major was Air Chief Marshal between April 2007 and May 2009 and earlier commanded the Air Force in Leh (Ladakh) in the aftermath of the Kargil war.

"As far as our Air Force preparations are concerned in that region, we are wonderfully placed. There is no doubt. We have many advantages of air fields, heights and altitude, etc. I am not talking of a war, but in the local area if there is some requirement, the Air Force is very well prepared and alert. It has always been so in that area. At the moment, Air Force's operational preparedness is top of the line," Major told



Former Indian Air Force chief Fali Homi Major

The Indian Express on the situation in Ladakh vis a vis China.

The former air chief, however, said that military action to force the PLA to withdraw from their positions in the Galwan area should be the last option.

"If everything else fails and the government feels a small military action could achieve the desired aims, then probably (it is an option). Unless a situation

arises, one cannot say. The PM has already made it clear if there is a provocation then the whole thing will take a different turn. To exercise a military option is the will of the government. And they won't do it till such time they stop making headway diplomatically. The prudent option would be to de-escalate the situation diplomatically and perhaps raise the required levels to do that. Only then would it be clear as to what the next course of action would be," Major said.

The Air Officer Commanding Leh (Ladakh) in 1999, Major said, "I don't know if what happened in the Galwan valley was a provocation or a localised scuffle that turned bad. It shouldn't have happened. I would not put it as provocation on either side. These perception lines, like the area between finger four and finger eight, these are patrol areas which both parties are doing so far. In the absence of a delineated border, this kind of an uncertain position will remain. The final

solution will be to delineate the border which we have been trying to do for a long time but it's not happening," he said.

He was non-committal on whether China was forcing a change in status quo with its recent moves. "I wouldn't make an attempt to say whether it's right or wrong. That's taking an extreme view on both sides. That's not an easy question to answer," he said.

He did agree with the general view that China was typically pushing its cause at a time when India was facing a difficult situation with the pandemic. "China has made such moves in the recent past in many parts of the world and not just here. Whether it is South China Sea, Indonesia, Vietnam or anywhere else, these kinds of moves have been made. Everyone is watching China across the world. As a regional power, all that we have done so far is indicative of how we are going to deal with China," Major said.

Photos: Dipankar Ghose



TILKA MANJHI CHOWK



Here we are, at a labour mandi. A market where we sell ourselves for Rs 200 a day. *Hamaari halaat itni kharaab hai ki hum bolte hain, humein khareed lo. Nahin toh bhukhe rah jayenge poore din*

VISHNU DAS, A DAILY-WAGER WHO TURNS UP AT THE CHOWK EVERY DAY



AS A DISTRICT UNLOCKS

Unlock, unlock, unlock, Prime Minister Narendra Modi recently defined the way forward to chief ministers. Beginning today, *The Indian Express* drops anchor in Bhagalpur to track this unlockdown.

With its second-highest Covid burden in Bihar, its labour chowk swelling with returning migrants, its social divides deepening in an election year, this district, of over thousand villages and with the third largest city in the state, captures both rural and urban distress — and charts the challenges ahead

DIPANKAR
GHOSE



AN EXPRESS SERIES

FOR ONE week, it has been the same. Arrive at 6 am. Bow at the Mahavir *mandir*. Spend Rs 5 for a cup of *chai*. Count the rest of the money: Rs 160 today. Then, wait. At first, patiently. Sitting on his haunches, staring out into the distance. Or engaged in conversation with those around him. In an hour, Vishnu Das's eyes are more desperate, hunting for signs of a contractor, or somebody who will offer work. Sometimes, he asks a passer-by, "*Kaam chahiye kuchh* (Do you want work done?)" By 8.30 am, the crowd around him begins to thin, the shops prepare to open. Another morning has passed. Das has not found work this entire week. Tomorrow he hopes, will be better.

Das, 46, is an old-timer at Tilka Manjhi Chowk, the site where daily-wagers collect every day before dawn to find work. The chowk is the centre of Bhagalpur town by day. But now, in these uncertain times, the centre and the ground beneath it is shifting for most people like Das as they grapple with the effects of a pandemic and the lockdown that followed.

Bhagalpur, its district headquarters 239 km from Patna, has all the trappings of small towns raring to break into the big league, its aspiration defined by its coaching centres, the markets that sell silk saris and the shopping arcades that display flatscreen televisions. It's one of four Bihar towns on the Centre's list of proposed Smart Cities, yet, the district is dragged down by high levels of poverty and malnutrition.

In a way, Bhagalpur is illustrative of challenges across the country as districts, especially those facing the brunt of migrant distress — exodus or influx — try to get back on track.

Tilka Manjhi Chowk

At the chowk's centre is a statue of Manjhi, one of India's first recorded tribal freedom fighters, who was hung by the British for his irreverence, as folklore says, right at this chowk.

Das chuckles, "Manjhi may have died fighting for our freedom. But here we are, at a labour *mandi*. A market where we sell our-

selves for Rs 200 a day. *Hamaari halaat itni kharaab hai ki hum bolte hai, humein khareed lo. Nahin toh bhukhe rah jayenge poore din* (Our situation is so bad, we put ourselves up for sale, saying we will go hungry otherwise)."

Life has always been hard for Das, who lives alone in a shanty 2 km away. He doesn't talk much about his past, except that he was born and raised in Bhagalpur. "*Akela hoon*," he says, when pushed. "*Koi nahin hai*," he adds, with a finality that resists more prodding questions.

He is more open about his present situation. When the lockdown was first announced, the chowk was empty, he says. Das tried to move out to look for work, but every time he did so, he was heckled or charged at with a police *lathi*. "I stopped after four days," he says.

For a month, from the end of March to the end of April, Das stayed home. By the second week of May, though, there was a new problem at the chowk. Migrants, who had lost jobs in Maharashtra, Gujarat, or Delhi, began arriving, desperate for money. According to state records, an estimated 63,962 migrants have returned to Bhagalpur since the lockdown.

Among them, Shyam Sundar Yadav, who worked in a warehousing company in Pune. He walked, and hitched rides to Bhagalpur. Once here, he arrived at the chowk to look for work. "I have been here for a month now. For one week I lifted cement sacks at a construction site. After that, nothing," he says.

Das continues, "When the migrants came, there was a huge number at the chowk. Maybe 400 people a day. Then slowly, people realised there was no work. Now even those who came for years have stopped. There are only about a hundred a day, and even they have no work."

Asked why there is no work even after the government announced the 'un-lockdown', Das and the others say there can only be one reason: Fear.

Ram Krishan Singh, a mason, says construction drives the economy of the labour market. "Those who were building something have stopped putting in money because they are afraid. What if another lockdown happens? Also, money is hard to come by these days. So if someone needs five people, he makes do with two. Even when we get work, we get paid less. Earlier we could get Rs 300-400 a day. Now it will be no more than Rs 150," Singh says.

Frustrated with the wait for work, the men have begun talking about "other options". Many, they say, have taken to roaming the by-lanes of Bhagalpur, asking for odd jobs by knocking on doors of shops. Some have returned to villages hoping to get MNREGA jobs.

Then, there is the other option. Right next to Tilka Manjhi, every morning, people line up on either side of the road to sell vegetables. Here, alongside the established ones who sell out of carts, there are the new entrants who sit on mats on the road. If nothing else, Yadav says, he will do that. "Some of those at the chowk have begun going to the *mandi*... They earn between Rs 50-100 a day. At least it is something."

JLN Medical College and Hospital, Mayaganj

A paved road, with wild grass on either side, snakes around the main building of the 800-bed Jawaharlal Nehru Medical College and Hospital. Past a parking lot, an administrative block and some shanties, the road ends in a place that's unsettlingly still, with only a white building in sight. It's a new building, with a board that says 'MCH' — the 100-bed Mother and Child Healthcare wing. Today, it is the isolation ward of JLN Hospital, the dedicated Covid care hospital in the district.

At 11 am on a Wednesday, Balram Das arrives in his tempo that has a 'COVID duty' sticker.



KHALIFABAGH MARKET

75% of business has gone away. Even the 25% sales I am doing are of things like nighties, undergarments. Clothes people need at home. Beyond that, nothing."

SHYAM SUNDAR NEWETIA, WHO OWNS 'MATCHING CORNER BOUTIQUE'



COVID-19 CASES IN BHAGALPUR

Date	Cases	Discharged	Active
May 15	33	8	25
May 20	59	12	47
May 25	76	27	49
May 30	140	53	87
June 4	204	85	118
June 9	267	141	125
June 14	324	197	126
June 20	348	266	81

Note: The 1 death in Bhagalpur took place on May 31

He sits on the bench, a mask hanging loosely around his face, playing a game on his phone. He is waiting for the hospital staff to hand him the garbage. There are three big bags today; two weeks ago, there were many more, he says.

Bhagalpur district now has the second highest number of Covid cases in Bihar — 348, compared to Patna's 377. But recovery is strong, with 266 already discharged, and only 81 active cases. The district has recorded one death so far.

Says Dr R C Mandal, Chief Superintendent of the hospital, "About two weeks ago, we changed strategy. We realised that a vast number of our cases are asymptomatic. So while earlier, all cases were in the isolation centre, now we only have those who are symptomatic and serious. Asymptomatic patients are placed in the Covid care centres. Right now, we have no serious cases at the isolation centre, and only four who are symptomatic," Mandal says.

Thus the deserted surroundings, and the three garbage bags.

"Everything is under control. There are only four cases that require medical attention, and two patients who have fever. Even the one person who died had cancer. For now, there is absolutely no reason to panic," adds Mandal.

The lack of serious patients is reason for solace, for now, but the numbers show how small

the margin for error is. Mandal admits that JLN Hospital is the only large medical college for a 200-sq-km area covering three states. "There is a big hospital like this in Patna, Dhanbad in Jharkhand, and Siliguri in West Bengal. Everyone comes here, and we need to be ready," Mandal says. Besides, the Covid numbers have been rising steadily (*see box*).

For a hospital that serves so many, the numbers too allow for no complacency. There are all of 22 ventilators, 10 of them new, and 64 ICU beds. Plus not enough protective equipment.

A doctor at the hospital says on condition of anonymity, "One of the reasons asymptomatic patients were moved to Covid care centres was that the hospital couldn't handle 100 patients. There weren't enough protective equipment. Even now, we make do with kits that are hardly protective."

The testing numbers are also abysmally low. Dr Vijay Kumar Singh, Civil Surgeon in the district, says the district is conducting 315 tests a day. Overall, till June 15, it had conducted 5,632 tests. With 333 testing positive until that date, it's a confirmation rate of 6.2 per cent, higher than the national average of 5.7 per cent. Of the 333 who tested positive, 311 are from tests on 1,801 returning migrants, a confirmation rate of 17.26 per cent.

There are other concerns too. With JLN set aside for Covid cases, the non-Covid cases are being handled by the older, smaller, and much less advanced Sadar Hospital. Dr Mandal says he shifted at least 10 senior doctors to Sadar. But the hospital is showing signs of creaking under the strain. There are patients waiting on the floor, some sleeping on it.

Singh, the district Civil Surgeon, admits he is worried about the monsoon. "In crucial departments like paediatrics and anaesthesia, we have two and three doctors respectively. The load is getting too much. Which is why despite being a Covid-only hospital, we have had to open the emergency ward of JLN with 150 beds," Singh says.

Khalifabagh Market, Bhagalpur

Bhagalpur has earned itself many monikers over the ages. The 'city of academia', because of the ancient Vikramshila University, is now associated with the 1989 Bhagalpur riots and the infamous blindings of the following year. It is called Bihar's silk city as well. And yet, for locals, what sticks is the image of a town of traffic jams.

Shyam Sundar Newetia, a shopkeeper at Khalifabagh, the town's busiest market, bristles at the sight of the crowd outside his shop.

"These people who are out on the street... You think they are coming to buy? No. They are bored at home, so they are here. Fools! I don't allow them to sit in my shop anymore," he says.



JLN MEDICAL COLLEGE AND HOSPITAL, MAYAGANJ

There are only four Covid-19 cases that require medical attention, and two patients who have fever... Even the one person who died had cancer. For now, there is no reason to panic."

DR R C MANDAL, CHIEF SUPERINTENDENT

Ever since restrictions began to ease, traffic has returned to Bhagalpur's narrow streets, where shops open by 11 am. The motorcycles, rickshaws and pedestrians are all out in force, enough to make mockery of any intended social distancing. Masks hang loosely on faces, if at all, and pedestrians brush past each other.

The roads might suggest normalcy, but, as Newetia says, it is all a mirage. Shops are empty, sale registers bare. It's a time of deep distress.

Newetia owns 'Matching Corner Boutique', a 50-year-old store that sells clothes, primarily for women. He opened the store on June 1 and since then, business has been dire. "About 75% of business has gone away. People want to hold on to their money in these uncertain times. Even the 25 per cent sale I am doing is of nighties or undergarments," Newetia says.

But there are things to be thankful for. Such as the fact that he owns the shop. "Those on rent have let go of most of their staff. There is no money. Last year, one of those rickshaws you see would refuse to take you to the railway station for Rs 40; today, he will go for 10," he says.

Most businessmen in Bhagalpur also complain about the timing of the shutdown. Newetia says, "From June to November, there is the wedding season, Durga Puja and then Chhat festival. Right now is when we should be having festive sales."

An employee at Hotel Chinmayee Inn, one of the city's biggest, says that during the wedding season, their 59 rooms would be fully booked. "As of today, only four rooms are occupied. Also, a lot of our clientele used to come for trade from Patna or Kolkata. As long as trains don't restart, that won't happen," says a staff member.

A km away, is Mayfair restaurant, one of Bhagalpur's most popular eating joints. At 2 pm on a Thursday, there is one family at a table.

Owner Navin Nishchal says, "People have just stopped coming. I reopened the restaurant only earlier this month. Most of the orders are deliveries from either Zomato or Swiggy... I had 22 people working with me. I have seven now," he says wistfully.

On some days, when his cellphone rings, he fervently hopes it's an order; but these days, there are more calls asking for jobs.

"One of them told me he worked in a restaurant in Pune and is now back in Bhagalpur. He said he earned Rs 22,000 a month but could make do with Rs 12,000 now. It broke my heart, but I could do nothing," he says.

Right next to Nishchal, a family of three are waiting for their order. The kitchen door swings open and three plates of *dahi vada* emerge. The waiter serves them and asks, "*Aur kuchh?*" The answer to that question, in times such as these, may well decide his future.

Across
THE AISLE



PCHIDAMBARAM

Website: pchidambaram.in
Twitter @Pchidambaram_IN

Mr Modi’s dream that the 21st century will be a China-India led Asian century is practically over. It is obvious that Mr Modi did not take a correct measure of Mr Xi. Whether Mr Xi took a correct measure of Mr Modi is a matter of speculation. The two leaders cannot be close friends again. They can still do business and sign one-step-at-a-time agreements in the manner that Mr Narasimha Rao, Mr Vajpayee and Dr Manmohan Singh did with their counterparts in China

inside
TRACK

COOMI KAPOOR



RIDING HIGH, BUT RIDER

IN MODI 1.0, Rajnath Singh was fairly invisible though he held the key Home Affairs portfolio and was the senior-most Cabinet minister. Arun Jaitley was usually in the spotlight on government issues and Amit Shah on the political front. At the start of Modi 2.0, Amit Shah as Home Minister projected a larger than life image. But in February this year, Shah seemed to have gone on a temporary hiatus and Singh did most of the talking on behalf of the government, whether on the lockdown, the migrant problem, the India-China confrontation or India-Nepal relations. Political observers were surprised that Singh was even included in the Group of Ministers on the Covid-19 crisis. By virtue of his seniority, Singh automatically chaired the key committee, though epidemic management falls under the Home Ministry. Singh may be politically far more relevant today than before, but the danger of being pushed upwards is that he can also be a convenient scapegoat.

PAWARFUL RUMBLINGS

THE outsourcing of the administration of Maharashtra to bureaucrats by Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray has infuriated his alliance partners and some in his party. The CM is seldom to be seen at his office or official residence, and is not available on the phone after 11 pm. He clears files only after the Chief Secretary’s approval. Frustrated Congress state leaders may make the most noise but the man to watch is Sharad Pawar. The NCP leader has objected more than once to the CM’s overcautious bureaucratic approach. For instance, the CM wanted to delay the resumption of domestic flights to Mumbai, hence the contradictory messages emanating from Mumbai to airlines for the first two days after flights started. While Pawar believes the only way to revive the economy is to lift the lockdown, Thackeray favours the bureaucracy’s pleas for a more gradual return to normalcy. Thackeray’s lack of political leadership is seen in his inability to engage with Mumbai’s industry, which should have played a major role in organising relief and healthcare. After the Nisarga cyclone, Thackeray went on a single aerial survey of Raigad district, while the 79-year old Pawar, a cancer survivor, made a gruelling road trip of the devastated region.

Out of
MY MIND

MEGHNADDESAI



IN THE second millennium of the Common Era, England and France fought each other off and on for 800 years — across the English Channel, in Europe, in India, and North America. The result was a draw, though each thinks it won. Then, in the twentieth century, they made Entente Cordiale — an alliance which has stayed for a hundred years and more. India and China have been in stand-off hostility since the late 1950s when India discovered the Chinese incursion into Aksai Chin, ‘a region where not a blade of

ARE INDIA and China at the beginning of a new and contentious era? So it seems. In chapter 1, Chinese troops stealthily intruded a few kilometres into Indian territory — without being detected — and occupied key points in the Galwan Valley, Hot Springs and Pangong Tso. The face-off on May 5-6 brought to light the intrusion. In chapter 2, on the night of June 15-16, Chinese troops clashed with Indian troops leaving 20 men dead on the Indian side; 80 soldiers were injured and 10 were taken prisoner and released on June 18. The India-China border — or Line of Actual Control (LAC) — has been simmering since the 1962 war, but this is the first occasion since 1975 when lives were lost. To hold the peace for 45 years was no mean achievement. Under Mr Modi’s watch, that tenuous peace has been shattered.

A FALSE NARRATIVE

The narrative that the Modi government had assiduously built in the last six years was absolutely false. That Mr Narendra Modi, then the chief minister of Gujarat, was a favourite of the Chinese, who hosted him on four occasions; that Mr Modi, unlike any other prime minister, visited China on five occasions, underscoring the special relationship between the two countries; and that Mr Modi and Mr Xi had a special chemistry between them as reflected in Wuhan

CRYING WOLF

Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot’s operation ‘Wolf Wolf’, where he carted Congress MLAs to the JW Marriott resort, Jaipur, for over a week was not because he feared a threat from the BJP in engineering defections and sabotaging the election of the Congress’s two Rajya Sabha candidates. Unlike Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh, where the Congress is vulnerable, the numbers in Rajasthan are stacked squarely in favour of the Congress. There are 126 MLAs, 107 from the Congress alone, supporting the government. The Congress needed just 101 votes for both its Rajya Sabha candidates to romp home. Gehlot laid out an elaborate game plan — summoning all party MLAs to the Shiv Vilas hotel on the pretext that he was holding a meeting; keeping the MLAs there overnight; and the next day sending them home to pack their clothes as he was sending them on a week’s sojourn. If Gehlot was truly suspicious of his MLAs he was hardly likely to have given them advance notice! The drama was orchestrated by Gehlot simply to paint himself as the Congress saviour with the Delhi high command and undercut his rival, Deputy CM Sachin Pilot, by insinuating disloyalty.

WHAT’S IN A NAME

IAS officer V K Pandian has been Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik’s right-hand man since 2011 when he was his private secretary. Pandian, in fact, is so powerful that he is often described as the de-facto ruler of the state. But the middle-rank IAS officer could not have remained a lowly PS forever. He was promoted to the post of secretary last year and given the fanciful designation of ‘Secretary of 5 Ts’. The Ts stand for Transparency, Team Work, Technology, Timeliness and Transformation. A workaholic, Pandian starts his day at 4 am and keeps an eye on the functioning of all ministries on the ground as this falls within the ambit of his work description. He sits in at all major government meetings and does most of the talking.

AGE NO BAR

Members of Delhi’s prestigious India International Centre were delighted to learn that the centre was re-opening after the lockdown. The elderly members who consider themselves the Capital’s intellectual elite often spend the entire day browsing the library or holding *addas* over tea, coffee and snacks. But the re-opening came with a rider. Those over 65 were advised to stay home. The mean age of the members is around 60. Take, for example, the IIC lifetime trustees. Soli Sorabjee is 90, NN Vohra, 84, Kapila Vatsyayan, 91, BN Srikrishna, 79, and Shyam Saran is 73. It was subsequently made clear that the age restriction was merely an advisory.

(2018) and Mahabalipuram (2019) — all these were part of the false narrative. The bubble burst on June 15-16. After the bloody confrontation and loss of lives, India remained conciliatory. The MEA put out a weak statement that read “...a violent face-off happened as a result of an attempt by the Chinese side to unilaterally change the *status quo*... all Indian activities were on its side of the LAC and it is expected the same of China”. The Chinese counter was swift and aggressive. The PLA said “the sovereignty of the Galwan Valley region has always belonged to China” and China’s Foreign Minister admonished India to “stop all provocative actions.....The Indian side must not underestimate China’s firm will to safeguard territorial integrity.”

INTELLIGENCE FAILURE

There are many theories about why China acted in the manner it did in May this year. The scale of the intrusion points to careful planning over several months — maybe going back to August 2019 when the Modi government changed the constitutional status of Jammu & Kashmir. The government either overlooked or brushed aside (more likely the latter) the fact that China has been in occupation of a large tract of land in Ladakh over which it claims sovereignty; that it is building the Belt and Road connect to

Life
&WORK

PROSENJIT CHATTERJEE



IN MARCH this year, I was shooting in South Africa for my film *Kakababur Prottyaborton*. It was a big unit, around 35-40 people. Around March 15, as information about the coronavirus started flowing in, our team grew tense. In the next 48 hours, the world changed — flights were stopped, lockdowns were imposed, there was a lot of uncertainty. We somehow managed tickets to return to India on March 19, and the entire crew was put in 14-day home quarantine. I shifted to the fourth floor of my house in Kolkata and did not meet anybody. My food was sent to me by lift. I was doing the dishes and all other chores on my own. I am not somebody who spends a lot of time on the phone, but I tried. I would talk to my family, my son, who had returned from abroad too, through video calls. At times, I got very lonely, even upset, I only had my phone. After 14 days, when I came down from the fourth floor of my house, it felt like I was returning from an exile. By then, both our Chief Minister and the Prime Minister had announced the lockdown, and since then it has definitely not been a holiday, especially with the crisis continuing to unfold around the world. I have started waking up late. Waking up early and being at home made the days too long. To change my sleep cycle, after finishing work I now watch shows on Netflix till 4-5 in the morning. When I wake up late, the evening comes sooner. It feels like the day has ended. Many people in my team also feel the same way. They want to make their days shorter. Along with the Covid-19 crisis, my state is also recovering from the devastation caused by cyclone Amphan. We are fighting back all of this, but it is not a healthy situation. Even our mental state is not very healthy. Everybody is trying to do their best for others, but there are limitations. After my shoot in South Africa, I was supposed to start a film with Shiboprosad Mukherjee and Nandita Das. And then, from April, I was slated to work on a Hindi series by Vikramaditya Motwane (director of *Sacred Games*, *Udaan*). It was an important project for me, but we can’t shoot now. However, we are trying to keep the wheels turning. From my personal man-

In Bengal, filming of television shows has begun. Film shoots, however, will take some time since we are linked to cinema halls — malls have opened but not theatres. And, even if cinema halls open, will crowds rush to buy tickets again?

Pakistan through Gilgit-Baltistan which is a part of Ladakh; and that it had objected to India constructing a feeder road to link with the DBO road on the Indian side of the LAC. China must also have taken note of the Home Minister’s statement that Aksai Chin will be part of India. It is a sobering thought that India did not suspect China’s intentions. If anyone must take the blame squarely for India’s complacency, it is our external intelligence agencies as well as defence intelligence agencies which have boots on the ground in Ladakh. In a sense, it is an unforgivable repetition of Kargil, and especially inexplicable in an age of satellites and images and photographs beamed regularly from space. The difference between Kargil and the Galwan Valley is that the adversary is not a bumbling Pakistan but a wily China. In Depsang (2013), India taught a lesson to China and China withdrew completely. In Doklam (Bhutan, 2017), China learned a valuable lesson about India’s strengths and weaknesses. India celebrated the withdrawal of some Chinese troops from the tri-junction, but meekly acquiesced in the structures built by China on the Doklam plateau, and the Chinese are ensconced till date in the Doklam plateau!

MR MODI’S ERROR

The Chinese are applying the Doklam lesson to the Galwan Valley and will,

‘I miss the cameras, smell of sets, can’t wait to return’



After three months, shooting is on for a Bengali TV show in Kolkata. Partha Paul

ager to my sister, who looks at the business side of my production company, everybody has come together in this difficult time to make the situation ‘normal’. The time at home has also made me realise what is important. I have started focusing on my health, reading scripts which have been lying around for long, and discussing ideas with my team. One day, I got a call from Mr Amitabh Bachchan to be a part of a ‘made-at-home’ short film, *Family*, to spread awareness about the importance of staying at home during the coronavirus pandemic. Actors such as Mohanlal, Rajinikanth were part of it. I agreed to do it. I realised that in such times people have expectations from us, from celebrities. While shooting the videos from our homes, all of us spoke about how grateful we were for getting a chance to act, to be part of a shoot, even if it was in front of a mobile phone. Later, as part of an idea conceptualised by our CM, Mamata Banerjee, I shot a song to help raise funds for junior technicians of our film industry. The entertainment industry across the world is going through a tough time. Films are made with large crews and are considered successful only when a large crowd watches it in the theatres. Unless there is a

eventually, apply it to Pangong Tso and the area between Finger 4 (the LAC according to China) and Finger 8 (the LAC according to India). There was an opportunity to avoid the Galwan Valley loss. Immediately after the Corps Commanders-level negotiations on June 6, Mr Modi should have dialled Mr Xi and persuaded Mr Xi to agree to a common readout by both sides *endorsing* the outcome of the negotiations. Maybe the tragedy of June 15-16 would not have happened. It was a grave error on the part of Mr Modi. Mr Modi’s dream that the 21st century will be a China-India led Asian century is practically over. It is obvious that Mr Modi did not take a correct measure of Mr Xi. Whether Mr Xi took a correct measure of Mr Modi is a matter of speculation. The two leaders cannot be close friends again. They can still do business and sign one-step-at-a-time agreements in the manner that Mr Narasimha Rao, Mr Vajpayee and Dr Manmohan Singh did with their counterparts in China and keep the peace on the 4,056-kilometre border that includes the LAC. It is certain that there will be no more ‘summits’ or ‘swings’. It will be just hard-nosed negotiations. It will be useful for Mr Modi to remember what Saint Thiruvalluvar said over 2,000 years ago: “*Fate’s strength, one’s strength, the adversary’s strength, allies’ strength, weigh all these and decide your course of action*” (*Kural* 471).

miracle, no one can say with certainty when that will happen. But yes, we have to fight back. In Bengal, the silver lining is that filming of television shows has begun. Film shoots, however, will take some time since we are directly linked to cinema halls — malls have opened but not theatres. And, even if cinema halls open their gates, will large crowds rush to buy tickets again? During the lockdown, online streaming platforms and web series have gained more popularity. They have a lot of potential and many international companies are now coming to India to set up OTT platforms. This has also given a platform to many talented actors and technicians. Having said that, cinema will stay. It has a special magic which unfolds on the big screen. It cannot be compared to watching content in isolation. As television shoots resume in Bengal, for the first time in India there has been an insurance guarantee for actors and technicians. Talks are now on for insurance coverage in films too. As per our Chief Minister’s instructions, we can begin shooting any time and I can’t wait to return. I miss the smell of the set, the camera, my co-actors, technicians, my make-up van. For the past 38 years, I have spent all my time with these people, in those surroundings. I need to get back to them, to my audience.

The author is a National Award-winning actor, director and producer from West Bengal. He has been part of over 300 films.

As told to Amitava Chakraborty

Fifth
COLUMN

TAVLEEN SINGH

Twitter @tavleen_singh



Questions, questions, questions

AS A soldier’s daughter, one of my most vivid childhood memories is of the war with China in 1962. In boarding school, we were infused with patriotism and so spent our free time knitting socks for the troops and making cards to send them. But when I came home to the Army station in which my father was posted, all I heard was angry talk about how the political leadership had betrayed our soldiers. They were sent to war without proper clothing, boots or weapons. And, in the ordinance factories, I remember hearing, they were producing coffee percolators instead of ammunition. I did not know much about Jawaharlal Nehru then, but remember that after his China war he was very unpopular in the Army stations of my childhood. Buried memories came back last week when 20 of our soldiers were beaten to death by Chinese thugs in the desolate heights of the Galwan Valley. The Modi government has not been able so far to fully explain why our soldiers were unprepared for what the Chief Minister of Punjab has correctly described as a ‘stone age’ battle. From the Army we have heard nothing and the silence of the Defence Minister has been deafening. But, the Minister for External Affairs tells us that our soldiers were not unarmed. They chose not to use their weapons while being clubbed to death with iron rods clad in barbed wire. This explanation is bizarre because even an amateur would use his weapon if he was being beaten to death. These men were trained soldiers. It is for military experts to investigate what really happened. For my part, I want to concentrate on the manner in which this ugly episode was handled politically. This needs analysis because in more ways than one, the manner in which the political fallout has been handled has been disastrous. When opposition leaders and the media started to question what happened on the border, the first responders came not from the government but from the BJP! They appeared on primetime TV shows to denounce as traitors anyone who dared ask questions about what happened on the border. This is a time for nationalism, they hollered, not a time for ‘anti-nationalism’. This is an old playbook that has been used so often since Narendra Modi’s second term began that it has become tattered and useless. Nationalism as defined in this playbook means not questioning anything that the government does. To question Modi personally amounts to treason, because in the view of those who wrote this playbook, the nation and the Prime Minister are synonymous. Instead of fielding arrogant BJP spokesmen it would have been wiser to field those who are actually responsible for the defence of this country. Where was the Chief of Defence Staff? Where was the Army Chief? Where was the National Security Advisor? We should hear from them because from them we might get what really happened instead of silly lectures on ‘nationalism’. We should also hear from the Prime Minister. So far, we have seen him grieve publicly for the dead while solemnly chanting ‘*Om Shanti*’. He needs to tell us much more. Are we on the verge of another war with China? Are Chinese soldiers still occupying Indian territory? Is it true that Indian soldiers remain in Chinese custody? What is our future strategy? These are questions to which only he has answers since he runs his government in a highly centralised fashion from the PMO. He also conducts foreign policy in a highly personalised way, and has chosen to invest a great deal of capital in his friendship with Xi Jinping. There is no other world leader he has met more often since becoming prime minister. Whenever there have been tensions with Pakistan, the Prime Minister has been vocal, aggressive and assured. When the Indian Air Force conducted its strike on Balakot it was from Modi that the country heard the details. He went to the extent of saying that he personally ordered the strike on a ‘cloudy night’ because he believed that this would help our fighter pilots fly under the radar. In the election campaign that followed immediately afterwards, Balakot became his symbol for being a tough, decisive leader. This time the Prime Minister has been unusually reticent, but those ‘proud to be followed by Modi’ on Twitter have not. Like the BJP spokesmen they have hurled abuse at anyone who has dared ask questions about why 20 Indian soldiers were killed so brutally. If I were to recount the number of times I have been called a traitor in response to the questions I have asked about the Galwan massacre, I would have to write a whole separate column. Does the Prime Minister realise the damage that his supporters are doing to him? What is more important is for him to understand that when the country appears to be teetering on the edge of another war with China, it is not ‘anti-national’ to ask questions. The opposite is true. Two men who have asked exactly the questions that need to be asked by patriots and true nationalists are the Chief Minister of Punjab and another ex-soldier, Lieutenant General H S Panag (retd). I am willing to bet that the questions they asked last week are being asked in Army towns across India. When soldiers are battered to death, questions will be asked.





“The climate and sustainability crisis is not a fair crisis. The ones who’ll be hit hardest from its consequences are often the ones who have done the least to cause the problem in the first place.”

— GRETA THUNBERG, 17-year-old climate activist

TOP OF THE WORLD



Captain Brett Crozier was commander of the *USS Theodore Roosevelt*

USA

Navy reverses move to reinstate virus-hit aircraft carrier's captain

Washington: In a reversal, the Navy on Friday scrapped its recommendation to reinstate Captain Brett Crozier and instead upheld a decision to fire him from his command of a coronavirus-stricken aircraft carrier where he became a hero to his crew. The Navy said an in-depth investigation showed that Crozier, despite imploring top brass to do more to safeguard his sailors, had himself failed to do enough to try to halt the spread of the coronavirus. It eventually infected more than 1,200 personnel aboard the *Theodore Roosevelt*, killing one of them.

USA

Tennessee lawmakers pass Bill to ban abortion after six weeks

TENNESSEE LAWMAKERS passed one of the tightest abortion restrictions in the country on Friday, banning the procedure once a fetal heartbeat is detected at around six weeks, which is often before a woman realises she is pregnant. The “heartbeat” bill follows a wave of similar strict anti-abortion measures passed by Republican-majority legislatures in an effort to prompt the US Supreme Court to overturn *Roe v Wade*, the landmark 1973 case that guarantees a woman’s constitutional right to abortion. In the last two years, federal judges have struck down “fetal heartbeat” laws banning abortion after six weeks in several states on the grounds that they were unconstitutional.

BRITAIN

Mayor promises to protect Leicester's Gandhi statue

London: The mayor of the city of Leicester has committed to protecting the statue of Mahatma Gandhi in the heart of the central England city, as an online petition created to save the under-threat monument attracted over 6,000 signatures. Peter Soulsby confirmed his support for the monument as the city’s “great pride” in his response to a letter from former Indian-origin Leicester East MP Keith Vaz, who has been leading a campaign ever since an online petition called for the statue’s removal last week.

BRITAIN CONSIDERS EASING SOCIAL DISTANCING RULES

Brazil infections cross 1 mn as Beijing sees drop in cases

KEN MORITSUGU & JILL LAWLESS
BEIJING, JUNE 20

CHINA’S CAPITAL recorded a further drop in coronavirus cases amid tightened containment measures, while Brazil surpassed 1 million confirmed infections, second only to the US.

Europe, in contrast, continues to emerge warily from lockdown, with hard-hit Britain considering easing social distancing rules to make it easier for restaurants, pubs and schools to reopen.

Officials reported 22 new cases in Beijing on Saturday, along with five others elsewhere in China. There were no new deaths and 308 people remained hospitalized for treatment.

South Korea recorded 67 new cases, the largest 24-hour increase in about three weeks. Most of them come from the densely populated Seoul area, where about half of the country’s 51 million people reside. Many cases have been linked to exposure in nightlife outlets.

The head of the World Health Organization said Friday that the pandemic is “accelerating” and that more than 150,000 cases were reported the day before.

Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus told reporters in Geneva that nearly half of the



A CONCERT FOR THE QUARANTINED: A group of musicians playing Samba offered a small concert to the residents of Rio’s Turano favela, most of whom remain quarantined to curb the spread of Covid-19. Residents could watch the performance from their windows, balconies or via internet. *AP*

newly reported cases were from the Americas.

Brazil’s Health Ministry said the total number of cases had risen by more than 50,000 from the previous day. President Jair Bolsonaro still downplays the risks of the virus after nearly 50,000 fatalities in three months, saying the impact of social isolation on Brazil’s economy could be more deadly.

The new coronavirus has infected more than 8.5 million people worldwide and killed more than 454,000. *AP*

Indian crew stranded on cruise ships appeal for repatriation

London: Hundreds of Indian crew aboard cruise ships docked on the UK coast have appealed for repatriation to India amid the ongoing coronavirus lockdown.

The All India Seafarer and General Workers Union claims that around 1,500 crew members from India have been stranded at UK ports across these ships.

“This is regarding 164 crew

members stranded Indian citizens on the vessel *MV Astoria*,” notes a letter from the union addressed to the External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar, in reference to one of the vessels.

“In this pandemic coronavirus outbreak, our Indian citizens stuck in foreign waters from past 90 days, and need help,” notes the letter dated June 16. *PTI*

US Dept of Justice tries to oust attorney probing Trump allies, but he refuses to go

NATHAN LAYNE & SARAH N LYNCH
WASHINGTON, JUNE 20

A TOP US federal prosecutor whose office has been investigating President Donald Trump’s personal lawyer, Rudolph Giuliani, on Friday refused to step down after the administration abruptly said it was replacing him.

Attorney General William Barr, in a surprise late-night announcement, said the US Attorney in Manhattan, Geoffrey Berman, was stepping down and that he would nominate Securities and Exchange Commission Chairman Jay Clayton to take Berman’s spot.

Berman, who leads a powerful office known for prosecuting high-profile terrorism cases, Wall Street financial crimes and government corruption, said he first learned of the move from Barr’s press release and would not go quietly.

“I have not resigned, and have no intention of resigning my position,” Berman said in a statement. “I will step down when a presidentially appointed nominee is confirmed by the Senate. Until then, our investigations will move forward without delay or interruption.”

Since being appointed in January 2018, Berman has not shied from taking on figures in Trump’s orbit. His office oversaw the prosecution of Michael Cohen, Trump’s former personal lawyer, indicted two Giuliani associates and launched a probe into Giuliani in connection with his efforts to dig up dirt on Trump’s political adversaries in Ukraine. *REUTERS*



Geoffrey S Berman

EXPLAINED

Crisis after unusual appointment

GEOFFREY BERMAN, the federal prosecutor in Manhattan, was appointed to the post on an interim basis by then A-G Jeff Sessions in 2018. Although he was a Trump pick, the President never officially sent his nomination to the Senate for confirmation, which is how federal prosecutors are usually appointed. After 120 days as interim US Attorney, Berman’s appointment was made permanent by the US District Court for the Southern District of New York. Refusing to quit despite A-G Barr’s announcement, Berman pointed out that he couldn’t be fired by the President as he wasn’t appointed by the President, and that he would remain in office until another nominee was confirmed by the Senate.



ANOTHER CONFEDERATE STATUE GOES DOWN

The statue of Albert Pike, which is the only statue of a Confederate general in the US capital, was toppled by protesters and set on fire in Washington early Saturday. It comes as the US observed Juneteenth, the day marking the end of slavery in the United States, amid continuing anti-racism demonstrations following the death of George Floyd in Minneapolis. *AP*

Judge denies Trump bid to block Bolton book

REUTERS
WASHINGTON, JUNE 20

A US judge on Saturday denied a request by the Trump administration for an injunction to block publication of a book by President Donald Trump’s former national security adviser John Bolton that alleges the president sought China’s help to win re-election.

“While Bolton’s unilateral conduct raises grave national security concerns, the government has not established that an injunction is an appropriate rem-



Bolton was criticised by the judge, who said he ‘gambled with the national security’

edy,” US District Judge Royce Lamberth said in his ruling.

The administration had

sought a temporary restraining order and preliminary injunction against the publication of *The Room Where It Happened: A White House Memoir*, saying it contained classified information and threatened national security.

The book, scheduled to hit stores Tuesday, is already in the hands of media organisations.

“Defendant Bolton has gam-

bled with the national security of the United States. He has exposed his country to harm and himself to civil (and potentially criminal) liability,” the judge wrote.

But he said an injunction

would be too late to stem the harm. “With hundreds of thousands of copies around the globe — many in newsrooms — the damage is done,” Lamberth said. In a tweet shortly after the decision was released, Trump lashed out at Bolton. “He must pay a very big price for this, as others have before him,” Trump said.

Trump drew some solace from the judge’s rebuke of Bolton. “BIG COURT WIN against Bolton. Obviously, with the book already given out and leaked to many people and the media,” Trump tweeted. *REUTERS*

The pandemic has pushed the Chilean medical system close to collapse — intensive-care units in Santiago are at 96% of capacity, and that is only because dozens of patients have been sent to regional hospitals to ease the burden on those in the capital.

The coronavirus was brought to Chile by well-off travelers who vacationed in Europe. Chilean officials in April replaced a strict quarantine of several wealthy neighborhoods of Santiago with a string of constantly shifting closures in neighbourhoods

throughout the city.

“For a short while we had a window of opportunity,” said Pablo Villalobos, a public health researcher at Harvard and adviser to the World Health Organization. “It was a lost opportunity.”

The virus started spreading virtually uncontrolled through Santiago at the start of May, helped by officials’ refusal to shut down public transport. “The government did not take the necessary restrictive measures,” said Claudio Castillo, a public health expert at the University of Chile. *AP*

‘COVID’ CASKET ELIMINATES PRECIOUS WOODS, DETAILED CARVINGS AND GLASS PANES IN FAVOUR OF FAST-TO-PRODUCE PLAIN BOX

Chileans mass producing caskets to deal with coronavirus onslaught

EVA VERGARA
SANTIAGO, JUNE 20

NICOLÁS BERGERIE’S family has been making coffins for four generations, with barely any alteration. But when he saw the coronavirus ravaging Europe, he decided to roll out a new product.

The “COVID” is a casket that eliminates precious woods, detailed carvings and glass viewing panes in favor of a plain box of cheaper wood that is fast to produce in quantity. It’s the per-

fect product for Chile, which has become a hot spot for the virus despite aggressive government measures to control its spread.

On Friday, Chile’s 230,000 cases made it ninth in the world in the number of confirmed coronavirus infections, despite its relatively small population of fewer than 19 million people. With more than 5,000 new cases reported on a typical day, next week Chile is expected to pass Italy in the ranks of most-infected countries.

With more than 4,000 dead in Chile, Bergerie’s business,

Bergut Funeral Services, has seen its orders boom. He said the workshop is making 100 coffins a week, double the pre-pandemic number, although the cheaper caskets mean his income has dropped by half.

“We looked at the international experience and we started to turn out more coffins because we understood what was coming,” said Manuel González, the head of the workshop.

The Chilean government reported 252 deaths Friday, the highest number since the virus that can



A production line of coffins at the Bergut Funeral Services in Santiago, Chile. *AP*

cause COVID-19 disease arrived in Chile in early March. Most infections and deaths are concentrated in the capital, Santiago.

The true scale of the outbreak goes far beyond the official numbers — Chile is daily carrying out as many as 20,000 virus tests, and about 30% are coming back positive, a strong sign that many infections have gone undetected.

Officials admit their effort to battle the virus is falling short, particularly in tracing and isolating those who come into contact with infected people.

10 ECONOMY

MAR QUARTER: LOSS OF ₹697 CR, TOTAL INCOME RISES TO ₹16,388.32 CR

Fall in bad loans, lower provisioning help PNB cut losses; reports ₹2,617 cr NPA divergence

ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU
MUMBAI, JUNE 20

AIDED BY a decline in bad loans and lower provisioning, public sector bank Punjab National Bank (PNB) has posted a lower standalone loss of Rs 697 crore for the fourth quarter ended March 31, 2020 as against a loss of Rs 4,750 crore in January-March period of 2018-19.

The bank has reported a divergence in non-performing assets (NPAs) at Rs 2,617 crore for the year ended March 31, 2019. While the bank announced NPAs of Rs 78,472 crore for the year, the RBI's assessment put the figure at Rs 81,089 crore.

The bank also reported a divergence in provisions at Rs 2,091 crore for March 2019.

The bank's gross NPAs de-

GROSS NPAs FALL TO 14.21% OF GROSS ADVANCES

■ Punjab National Bank has reported a divergence in non-performing assets (NPAs) at Rs 2,617 crore for the year ended March 2019. While the bank announced NPAs of Rs 78,472 crore for the year, the RBI's assessment put the figure at Rs 81,089 crore

■ The bank's gross NPAs declined to 14.21 per cent of gross advances at the end of

March 2020, as against 15.50 per cent in March 2019

■ The bank has done the cash recovery of Rs 10,000 crore during the fiscal, while containing the fresh slippages to Rs 20,000 crore. The bank is expecting the recovery of Rs 6,000-8,000 crore during the current fiscal year

clined to 14.21 per cent of gross advances at the end of March 2020, as against 15.50 per cent in March 2019. In absolute value, gross NPAs stood at Rs 73,478.76 crore at the end of 2019-20, lower than Rs 78,472.70 crore reported in the previous fiscal. Similarly, net NPAs were valued at Rs 27,218.89 crore as against Rs 30,037.66 crore.

The bank's total income during the March quarter rose to Rs 16,388.32 crore from Rs 14,725.13 crore in the year-ago period. The provisioning for bad loans during the March quarter almost halved to Rs 4,618.27 crore.

The bank has done the cash recovery of Rs 10,000 crore during the fiscal, while containing the fresh slippages to Rs 20,000

crore. The bank is expecting the recovery of Rs 6,000-8,000 crore during the current fiscal and recovery will gather momentum from the third quarter onwards. Net NPAs also came down to 5.78 per cent as against 6.56 per cent in the year-ago period.

On the COVID pandemic, the bank said, "the situation continues to be uncertain and the bank is evaluating the situation on ongoing basis. The major identified challenges for the bank would arise from eroding cash flows and extended working capital cycles. The bank is gearing itself on all the fronts to meet these challenges."

"The management believes that no adjustments are required in the financial results as it does not significantly impact the current financial year. Despite these events and conditions, there would not be any significant impact on the bank's results in future and going concern assumptions as at presently made," it said.

PNB said the amalgamation of Oriental Bank of Commerce and United Bank of India into PNB has become effective from April 1, 2020. The bank now has a network of 10,910 branches and 13,530 ATMs in India. It has a customer base of 17 crore, deposits of Rs 10.71 lakh crore and advances of Rs 7.62 lakh crore. During the financial year ended March 2020, the government infused Rs 16,091 crore into the bank. The government holding in the bank has increased to 83.19 per cent as on March 31, 2020.

If provisioning for NPAs assessed by the RBI exceeds 10 per cent of the reported profit before provisions and contingencies or additional gross NPAs identified by the RBI exceeds 15 per cent of the published incremental gross NPAs for the reference period, then the banks are required to disclose divergence from prudential norms on income recognition, assets classification and provisioning.

What does recent NCLAT ruling — liquidation of a firm under IBC holds precedence — mean?

AASHISH ARYAN
NEW DELHI, JUNE 20

THE NATIONAL Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT) has ruled that liquidation process of a company under the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC) holds precedence over outcome of an arbitration proceeding.

A three-member Bench, headed by Justice Venugopal M, ruled that just because Bharat Heavy Electricals Limited had won an arbitration award against Surana Power, which was undergoing liquidation, the process would not be stopped to favour it. The Chennai Bench of National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) had earlier ruled in favour of BHEL.

What does the NCLAT order mean?

In its judgment, the NCLAT set aside an order of Chennai NCLT on the grounds that BHEL's charge over Surana Power assets were equal to the other 10 financial creditors, and therefore it could not be given precedence.

BHEL's claim that it has the first right over the assets and properties of Surana Power, was wrong as all other creditors had given the assent to liquidate the corporate debtor, the

NCLAT held.

The NCLAT's judgment essentially holds that if a corporate debtor is being liquidated, a creditor can not claim superiority over other secured creditors in the same band, and that everyone must receive their fair share by following the waterfall mechanism of liquidation.

What is the waterfall mechanism for liquidation?

As the name suggests, the waterfall mechanism under Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code gives priority to secured financial creditors over unsecured financial creditors. The mechanism says that if a company is being liquidated, these secured financial creditors must be first paid the full extent of their admitted claim, before any sale proceedings are distributed to any other unsecured creditor.

Under Section 53 of the IBC, which deals with waterfall mechanism, the top most priority, however, is given to costs related to the liquidation process and dues of workmen of the corporate debtor. The dues of the workmen include all their salaries, provident, pension, retirement and gratuity fund, as well as any other funds maintained for the welfare of

the workmen.

Why did BHEL object to liquidation of Surana Power?

State-run BHEL, which was also a secured creditor for Surana Power, had won an arbitration award against the company. It gave BHEL complete and undisputed rights over all the assets, equipment, goods lying at the site of the power plant. It also gave BHEL title rights over the finished and unfinished buildings.

BHEL objected to the liquidation process as it held only 26.24 per cent share by value in the Surana Power, which is being liquidated. Going by the waterfall mechanism, though it would have got the money over other unsecured creditors, its share would come down by a lot.

The arbitration award route would have, on the other hand, given it complete rights over all properties, assets and equipment, while leaving little to nothing for other creditors.

Though the NCLT Chennai bench had held that BHEL was right in claiming priority over other creditors, the NCLAT held that in order to claim priority, BHEL should have had at least 60 per cent share value. Since it did not have the same, it would be unfair to stop the liquidation proceedings because of one dissenting creditor.

CDSCO approves Hetero and Cipla remdesivir generics

PRABHA RAGHAVAN
NEW DELHI, JUNE 20

THE COUNTRY'S top drug regulatory body on Saturday granted emergency use approval to two Indian drugmakers for generics of Gilead Science's remdesivir, *The Indian Express* has learnt.

These approvals will allow Cipla and Hetero Drugs to manufacture and supply the injectable medicine for the treatment of suspected or laboratory-confirmed cases of COVID-19 "with severe disease", ending weeks of uncertainty over where they can access the drug from.

Drug Controller General of India Dr VG Somani approved these applications late on Saturday, said a senior Health Ministry official on condition of anonymity. The companies will have to follow the same conditions set out by the DCGI for Gilead when its remdesivir was approved at the beginning of the month.

"Hetero and Cipla have just got the approval. The documents and samples they had submitted were extensively assessed before the approval was granted," the official told *The Indian Express*.

Remdesivir is to be administered for a maximum of five days, as per the country's clinical management guidelines.

"This is a boon for the country. We are hoping these companies will be able to supply (remdesivir) to as many patients that require it in India, maybe more," the official added. Four other companies — BDR Pharmaceuticals, Jubilant Life Sciences, Mylan Laboratories and

The companies will have to follow the same conditions set out by the DCGI for Gilead when its remdesivir was approved at the beginning of the month

Dr Reddys Laboratories — are still yet to get the final approvals, according to the official.

"The samples of the other companies are still to come and their test reports are yet to be made, but that too will be done," they said.

Cipla and Hetero have not officially confirmed the development and queries to the companies on Saturday night remained unanswered by press time. The development is crucial as there has been a surge in demand for the drug here, but little clarity on where patients could get approved supply. Gilead, when receiving the approval, had stated on June 3 that there was "limited global supply" of the medicine and that it was anticipating new supply in July.

In the absence of such supply here, patients had been procuring it from generic drug makers given the Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation's (CDSCO) approval to supply their product on compassionate grounds. In other cases, some patients had even been attempting to import the drug from countries like Bangladesh, which another official had earlier said was not approved by CDSCO.

Aviation Secy: Limits on airfares may be extended beyond Aug 24

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, JUNE 20

THE GOVERNMENT-IMPOSED upper and lower limits on airfares may be extended beyond August 24 depending upon how the situation turns out, Aviation Secretary P S Kharola said on Saturday.

The government resumed domestic passenger flights from May 25 after nearly two months of suspension to combat the coronavirus outbreak, but placed lower and upper limits on airfares depending upon the flight duration.

It had said on May 21 that these limits would be in place for a period of three months.

"Depending on how the situation turns out, the fare band may have to be adjusted beyond that (August 24) also. But right now, it is only for three months," Kharola said at a press conference here. International passenger flights continue to remain suspended in the country.

However, the government started Vande Bharat Mission on May 6 to help stranded people reach their destinations through special flights.

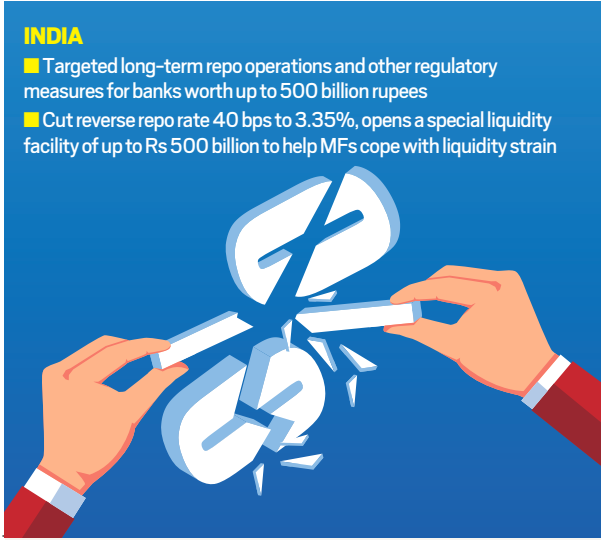
Aviation Minister Hardeep Singh Puri said at the conference that during phase 3 and phase 4 of the mission, private domestic airlines have been approved to operate 750 international flights to repatriate people stranded amid the coronavirus pandemic.

Commercial flight operations had been shut since March 25.

COVID IMPACT

How central banks are trying to soften the blow

Central banks worldwide have slashed interest rates in recent months, providing in some cases unprecedented amounts of stimulus to help soften the blow to the global economy from the coronavirus pandemic and to keep markets functioning.



INDIA

- Targeted long-term repo operations and other regulatory measures for banks worth up to 500 billion rupees
- Cut reverse repo rate 40 bps to 3.35%, opens a special liquidity facility of up to Rs 500 billion to help MFs cope with liquidity strain

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

The coronavirus pandemic has put countries in a tight spot as subsequent lockdowns have hampered tax collections, businesses and livelihoods. Governments have tried to kickstart their economies by announcing stimulus packages. However, central banks have played a key role too. They ensure stability of interest and exchange rates to provide adequate liquidity for productive sectors and ensure adequate supply of currency in these tough times.

THE US

- Buying unlimited quantities of US Treasuries, mortgage-backed and agency securities
- Buying municipal bonds, corporate bonds and ETFs, and dollar swap lines set up
- \$2.3 trillion in loan arrangements for local governments, small and mid-sized businesses

EUROZONE

- 750 billion euros in additional assets
- No change to main purchases, taking the total to about 1.1 trillion euros this year, after initially adding 120 billion euros to its

existing asset-purchase programme

BRITAIN

- Will buy investment-grade commercial paper with maturities up to 12 months
- Increases bond-buying programme by 100 billion pounds
- Lowers 1-year medium-term lending facility (MLF) rate on loans
- Cuts the amount of cash that small banks must hold as reserves by 50 bps to 6.50%, releasing around 400 billion yuan

Source: Reuters

- Central banks have resorted to cutting benchmark policy rates to infuse liquidity into their economies. Nations have also cut capital adequacy requirements for banks and announced moratoriums on loan repayments

Rising foreign currency assets push forex reserves to record high of \$507.6 billion

ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU
NEW DELHI, JUNE 20

THE COUNTRY'S forex reserves jumped substantially by \$5.942 billion to touch a life-time high of \$507.644 billion in the week to June 12, helped by a significant jump in foreign currency assets (FCA), the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) data showed.

In the previous week ended June 5, the foreign exchange reserves had crossed the half-a-trillion mark for the first time, after it surged by a massive \$8.22 billion and reached \$501.703 billion, according to the weekly data released by the RBI.

In the reporting week, the foreign currency assets, a major component of the overall reserves,

The gold reserves in the reporting week rose by \$821 mn to \$33.173 bn, the RBI data showed

rose by \$5.106 billion to \$468.737 billion. Expressed in dollar terms, the foreign currency assets include the effect of appreciation or depreciation of non-US units like the euro, pound and yen held in the foreign exchange reserves.

According to economists, the increase in foreign exchange reserves is due to higher capital inflows and also due to the narrowing current account deficit as trade activities have come to a standstill due to the disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The gold reserves in the reporting week rose by \$821 million to \$33.173 billion, the RBI data showed.

The special drawing rights with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) was up by \$12 million to \$1.454 billion. The country's reserve position with the IMF also rose by \$3 million to \$4.280 billion during the reporting week, the data showed.

The rising forex reserves give a lot of comfort to the government and the RBI in managing India's external and internal financial issues at a time when economic growth may contract in 2020-21. It's a big cushion in the event of any crisis on the economic front and enough to cover the import bill of the country for a year. **WITH PTI**

Trump intends to nominate Deven Parekh to IDFC Board

LALIT K JHA
WASHINGTON, JUNE 20

US PRESIDENT Donald Trump has announced his intention to nominate leading Indian-American global venture capitalist Deven Parekh as a member of the Board of Directors of an independent agency of the government that provides financing for private development projects.

The nomination of Parekh to be a member of the Board of Directors of the International Development Finance Corporation will be for three years. He is the MD at software investment firm Insight Partners. **PTI**

‘Amazon, BigBasket get nod for liquor delivery in West Bengal’

REUTERS
NEW DELHI, JUNE 20

AMAZON.COM INC has secured clearance to deliver alcohol in West Bengal, according to a document seen by Reuters, signalling the US e-commerce giant's first foray into the country's multi-billion-dollar sector. In a notice on Friday, West Bengal State Beverages Corp, the authorised agency to carry out online retail of liquor trade in the state, said Amazon was among the companies found to be eligible for registration with authorities.

Alibaba-backed Indian grocery venture BigBasket has also won approval to deliver alcohol in the state, the notice said.

Amazon has been invited to sign a memorandum of understanding with the state, said the

‘AMAZON SET TO SIGN MoU’

- Amazon has been invited to sign a memorandum of understanding with the state, said the notice by West Bengal State Beverages Corp.

notice, which has not previously been reported.

Amazon did not respond to a request for comment. BigBasket also did not respond to a request for comment. Amazon's interest in delivering alcohol in West Bengal marks a bold move to make inroads into a market that is worth \$27.2 billion, as per estimates by IWSR Drinks Market Analysis.

China woos Bangladesh, provides tariff exemption for 97% of exports from Dhaka

A total of 8,256 products is set to benefit from this

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
DHAKA, JUNE 20

IN A bid to woo Bangladesh, China has provided a huge trade boost to the country by announcing tariff exemption for 97 per cent of Bangladeshi products effective from July 1. The decision has come one month after Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and Chinese President Xi Jinping held a discussion to upgrade their bilateral relations during the COVID-19 pandemic.

PRESENT STATUS

3,095

- Currently, 3095 Bangladeshi products enjoy duty-free access to Chinese market under Asia-Pacific Trade Agreement. With the new announcement, 97 per cent of Bangladeshi products will join this zero-tariff club from July 1 that raised the numbers of Bangladeshi products with zero duty access to Chinese market to 8,256.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Bangladesh announced on Friday that 97 per

cent of items would be exempted of Chinese tariffs.

As part of the government's economic diplomacy and the outcome of exchange of letters between Bangladesh and China, Tariff Commission of the Chinese State Council issued a notice recently on granting zero treatment to 97 per cent of tariff products of Bangladesh, the Dhaka Tribune reported, quoting the ministry's statement.

With this announcement, a total of 8,256 Bangladeshi products will come under the 97 per cent of products that would be exempted from tariff.

Currently, 3095 Bangladeshi products enjoy duty-free access to Chinese market under Asia-Pacific Trade Agreement (APTA). With the new an-

nouncement, 97 per cent of Bangladeshi products will join this zero-tariff club from July 1 that raised the numbers of Bangladeshi products with zero duty access to Chinese market to 8,256, the report said.

During the Asian-African Conference which took place this week in Indonesia, Chinese president Xi announced that China will grant duty free market access for Least Developed Countries (LDC) 97 per cent of the tariff lines within a year.

This beneficial market access scheme will be applied only for imports from LDCs that have diplomatic relations with China. China's tariff exemption is expected to help Bangladesh cushion the economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

COVID EFFECT

AAI gives more time to Adani group to take over 3 privatised airports

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, JUNE 20

THE AIRPORTS Authority of India (AAI) has given three more months to the Adani group to take over the management of three privatised airports of Ahmedabad, Mangaluru and Lucknow due to the COVID-19 scenario, according to the Civil Aviation Ministry on Saturday.

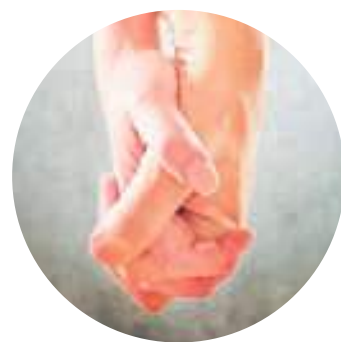
This means the Adani group, which was expected to take over the operations, management and development of the three airports by August 12, can now take over the airports by November 12.

"On the advent of COVID-19

The three airports are Ahmedabad, Mangaluru and Lucknow

scenario, AEL (Adani Enterprises Limited) has cited force majeure and filed for extension in March 2020 and sought time till February 15, 2021 (to take over the three airports)," said the statement by the Civil Aviation ministry. "AAI has agreed to the extension of time of additional three months to achieve Commercial Operation Date (COD) by the concessionaire in view of force majeure on account of COVID-19," it added.

THE SUNDAY EXPRESS MAGAZINE



SPOTLIGHT

Stronger Together

Mental health is not an individual problem, it is a collective responsibility, writes Shelja Sen



BOOKS

- Review of Chandan Gowda's *A Life in the World: UR Ananthamurthy in Conversation with Chandan Gowda*
- Historian Ira Mukhoty on her new book on Akbar & why his vilification is a British legacy

THE FUTUREPOLIS

How will the pandemic change the city?

Shiny Varghese

THINK OF a city that has a skin that can inflate and deflate, depending on the number of people it needs to accommodate. A house that can be lifted on a crane and perched on skyscrapers and detached when your work in the city is done. What if a city can hang off an airship and land overnight in a place, with a kit of moveable parts? In the late 1960s, when modernism was making chunky cubes of houses for people to live in and grids for urban layouts, a group of six British architects came together to form Archigram. They began with a single-page magazine that was filled with collages, poems and visuals of utopian possibilities of a city — flexible, mobile and adaptable. The group would challenge generations of architects to build, dream and envision possible futures. Though Archigram never built any city and critics called them out for their assumption that the earth had endless resources, many of their ideas seem to have found their way into our everyday, from escalators to monorails.

The novel coronavirus pandemic and the lockdowns that were put in place across the world to tackle it pose questions about the future of urban living. In India, among the images seared into public memory are those of crowds cheering on balconies of towering apartments and private homes, and that of workers streaming out of cities, walking hundreds of kilometres to their homes. Some of “us”, for whom home remained a safe place, raised the drawbridges, switched on our WiFi and disconnected from the outside. We created islands for ourselves within our homes, while the migrant worker moved out of his dwelling place.

“Today it’s the pandemic, tomorrow it could be an intense heat wave or a global climate crisis. Confined living will become the way forward,” says Thiruvananthapuram-based urban designer and architect Manoj Kumar Kini. A possible future model, he says, lies in the example of Arcosanti.

Sometime in the 1970s, Italian architect Paolo Soleri planned a future city that would meld ecology and architecture. In the Arizona desert, he envisioned the utopian metropolis, Arcosanti. Its ribbed vaults allowed ample light and air to filter into spaces, and encouraged a sense of community. One could walk to the office or workshop, compost with one’s neighbour or walk out of one’s house into the thick of cultural action. While it had its faults, be it the people who lived there or the adaptability of the structure, it offered a worldview that could change the way we live.

Closer home, Auroville near Puducherry aimed to be a place with “a new consciousness”, with like-minded people from all over the world making it their home. “In the future, urban living could be like something between an apartment and a township like Dwarka in Delhi, where compact living will be the norm, with people choosing to walk, cycle or take public transport, because distance will compress. We will travel less, have a smaller ecological footprint, and have more time with family,” says Kini.

Could buildings of the future be about empathy, about an architect who “places himself/herself in the role of a future dweller and tests the validity of the ideas through this imaginative exchange of roles and personalities?” asks Finnish architect and thinker Juhani Pallasmaa in the book *Architecture and Empathy* (Peripheral Projects; 2015). Will buildings become a shared resource? Can a university and a corporate office be in the same campus? Can government administration and cultural centres coexist? “Maybe it will open up spaces in the city, between building and non-building, where designers and architects will need to intervene to revitalise, renovate, and renew. We will have to get off our Autocads and get our hands dirty. Just the way you now want a hairdresser to come home, people might want an architect to come home and use what they have to build anew, since money and building resources will be hard to come by,” says architect Moulshri Joshi of the Delhi-based firm Space Matters.



“Until now, we were aware of those who lived on pavements, in slums and *chawls* and overcrowded small apartments. But we didn’t realise there is another lot of people who live in corridors, garages, attics, mezzanines, and lofts in every city, and their numbers are staggering. When the city turns its back on them, where can they go?” says architect and habitat professional Kirtee Shah, who lives



ILLUSTRATION: SUVAJIT DEY

in Ahmedabad.

For the poor migrant to the city, there is a place called home in the village and a city where he earns his daily bread. “For some, the home is a ‘resort’ but for those who don’t have that privilege, the city was their home. It gave them certainty. What does it mean to not have that in a lockdown? There are no easy answers, but we need to think of ideas of care and how we can create those spaces in our cities. How can we create different levels of communities and what will those spaces be?” says Mumbai-based architect and urbanist Rupali Gupta.

In a recent letter to Praveen Pardeshi, former municipal commissioner of Mumbai, Shah offered suggestions for handling the slum crisis in the city. From using vacant houses and unsold inventory in housing for migrants and using rooftops of public buildings to create temporary housing stock, Shah pushed for more dignified dwelling units.

He recounts his keynote address at the opening of the “State of Housing” exhibition in Mumbai in 2018. He asked an audience of nearly a 100 people, a majority of them architects, if they had heard of Indira Awaas Yojana. “Only a few hands went up. It was one of the

world’s biggest social housing projects, which lasted nearly 30 years and built more than 20 million houses, but India’s architects barely intervened. It speaks volumes about the disconnect architects have with society,” he says.

While architects design on a computer, the drawings are executed by masons, carpenters and unskilled labourers. “They are the ones who convert our dreams into beautiful projects. So I asked, ‘Since most of you visit your sites at least every two weeks, how many of you have seen the conditions in which the workers live?’ Barely one hand came up,” says Shah. “We need to rethink and reshape our cities which are inhuman and hostile to the people who build them.”

In the letter, Shah suggests renegotiating terms with employers so that workers are provided better places to live. “... [It] could be a rented place in a slum redevelopment colony, in an affordable low-income settlement, in a slum where a family is willing to rent a room, or in a liveable tent on a public building terrace.”



The comfort of home for migrants is also

Lankan civil war refugees and those displaced by the 2004 tsunami in Nagapattinam, Tamil Nadu. Many of the Sri Lankan women, for instance, were skilled at weaving mats. Balsavar, with his team at Artes-Human Settlements Development Collaborative, encouraged them to use these as partitions for their new homes. “That should be the way forward for families returning to their villages, too, during the lockdown. None of them want anything free, they are glad to engage their skills in a productive manner. That is what we should be doing, respecting dignity and pride in their work,” he says.

Home is about identity and self-definition, an expression of belonging. While our cities privilege privacy and gated elements and also disconnection from the larger masses, in our villages networks are cyclical and form the basis of life. The city and its lack of interdependency is what causes alienation. Pratik Dhanmer of Design Jatra, a rural research and architectural firm in Dahanu, Maharashtra, speaks of how the layout of houses in villages enhance interaction, where verandahs face each other and children are secure playing on the streets.

Balsavar recounts what he noticed in Nagapattinam soon after the tsunami. Several families had abandoned their newly-built concrete-box shelters. These fine engineered solutions for living put the kitchens at the back of the house. The original homes had the kitchens in the front, which enabled women to talk among themselves, keep an eye on their children playing on the street, not to mention the excellent cross-ventilation they afforded. However, in the new homes, the kitchen was pushed to the back of the house, which meant the women worked in isolation, their front doors were shut and the streets empty. “The idea of a rural home has many layers, which architects, sociologists and engineers can learn from,” says Balsavar.

While we rejoiced in employing our city balconies as a stage for approval, with all the bells and whistles, it has rarely become a site for interaction all these years. It’s the park view we seek and not the sense of community. In fact, in many homes, balconies are seen as obstacles in the way of carpet area.




Delhi-based architect Gautam Bhatia has planned a design where the community is not compromised. In cities where we privilege privacy, what are the possible combinations which allow for the public and the private to come together? “Over the last couple of decades, life has been going into lockdown by itself. Within homes, too, entertainment was becoming private and recreation was getting isolated. So, the idea of an apartment that shares community values yet allows you to keep your privacy is the aim. These would be about 800-1,000 sq. ft houses, varying from one-two bedrooms. The remaining spaces are given over to the community, with meeting rooms and games areas. The idea is to force you out of your confinement. You pay much less for private space and get more shared space. You will be forced to go out into verandahs. Unlike high-end apartments that are self-contained, where there is no sense of sharing,” he says. There is the need to change by-laws in our cities to accommodate more public spaces and integrate all classes to live side by side. The future, Bhatia says, is in smaller homes and rental housing.

The coronavirus has exposed the artificial and abnormal in society, argues Delhi-based Shuddhabrata Sengupta of Raqs Media Collective, which is curating the Yokohama Triennale 2020. “There is an enormous amount of resources spent to ensure that our society is not democratic. Delhi, for instance, is a lot about gated communities and large resources are used to keep people out. We are living in a highly artificially maintained dystopia. Architects and urban designers can show a new way and plan how our cities can be for the next 100 years. But I don’t see them coming together to demand a commitment to urban housing from any regime.” “Ultimately, it will not be about big projects but keeping life cycles intact, which our vernacular societies have always done, where life is not a straight line and relationships are important,” says Thautam.

Maybe, our cities ought to be like Ersilia, from Italo Calvino’s novel *Invisible Cities* (1972), where relationships nurture life, and “its inhabitants stretch strings from the corners of their houses” across the city to mark connections, be it for trade or fellowship. So that, even when walls come crumbling down and homes cease to exist, the “labyrinth of taut strings” will continue to exist.



DOWN IN JUNGLELAND



Ranjit Lal

Ranjit Lal is an author, environmentalist and bird watcher

Getting Sweet on Spiders

Spiders are remarkable creatures, and it’s possible to have healthy relationships with them

A LOT OF people have arachnophobia — an irrational fear of spiders. Many people, especially rednecks trying to show how macho they are, go to the other extreme and have huge furry tarantulas or black widows strolling up and down their beefy arms or thick necks. There’s no need to either scream every time you see a spider or have a cuddle with a tarantula to develop a healthy relationship with these absolutely remarkable creatures. While I will keep a healthy distance from the large furry kinds that prowl about the undergrowth or crouch behind bathroom doors in forest rest houses, I am equally gob-smacked every time I see a web looking like strings of pearls on a dewy morning, and will eyeball those small, fierce, jumping spiders whose bright obsidian eyes remain fixed on you as though they’re in love with you.

If you would like to get to know them better, it may be sensible to start off with the smaller ones — they’re normally sparkly, sprightly and hugely entertaining. One of my favourites is the jumping spider, also known as the zebra spider or zebra jumper. They’re small chocolate-brown-and-caramel and spend their time fiercely posturing on walls, feinting like boxers before a bout. Let a mosquito or fly settle close and they’ll fix their eyes on them and whom! They leap so fast you can’t see the movement till they land on their victim. Always, like all of their clan, they’ll trail a safety line behind them, just in case the jump, say, off a table, goes wrong and they have to haul themselves back to safety. Their leaps are like vanishing tricks — they disappear from one spot and appear at another in a trice. There’s another tiny little jumping spider which looks like it’s made out of iridescent metal: it can appear gold or emerald green depending on the angle of the light. You might find it on your car, too, especially if it has a metallic paint finish.

The garden or large green plants may be other good haunts to look out for spiders. One morning, I stepped out into the balcony overhung with a *madhumalti* creeper and casually looked at the pale pink-and-white blooms as bees hovered around. Suddenly, one bee seemed to be



SIZE MATTERS

Small spiders are normally sparkly and hugely entertaining

having a fit. When I glanced at it, I froze. A translucent pearl-white crab spider, half the bee’s size, had pounced and was holding the hairy bee in an embrace. All too soon, she had sunk her mandibles into the bee, injecting it with virulent venom and the bee ceased to struggle. The spider remained stock-still. I knew she was sucking up the nourishing juices from the bee, having dissolved its insides with her venom and digestive juices. She would suck it dry and then discard the empty husk. You might find this revolting, but how is it different from what politicians and taxmen do to us? Crab spiders are beautiful because often they’re the same colour as that of the flowers they hide among and can change their colours accordingly.

Another common spider that lives among plants is the lynx spider, an elongated little creature that often looks like it’s been made out of fine blown glass. I’ve found them lurking on the undersides of kumquat leaves, waiting in ambush for something small and edible to land on the surface of the leaf. Lynx spiders (like several of the clan) make fiercely protective moms — to a degree. She’ll lay her eggs in a silken egg case, tethered to her by a thread, and she’ll drag the contraption along. She will threaten intruders and pull her precious egg case under leaves if it starts raining. I watched just-hatched spiderlings emerge from their egg case once, and, boy, were these tiny angel-white creatures into sibling rivalry! They’d saunter down a silk line, meet each other headfirst and try to throw one another off it. But it can get worse. If there are too many babies and too little food, they (even their mom!) will turn on each other and turn cannibals.

There are the famous orb weavers, which may range widely in size. It is amazing how their cleverly crafted sticky nets can vanish, until you step into them! Some orb spiders, like those belonging to the Argiope clan, sketch a conspicuous zig-zag pattern around the centre of the web, which can serve as a warning for anything too large. But even these relatively large spiders are worth watching for the deft way with which they shroud their victims with silk, keeping their meals for another time. Walk into the web of a giant wood spider and you’ll feel like you’ve walked into a trap made of fine steel wires.

It’s usually the spiders that you encounter unexpectedly that give you the biggest frights. Shuffling into the bathroom in the middle of the night to find a monstrous wolf spider beady-eyed you from the potty lid can be traumatising. But unless you’re a cockroach or something similar, you’re generally safe. So gently chivvy it away, use the loo and go back to bed...and sweet dreams!



IMAGINE

BY SHELJA SEN

RIGHT FROM an early age, we are recruiting our children into believing that there is one right way to live their life. In a talk or in a workshop, I generally ask the audience if they know somebody who has experienced mental-health struggles. Some hands shoot up right away, then others start raising their hands tentatively, looking around and taking solace in the sense of solidarity until all the hands go up. Then, I make it a little more difficult and check if they know somebody who has dealt with suicidal thoughts. Majority of the hands go up again. It is all around us — in our homes, our schools, colleges, workspaces, public places — staring back at us, asking us to look, listen. But we turn away, leaving them with their silences. Maybe sometimes, that silence and shame becomes too much to live with.

It takes the death of a public figure to remind us how much mental health matters. For the coming weeks, there will be a flurry of Instagram, Facebook and Twitter posts by well-meaning people, but then it will all go away, as it generally does. Do we realise how difficult it is for people living with depression or anxiety to be their own advocates at every step, especially when they have been convinced that something is inherently wrong with them — that they are the problem?

The person is not the problem, the problem is the problem

Right from an early age, we are recruiting our children into believing that there is one right way to live their life. They are constantly struggling against the illusory yardstick of success. They are being sold the idea that the higher they go, the better they will be. But then they wonder why every rung up leads to more misery? Off-the-chart suicide rates of IIT aspirants in Kota coaching centres should shake us out of our collective stupor of what we see as the making of a “good life”. A study conducted by ASSOCHAM in 2018 found that 42.5 per cent of employees are struggling with depression and/or anxiety in their high-pressure jobs. They possibly climbed the ladder of success and security to find it is a myth. They have internalised the propaganda that the only way they are worth something is if they get into a good college, “be productive” and get into a financially stable career. Therefore, it is no surprise that the chilling statistics indicate that one in four young persons is struggling with depression or anxiety and that India tops the world in youth suicide.

The person is not the problem, the problem is the problem, and the problem is social!*

Shiv is a young man I met who had been lured into the society’s idea of success. In our discussion, he started realising that his company’s work culture of constant pressure, of

STRONGER TOGETHER

Mental health is not an individual problem, it is a collective responsibility



GETTY IMAGES

“never being good enough” was pushing him into depression. As we unspooled this problematic notion of success, he realised, “My life can’t be just about meeting the next target, pay my bills and die.” He renegotiated his purpose in life, had a clear chat with his boss on what he would be able to deliver and started doing things that aligned with what he valued the most. For example, getting together with his old band and jamming every weekend and not “wasting precious hours of my life thinking of how to get ahead.”

There is much talk about the “epidemic” of mental-health problems reaching unprecedented proportions. We have been made to

REACH OUT, HOLD TIGHT

We need to reflect on how to help each other overcome mental-health impediments

believe that it can all be understood as “chemical imbalance” but that does not hold much water in the face of growing research and begs the question, “Who has a chemically balanced brain and what does it look like?” To the point of being provocative, I can say it is pretty fictional and not helpful as it locates the problem within the person. It is an extremely complex problem within our socio-cultural context which needs a nuanced understanding. Our identities are formed at the intersection of gender, sexuality, age, caste, class, religion, looks (let’s not underestimate the demand for “fair & lovely”) and the most important of it all — social acceptance and social success. Mental-health problems as chemical

imbalance absolves us of the collective responsibility we need to take as adults. This pushes us to think it is not our problem and we end up making the problem individualistic, leading to, what I call, the 3 Ds.

Dismissal — trivialising the problem with normative judgements such as “Stop complaining all the time”; “This is so silly”; “You just need to be stronger”.

Defining — making the problem the single story about them — “I don’t think you will be able to do much in life if you are so weak.”

Dumping — mental-health problems hide issues of gross social injustice. For example, women being diagnosed with depression when they react to marital abuse, young girls who feel rejected and suicidal as they do not fit the rigid definition of “fair & lovely.” Their mental-health problems are just a mirror of a society that is unfair and damaged.

Sometimes, all people need are these simple messages:

“I see you” “I hear you” — People are multi-storied so let’s not define them by single stories of “failure” and “unworthiness.” This does not mean we have to “be positive” and “look at the silver lining” as that can be quite dismissive. It means to listen to their problems and also keep sight of their stories of courage, hopes and dreams.

“Tell me how I can help” — We might not know what to say or do, so asking might help. It is easy to get into the “let’s fix it” or advising mode but step back from it, as it might stop them from accessing their own skills and abilities to find their solution.

“I have your back” — If each person knew that there is somebody out there who will accept them the way they are no matter how damaged they are feeling.

It is not a mental-health problem but a problem of social justice

As a narrative therapist (Narrative Therapy was pioneered by Michael White & David Epston), I strongly believe that the solution is not an individual’s or a family’s responsibility. It is a social problem, and, therefore, we need to take the lens of social justice. There is an old legend-now-turned-to-a-metaphor that canaries were sent down into coal mines to test for gas leaks. Our young people are the canaries of our present time. We have created the toxic society in which they are struggling to survive. Maybe, this pandemic is an opportunity for us to let go of the deadwood of social expectations of success and carve out something new collaboratively.

Rather than quick solutions, here are some questions we can reflect on:

- What do you think are the social beliefs and norms that contribute to the rising mental health problems?
 - How fair are these social norms and expectations?
 - In what ways can you resist these expectations and support others?
- We need nothing short of a social movement to make this happen. We have lost too many lives and too much time. Nobody is going to come and sort this out for us. We have to do it ourselves.

**Quoted by David Denborough, narrative practitioner, in a workshop*

Dr Shelja Sen is a narrative therapist, co-founder Children First, writer, and, in this column, she curates the know-how of the children and young people she works with. Write to her shelja.sen@childrenfirstindia.com

‘It was a golden opportunity to represent the transgender community’

A Manipuri teenager on facing the camera for the first time for the web-series *Paatal Lok*

Tora Agarwala

ONE OF the more moving arcs in the acclaimed web series *Paatal Lok* belongs to Mary Lyngdoh, also called Cheeni, who is one of the accused in the murder plot that opens the show. Playing Cheeni is 19-year-old Mairambam Ronaldo Singh from Manipur. In this interview, Singh talks about playing Cheeni, the challenges faced by the transgender community and life back home:

From Moirang, Manipur, to Mumbai — how did that happen?

I grew up watching Manipuri cinema. Acting was always a passion for me but never did I think I would be acting in front of a camera in a Hindi language series! The geographical remoteness of the place I come from and the language barrier — these are just some of the challenges we northeasterners face regularly in life. Last December, Eliza Ngangom, a transgender activist from Manipur (also my make-up teacher), told me that people from Mumbai had come looking for someone to play the role of a transgender character. Nikita (Grover) ma’am, the



Before the series, I have never acted professionally. I was nervous...I felt like I needed to prove myself to the team all the time

How was your experience of filming the series?

There was both joy and worry. I did not know Hindi — so they had to hire a Hindi teacher to give me lessons. Moreover, before this series, I had never acted professionally. I was nervous because I was sharing camera

casting director, came down to my hometown in Moirang to meet me. We met at a *chai* stall and my audition happened in the backseat of a car! I was very, very shy but somehow they decided to pick me.

Did your family need much convincing to let you play this part?

Initially, my parents were not ready to send me to Mumbai. They even asked if my part could be shot in Moirang! Of course, that was not possible. They were not against the idea of me playing the role of a trans woman but had a problem with the place I was going to shoot in. My parents are simple people and they don’t really know much about filmmaking. Moreover, they had hardly watched any Hindi movies. But with Eliza’s help and my constant begging for permission, they ultimately had to bless me.



SCREEN TIME

(Left) Mairambam Ronaldo Singh in a scene from the web-series on Amazon Prime; Singh

space with known faces of the industry, so I felt like I needed to prove myself to the team all the time.

Did you connect with Cheeni?

Cheeni is a victim of human greed and lust. To some extent, the series showcases the challenges transgender people face reg-

ularly, such as in the jail scene where she was forced to share the room with other male inmates. *Paatal Lok* also highlights society’s ignorance about the existence and problems of the trans community. I think it sent a message that we are also human beings who want to live a dignified life. Honestly, it was a golden opportunity for me to play this role and tell our story. I represent my transgender community in the series.

Can you tell us a little about your early life in Manipur?

I was born and brought up in Moirang, a historically and culturally important town of Manipur. My family was not well-to-do — I only attended government schools as it was difficult for my parents to get me admission in a private school. In my early years, I could not come to terms with my sexuality. Gradually — with support from the transgender community — I learnt that it is something I should be proud of. In the past, I have been mocked and subjected to numerous derogatory remarks. But what *Paatal Lok* has taught me is that we can do what we truly love, regardless of the obstacles that come our way.

Has your life changed after *Paatal Lok*?

The overall response and acclaim that our series has received so far is amazing. As for me, I am living the same life in Moirang, where I am a make-up artist. People in Manipur — except a few — don’t recognise me even after the success of the series since most are not even aware of *Paatal Lok*. First of all, this was not a mainstream Bollywood series, and, second, the culture of Manipur is totally different from mainland India — a lot of young people follow Korean movies and songs. However, I do get a lot of comments, praises and appreciation on my Instagram handle and I do not have words to express how good that makes me feel.



COURTESY: HARPERCOLLINS INDIA

THINK TANK

UR Ananthamurthy (right) with Chandan Gowda

The Critical Insider

A glimpse into the mind of UR Ananthamurthy and his reflections on the many issues of 20th century India

NS Gundur

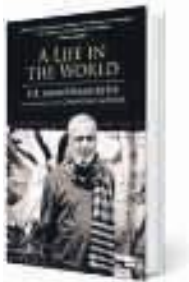
RENOWNED KANNADA writer UR Ananthamurthy (1932-2014) is best known to us as the author of *Samskara* (1965) and as a public intellectual. URA restlessly reflected on the problems of this world and had an urge to share these reflections with friends and visitors. He, therefore, immensely enjoyed conversing with others as much as thinking and writing about our life. The present book, *A Life in the World: UR Ananthamurthy in Conversation with Chandan Gowda*, is the result of one such conversation.

These conversations were shot at URA's residence by Chandan Gowda, an eminent translator of URA's fiction, along with a team of members from Azim Premji University, Bengaluru. This book, a by-product of such a documentary exercise, is structured into 10 chapters. These chapters not only reveal the mind of one of modern India's great writers but also his penetrating insights into the varied issues of 20th century India. The first three chapters 'Early Years', 'Mysore' and 'Birmingham and After' reconstruct the intellectual formation of URA. From a Brahmin *agharah* through Maharaja's College in

Mysore to Birmingham University, his experiences with this world contributed to his "world making". He did not completely reject one space for another, but critically imbibed the virtues of all. Therefore, he became a critical insider, as the famous description of him goes.

The Mysore milieu produces in URA a voracious reader beyond the syllabus, and there, in the company of a poet like Gopal Krishna Adiga, he discovers himself as a *navya* writer. However, a completely new world opens up for him as he arrives in Birmingham to pursue his PhD. In England, his association with great cultural critics like Raymond Williams, Richard Hoggart, EP Thompson, David Lodge and the like does not influence him to become yet another Indian cultural critic, but his English days help him rediscover Kannada deeply and imbibe the art of writing a novel.

The remaining seven chapters are conversations that cover the cultural and political problems of India. Particularly, the chapters 'Tradition', 'Language', 'A Few Friends' and 'Karnataka' offer deep insights into literature, language, Kannada writers, the Veerashaiva movement, pen portraits of Kannada writers, intellectuals and politicians, among others. It is in one such conversation that URA makes a distinction between traditionalism and tradi-



A LIFE IN THE WORLD: UR ANANTHAMURTHY IN CONVERSATION WITH CHANDAN GOWDA
Harper Collins
204 pages
₹399

tion. He says, "How to preserve the past is the concern of the traditionalists. My concern is not how to preserve the past, but how to make the past useful for the present world."

In the chapter 'Being in Public', we come across the idea of a common school which he believes is necessary for bringing about social changes in India. The chapter 'Language' continues his public concern, particularly his views on translation, language in general, and the interface between Kannada and English. For URA, translation is an everyday practice in multilingual spaces like India as we often switch over from one set of codes and registers to another.

In yet another chapter 'Karnataka', URA contemplates on the making of modern Karnataka and the Kannada tradition. The chapter 'India's Political Life' adds another dimension to the conversation as URA examines Mahatma Gandhi, BR Ambedkar, Jawaharlal Nehru and Ram Manohar Lohia. In his view, Gandhi, who played with ideas, was suspicious of the modern world system because we can hurt any part of the world by doing something wrong in any other part of the world. URA looks at Gandhi and Ambedkar as complementary minds. "Both Gandhi and he (Ambedkar)," URA says, "take different spiritual journeys. One takes a spir-

itual journey and says 'Hey Ram' and dies, and Ambedkar takes to Buddhism and dies. Gandhi uses Ram for politics and Ambedkar uses Buddha for politics..."

In the final chapter 'In Conclusion', we get to know about URA's personal tastes, including his favourite cuisine, favourite writers, attachments, his dislike for middle-class backbiting, among other things. As a finale, he states that he wishes to be remembered as a teacher and a writer — a Kannada writer.

Gowda's questions, as much straightforward as possible, do not interfere much in the course of the conversation. However, for a writer like URA, deeply probing questions like the craft of his fiction — how he constructed plots and fashioned his Kannada for his fictional narratives; how he wrestled with his writing — and such other questions of *techné* would have made this volume richer.

Gowda's introduction, which gives an overview of URA's works and thought, could have expanded on how such conversations extend the boundaries of autobiography. However, after reading URA's autobiography *Suragi* (2012), it is a different experience to listen to this speaking autobiography.

NS Gundur is the chairman, department of English Studies, Davangere University, Karnataka

The Long Dark Teatime

A historic crime thriller focuses on the underbelly of the British empire's slave trade

Seema Chishti

READERS OF crime fiction cannot fully explain, even if they feel it in their bones, what might be so comforting about reading about blood and gore in the middle of a pandemic. The fact that there is a crime in an otherwise placid world, which gets resolved by the last page, gives a sense of (false) comfort to the reader. The setting of the crime, usually idyllic or well-known, gives a sense of double ease that things have stayed the way "they were" once the crime is solved.

On both counts — in describing the sulphuric air of London as well as the grisly murder of an abolitionist — debut novelist Laura Shepherd Robinson is unsparing. In *Blood and Sugar*, a vividly-told murder story set in 1781, you are thrust into a London just about beginning to savour the joys of Empire as well as get to see the underbelly of the slave trade which made it profitable.

A decorated war veteran, Captain Corsham, fancying his chances of moving up in the House of Commons, has his life turned upside down as he faces up to the murder of his oldest friend, killed in circumstances connected to the Empire's darkest dimensions. Corsham recognises that unveiling what his late friend died for is going to put him at odds with the influential West Indian lobby in London, but the truth of what he uncovers forces him to continue regardless.

The atmospheric descriptions of late 18th century London confront the darkness that colonial prosperity is built on. The profit that comes from treating human

beings worse than chattels is confronted each time a tobacco leaf or the stirring of sugar grains in teacups is mentioned. The historical context is skilfully woven into the plot which, though fictional, is based on a real incident aboard a slave ship, *The Zong*. In the middle of the Atlantic Ocean, running short of supplies, its captain killed 132 slaves by drowning them. His insurance claim on the murdered slaves is what brought this to court and to light. The owners did not win the claim but there was no prosecution either as the murder of slaves did not ruffle any feathers. Former slave-turned-abolitionist campaigner Olaudah Equiano and Granville Sharp used the incident to campaign for the abolition of the slave trade, even though the abolition bill was passed only in 1807 in Britain. Slavery and systemic oppression are again in the news, this time in the US, following the murder of a black man, George Floyd, by a white police officer.

The stain of slavery may be seen as something outside the Indian consciousness but it is not. Millions were shipped away from India to work as indentured labour in British colonies in an indirect consequence of the abolition of slavery. The *Gimtiyas* — or the people of the "agreement" that they signed and willed off their freedoms — hasn't got the attention in the Indian imagination as it, perhaps, should have. But books like Robinson's shake you into understanding the ways in which the institutionalised system of treating some as "lesser-born" still lives on. The biggest achievement of the author is to leave the reader with a distinct doubt over which of the two crimes it is that this novel seeks to place at the centre. Is it about the brutal murder, or the other crime that constantly hangs in the air and makes London, the capital of the "fledgling empire" connecting mercantile and military power, flourish with its "elegant drawing rooms, washed down by bowls of sweetened teas"?



BLOOD & SUGAR
BY LAURA SHEPHERD-ROBINSON
Pan Macmillan
430 pages; ₹450

‘Akbar understood the complex nature of Hindustan’

Ira Mukhoty, 51, on writing about Akbar in her new book, the Mughal response to medical emergencies and why their present-day vilification is a British legacy

Paromita Chakrabarti

FROM THE *zenana* in your second book to the monarch who would become the face of the dynasty, what drew you to the Mughals in the first place?

The Mughals are very close to us in time. Only around 250 years separate us from their glory days, following which they continued to exist, diminished, for another 100 years. So in a very physical, immediate sense, the legacy of the Mughals is all around us. It can be seen in the buildings that litter the landscape of India, in the clothes we wear, the *attar* we use, the words that seep into our vocabulary, the ingredients in our kitchens. It is even there, in the faux-Shahjahani arches and overly-creamy dishes served in 'Mughalai' restaurants in watery British towns.

In my first book, *Heroines* (2017), I encountered the story of Jahanara Begum, Shah Jahan's daughter. I was struck by her independence, wealth, her search for meaning outside of her opulent lifestyle. That led her to the Sufi path and the two biographies she wrote glow with the ambition of being taken as seriously as her brother Dara Shukoh, and her father, and not allowing her gender to undermine her. I found her message very moving, given that her memory had almost completely been erased, and that brought me to write *Daughters of the Sun* (2018). Since it was a re-evaluation of the *zenana* of the 'Great Mughals', a fascination for Akbar was inevitable. Akbar casts a huge shadow on Mughal history and on India as it is today. At the same time, there is a great deal of myth-making that inevitably accompanies such a personality. I thought it would be an interesting exercise to re-examine Akbar and his legacy using some fascinating new insights from art historians. Despite the fact that Akbar

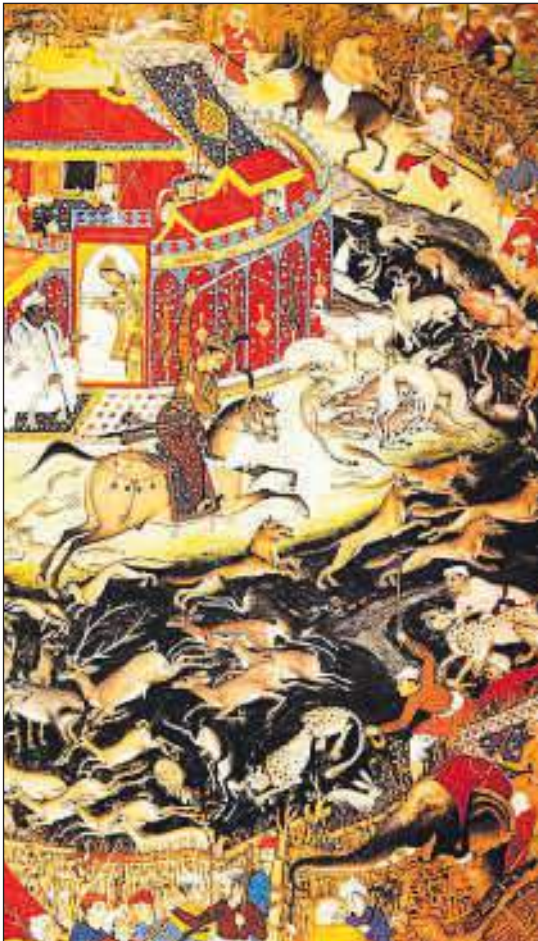
is such a talismanic figure, not nearly enough modern biographies in English have been written over the past few decades.

How do you react to the present-day vilification of the Mughal dynasty?

The vilification of Mughal history is, unfortunately, a product of a colonial legacy. It is the British who began speaking in terms of a pristine, unsullied earlier 'Hindu' era to distinguish from the later 'Muslim' one, as separate entities, in the 19th century. This was done to justify their own incursion into Hindustan but, unfortunately, this narrative continues to gain traction. Identities were never so simplistic as Hindu or Muslim, or indeed Christian, Jain, Buddhist, Parsi, etc. Identities were complex things, shaped by clan loyalties, geography, language, culture, etc, with religion being one of many factors, often not even the most important one. Which is why, I believe, it is all the more important to write narrative histories for the lay person, so that these nuances can be made easily accessible for interested people.

Would you say Akbar was the first of the Mughals to have a nuanced understanding of the syncretic nature of India? Is that why he eventually moved away from the scorched-earth policy of his Chittorgarh siege?

Akbar was the first to respond to the diverse nature of Hindustan and he made that response the very scaffolding of the empire. Both Babur and Humayun were already aware of this diversity and also quite pragmatic about the need to work with a non-Muslim majority. They both had a large number of Hindu soldiers in their armies due to their Timurid legacy, which was entirely practical when it came to religion. But neither ruled long



COURTESY: ALEPH BOOK COMPANY

HIGH AND MIGHTY

A painting depicting Akbar during a Qumargha hunt, which served to demonstrate the emperor's wealth and power

enough to translate that into a coherent response. Akbar did, and that was part of his genius — to understand the complex nature of Hindustan and to create a system of administration, in which all members were invested in the system. People would not be rewarded or punished because of their religion, but through their talent and abilities.

The siege of Chittor came early in Akbar's reign (1567-68), when he was yet to formulate a clear policy. He was still facing challenges on all fronts. It was the very brutality of Chittor that allowed Akbar to then use his power as a deterrent. It was only after the fall of Chittor and Ranthambore that many previously recalcitrant Rajput clans joined the empire, bringing lasting peace. So, Akbar may have viewed it as a necessary stage in the formation of a large, wealthy and stable empire.

Akbar's reign began with a pandemic and there was another epidemic after his Gujarat campaign (1572-73). How did he respond to these medical challenges?

There have been famines, followed by epidemics, throughout history. Famines were frequent and led to widespread deaths, which then caused diseases. The people seemed to have an awareness that contagion could be spread through contact because there are accounts of entire families dying together in their homes because they locked themselves in. As far as Akbar is concerned, there is an account of a famine towards the end of the 16th century in Srinagar. Akbar took active steps to alleviate suffering — he set up food kitchens,

abolished more than 50 harsh taxes and began the construction of a fort on Hari Parbat, for which hundreds of paid labourers were employed so that they had money for food.

You've dealt with the independence of the Mughal women and Akbar's sensitivity to them, but during his reign, the assimilation with Hindustani culture slowly invisibilised them. How do you explain this dichotomy?

When Akbar married his Rajput wives in a bid to stabilise the empire, he was very young. The influence of the elite Rajput clan culture on the young Padshah was, therefore, substantial. One of these influences was very probably a desire, like the Rajput clans, to 'invisibilise' women behind a stricter concept of *purdah* and a fixed and defined *zenana* space. At the same time, Akbar also sought to bring order and structure into all aspects of Mughal life and society. If you go through Abu'l Fazl's *Ain-i-Akbari*, you will see that there are elaborate procedures noted down for a range of activities, almost baf-

fling in their minutiae, from rules for the feeding of the royal elephants to the keeping of the royal tents. In a sense, the 'ordering' of the female component of the Mughal royal family fell within this same framework. It did not, in any way, suggest that Akbar altered his view towards women, which remained empathetic and caring. He continued to challenge prevailing attitudes towards women, whether it was the practice of *sati* or the stigma against widow remarriage in Hinduism or the discriminatory laws of inheritance in Islam.



AKBAR: THE GREAT MUGHAL
BY IRA MUKHOTY
Aleph Book Company
624 pages
₹799

Sign of the times

Seasoned autograph hunters face existential crisis because of pandemic protocols

SANDIP G
NEW DELHI, JUNE 20

CHANDIGARH'S AVID autograph-hunter Dharam Vir Duggal was planning to buy a PPE kit and pair of gloves when he heard that the much-delayed Indian Premier League (IPL), despite the COVID-19 outbreak, might take place later this year.

Stuck on 572 signatures, the 58-year-old who doubles up as occasional cricket reporter for local newspapers, was banking on the star-studded T20 tournament to take his collection to the '600' milestone. Far away in England, James Brighton too was hopeful to take his tally of signed Manchester United scarves to 11,777 till the time he heard that the English Premier League would be held behind closed doors.

With live sport action, including the IPL, expected to take place without spectators, memorabilia-seekers are facing what the grand old man of the autograph collectors' club, Chennai's T Balasubramaniam, a 75-year-old Chepauk regular, calls an "existential crisis". "Already, a lot of celebrities have tie-ups with different companies. Then there is the selfie army, which has outnumbered us. Now the players and celebrities have more reason to refuse us," he says.

Duggal too is despondent as he isn't used to being not allowed for cricket games. "I had zeroed in on the players, already brought 40 miniature bats (to be autographed), so that I can complete 600 autographs during this IPL season. They are all lying in a room gathering dust," he says.

The obsessed collector shares how he thought things would have been easier for him this season as only die-hards like him would turn up for games. "I had thought there wouldn't be much of a crowd chasing players. You know these selfie-hunters, who take a lot of time. I had plans to go in wearing a PPE kit and a pair of gloves, one for me and the other for the player (signing the autograph). The pen and the bat will be sanitised too," he says.

Duggal says the planning to get a prized signature is no different from a *shikhar*. "You wait and wait for your prey, and then latch onto it. If you can get through Chandigarh



(Clockwise from top) James Brighton was hoping to get many more Manchester United scarves autographed. Amarjeet Singh has Diego Maradona's autograph. Dharam Vir Duggal had bought 40 miniature bats for this season's IPL.



Police, you could slip past any policemen in the world," he claims.

For this persistent bunch, it's not just ink from a celebrity's pen immortalised on a piece of paper that thrills him, but the pursuit excites them too. "It's like James Bond. There is no thrill in managing an autograph without enduring some pain. You can buy autographs these days, so it's not about signatures as such, but the whole journey of getting a



cricketer to sign. The longer I have to wait, the more precious the signature will be."

Prized possession

Relentlessness pays off; so does ingenuity. Faridabad-based autograph-hunter Amarjeet Singh narrates a story of how he procured Diego Maradona's signature after several heartbreaks with a flash of ingenuity. "I went to Kolkata three times, but twice

he (Maradona) cancelled the trip for one reason or the other. The third time, I was determined. But there were thousands of fans like me. But I had done my bit of genius. I had an artist draw a huge portrait of his and I began waving it. He saw it and called me by his side and gave his signature. It's the most memorable one I have," he says.

But unlike the upbeat Duggal, 28-year-old Singh, who works in the private sector, has resigned to the reality that autograph-seeking is implausible this year. "It cuts both ways. They wouldn't be comfortable signing autographs, nor would I be. The virus doesn't differentiate between a celebrity and an autograph hunter. I have to be careful about my own health. So I will lay low until the virus subsides and everything is back to normal," says Amarjeet, who has in his treasured collection the original signatures of Albert Einstein and Alexander Graham Bell.

United fan Brighton too is worried as he insists on buying scarves from the vendor from outside the stadium. "Mostly, counterfeit ones, the club anyway makes a lot of dime. Let these fellas too," he says. But with the corona protocol not allowing anyone near the stadium, he finds it tough to secure one as the EPL restarted.

But he hasn't given up. Amidst the uncertainty, all the autograph seekers agree on one thing: "The next autograph will be the sweetest of their lives." The next scarf, Brighton says, will be framed and hung on his drawing room. "Except for the two months when there's a break, I bring home a scarf every week, now I have to keep waiting till the spectators are allowed inside and the shops are opened," he says.

A former accountant from Chennai, Balasubramaniam informs that autograph-seekers are "eternal optimists".

Duggal exemplifies this. "I wanted to get Donald Bradman's autograph. I kept on writing letters to him, he didn't respond to the first 49. But to the 50th, he replied and gave me an autographed gold coin. So if I have a name in my mind, I will go to any extent to get his autograph. Last year, I jumped in front of (Chris) Gayle's car to get his autograph, as he had earlier refused me. Whether spectators are allowed or not, if cricket resumes, I will find my way," he says.



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THOSE MONTHS, THOSE MINUTES

Forced into an unprecedented lockdown, sport is staring at an unfathomable despair. Indian athletes, though, have given the country reasons to rejoice in the past.

NIRUPAMA SANJEEV tells **Shahid Jha** how she became the first Indian woman to win a match in the singles main draw of a Grand Slam.

United stave off defeat via late penalty; Arsenal humbled



Tottenham's Eric Dier fouled United's Paul Pogba, which resulted in a penalty being awarded. Bruno Fernandes converted to secure a draw. *File*

Paul Pogba made an immediate impact on his return from surgery, earning a penalty converted by Bruno Fernandes that recovered for Manchester United a 1-1 draw at Tottenham in the English Premier League. While the teams have endured three months without games in the pandemic, Pogba has n't played since December. And he entered only in the 63rd minute at an empty Tottenham Stadium on Friday with the hosts leading from Steven Bergwijn's first-half strike through goalkeeper David de Gea.

But Pogba, whose United future has been mired in uncertainty, helped to inject some attacking dynamism United had been missing. Pogba was bundled off the ball by Eric

Dier and Fernandes netted his third penalty since joining United in January. United was denied a second penalty when VAR overturned the decision to penalize Dier for another foul — this time on Fernandes. United is three points behind fourth-placed Chelsea having played an extra game.

Arsenal slumped to a last-gasp 2-1 Premier League defeat at relegation-threatened Brighton & Hove Albion on Saturday in a blow to the London club's chances of securing European football next season. Frenchman Neal Maupay struck the winner five minutes into stoppage time after Nicolas Pepe's delightful second-half opener had been cancelled out by Lewis Dunk. **AGENCIES**

US reopen plans face setback

Hopes that sport in the United States might soon return to business as usual suffered a blow on Friday as athletes from golf to hockey tested positive for the novel coronavirus, triggering a shutdown of some facilities. The PGA Tour, which only restarted last week after a three-month COVID-19-forced hiatus, confirmed its first positive test, removing Nick Watney from second-round play at the RBC Heritage in Hilton Head, South Carolina. Over a 24-hour period, Major League Soccer, National Football League, National Hockey League and Major League Baseball confirmed positive tests. **REUTERS**

Mortaza tests positive

Former captain Mashrafe Mortaza and two other Bangladesh cricketers, Nazmul Islam and Nafees Iqbal have tested positive for the coronavirus. The 36-year-old Mortaza was reportedly unwell for the last couple of days and tested positive for the contagious disease on Saturday. He is currently in self-isolation at his residence. Mortaza, who plays only ODIs and had stepped down from captaincy earlier this year, is the second high-profile cricketer to get infected by the disease. Mortaza, who is also a member of Bangladesh parliament, was quite active with his philanthropic activities amid the pandemic. **PTI**

BRIDGE

The first rule of declarer play is to not take a trick until you are sure what you will do next. Here is an example.
Declarer South (Contract 3NT)

NORTH				WEST		NORTH		EAST		SOUTH	
♠ 3				1C		2S		3S		Pass	
♥ A5				3NT							
♦ A10985											
♣ A10985											
SOUTH											
♠ K1064											
♥ KQ8											
♦ QJ4											
♣ QJ7											

West's 2S was a weak jump overcall. West led the 8♠ from SAJ9872, and East played the queen. You have one spade stopper, but is there any way to stop West from taking the rest of his spades as soon as East gets on lead?
The West Hand: S-AJ9872 H-6 D-32 C-K642
The East Hand: S-Q5H-J1097432 D-K76 C-3
Here are some questions. 1. What high cards does West have in spades? 2. How many spades does West have? 3. What other high cards might West have for his vulnerable bid? 4. What is South's correct line of play?

Answers: 1. If you apply the rule of 11 after a fourth-best lead (something you should always do when you get a spot card led), you will do this arithmetic. Eight from eleven is three. There are three cards higher than the eight outside of the opening leader's hand. East played the queen, and you have the king and ten. This accounts for the high cards in the spade suit. West must have the remaining high spades, so he is marked with a suit headed by the SAJ98.
2. West bid 2S, vulnerable. Even the most daring bidder will have six cards or more for this bid when vulnerable. East had the queen and may have one more, but that is all.
3. West is vulnerable and he ought to have more than just his spade suit. He probably has one of the minor suit kings. Who knows? He might have both. If he has both, you can take 13 tricks.
4. The answer to this question depends on how many tricks you want. If you want 13, go ahead and win the first trick and start finessing. You actually have 13 tricks if the finesses work.
Let East have his SQ. He will return a spade, and regardless of what West does, you will have nine tricks.
As long as you can count on East not having three spades, it is okay to lose the first and second and even the third spade because it will stop West from later winning the fourth, fifth, and sixth spades.

NORTH		SOUTH (YOU)	
♠ K107		♠ A92	
♥ A87		♥ K5	
♦ J1064		♦ AQ98	
♣ AJ8		♣ Q1096	

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1NT	2H	Pass	4H
Pass	3NT	Pass	Pass

West leads the H3. You win in hand with the king, and once again you have to deal with the two minor-suit kings before West gets his suit running. Which suit do you play first, and how?

SUNDAY CROSSWORD 2274

QUICK CLUES

ACROSS

- Gambler (8)
- Group of nine (6)
- Passive (10)
- Writing fluids (4)
- Hand covering (6)
- Jewellery items (8)
- Compound of nitrogen reacting with a metal (7)
- Musician - "fit lust" anagram (7)
- Effectiveness (8)
- Drink of the gods (6)
- Japan's first capital (4)
- Trophies (10)
- English river (6)
- Liking (8)

DOWN

- Saturday in Paris (6)
- Used to be (4)
- Achieved or accomplished (8)
- at : reaches a conclusion by deduction ? (7)
- Shooting star ? (6)
- A substance used as a germ killer (10)
- Parcels (8)
- Ends or concludes (10)
- Red and sore (8)
- Protective cases for lamps or lights (8)
- Cosmetic blepharoplasty (7)
- Agree to (6)
- Not moving, free from trouble - maybe dead (2,4)
- Juice of the grape (4)

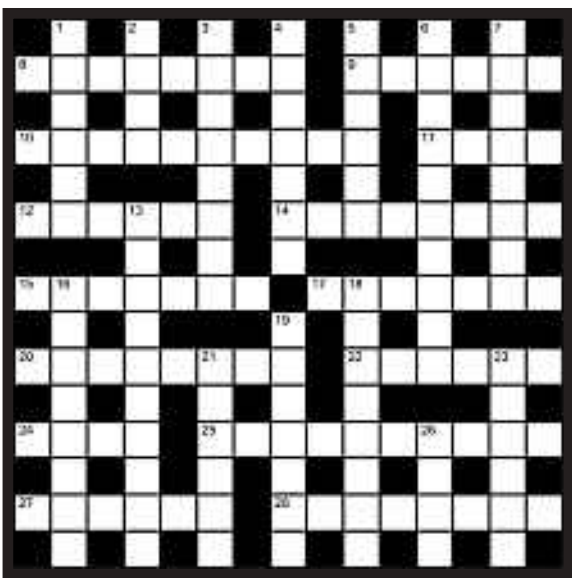
CRYPTIC CLUES

ACROSS

- Lose out in time, having been left alone (8)
- Fellow being funny about french wine to get attention (6)
- A clever judge is held to be more beneficial (10)
- Fun enjoyed in popular knock-about force (4)
- Boy sent back a couple of times to see the animal ? (3-3)
- Nails oak badly in Greece (8)
- The man with a giant stew that gives us a warm feeling (7)
- Rather in the air not on the leg ? (3-4)
- Colin has re-written letters for Santa (8)
- Where actors appear, for starters (6)

DOWN

- NY heir requiring change for a sovereign, but which one? (5,1)
- Beat up as a matter of course (4)
- Street hoodlum spins around the rink rail (8)
- Swimmer with a deep voice ? (3,4)
- Cycling out from a western hotel to fish (6)
- They have caused trouble in the highlands, as clans have in a way (10)
- Young boy's voice is continuous (8)
- Flowery glowers from the lowlands ? (5,5)
- It's heard at close of play ? (8)
- Downtrodden, it leads to inflation (4,4)



- Lower-class irregular noun (3-1)
- Money you don't get for nothing ? (4,3,3)
- Mother graduate and me in a city (6)
- Candidates oppose mine on prime environmental sites (8)
- Finds a job for a fool putting on a wrong sign (7)
- Convertible to cash - US\$1 ? (6)
- Was a solicitor to you, Edward (6)
- Old writer's material (4)

Solutions to 2273

QUICK CLUES Across: 7 Mieson, 8 Underhand, 10 Revile, 11 Detained, 12 Alcatraz, 13 Chez, 15 Invests, 17 Pleased, 20 Ajit, 22 Retailer, 25 Chowmein, 26 Toa man, 27 Eagle-eyed, 28 Mould. **Down:** 1 Revealing, 2 Motivate, 3 Anodize, 4 Vertical, 5 Shrike, 6 Sneer, 9 Lear, 14 Vegetable, 16 Tethered, 18 Animator, 19 Princes, 21 Jewels, 23 Tutu, 24 Cheat. **CRYPTIC CLUES Across:** 7 Zaire, 8 All agreed, 10 Corona, 11 Bridle, 12 Denisy, 13 Musk, 15 Belgian, 17 Snoring, 20 Well, 22 All right, 25 Previous, 26 Co-hair, 27 Come under, 28 Waver. **Down:** 1 Can-opener, 2 Trooping, 3 Old boys, 4 Dairyman, 5 Erebus, 6 Beats, 9 NATO, 14 Unchained, 16 All-round, 18 Railhead, 19 Parsley, 21 Envies, 23 Lice, 24 Crook.

JUMBLED WORDS

Given below are four jumbled words. Solve the jumbles to make proper words and move them to the respective squares below. Select the letters in the shaded squares and jumble them to get the answer for the given quip.
One faces the future with one's past. - Pearl S. Buck

OSAER	ENRTUU
STOAT	AFOYFP

ANSWER: AFOSE, TOAST, UNTRUE, PAVOR
Solution: One faces the future with one's past. - Pearl S. Buck

SUDOKU 4146

Difficulty Level 5s

Instructions

To solve a Sudoku puzzle, every digit from 1 to 9 must appear in each of the nine vertical columns, in each of the nine horizontal rows and in each of the nine boxes.

Difficulty Level

1s = Very easy; 2s = Easy; 3s = Medium; 4s = Hard; 5s = Very Hard; 6s = Genius



SOLUTION SUDOKU 4145

