

THE INDIAN EXPRESS, MONDAY, JULY 20, 2020

EXPLAINED

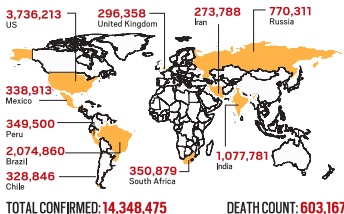


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CORONAVIRUS DASHBOARD

THE WORLD



TOTAL CONFIRMED: 14,348,475 DEATH COUNT: 603,167

Source: Johns Hopkins University, updated at 11 pm on July 19. JHU's India tally and Health Ministry's tally (below) may not match if these are accounted at different times.

T cell immunity in recovered Covid and SARS patients

SINGAPORE SCIENTISTS have uncovered T cell immunity specific to SARS-CoV-2 in recovered Covid-19 and SARS patients, and also in uninfected individuals. The study is published in *Nature*.



NEW RESEARCH

Covid-19 immunity is present in the general population, the researchers said.

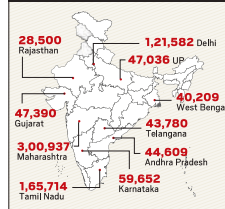
They inferred that infection and exposure to the pandemic coronavirus induces long-lasting memory T cells, which could help in the management of the current pandemic. This could be due to cross-reactive

immunity obtained from exposure to other coronaviruses, such as those causing the common cold. The researchers said it is important to understand if this could explain why some individuals are able to better control the infection.

Source: Duts-NUS Medical School

INDIA COUNT: 10,77,618 (26,816 DEATHS)

TOP 10 STATES



REST OF INDIA

Andaman and Nicobar Islands	198
Assam	650
Bihar	2536
Chhattisgarh	700
Chandigarh	5233
Dadra and Nagar Haveli	602
Goa	3484
Haryana	25547
Himachal Pradesh	1457
Jammu and Kashmir	21763
Jharkhand	13198
Kerala	5342
Ladakh	11059
Madhya Pradesh	1159
Mizoram	191
Nagaland	418
Nepal	284
Odisha	978
Punjab	10701
Sikkim	1894
Tripura	9792
Uttarakhand	275
West Bengal	2054
Yamlo	4278

Union Health Ministry update as of 11 pm, July 19. Some states may have reported higher numbers. Only states/UTs with at least one case listed above. 6,77,423 PATIENTS DISCHARGED IN 35 STATES AND UNION TERRITORIES

Have a question on the COVID-19 outbreak and what you should/shouldn't do? Write to explained@indianexpress.com

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SIMPLY PUT QUESTION & ANSWER

Community transmission?

Yes, say leading scientists, although government continues to insist that coronavirus has not reached that stage in India. A look at what community transmission means, and why it no longer matters at this stage

AMITABH SINHA
PUNE, JULY 19

MORE THAN 1.1 million people have so far been infected with the novel coronavirus in India now. Covid-19 disease is present in every state and Union Territory, except Lakshadweep. Twenty-seven of these have seen more than 1,000 people getting infected till now. Even Andaman and Nicobar Islands, which is the lowest number of cases in the country, has more than 150.

The government, however, continues to insist that the disease has still not reached a stage where community transmission starts to happen. Several scientists and health experts told *The Indian Express* this was not true, that the government position was entirely "untenable", that community transmission was no doubt taking place, but that it did not matter in any case.

But what is it, and why is it important?

Community transmission simply means that the epidemic has become widespread in a community that it gets difficult, if not impossible, to determine who is passing on the infection to whom. The source and chain of infections can no longer be established. Determining the chain of infections is key to the containment strategy that is being followed. Contact tracing, identification, testing and isolation of suspect cases are all dependent on establishing this chain.

In the initial days, when the disease was being brought by travellers from abroad, every infected person was being checked for their travel history or their contact with someone who had a travel history. And in those days, every new infection could indeed be linked with someone who was a primary or secondary contact of someone who had travelled abroad. At that time, the government's repeated statements about the absence of community transmission was also seen as a move to reassure the public that only a small proportion of people, those who had come in contact with travellers abroad, could potentially be at risk, and thus there was no need for others to panic.

But when more than 1.1 million people have been infected, the insistence that there was no community transmission happening



With more than a million infected, the government's insistence that there is no community transmission is not true, say health experts. *Praveen Khanna*

is something that, scientists said, was "laughable" and "not true". As recently as last week, the Health Ministry said that a bulk of India's cases, about 80%, were confined to just 49 districts out of a total of 733, and therefore any "talk of community transmission is not justified".

So, is it happening?

Scientists and health experts this newspaper spoke to were in no doubt that community transmission was happening. "You talk to any epidemiologist of any repute, who is outside of the government, and he or she will tell you the same thing. It is a totally untenable claim. It was untenable even earlier, but now... I don't even know what to say to this," said Vineta Bai, an immunologist and a visiting professor at the Indian Institute of Science Education and Research (IISER) in Pune.

One senior scientist, who is advising one of the state governments, said there was hard evidence and data to show that community transmission was a reality, and it was happening for a long time.

"Our team is looking at the raw data. And there is clear evidence. There are hundreds of

cases in which the chain of transmission is totally absent. So, what I am saying is based on evidence that is there. In any case, to argue that with 11 lakh cases, there is still no community transmission happening, is totally indefensible," the scientist said. He said he had signed a non-disclosure contract with the state government and therefore could not be quoted.

Shahid Jameel, a virologist and chief executive of Wellcome Trust-DBT Alliance that funds health research in India, said the government's stance lacked transparency. "I think it is always better to be honest about such things, about matters related to science. Look, beyond a point, it is nobody's fault that the cases have reached 10 lakh and still increasing. Frankly, I am not of the view that India is in a very bad situation, considering its size and population. But to say that there is no community transmission happening with 10 lakh cases and more... how is that even possible? You remember the KMR (Indian Council of Medical Research) had carried out a survey of people with serious respiratory diseases, and more than 40% of those surveyed did not know where they

got the infection from. If that is not community transmission, what is it? It is the government's own data," he said.

So why the insistence?

Scientists said they could only speculate since they just did not understand this reluctance to admit community transmission. "I don't know, but does the government believe it would be taken as some sort of failure on its part to effectively identify and isolate all the primary and secondary contacts? May be that could be the motivation behind denying it. I am not sure. I can't think of any other reason," said Jayprakash Muliyil, former principal of CMC Vellore and one of India's best-known epidemiologists.

"Once you accept that there is community transmission, then none of these containment zones, red zones or green zones make any sense. People might ask why should we follow all these. So, may be government wants to avoid that kind of situation. But frankly, I don't know," he said.

The scientist who did not wish to be named because of a non-disclosure agreement said it could be possible that the government was going by the geographical concentration of cases. "It is a fact that the lockdown, movement restrictions, and the adoption of masks and other precautions, has kept the rural areas largely protected from the disease. But it is a very lame defence," he said.

Does it matter now?

Muliyil and other scientists also argued that it was immaterial whether the government admitted to community transmission.

There is no definition of community transmission in epidemiology textbooks. In very simple terms, it just means, whether the disease gained a foothold in my country, or my community. Everything else is humbug," Muliyil said.

Jameel said he could not think of anything that the government would be forced to change if it accepts that community transmission was happening. "Nothing changes. The same processes will have to be carried out. Test, isolate, treat. For general public also, there is nothing that will change. Follow the same safety procedures, take the same precautions," he said.

What is Itolizumab, newly cleared for Covid?

ANURADHA MASCARENHAS
PUNE, JULY 19

A REPURPOSED drug, Itolizumab, is one of the newest treatments for Covid-19 approved in India. The Drug Controller General of India recently approved it as a novel biologic therapy for restricted emergency use. The decision has also sparked controversy because of the small size of the clinical trials, and because exemption has been granted from phase III trials.

What is this drug?

Itolizumab is an existing drug used for psoriasis, a chronic skin disease involving unregulated growth of some skin cells that develop into red patches mostly on knees and elbows, but also on some other parts of the body. The drug, developed by Bengaluru-based Biocon, was approved in 2013. It is considered safe and effective for the treatment of psoriasis.

Why was it approved for emergency use in Covid treatment?

The SARS-CoV-2 virus has been observed to induce an overreaction of the immune system, generating a large number of cytokines

that can cause severe damage to the lungs and other organs, and, in the worst scenario, multi-organ failure and even death.

The approval from the DCGI is based on the results from the conclusion of a randomised, controlled clinical trial at hospitals in Mumbai and New Delhi. The study focused on the safety and efficacy of Itolizumab in preventing cardio-renal complications in Covid-19 patients who also have acute respiratory distress. The drug has been found to reduce these complications in such patients.

Basically, the drug controls the hyperactivation of the immune system in response to SARS-CoV-2 virus and prevents morbidity and mortality related to the cytokine storm. The clinical trial showed that the drug is best administered in the pulmonary phase of the Covid-19 infection when the cytokine build up is starting and the patient is experiencing shortness of breath and exhibiting abnormal chest images. It prevents progression to the hyperinflammation phase (cytokine storm) and other complications like coagulation and organ failure, according to Dr Sandeep Athalye, Chief Medical Officer, Biocon Biologics.

The drug has been used over 80 patients in Cuba and off-label in over 150 cases.

According to Dr Shashank Joshi, Dean, Indian College of Physicians, the most critical part is to know when to use the drug and it must be reserved for moderate to severe Covid cases with cytokine storm where oxygen requirements are rapidly going up, usually between the 8th day onwards of Covid infection.

What were the results of the trial?

The trial results showed a statistically significant advantage over the control group of patients, in one-month mortality rate. All the patients who were administered Itolizumab were weaned off oxygen by Day 30, and none needed ventilator support unlike the control group that did not get the drug. Some other complications commonly found in such patients were also suppressed, and these correlated well with clinical improvement in symptoms. Overall, the drug was found well-tolerated.

How large was the trial?

The trial had 20 participants given the drug along with supportive care and 10 others given only supportive care. All 20 patients on Itolizumab recovered while three of the other 10 patients died.

Public health experts and some doctors

have used social media to question the sample size of the trial. When journalists raised this question at a virtual press conference, Kian Mazumdar-Shaw, Executive Chairperson, Biocon, said Itolizumab has been approved in India and since the country is in a medical emergency, it was decided to go ahead with a clinical trial involving a cohort of 30 patients. She said the regulatory process was extremely robust and the scientific discussions on the trial was of a very high order.

The DCGI has exempted the drug from phase III clinical trials and allowed phase IV trials (post-marketing surveillance). "Itolizumab is not a new drug and was approved in India since 2013. We had done phase III clinical trials, and got the approval. In the past seven years, its been used in psoriasis and we know how the mechanism works," Biocon Biologics CMO Dr Athalye said. Company officials said they plan phase IV trials soon.

How much does it cost?

Each injection is presented as a 25mg/5ml solution, which costs Rs 7500 per vial. Based on an average body weight of 60 kg, the therapy cost of a single dose comprising four vials is estimated at Rs 32,000 (MRP).

Floods in Kaziranga: often destructive, yet always necessary

TORA AGARWALA
GUWAHATI, JULY 19

THIS YEAR, Assam's Kaziranga National Park and Tiger Reserve (KNPTR) has witnessed its sixth worst flood since 1988: 108 animals, including eight one-horned rhinos, have died so far; 134 have been rescued; 85 per cent of the park remains submerged. Yet, the annual deluge is also considered crucial for the survival of the park. A look at the role of floods in Kaziranga's ecosystem:

Why are floods necessary for Kaziranga?

Sandwiched between the Brahmaputra river and the Karbi Anglong Hills, the 1,055 sq km KNPTR is a floodplain ecosystem, which has not only been created by floods, but also feeds off it. The entire area is formed by alluvial deposits from the Brahmaputra and its tributaries. "It is a riverine ecosystem, not a solid landmass-based ecosystem," said P Sivakumar, Director, KNPTR. "The system won't survive without water. The regenerative nature of floods helps

replenish Kaziranga's water bodies and maintain its landscape. Honorary Wildlife Warden, Kaziranga, Uttam Saikia said the floodwaters also function as a breeding ground for fish. The same fish are carried away by the receding waters into the Brahmaputra — in a way, the park replenishes the river's stock of fish," he said.

Floods are also a way of natural selection. "A number of animals — especially the one-horned rhinos — cannot survive the floods. Only the ones with superior genes survive," said Rabindra Sarma, Wildlife Research Officer at KNPTR.

When are the floods destructive?

While medium floods are welcome every year, experts feel the frequency of high floods is worrying. "Earlier, a big flood would come once in 10 years," said Rabin Barman, who heads the Centre for Wildlife Rehabilitation and Conservation (CWRC), Kaziranga. "Now, they happen every other year," he said, adding that massive deforestation in catchment areas or release of waters by dams upstream may be contributory factors.

Barring 2018, the years between 2016

and 2020 have all featured high floods (or floods that submerge more than 60% of the park) that have killed and injured hundreds of animals.

According to Dr Varun Goswami, Senior Scientist at Conservation Initiatives, an organisation that works in the Kaziranga landscape, wildlife in KNPTR have adapted to the natural flood regime by finding refuge on higher ground south of the park in the Karbi Anglong Hills. In the past, Kaziranga and Karbi Anglong were part of the same landscape. Today, the animals have to cross the bustling National Highway 37 which cuts across the periphery of the park.

"Over the years, the highway is getting increasingly tough to cross. A few of the nine wildlife corridors on the highway are choked by traffic," said Dr Naveen Pandey, Deputy Director and Veterinarian/Advisor, Corbett Foundation, Kaziranga. "Mushrooming of hotels, restaurants, shops, and ancillary structures of the tea industry has not helped either."

As a result, the animals that venture out of the park often die under the wheels of vehicles, or are killed by poachers. On Friday



Exhausted after fleeing the flooded Kaziranga park area, a rhino rests on NH-37. KNPTR video grab via Twitter

night, an exhausted rhino fleeing the flooded park was seen taking rest on the NH-37 for more than 24 hours, before the authorities were able to guide it back to the forest.

So, how can the park prepare for floods?

Dr Pandey said the civil administration, park authority, NGOs, and local communities work together to tackle the floods. "To avoid disease outbreaks, door-to-door vaccination is organised every year pre-floods," he said. "Camps are organised to create awareness against poaching and harming wild animals during the floods." Moreover, when the floods hit, Section 144 is imposed along NH-37, barricades are placed, speed limits are enforced and fines levied.

Are there any long-term solutions?

During 2017-18, the Assam government built a series of 33 artificial highlands inside the park for the animals to take refuge in during the floods, in addition to the 111 built in the 1990s. While the new highlands have helped reduce the number of casualties during floods, some feel it is not a permanent solution. "Animals do take refuge there but it is not viable to build more highlands since such constructions will ruin the natural ecosystem," said Sarma. According to Honorary Wildlife Warden Saikia, some animals do not take to the highlands naturally. "They have

been migrating to natural highlands of Karbi Anglong for centuries; suddenly these artificial constructions do not inspire confidence, they do not find it secure," he said.

The solution, experts said, lies in securing animal corridors and ensuring safe passage to the Karbi Hills. A 2.5-km-long flyover constructed over NH-37 was proposed by the Centre in September 2019.

In April 2019, the Supreme Court banned all mining and related activities along the park's southern boundary and in the catchment area of the rivers that originate in the Karbi Anglong hills and flow into Kaziranga, as well as new construction activities in private lands on nine animal corridors.

Apart from facilitating safe wildlife movement, Dr Goswami of Conservation Initiatives recommends a landscape-scale conservation approach that recognises the value of not just Kaziranga, but the Karbi Anglong hills to the south. "Kaziranga, with its rich grassland habitats has a primary role to play in supporting diverse wildlife populations. But the highlands of Karbi Anglong, where these animals take refuge, are the life-line of the park during the floods," he said.

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THE INDIAN EXPRESS, MONDAY, JULY 20, 2020

THE EDITORIAL PAGE

The Indian EXPRESS

FOUNDED BY
RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

IRAN AND CHINA

Breadth and depth of proposed partnership is spectacular. But it also carries big political risks

DESPITE WIDESPREAD INTERNATIONAL attention and much political excitement in India, the Iran-China deal worth \$400 billion is an ambitious plan, not a confirmed deal. The plan has been under consideration for long, but remained unimplemented. On the face of it, it makes sense to both. Tehran is desperate to break out of the American sanctions' chokehold. Tehran's hope that Europe will defy the Trump Administration and prevent Iran's commercial isolation, has evaporated. Moscow can certainly create political space in Tehran's fight with Washington, but it can't bring the scale of economic engagement that Beijing is capable of. China has no difficulty in recognising that an all-encompassing strategic partnership with Iran could make China the dominant power of the Gulf region.

The breadth and depth of the envisaged Sino-Iranian partnership is indeed spectacular. It involves China's massive investments to modernise the entire expanse of Iran's economy—from roads and railways to ports, and from telecommunication and digital infrastructure to the oil industry. It is also reported to include a significant expansion of defence and security cooperation between the two countries, including the construction of a strategic port at the mouth of the strategic Hormuz Strait, through which the Gulf countries export their oil to the world. In return for its investments, China is said to get preferential access to Iranian oil production.

While the proposed deal offers many long-term benefits to Iran and China, it also carries big political risks. Within xenophobic Iran, there is strong political opposition to handing over the economic keys of the proud nation to a foreign power. Tehran knows that Beijing will be ruthless in taking advantage of Iran's current weakness. Although the heat being turned up by the Trump Administration is getting to the regime, Tehran knows the dangers of jumping from the frying pan into the fire. Sacrificing Iran's strategic autonomy will be too much of a price for the Chinese economic lifeline. Iran is also aware that the proposed deal with China will accentuate the confrontation with the US. Beijing also knows Iran is not pliable Pakistan and will not simply accept China's harsh terms for the bailout. China is also aware that pushing ahead with the deal at this juncture will add another element to the deepening political contestation with the US. Having teased out the prospects for a historic agreement, Tehran and Beijing are likely to wait till the outcome of the US presidential elections in November. Iran and China hope that Trump's defeat will encourage Washington to reconsider its current hostility towards Tehran and Beijing. If Trump gets re-elected, Tehran and Beijing might decide there is no option but to take some risks. In the interim, the proposed deal helps the Biden campaign argue that President Trump has foolishly pushed Iran into China's lap.

CURSE OF GOLD

A smuggling case raises questions about abuse of authority in Pinarayi government, underlines need for accountability

A GOLD SMUGGLING case has cast a shadow over the Left Democratic Front government in Kerala, which has backed in the spotlight recently for its remarkable management of the COVID-19 epidemic. It has cast unflattering light on Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan's office, after at least one person arrested in the smuggling case was found to have close links to the principal secretary to CM, M Sivasankar. The government has rightly handed over the case to central agencies, and suspended Sivasankar, pending investigation.

The case initially drew public attention because 30 kg of gold had been smuggled in in diplomatic baggage dispatched to the UAE consulate in Thiruvananthapuram. As investigations identified the people who allegedly facilitated the smuggling, it revealed a chain that appeared to extend to the UAE consul general's office at one end and the CM's principal secretary at the other. While investigations are on to trace the beneficiaries of the contraband, available information points to abuse of authority and nepotism at the highest levels in the government. It appears that rules were bent to favour the key accused in the smuggling racket, Swapna Suresh, in a consultancy job, which allegedly gave her access to higher authorities in government. Photographs and mobile call records suggest that Suresh may have leveraged influence in government to further her own business interests. The alleged involvement of the CM's principal secretary has unsurprisingly given the case the hue of a political scandal.

The case has also exposed the excessive centralisation of power in the CM's office and the nature of decision-making that stems from such an arrangement. A unique aspect of the Vijayan government has been the apparent marginalisation of the political machinery in governance in favour of favoured bureaucrats who are tasked with policy-making and implementation. Ironically, a major factor that helped the state contain COVID-19, or tackle the floods some time ago, has been its much-touted decentralisation in governance, which allows community participation, and of political and government functionaries at the grass roots, in the delivery of public services and goods. The Centre must also seek the cooperation of the UAE, a friend of India, to fully uncover the smuggling racket, and bring all the guilty to book, including the big fish.

FREEZE FRAME

E P UNNY



SUHAS PALSHIKAR

WITH SACHIN PILOT'S claim that he is not joining the BJP, the Rajasthan drama has become complicated. For the Congress, it would have been easier to handle it if Pilot had followed Jyotiraditya Scindia and join the BJP. With the risk of losing power in Rajasthan, the Congress could complain about treachery and ideological bankruptcy. It is another matter that the Congress never introspects why its stalwarts have no problem joining the ideological arch rival. For the time being, by not joining the BJP, Pilot has thrown up tough questions for the party that seems too eager to lose him.

Pilot has never hidden his ambition to "serve the people of Rajasthan". There was more than a whiff of entitlement resulting in impatience in his (and earlier, in Scindia's) claims. But as the current developments have shown, Pilot does not seem to have the steadfast support of more than a score of the party MLAs. This has severely limited his choices. Another option is to join the BJP but that alternative probably does not guarantee the post of chief minister.

This leaves Pilot with the third and more challenging option: To form a new party (and then form an alliance with whomever is willing). Many Congresspersons have adopted this route—like the present incumbents in West Bengal and Andhra Pradesh. But the Congress in Rajasthan is not in the dilapidated condition that it was in these two states when Mamata Banerjee and Jagannathan Reddy took the regional route. It could also be argued that Rajasthan (like MP or Gujarat) is far too bipolar in its political character to have space for a third party.

But what do the Rajasthan developments tell us about the Congress? While on the surface, this is a "fight to the finish" for the two warring factions in the state, the role of the "third angle" in the triangle—the central leadership—has been intriguing. The party's hydra-headed approach has confused most—both outside and inside the party. The central leadership's approach has ensured that Pilot will find it very difficult to "return" to the fold. The Congress seems keen on showing how to create enemies out of its own members and commit political suicide.

The political intrigue in Rajasthan so far



COLIN GONSALVES

SUDHA BHARADWAJ, PROFESSOR OF Law at the National Law University Delhi, a former member of the Chhattisgarh State Legal Services Authority and founder of the democratic rights organisation—Janhit—has been in jail for two years following the rejection of her bail application. The high court order followed a recent two-judge bench Supreme Court decision in Zahoor Watali's case, where the Court held that bail under section 43D(5) of the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA) can be denied by relying upon prosecution documents even though they would be inadmissible in evidence during the trial. Such a judgment is unprecedented and has draconian consequences. Like Bharadwaj, there are several leftist comrades in jail today whose only crime is that they fearlessly opposed governments in courts while defending their clients.

Yug Chaudhary, who brilliantly defends Bharadwaj in the Court, pointed out that the only evidence against her was letters and documents recovered from other accused. Nothing objectionable was recovered from her or her devices. No witness statements were recorded by the police. None of the documents was signed by any of the accused persons. The authorship is not known. They do not bear any date. If produced in court during the trial, they would not be accepted as admissible evidence. The investigation is

Redesign or drift

Whichever it is, Congress fumbling, as in Rajasthan, could end up being catalyst for spurt of regional parties

A party that is often accused of not giving enough autonomy to its state leaders all of a sudden seems to have given a free hand to the chief minister—even at the cost of causing a split in the state party. While the two factions in the state Congress would surely charge for each other's throat, the party's invisible top leadership seems busy in hurting the party more than the two factions can. Some time back, Captain Amarinder Singh was supposed to have wrested autonomy in Chhattisgarh Bhupesh Baghel seems to be quietly creating a niche for himself, in MP, the exit of Scindia has given Kamal Nath more control over the state unit and in Rajasthan now, Gehlot appears to be in command. Though, in MP, the party lost power and in Rajasthan it might face the same fate, a rather audacious interpretation would be that the party is finally waking up to the idea of giving its state units more autonomy and state leaders more elbow room. That would indeed be a great step in redesigning the party. It is, however, not clear if this is an outcome of a well-thought out approach or merely a function of the drift in the party.

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leads to the inescapable conclusion that if Pilot has been over-ambitious and impatient and Gehlot has been excessively factional, the party has been inescapably muddled-headed. Dropping Pilot from the cabinet might be seen as a concession to the chief minister who seems to have larger numbers with him. But what procedure was followed and what purpose was served by also removing him as state party chief? Barricading him and his supporters against a possible move to the BJP seems understandable, but what is the sense in issuing notices under the anti-defection law when they have done is not attend the legislature party meeting? When a seasoned politician like Gehlot publicly ridicules his colleague as merely a smart-looking, English speaking person, what message does that send?

A party that is often accused of not giving enough autonomy to its state leaders all of a sudden seems to have given a free hand to the chief minister—even at the cost of causing a split in the state party. While the two factions in the state Congress would surely charge for each other's throat, the party's invisible top leadership seems busy in hurting the party more than the two factions can. Some time back, Captain Amarinder Singh was supposed to have wrested autonomy in Chhattisgarh Bhupesh Baghel seems to be quietly creating a niche for himself, in MP, the exit of Scindia has given Kamal Nath more control over the state unit and in Rajasthan now, Gehlot appears to be in command. Though, in MP, the party lost power and in Rajasthan it might face the same fate, a rather audacious interpretation would be that the party is finally waking up to the idea of giving its state units more autonomy and state leaders more elbow room. That would indeed be a great step in redesigning the party. It is, however, not clear if this is an outcome of a well-thought out approach or merely a function of the drift in the party.

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The writer, based at Pune, taught political science and is currently editing a book on Studies in Indian Politics

ISOLATING THE DISSENTER

It is unjust that refusal of bail to Sudha Bharadwaj is based on inadmissible evidence

over and this is all that the police have. Meanwhile, Bharadwaj has developed osteoarthritis and is in great pain. She lost her father while in custody and is the sole guardian of her young daughter.

The decision in the Watali case runs contrary to a long line of decisions of the Supreme Court to the effect that any order regarding bail must be based only on documents that are admissible as evidence during the trial (take *Dipankhvi v State of Gujarat*). In Naidu and Vena, unsigned documents were left out of consideration. Documents, whose authorship could not be determined, were similarly left out. Only perusing such legally-admissible evidence, will the court, using the probability test, grant bail if satisfied that in all probability the accused would not be ultimately convicted (*Ranjitsing, Vasanthi*).

In not a single decision of the Supreme Court is it laid down that documents inadmissible as evidence can be relied upon by courts to deny bail. This is a heretical proposition in criminal jurisprudence articulated thus: "The question of discarding the document at this stage on the ground of being inadmissible evidence is not permissible. The Court must look at the contents of the documents and take such documents into account as it is". Therefore, according to the Supreme Court, bail can be denied by looking at police evi-

dence that would not be admissible during the trial under criminal law. It is an understatement to say that this judgement undermines the purity of criminal jurisprudence. It deserves to be set aside by a larger bench.

The observation of the Court in Bharadwaj's case that the decision as to whether a document is admissible in evidence or not will have to wait for the trial stage is unbelievable. Courts routinely exclude inadmissible documents or statements (such as hearsay) from consideration while deciding bail applications. The dicta of Watali is that even patently inadmissible documents can be relied on by the police and courts to deny bail by leaving the accused in a situation where years will pass before her ultimate acquittal. One must remember that in the present situation of police propaganda against so-called "terrorists" who expose the government's criminal conduct, the purpose of prosecution is not to get a conviction ultimately, for the police themselves know that legal evidence is lacking, but to keep the accused as long as possible behind bars. Decisions like the Watali judgment fit well with the police strategies to isolate and incarcerate social activists contrary to law.

The writer is a senior advocate, Supreme Court of India, and founder-director of Human Rights Law Network

JULY 20, 1980, FORTY YEARS AGO

INDIRA ON THE BOMB
PRIME MINISTER INDIRA Gandhi declared that unlike the Janata government's "soft posture" towards the country's immediate neighbours, her government will continue to be firm if it saw national interest or security being threatened. She voiced a feeling of uneasiness at Pakistan's push for arms and nuclear capability, referring to the demand made by several Lok Sabha members, including senior representatives of her party, that India should make the bomb. Mrs Gandhi declared that while her government remained committed to the peaceful use of nuclear energy, it would do everything to enable the country's scientists acquire knowledge in this field. She asked:

Would possession of one or two bombs be a deterrent to conflict?

JAGUAR DEAL
PRIME MINISTER INDIRA Gandhi announced that her government will honour the memorandum of understanding with British Aerospace for the supply of Jaguar aircraft to India. But she also said that where the "discretion lies with us".

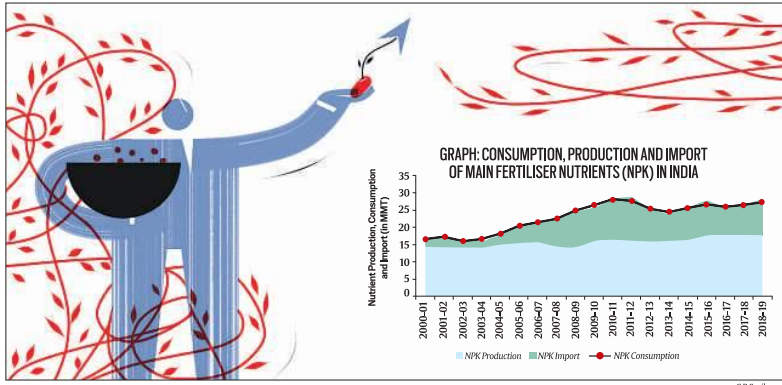
UP FLOODS
THE FLOOD SITUATION in eastern Uttar Pradesh continued to cause anxiety as the Ganga and Gomti crossed the red mark at Ballia district, flooding low-lying villages. The

Ghagra has already flooded around 300 villages in the state. Constant rainfall in the last 12 days has swelled all the major rivers in the state and disrupted normal life in the rural areas and towns. Over one million people have been affected.

MOSCOW OLYMPICS
A HUGE HUSH fell over spectators as trumpets heralded the opening of the controversial 22nd Olympic Games in Moscow's Central Lenin Stadium. By tradition, Greece led the parade. All other national teams followed the Cynille alphabetical order, with the host nation bringing up the rear. The large Indian contingent looked neat and impressive.

THE INDIAN EXPRESS, MONDAY, JULY 20, 2020

9 THE IDEAS PAGE



Unshackling for self-reliance

In agri-inputs, government should free private sector from unnecessary controls and regulation

FROM PLATE TO TROUGH
BY ASHOK GULATI

WITH PRIME MINISTER Narendra Modi's clarion call for an "Atmanirbhar Bharat" (self-reliant India), I take up here how Indian agriculture can be geared towards that mission. In my last column, (Atmanirbhar in agriculture, IE, July 6), I focused on outputs. Here I look at the key agri-inputs — seeds, fertilisers and tractors — to ensure self-reliance in agriculture.

Good seeds are catalysts for change in agriculture. The Green Revolution was ushered in by the import of 18,000 tonnes of high-yielding varieties of wheat seeds, Lerma Rojo and Sonora-64, and IR-8 rice seeds. Today, our granaries are full and India is atmanirbhar in staple crops, thanks to those seeds and the research conducted by the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) to improve them. Today, India exports seeds to its neighbouring countries. Even during the lockdown period, hybrid rice seeds were exported through special trains to Bangladesh by the private sector.

India can emerge as an important seed producer and a large exporter of seeds to many developing countries in South and South-east Asia as well as Africa. The country can produce very competitively priced seeds for hybrid rice, hybrid corn, hybrid BT cotton, and several vegetables including tomato, potato and okra, provided we set our regulatory system right. Let me use the case of cotton to illustrate my point. Former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee had taken a bold decision to allow BT cotton in India in March 2002. That decision made India the largest producer of cotton in the world and the second largest exporter of cotton by 2013-14. But since this government took over in 2014-15,

it has waged a continuous battle against large seed companies, especially multinationals, and their Indian joint ventures, on issues such as trait fees. As a result, these companies have almost stopped introducing new generation of seeds, and now there is an "illegal" spread of Bt HT cotton in Maharashtra, 15-20 per cent of the area under the crop has been taken up by this counterfeit variety. This is partly because our regulatory system is complex, and more so because the present government has ideological blinkers against modern science. This is the biggest bottleneck holding India back from becoming the seed capital of the developing world. No wonder, in 2019-20, India has once again become a net importer of cotton, taking the clock back to 2002-03.

Let me now turn to fertilisers. India has been a net importer of fertiliser nutrients (NPK) for almost two decades (see graph). In 2019-20, India imported fertilisers worth \$6.7 billion. Topping the list is urea (\$2.3 billion), followed by diammonium phosphate (DAP, \$2 billion) and muriate of potash (MOP, \$1.14 billion). We are totally dependent on imports in case of MOP and in case of DAP we import the rock and the finished product. Given that we don't have the raw materials required to produce DAP and MOP, India is likely to remain dependent on imports of these fertilisers. However, in the case of urea, which we imported about 11 million tonnes of in 2019-20, India wants to be atmanirbhar by opening up five new urea plants in the public sector with a total capacity of 6.35 MMt. Almost 70 per cent of the gas being used in urea plants is imported at a price much higher than the price of domestic gas. And of these five, the one in Talcher is based on coal gasification with Chinese technology. The cost of making urea is going to be more than \$400/tonne when the international price generally hovers between \$250-300/tonne. We know well that in most cases our public sector enterprises turn out to be white elephants saddled with high costs — finally they have to be sold to the private sector. Why did we not allow existing private sector urea plants to expand and produce at a

The best way to achieve atmanirbhar in fertilisers is to change the system of fertiliser subsidies. Deposit equivalent cash directly into farmers' accounts, calculated on a per hectare basis, and free up fertiliser prices. Allow the private sector plants to compete and expand urea production in a cost competitive manner, be it at home or in the Gulf countries where gas is much cheaper. That will be true atmanirbhar (self-reliance).

much lower cost? Only the government has the answer.

The best way to achieve atmanirbhar in fertilisers is to change the system of fertiliser subsidies. Deposit equivalent cash directly into farmers' accounts, calculated on a per hectare basis, and free up fertiliser prices. Allow the private sector plants to compete and expand urea production in a cost competitive manner, be it at home or in the Gulf countries where gas is much cheaper. That will be true atmanirbhar (self-reliance).

The best example of atmanirbhar in agri-inputs is that of farm machinery especially tractors. In 1961-62, before the Green Revolution, India produced only 880 tractor units, which increased to about 9,00,000 units in 2018-19, making the country the largest tractor manufacturer in the world. India also exported almost 92,000 tractors, largely to African and ASEAN countries. How did it happen? The Green Revolution gave it a push, but the real breakthrough came after de-licensing in 1991. Tractor companies compete and bring out better products at low cost. Mahindra and Mahindra leads the pack with an almost 40 per cent share. The new class of entrepreneurs and start-ups are coming up with special apps for "Uberisation of tractor services" so that farmers can avail of these services at low cost, without owning a tractor. In an economy of small landholders, owning a tractor is a high cost proposition as it is not fully utilised. This needs to be made more efficient by creating a market for tractor services.

What is the overall lesson from these three cases of seeds, fertilisers, and tractors? The private sector is our strength. The only thing the government has to do is to unshackle them from the chains of controls and webs of unnecessary regulations. They will make an Atmanirbhar Bharat.

Gulati is Infosys Chair professor for Agriculture at ICRIER

WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

"[The] proliferation of struggles reflects Beijing's increasing confidence and forcefulness. Britain also looks a good deal weaker than the last time China froze it out, following David Cameron's meeting with the Dalai Lama." — THE GUARDIAN

A pincer in Ladakh

It is no longer Pakistan seeking Chinese support for its adventurism as much as it is the other way around. India must prepare



SYED ATA HASNAIN

WHILE INDIA HAS long considered the potential of a two-front war with Pakistan and China, it was only in 2009 that a keynote address at a seminar in Delhi, by the then Army Chief General Deepak Kapoor, forced a serious re-evaluation. The debate regarding India's capability to fight a war in which there is full collusion between China and Pakistan has generally remained inconclusive. Most detractors of the belief regarding China's military-support to Pakistan, in the event of latter's adventurism against India, have leaned on the argument that China will adopt a policy to suit its interests. Both in 1965 and 1971, it made some promises to Pakistan but chose to stay away. Of course, that was during the Cold War — a completely different international strategic environment.

From 2005, the process of rapid military modernisation saw China pursue its strategic interests, including border management on land and sea, more aggressively. Limited and fairly benign experiments with "walk in" operations across the Line of Actual Control (LAC) began after 2008. An expression of the mutuality of strategic interests with Pakistan came with the reported presence of 11,000 PLA troops in Gilgit-Baltistan in 2011. Post 2013, Pakistan ramped up its proxy campaign in J&K almost in sync with two China-related trends: First, enhanced PLA assertiveness in the region. Second, the announcement of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) — Xi Jinping's ambitious, and almost personal, project. A progressively altering Chinese attitude towards the Kashmir issue started to take shape as early as 2008-09, with the issue of stapled visas to Indians residing in J&K. The denial of a visa to the Northern Army Commander in August 2010 was with the clear intent of expressing increasing diplomatic support to Pakistan. This support was also witnessed on issues such as the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG), Pakistan's involvement in global terrorism and the abrogation of Article 370.

The BRI was probably long in the making. The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is a part of the BRI that is less economic in orientation than strategy. It is described by many as the flagship of the BRI. The corridor is also a part of China's Indian Ocean strategy and in its current avatar, it is little more than a shaky communication artery with some additional projects thrown in. The BRI is a far more ambitious project, the survival of which in the post COVID-19 setting has been questioned by visionaries.

Yet, China's long-term strategic vision is not something that the international strategic community is adept at assessing. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's observation on

expansionism having no place in the modern era was an indirect message to China. We are about midway through the period that China has set for itself to rise to a position of greatness — beginning in 1978 — for which it is increasingly employing coercion. It is seeking that milestone on a faster track, post the devastation due to COVID-19.

It is no longer Pakistan seeking Chinese support for its adventurism as much as it is the other way around. The mutuality of interests has increased and military coordination has become a larger part of the overall strategy. China may force further escalation this season depending upon how the world responds to its expansionism. Yet it could also adopt a posture which prepares it, along with Pakistan, towards a future "pincer approach" in Ladakh. This does not presuppose the limitation of Chinese intent to just Ladakh — Arunachal, Sikkim and the Central Sector very much under the scanner as part of the expanded collusive strategy. However, it is Ladakh where the effect is intended most and it is there that the pincer approach may prove more challenging for India.

Currently, India may not be optimally prepared for such a contingency but the Chinese may not be either. This is because they have tried setting the stage too early in their eagerness to spring a surprise — in turn, the Chinese could be surprised. That is where Pakistan comes in as a force multiplier to keep the options open as far as timing is concerned — the current campaigning season or a postponed one. In postponing, the Chinese will seek greater Pakistani activity in J&K and Ladakh, including attempts to keep the LoC alive along with terrorism in the hinterland to dilute Indian optimisation in Ladakh.

Assuming that confrontation with the Sino-Pak combine is inevitable now or later, one of the ways for India to offset this is to project sufficient capability. The diplomatic and military domains have to play this out effectively. India cannot be seen to be alone or militarily weak. It has tremendous support internationally which must translate towards the Kashmir issue of strategic support. Militarily, Pakistan should never be able to perceive that it will be allowed to fight as per choice and conceived strategy.

China's success or failure in such adventurism will set the course of its future strategy against its multiple adversaries. That is the psyche which India must exploit to prevent escalation and win this and impending standoffs without fighting. This needs a rapid and all-out national effort with high priority accorded to it, including budgeting. China has made the major mistake of creating a face-off that it thought it could win without fighting but it is now mired in a situation that it did not think through. Extending this face-off will be a logistics nightmare for both countries. On its part, India cannot afford to focus only on the northern borders. A firm and full strategy to deal with Pakistan in all contingencies has now become imperative.

The writer, a former corps commander of the Singra-66 15 Corps, is Chancellor, Central University of Kashmir

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

BETTER RESPONSE
THIS REFERS TO the article 'Counterproductive lockdown' (IE, July 17). The government response and health infrastructure in the country have been exposed by the pandemic. The analogy of road accident deaths used by the writer to explain why a lockdown is insufficient in controlling the virus spread is apt. The response from governments both in the states and at the Centre can be inspired by best practices within India (Kerala) and outside (Vietnam), while simultaneously ramping up the already lagging public health infrastructure in the country.

Sagar Ganesh Borade, Thane

STUDENTS AT RISK
THIS REFERS TO the article, 'Let's not fall the young' (IE, July 16). Why are the Union Ministry of Human Resource & Development and University Grants Commission (UGC) risking students' lives by forcing an examination on them? Many colleges are in cities where there is a huge number of COVID-19 patients. The need of the hour is for the UGC to revisit its guidelines by taking into account the current scenario.

Gavhane Viraj V, Beed

BE CONSISTENT
THIS REFERS TO the report, 'In Rajasthan, rebel Cong MLAs go to court, cite freedom of speech in defence' (IE, July 17). The public will appreciate the rebel Congress MLAs' decision to cite in the high court their

IDEAS ONLINE

ONLY IN THE EXPRESS

● THE BURDEN OF HIGH EXAM SCORES
SANJEEV RAI

● A CAMPAIGN AGAINST THE UPS
AMIT BEDWAL

www.indianexpress.com

constitutional right to freedom of speech and expression against state disqualification. They can earn more public laurels if they declare publicly also that in case they finally have to leave their party, they will not join any other party known for its violation of freedom of speech.

Tarsem Singh, Mahipour

SOME QUESTIONS
THIS REFERS TO the article, 'Blessing of the visa gods' (IE, July 17). We were taken aback by the US move of suspending student visas and we took a sigh of relief when the stand was reversed. The question is: Why are we so dependent on foreign countries for our students' education? Why are we not attracting international students to India?

Ayush Singh, Agra



ARUNDHATI DHURU AND SANDEEP PANDEY

IN THE WAKE of migrant workers returning following the lockdown, Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath announced on May 24 that his government will set up a commission to create employment opportunities in the state. He said the commission will conduct skill mapping of migrant workers and provide them jobs and social security. An interaction with around 200 migrant workers from Unnao, Sitapur, Varanasi, Lucknow, Kushinagar and Saharanpur districts in UP gave a picture very different from what the government has been claiming. Not one of the workers surveyed in these districts has been approached by the government for skill mapping or for providing them guidance for any kind of livelihood options in their home state. Only one of them had received monetary support of Rs 1,000 twice, though about half of them were provided with the 35-kg ration kit — benefits promised to all the returning migrant workers. However, the cash benefit could be availed only by those who had used state-owned transport, which was nearly absent.

Most of the migrant workers had been employed by the construction industry in the National Capital Region, Haryana and Punjab. Some of them worked with plaster of paris and did marble masonry. Some were polishing marble in Telangana. Still others were tai-

Unkept promises to workers

Despite government claims, migrants continue to be vulnerable and abandoned

lors in Ahmedabad, or worked in hotels in Mumbai. A few had work in factories producing crockery, hosiery and clothes. The farthest anybody worked was in a zarda factory in Karnataka. The few women among the returnees worked as domestic workers or were employed in local factories in Ludhiana. Only less than 10 per cent of them got to travel free by government transport. Most of them spent their own money to travel by various kinds of private vehicles, on buses, auto-rickshaws or even changing their vehicles at some place, and even walking part or full distance. For example, when the police would not let their vehicles cross the Delhi-UP border, they would walk up to Ghaziabad or Meerut, where they could change their vehicles at some place, and then head for their home. Often, they travelled in groups so that costs could be shared. The amount a person spent on travel was upwards of Rs 2,000.

About 10 per cent of them were quarantined — the quarantine centres were mostly near the railway stations. Others were told to go home and voluntarily quarantine themselves inside their homes. Relatives of workers quarantined at most centres were getting the regular quota of ration nor the free quota made available during the coronavirus crisis period. Only a little more than 50 per cent of the migrant work-

ers who have returned get their quota of ration. The situation with work under MGNREGS is worse. Less than a third of the people who have returned get work from one to 20 days. But only about a third of them had received payments. Forgetting that workers have their own agency and rights over their lives, the chief minister had said that if states wanted to re-employ migrant workers they would have to take the UP government's permission. Preeti, a native of Sitapur, said that she was working with her family of six adults in Ludhiana for the last 12 years, laughed at this statement. He said: "It is not possible to start factories overnight or even in a few months or a year or two in UP. Our entire family works in factories and earns Rs 55,000 a month. Who will give us that sort of skilled work here? When we will be no work for them at the places they had left in desperation. Hardly anybody got paid for the period of lockdown, despite the appeal by the prime minister. About 20 per cent of them also have payments worth more than 75 lakh in salaries and wages pending for work done earlier. Overall, the workers stare at a bleak future."

Even though the chief minister announced more than once that needy people will get ration even without a ration card, the fact is that the returnee migrant labourers who don't have ration cards or their names have been struck off from ration cards because they were not staying in their village, are neither getting the regular quota of ration nor the free quota made available during the coronavirus crisis period. Only a little more than 50 per cent of the migrant work-

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Dhuru works with the National Alliance of People's Movements and Pandey, a Magasanyan awareness, is with Socialist Party

(Info: The Farang community in the village of Rakesh in collection, compilation and verification of data



The COVID-19 pandemic has made teletherapy popular, and experts say its convenience will ensure that it endures beyond these lockdown times

From the therapist's couch to yours

by NIDHI ADLAKHA

In early May, Mani S*, a Chennai-based writer and journalist, found himself talking to an empty chair. "Imagine a friend seated there, going through your emotional crisis, and talk to him", said his therapist's calming voice over a WhatsApp call from Bengaluru. Though initially awkward with the exercise – especially now in our socially-distanced reality – Mani soon found that the new perspective helped him deal with his anxiety. "I thought in-person sessions were better, but I've had no trouble [with teletherapy] because my psychologist is aware of the medium's limitations and helps me with specific instructions," says the 32-year-old, who first got help last October to cope with his divorce. "During lockdown, I realised that medicines alone were not helping my depression, so I turned to teletherapy."

In New Delhi, the fortnight after the first lockdown saw a spike in Covid-related phone calls at IWILL Therapy, the online specialist therapy company. The first week was spent addressing anxiety from both first-timers and existing clients. "With lay-offs, pay cuts and mounting bills, everyone is facing some issue now. But our callers have been triggered to a point where their depression or anxiety is painful," says Nayamat Bawa, 32, head psychologist, adding that they've seen a 65% jump in sessions between May and June.

Even social media platforms are upping their game. This week, Snapchat rolled out its 'Here For You' feature. While there are no teletherapists, its content covers a range of topics including eating disorders, anxiety and how to identify distress in a loved one.

Though teletherapy has been around for years, the pandemic has most certainly brought the psychotherapist home.

Help's just a tap away

Teenagers, millennials and people in their 40s are reaching out the most, to address concerns such as job insecurity, couple discord, behaviour issues with children, sleep disorders and loneliness. "Anxiety and depression as clinical conditions have seen a strong spike. This is because the pandemic has created stressful conditions for people with no pre-existing issues as well as those with an existing risk for burnout," says Bawa. One of her first sessions, she recalls, was a client in his 40s whom she'd been seeing for a couple of years. "His business was overseas and he had to shut shop. He was experiencing suicidal thoughts. I had to use positive coping mechanisms and cognitive behaviour therapy, such as thought restructuring, to help him," she says.

In Chennai, psychiatrist Vijay Nagaswami, 62, has also noticed a much higher incidence of anxiety and irritability over the last four months. "Many couples haven't spent as much time in direct contact with each other as they have now. So the cracks that were once papered over are now opening and people are realising that they can't delay addressing the issues any longer," he says.

Need for privacy

For those who've never had therapy, teletherapy is an easy introduction. "Many first-timers find video sessions more comforting as they remain in their own environment," says Nagaswami, who has been taking online sessions since 2013. Moreover, taking 50 minutes out of one's day is far easier than travelling a couple of hours to get to a therapist's office. "Virtual sessions are more convenient for someone with anxiety as the smallest of things, such as traffic or bad roads, can seem impossible to handle," says Mani.

But convenience and

flexibility aside, there are challenges too. Therapists have to be alert for non-verbal cues. They also have to judge the baseline for a new client's anxiety. "I talk this through at length with patients, but mostly we go by how long the problem has been persisting and how badly it affects their daily life," says Jessica Gold, Assistant Professor at Washington University's Department of Psychiatry (St Louis), who has authored articles on issues faced by therapists. "Where I need to check their heart rate or blood pressure [for those on stimulants for ADHD, etc], I've been asking them to use Fitbit or other ways to get their own measurements," she adds.

Another constraint: lack of a "safe space". When you pay for therapy, you pay for the psychotherapist's knowledge and the space – where you can open up without the risk of interruption or being overheard. Nagaswami believes teletherapy won't completely replace face-to-face sessions in the future. "For those living with large families, privacy is a concern. They will prefer to wait for in-person sessions, unless their issues are too compelling and require urgent intervention," he says. This explains why many opt for sessions on WhatsApp or the chat platform on IWILL's app. Poojini Bhola, faculty at the Department of Clinical Psychology at NIMHANS (National Institute of Mental Health and Neuro Sciences), recalls a 19-year-old who found it challenging to speak to a psychologist because his family didn't know he was in therapy.

cost of medicines, is a high expense every month," she says.

Finding the right specialist takes time too, says Radhakrishnan, who has consulted four psychologists and two psychiatrists in the last five years. Then there are the bad experiences no one talks about. "I once had a psychologist who disagreed with me during a session, stopped midway and then blocked me on WhatsApp!" Unfortunately, at



the moment, such cases can't be reported. "There is no governing body that regulates psychotherapists and counsellors in the manner that the Indian Medical Council regulates doctors," says Nagaswami.

Expert speak

Of course, teletherapy has been a learning curve for therapists too. Gold says making the virtual switch in March wasn't easy. "It can be really exhausting to go from person to person on Zoom or Skype all day," she says, adding that some things simply can't be done over video or phone, like handing someone "a tissue if they are crying". But what they all agree on is that teletherapy will be the new normal in tackling the mental health crisis – albeit as a hybrid version. "It will not replace traditional sessions entirely; there will be a mix of the two. It will give us the opportunity to reach out to more people, especially those in rural and semi-urban areas," says Bhola. As more glitches get fixed and more experts join the expanding roster of online resources, this will mean help at hand for anyone, anywhere.

*name changed



It can be really exhausting to go from person to person on Zoom or Skype all day... Having more people from different cities connect with me is a plus point

JESSICA GOLD
Department of Psychiatry,
Washington University



Connectivity is a sore point. As many people don't have a broadband connection and use 3G or 4G, the video/audio quality is often variable. Staring at pixelated images can be trying

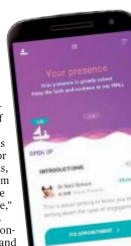
VIJAY NAGASWAMI
Psychiatrist



Over the last four months, the need for seeking professional help has gone up. People from all walks of life are grappling with anxiety and need help to cope. This is propelling them to open up more

NAYAMAT BAWA
IWILL Therapy

Government of India BHABHA ATOMIC RESEARCH CENTRE Nuclear Recycle Board General Services Organisation Construction and Maintenance, Tarapur					
The bid forms and other details can be downloaded from the website www.tenderwizard.com/DAE . The tender notice is also available on the website www.barc.gov.in/tenders from 20/07/2020.					
Tender Notice No.	Name of work	Estimated Cost (Rs. P.)	Maximum Money Deposit (Rs. P.)	Time of Completion	Site Period
BARC/TI/NRB/ (SOSICAM) (SIP413) 2020/28	Supply, installation, testing, commissioning and guarantee of Power panel, Street Light and Garden Light Poles, LT Cables for New Type of quarters in BARC Staff Colony, Tarapur.	1,00,00,000/-	1,62,00,000/-	12 (Twelve months)	20/07/2020 to 31/07/2020
The bid forms and other details can be downloaded from the website www.tenderwizard.com/DAE . The tender notice is also available on the website www.barc.gov.in/tenders from 20/07/2020.					



Let's talk money

Price is a concern, too. Especially since no insurance company covers therapy (though the 2017 Mental Health Act provides for the inclusion of mental illness cover). Last month, Delhi-based feminist researcher Radhika Radhakrishnan, 26, tweeted about the exorbitant cost of therapy in India. With over 2,000 retweets and 10,000 likes, it resonated with many. "A session with a psychologist costs between ₹1,500 and ₹2,000 for an hour, and psychiatrists – cost more, close to ₹3,000. This, added with the

OUR VIEW



The special paradox of HCL's succession plan

As Roshni Nadar Malhotra takes over as the software major's chairperson from Shiv Nadar, the business would benefit from continuity in its willingness to keep transforming itself

What marks technology out from most other businesses is the speed at which markets evolve. Inflection points show up with high frequency, often out of the blue, with the result that multiple generations of products and services get compressed under a single generation of leadership. Few industries have thrived on this reality quite as HCL's Shiv Nadar has. Last week, the 75-year-old co-founder of the group made way for his daughter Roshni Nadar Malhotra as chairperson of HCL Technologies. This succession at the nearly-\$9 billion software services major has been under planning for many years. Armed with an MBA from the Kellogg Graduate School of Management, she has been an director on its board since 2013, and became vice-chairperson in 2018. As announced, Nadar shall stay on as managing director and chief strategy officer. The company's director, however, is now expected to be set by his 38-year-old successor. Shareholders, among others, would be watching HCL closely for signs of continuity. But what needs to be sustained above all else, in this case, is the spirit of change that has got it so far. At first glance, that may seem paradoxical. With clarity on what must bear Nadar's imprimatur and what needs to be refreshed, though, it could easily resolve itself. This is because the story of his success as an entrepreneur is a strong argument against the safety of status quoism. In all his best-judged decisions, he foresaw what lay ahead early, and swerved his business toward the future in good time, undaunted by risk.

Like Silicon Valley legends Hewlett-Packard and Apple, HCL was a classic 'garage startup' with big ambitions. It started small in a Delhi

barsati of the mid-70s, when Nadar and his co-founders spotted an opportunity in digital devices for a mass market. From calculators, they leapt swiftly to desktop computers, making the most of a demand boom in the 1980s. By the end of that decade, these machines had got commodified to such an extent that they were selling almost entirely on the appeal of low price tags. Hardware manufacturing was a low-margin affair. It grew evident, with profits dependent on the scale of one's output. It was in the early 1990s, just as India opened up to global competition, that Nadar took what can be termed his career's boldest bet. He returned a unit of research and development into a hotshop for software services, taking care to set it apart from players such as Infosys and Tata Consultancy Services by opting for different field specializations. This was spun off as HCL Technologies, and once it went public in 1999, it began to overshadow the old business. Education has been Nadar's other domain of interest. While the group's computer training chain has faded away, the multi-disciplinary Shiv Nadar University could yet consolidate his legacy as an institution builder.

Today, HCL Technologies is a sizeable corporation under the watch of equity analysts, with all the burdens that keep such businesses from moving too swiftly. Nadar seems keen to have it retain its agility, as signalled by his recent description of the covid pandemic as a catalyst for change. What this translates into may take time to show, but observers seem unsure if it will differ much from what its rivals do. Some say it must go beyond leveraging for gains; that it should sharpen an internal edge in a sector full of skillset overlaps. For HCL to differentiate itself again, it may need to rejuvenate an old zest for novelty.

The US anti-racism movement might work in favour of racists

Reducing all American history to a simplistic binary could end up being harmful to a just cause



SANDIPAN DEB

is a former editor of 'Financial Express', and founder-editor of 'Open' and 'Swarajya' magazines

It is quite an extraordinary moment in the history of the United States. Statues of George Washington, Thomas Jefferson and Abraham Lincoln are being toppled, airports and sports teams are being renamed, all heritages being questioned. Washington, the man who led the US war of independence and was its first president, and Jefferson, who wrote the Declaration of Independence and is credited with a big role in creating the modern concept of 'human rights', were both slaveowners. Lincoln, the US president who fought the Civil War that led to the emancipation of slaves, and whose copy of the Bible the US first African-American president Barack Obama used to take his oath of office, has been 'canonised'. It has, after all, been known to historians all along that Lincoln fought the war primarily to maintain the integrity of the nation and not to free slaves, per se. However, made a sort of this fact and allowed the statues that supported him in the war to keep slaves.

The Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs at Princeton University has been renamed the Princeton School, since Wilson, US president during World War I, was an active segregationist. California's John Wayne Airport will almost certainly be renamed since American's greatest Western film star made some decidedly racist public comments. The football

team Washington Redskins has dropped 'Redskins', seen as derogatory to Native Americans. The Texas Rangers baseball team is under pressure to change its name, since the legendary frontier lawman may have been racist.

The question then is: Where does it all end? Western portrayals of Jesus Christ as blonde and blue-eyed are born of European cultural assumptions, since the West Asian who died on the cross could hardly have had such an appearance. Should Americans now replace all the statues and paintings in their churches, and try to 'cancel' Leonardo da Vinci, Raphael and the Sistine Chapel, where every Biblical entity, beginning with God and Adam, is Caucasian?

What of Columbus, the capital of Ohio? Records suggest that Christopher Columbus, long celebrated as the intrepid explorer who discovered America, was also a plunderer who left many natives of the land he reached dead. In the last decade, many American cities have renamed the national holiday Columbus Day as Indigenous Peoples' Day. What about Columbia University, 'Hall Columbia', the official US vice-presidential anthem and the district of Columbia? After all, 'Columbia' is merely a derivation from 'Columbus'. Washington DC itself is named after a man who kept an estimated 300 slaves. And the very name 'America' comes from Amerigo Vesputi, the 15th century Italian explorer who, as records show, made at least one slave raid in the Bahamas, capturing 232 natives, and was a slave owner.

Today, aloud and voluble section of Americans, though almost certainly a minority, are seeing their country and its history only through the prism of racism. Every individual and every action is being judged by the racial/non-racial binary, and apparently anyone who questions this classification is by definition a racist. As anyone who claims he is not a racist, because this is not a racist definition, is being labelled a racist public comment. The football

whether a person should be judged by the standards of his time, or whether a person's positive contributions, like those of all mortals, outweigh his negatives, are also tarred with the same brush.

There is no denying America's history of systemic racism, but could these anti-racism activists, with their bipolar view of the world, end up giving racists just the tools they need to pursue their venal agenda? Caucasian racists can now cite the activists' starkly black-and-white campaign as proof that they were right all along—that people of colour do not believe in the 'idea of America' (whichever way racism is defined). When one side reduces all American history to a skin-pigment narrative and calls for endless penance, it may be harming the other side, which propagates its own hateful melanin story, and confusing the innocent. The attacks on men regarded as America's greatest national heroes—including the two most prominent founding fathers—may be intensely disturbing to a very large number of average Caucasian Americans who are not racist in any manner, but whose deepest beliefs and pride in their country are now being called foolish delusions at best.

Anti-racism activists appear uninterested in discussion, debate and nuances. Historical inequities can only be corrected through wisely designed and soundly executed policies—from zoning laws to economic programmes—and reforming institutions, and this cannot happen without informed and sober discourse.

Last month, when the Minneapolis City Council announced that it would disband the city's police force, council president Lisa Bender was asked at a press conference: 'What if, in the midst of the night, my home is broken into. Who do I call?' Bender replied: 'That [fear] comes from a place of privilege.'

This sort of thinking is not going to help America, or its racial relations.

10 YEARS AGO



JUST A THOUGHT

After a certain high level of technical skill is achieved, science and art tend to coalesce in aesthetics, plasticity, and form. The greatest scientists are artists as well.

ALBERT EINSTEIN

MY VIEW | MODERN TIMES

Why future artists should get stuck in science streams

MANU JOSEPH



is a journalist, and a novelist, most recently of 'Miss Laila, Armed and Dangerous'

propose a library sign: 'Be quiet, like Indian parents whose children scored less than 90% in their boards'.

If you have ears or eyes, you may have found it hard last week to escape the jubilation of people whose children had scored high in Class 12. Or this annual headline: 'Girls Outshine Boys'. The outshining happens every year in almost all examinations, including the civil services, but rarely in objective-type quantitative reasoning tests.

The way parents react to academic success, they clearly think that it guarantees a good material life, or at least that academic failure forebodes financial insecurity. But then how did the lives of India's thousands of toppers turn out? Did the toppers fare as poorly as their teachers prophesied? We aren't talking about happiness here, after all, a measure of that complicated thing is a sophisticated fraud. Purely on material terms, did the toppers find the life and vices that were prophesied? They were, of course, promised boring but secure and

lucrative jobs—did that happen? Will last week's toppers thrive in a world where their education and degrees and whole professions might be obsolete?

Over the past few years, many Indian parents have resisted the veneration of examination, but they had to fulfil their quota to go wrong. As a result, they have become bested with a table that is growing more and more persuasive—that what a prospective engineering graduate may really want to 'do in life' is wildlife photography. Or sing, or write, or make movies. And that if adolescents 'pursue' their artistic talents, instead of science or medicine, they will be happy, even rich.

I myself have suggested such a scenario in an article about 12 years ago, and that outside the engineering and medical streams, there was 'the beautiful world of the backbencher'. I wish to make some revisions to my earlier view.

An adolescent who is reasonably good at science and maths, but finds them boring and wants to pursue a more exciting career in a 'creative field', is not necessarily doing the right thing by abandoning formal science education. Here I am not talking about youth who have a deep interest in the arts and wish to learn, in an orderly way, this

story and aspects of what other people have created. I am only referring to those who might be creators themselves, who believe they have a gift in non-scientific domains and that they will be wasting it away in the sciences streams.

To a true artist, nothing is a waste, especially science, because science is philosophy. In fact, I believe that what of philosophy is merely a set of dim questions asked too early in the progress of science. In any case, no artistic gift can be taught. There can be great insights, but artistic insight gets better as it matures within all your ongoing experiences. So, formal education in the arts is for lovers of art and not the artist. In some young artists, formal education may do some serious damage to their her basic instincts.

German filmmaker Werner Herzog is known to have said: 'Somebody who has been a boxer in Africa would be better trained as a filmmaker than if he had graduated from one of the best film schools in

the world. All that counts is real life.' This is in line with his advice to aspiring filmmakers to 'learn' a trade that has nothing to do with cinema.

This is true for every creative profession. And this is exactly what adolescent artists who are proficient in the sciences are offered on a platter—to be artists

who can comprehend and enjoy the philosophy of science without the bleak prospects of being stranded in dull lucrative jobs.

In any case, creative work is not a paradisaical experience that it is made out to be. Anything that becomes a job, a career, will become dull, or at least have parts that are plain boring and tedious. The secret of most artists is that they hate many aspects of their craft. They enjoy something in the heart of it all, the ambiguous core, but most other things are boring.

For the past several years, my mother has been talking to me about her novel. She enjoys the idea in her head as they form, but she has not got down to writing anything

substantial on paper. It is hard physical labour. There are millions of writers in the world who have never written a word—they have these beautiful ideas in their heads but when they have to bring them out into the physical world, something goes wrong; those ideas are not so beautiful anymore and then there is the accompanying sense of intense fatigue.

That is why the most foolish advice that I have heard seasoned writers give the youth is 'read, read, read'. I have heard this dramatic iteration many times. That's like asking young cricketers to watch videos of Sachin Tendulkar. Writers must write, write and write, and run miles or lift heavy weights. If you are not physically fit, your body will fool you into overrating your mediocre third draft.

If I find it amusing that the rigorous scientific stream prepares one much better for such a job than the deluged lawlessness of the artistic streams.

So, if there are potential artists out there who have scored in their high 90s making their parents proud, and who have, through their own exam-taking abilities, made it too emotionally expensive to quit the looming science stream, I say it is not such a bad pressure to face. A lot of science is pure art.

| MY VIEW | THE INTERSECTION

India should deploy naval power to acquire leverage over China

This would send a calibrated signal to Beijing that New Delhi could tilt the power balance in areas of Chinese vulnerability



NITIN PALI

is co-founder and director of The Takshashila Institution, an independent centre for research and education in public policy.

My argument in these pages over the past month has been that India cannot deter Chinese expansionism in the Himalayas unless we show credible capacity to hurt China's interests elsewhere in its contested neighbourhood where it is vulnerable. After the skirmishes of the past couple of months, Indian and Chinese troops are in a process of disengagement in eastern Ladakh, but we should not be surprised if China refuses to go back to the pre-April 2020 position. New Delhi should not accept anything short of that, but Beijing will count on our political leadership's reluctance to escalate military tensions to get away with its gains. Only when New Delhi shows a willingness to use India's capability to tilt the balance away from China in theatres that Beijing considers core to its interests will its leaders be more amenable to maintaining the status quo along our land frontiers.

Meanwhile, the situation in China's maritime neighbourhood has gotten very dangerous. Not only has the United States bolstered its naval presence with three aircraft carrier groups in the greater South China Sea region, it has changed its official position from being neutral on maritime territorial disputes to weighing in on the side of China's rivals. US Navy ships have stepped up freedom-of-navigation operations in defiance of Beijing's warnings. Earlier this month, China conducted military exercises in the disputed Parcel archipelago that is claimed by Vietnam, Chinese and US naval ships and aircraft are frequently coming dangerously close to each other, in a maritime version of the pushing and shoving that happened between Chinese and Indian troops in the Himalayas. The US move comes after Chinese vessels sank a Vietnamese fishing boat, harassed a Malaysian drillship, and intruded into an Indonesian EEZ, all in the space of the past few months.

This puts Malaysia, Brunei, the Philippines and Vietnam—among the other claimants in the South China Sea disputes—in a greater quandary. These Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) states are too weak to be able to resist Chinese expansionism on their own, and the idea of US military presence as a counterweight. At the same time, they worry that a US-China confrontation could escalate into a conflict that they do not want. While they would like to arrive at a negotiated maritime code of conduct with Beijing, they can neither count on the support of their fellow Asean members, nor on China climbing down from its maximalist positions. Only Vietnam appears to be determined to resist—diplomatically, possibly at international courts and perhaps even militarily, if it comes to that.

If China clashes with Vietnam (or the Philippines, although it's less likely), the US could enter the



conflict on behalf of the latter. If on the other hand, matters escalate between Chinese and US forces, all other claimants will be compelled to make choices they would rather avoid.

So these are dangerous waters. And I advocate fishing in them.

New Delhi's official position on the South China Sea is that "India supports freedom of navigation, over flight and unimpeded commerce, based on the principles of international law". In addition to advocating peaceful solutions to disputes, India "urges all parties to show utmost respect for the [United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea]". It is time for actions that give meaning to these well-crafted words. The Indian navy's muscles should be strengthened for operations east of the Malacca Strait.

Sea power can be used flexibly to send calibrated signals to Beijing without necessarily having to cross its lines. At the least threatening level, New Delhi should increase the frequency and duration of naval deployments in the region, expanding the types of naval assets so deployed. Vessels on such deployments should regularly call at friendly ports of South East Asian countries, including Timor-Leste, and have frequent rendezvous with ships of the US, Japan, Australia, Vietnam, Singapore and Indonesia, away from disputed waters.

Stronger signals can be sent by sending the navy on longer voyages to Japanese and Russian ports, especially if the routes are planned for saying a "Hi-

Hello" to the Taiwanese along the way. Such voyages offer New Delhi forms of diplomatic leverage that it currently does not have with Beijing.

At the most provocative end, Indian naval ships can participate in freedom-of-navigation operations in the South China Sea to explicitly uphold international law and reject expansive China's nine-dash line claims. This requires extremely close political and military cooperation with the US, Japan and Australia, which is another reason why New Delhi should no longer keep the Australian navy out of the multilateral Malabar exercises.

Sea power is an important part of the answer to India's China question. Yet, looking at our defence budgets, it does not appear so. As retired rear admiral Sudarshan Shrikhande argues in a recent paper, "The Indian Navy needs much better fiscal support to become far more effective in power-projection, sea control and sea denial. This would give it the range of options to use its several tools across these missions when conflict is nigh and at the minimum, the Indo-Pacific is the canvas for fighting the fight." As long as the defence establishment in New Delhi dogmatically believes that its scope of strategy is limited to our long land boundary, we will continue to ignore sea power and under-invest in the navy. If we accept that our interests span the Indo-Pacific, and this broader theatre offers us opportunities to better manage China, then it follows that we must use and strengthen our navy.

MINT CURATOR



Butterfly numbers could be at the highest since mid-1990s. ISTOCKPHOTO

Britain's butterfly count set to surge in summer

People in Britain are being urged to help determine if summer 2020 is the best for butterflies for a quarter of a century by joining the world's most popular insect survey. The Big Butterfly Count begins on Friday, with people asked to spend 15 minutes in a park, garden, field or wood, counting the common butterflies they see. The sunny spring weather has caused butterfly species to emerge earlier this year than at any time for two decades, with experts predicting that following the hot summers of 2018 and 2019, butterfly numbers could build to their greatest abundance since the mid-1990s. Chris Packham, the wildlife campaigner and vice-president of Butterfly Conservation, said taking part in the charity's three-week count was a chance to give back to the natural world...

The Guardian

A photo cracks the mystery of 'ultra-black' fish

An ocean mystery—how the blackest fish in the deep sea are so extremely black—has been solved in a study that began with a very bad photograph. "I couldn't get a good shot—just fish silhouettes," said Dr Karen Osborn from the Smithsonian Institution. Her detailed study of the animal's "ultra-black" skin revealed that it traps light. While it makes the animals difficult to photograph, marine scientists say it provides the ultimate camouflage. The discovery, described in the journal *Current Biology*, could provide the basis for new ultra-black materials, such as coatings for the interior of telescopes or cameras. "The particles of pigment in their skin are just the right size and shape to side-scatter any light they don't absorb," Dr Osborn explained.

BBC

New images of solar flares could explain plenty

The closest ever images of the sun reveal its surface is speckled with "campfires", miniature versions of the dramatic solar flares visible from Earth. The observations, beamed back from the Solar Orbiter spacecraft, could help resolve why the sun's atmosphere is so staggeringly hot compared to the surface—a central paradox in solar physics. Miniature flares have been proposed as a theoretical explanation for the so-called coronal heating problem, but until now no telescope has had a good enough resolution to observe the sun's atmosphere in sufficient detail. The latest footage, taken at 77m kilometres (48m miles) above the solar surface between the orbits of Venus and Mercury, reveals flickering beacons, each spanning just a few hundred kilometres across and lasting minutes, before fizzling out again.

The Guardian

The growing threat of unbearably hot summers

Millions of people around the world could be exposed to dangerous levels of heat stress—a dangerous condition which can cause organs to shut down. Many live in developing countries, and do jobs that expose them to potentially life-threatening conditions. These include being out in the open on farms and building sites or indoors in factories and hospitals. Global warming will increase the chances of summer conditions that may be "too hot for humans" to work in. When we caught up with Dr Jimmy Lee, an emergency medic he's labouring in the stifling heat of tropical Singapore to care for patients with covid-19... One danger, he realises, is that overheating can slow down their ability to do something that's vital for medical staff—make quick decisions.

BBC

Niche Japanese professions put at risk by covid

Ikuo, the "big sister" of Tokyo's Asakusa geisha district, came to the capital to seek her fortune in 1964, the year Tokyo first hosted the Olympics. But the pandemic has made her fear for her centuries-old profession as never before... Coronavirus-induced austerity has slashed expense accounts, and many people remain wary of spending hours in the elegant but closed traditional rooms where geisha entertain. Engagements are down 35%, and come with new rules: no pouring drinks for customers or touching them even to shake hands, and sitting 2 metres apart... Geisha aren't the only Japanese artists in danger. Performers of 'jūtamai', an ancient women's dance, as well as makeup artists, wig stylists and kimono dressers, confessed to worry the coronavirus could further imperil their niche professions.

Reuters

| MY VIEW | GENERAL DISEQUILIBRIUM

A revolution is due but don't hold your breath just yet

RAJRISHI SINGHAL



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The time seems ripe for a new economic paradigm. A study of historical trends also seems to suggest that the conditions are right.

The advent of modernity and an increase in the rate of scientific discoveries in the 17th and 18th centuries quickened the pace of enquiry. Rapid upheavals in scientific ideas and shifting goalposts (think Isaac Newton, Galileo Galilei or Charles Darwin, among others), inspired philosophers to jettison old ideas and propound new thoughts, even prompting universities to slice up philosophy into natural and physical as well as social sciences, to be studied as separate disciplines. This process continued well into the 20th century with greater acceleration.

Cut to 2020. With the pandemic forcing governments to implement an unparalleled global lockdown, it might be time to mullish some existing economic orthodoxies. The years after the 2008 financial crisis repeatedly demonstrated that the existing toolkit is incapable of resolving deep-seated economic

problems, more so because crises have recurred with greater frequency than earlier. The current pandemic has only accentuated these fault lines. Dani Rodrik, professor at Harvard University, said at a recent SBI conclave that the world should forget returning to the status quo ante because the system is broken and unsustainable.

Every great challenge or crisis creates an opportunity for—as Thomas Kuhn describes it in his influential book *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*—"paradigm shifts". A crisis or challenge arises when existing theories are incapable of solving new problems, leading to scientific revolutions. It might, therefore, be instructive to study the recent history of economic thought, which demonstrates how different crises engendered the emergence of new economic systems.

At the crux of the 20th century, economics was dominated by neoclassical theories. Then came the Great Depression and with it emerged John Maynard Keynes. His prescriptions for economic recovery through government investment introduced a new stream of economic thought that popularised welfare systems across the Western world. While demolishing the earlier notion of self-correcting economies with full employment, Keynes and his book, *General*

Theory of Employment, Interest and Money, became the touchstone for modern liberal political economics over the next 40 years.

With the advent of the 1970s came the oil shock, high inflation and the collapse of Bretton Woods currency pegs. The Keynes framework was unable to explain the coexistence of high unemployment, high inflation and stagnant growth. Enter Milton Friedman, the Chicago school, and monetarism. Friedman, a vocal Keynes critic, advocated using monetary policy to stabilise prices and urged minimal government intervention. Friedman became advisor to US President Ronald Reagan and his philosophical influence, especially on how central banks should conduct monetary policy, stretched all the way into the new millennium, even inspiring the Federal Reserve's rescue plan during the 2008 financial crisis.

Persisting with Friedman and a global neoliberal order is often blamed for exacerbating the current crisis. Economists Suresh

Naidu, Dani Rodrik and Gabriel Zucman wrote in the *Boston Review*: "Deregulation, financialization, dismantling of the welfare state, deinstitutionalization of labour markets, reduction in corporate and progressive taxation, and the pursuit of hyper-globalization—the culprits behind the inequality—ties—all seem to be rooted in conventional economic doctrines. The discipline's focus on markets and incentives, methodological individualism, and mathematical formalism stand in the way of meaningful, large-scale reform."

The current deepening crisis is considered suitable for a new economic paradigm, but none of the alternative theories has found acceptance so far. Meanwhile, rising inequality or the ecological crisis has sparked prodigious literature on overhauling the existing template. There are also demands that the study of economics return to its philosophical moorings and cast off the heavy mathematical mantle that hobbles its growth.

There are some promising names out there. Stephanie Kelton and modern monetary theory (MMT) usually top the list in every conversation. MMT is still considered a fringe movement and has its fair share of sceptics, especially those approaching it from an accounting or balance-sheet perspective, or even among Keynesians (such as Nobel Laureate Paul Krugman), but seems to be gaining acceptance. It must be remembered that both Keynes and Friedman had helped their theories become acceptable after other renowned economists buried them; hopefully, MMT will also find similar support. Some other prominent economists, including a grouping called Economists for Inclusive Prosperity, have been advocating a new, alternative macroeconomic framework. There have also been demands to repurpose central banking.

In India, the economic policy and administration bench is filled with old-school adherents. India's economic pack is at odds with the severity of the pandemic, or with other economies that have introduced robust fiscal stimulus and social protection schemes. This is an opportunity for India to shine with an alternative economic strategy that is growth-oriented, sustainable and just. But perhaps it should first get some new talent on board.

The current crisis ought to throw up a new economic paradigm, but are we really open to ideas?