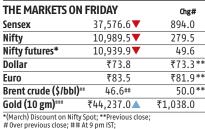
Weekend Business Standard SATURDAY, 7 MARCH 2020 • MUMBAI (CITY) ₹10.00 VOLUME VII NUMBER 32 • 22 pages in 2 sections

To pick up 49% stake in bank for ₹2,450 cr; administrator says working to revive bank



Market rate exclusive of VAT; Source: IBJA

VODA IDEA PUTS AGR DUES AT ₹21,000 CR AS READ CALLS ON FM



Just a few hours before Vodafone Group CEO Nick Read's meeting with Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman and then Telecom Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad on Friday, the company announced that it had completed assessing its dues linked to adjusted gross revenue (AGR). At ₹21,533 crore, Vodafone Idea's calculation of the AGR liability turned out to be less than half the government estimate. 3)

BSNL LOSS WIDENS OVER 2.5 TIMES TO ₹39,000 CR IN APR-DEC

COMPANIES P3

Promoters of IndusInd Bank to raise stake

IndusInd Bank's promoters will hike their stake in the private sector lender by buying extra shares from the market. The promoters of the bank are planning to acquire additional shares from the open market in India. This will be within the overall regulatory cap prescribed for promoter holding in private banks, the bank said



WEEKEND RUMINATIONS

Fast trains at slow speed 9 The new trains should be fast, but the roll-out of the privatisation plan should be slow and well-considered, writes TN NINAN

NATIONAL INTEREST Strong leader \neq Strong economy

The data and the feel after six years under PM Modi prove a strong leader doesn't necessarily give us decisive economic leadership unmindful of immediate political risks. SHEKHAR GUPTA writes

COMPANIES P3

Goldman's Talwar in race for HDFC Bank CEO role Harit Talwar, the head of the Goldman Sachs



SOMESH JHA/SAMIE MODAK

New Delhi/Mumbai, 6 March

in YES Bank.

anonymity.

public by the RBI.

the capital".

pricing norms.

38.470.6

March 5

SENSEX

INTRA-DAY

Change

9

tate Bank of India (SBI) will pick up a 49 per cent stake in troubled private lender YES Bank as part of a revival scheme framed by

the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on Friday.

The draft scheme, titled "Yes Bank Ltd.

Reconstruction Scheme, 2020", issued by the RBI, mentioned SBI as the "investor bank" and said it

would pay at least ₹10 per share for buying equity

roughly ₹2,650 crore by SBI, with equity worth

₹2,450 crore and preferential shares of around

₹200 crore, an RBI executive said, requesting

rised capital will stand at ₹5,000 crore and

the paid-up capital will be ₹4,800 crore. The

country's largest lender will acquire shares at a price not less than ₹10 each (face value of ₹2 and

premium of ₹8), according to the scheme made

The RBI has invited comments on the draft

from Sebi's open offer obligations as well the

Under the Takeover Code regulations, an enti-

STOCKS TAKE A HIT

in₹

-36.9

Mar 5

YES Bank

Change

-₹20.7

•56.09

According to the scheme, YES Bank's autho-

The move will lead to a capital infusion of

WEEKEND SEPARATE SECTION AS COVID-19 PANIC LOOMS, GOLD ON COURSE FOR BIGGEST PERSPECTIVE IN LOW SUPPLY WEEKLY GAIN SINCE JAN 2009

scheme from members, depositors, or creditors of Account holders gather outside a YES Bank branch YES Bank Ltd and will accept them till March 9. to withdraw money, in Thane on Friday SBI's stake, locked in for three years, will "not reduce its holding below 26% before completion of ANGRY & CONFUSED, **UP OUTSIDE** BRANCHES

PAGE 6 public sector lender sought exemption

State Bank of

in₹

hange

6.2%

-₹17.9

India

∽-288.3

Mar 5

ty acquiring more than 25 per cent in a listed company has to make an open offer to acquire another 26 per cent stake from minority shareholders. Also, capital infusion has to be done on the basis of the pricing formula pre-

PHOTO PT

scribed by Sebi. Under this, the acquisition price has to be either the previous two-week average price or the six-month average price, whichever is higher. SBI had expressed its willingness to make

investment in YES Bank after getting an "in principle" approval from its board on Thursday. Turn to Page 10

YES crisis, virus fears batter markets

SUNDAR SETHURAMAN

Mumbai, 6 March

DRAFT SCHEME OF RECONSTRUCTION

BACK PAGE P14

- SBI to infuse ₹2,650 crore into YES Bank (equity worth ₹2,450 crore and preferential shares of around ₹200 crore)
- It shall not reduce its holding below 26% before completion of three years from the date of capital infusion
- RBI to appoint new board of directors;
- SBI will have two members
- Employees' terms and conditions to remain same for one year

SBI says YES to rescue plan ED searches Rana Kapoor's Mumbai house

SHRIMI CHOUDHARY New Delhi, 6 March

NRI HOMECO

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Friday conducted a search of YES Bank co-founder and former chief executive officer Rana Kapoor's South Mumbai residence, Samudra Mahal, in connection with the bank's financial dealings with debt-laden Dewan Housing Finance (DHFL). This came hours after Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman listed "malpractices" by the bank's top leadership among the reasons for the government's intervention to restructure the management of the private lender.

Confirming the development, an ED official said searches would continue over the weekend and Kapoor might have to face questioning by sleuths. Turn to Page 10

> RANA KAPOOR YES BANK CO-FOUNDER SPOKE TO THE PRINT BEFORE THE RAID TOOK PLACE

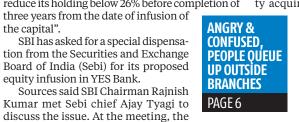
www.business-standard.com

"WHAT CAN I SAY? I WAS THE FOUNDER OF THE BANK. BUT I HAVE HAD NOTHING TO DO WITH IT FOR THE LAST 14 MONTHS"

AT-1 bondholders plan legal action HAMSINI KARTHIK

Mumbai, 6 March

Holders of YES Bank's additional tier-1 (AT-1) bonds, amounting to ₹10,800 crore, are contemplating legal action, with the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI's) draft reconstruction scheme for the troubled lender suggesting a permanent write-down of these bonds outstanding as of March 5. According to the draft scheme, the write-down is "in conformity with the extant regulations issued by the RBI based on the Basel framework". According to the Basel norms, if minimum tier-1 capital falls below 6 pe



Group's consumer-banking business, is in the running for one of India's top banking jobs. HDFC Bank has held talks with Talwar for the top role, according to people with knowledge of the matter. The bank has been looking for a new leader to replace Aditya Puri, whose term ends in October.

World oil prices fall more than 7.5%

Oil prices fell over 7 per cent on Friday on reports that talks between the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries and Russia over a cut in output in response to a coronavirus-fulled slump in demand ended without a deal. Brent North Sea crude tumbled to \$46.12 per barrel and WTI to \$42.30, down around 7.5 per cent over Thursday's AFP/PT closing levels.



global recession. The Sensex dropped 894 would evolve," said Jvotivardhan Jaipuria points, or 2.32 per cent, to end at 37,577 - the lowest

Benchmark indices enter correction territory; Nifty

ued rout in world markets as coronavirus cas- curbs in fund withdrawals, which led to

es neared 100,000, stoking fresh fears of a unnecessary speculation how the situation

crashes 2.5%; rupee near 74 against dollar

close since October 7. The Nifty50 index

plunged 280 points, or 2.5 per cent, to close at 10,989, breaching key support levels. Both the indices are now down 11 per cent from their all-time highs, recorded in mid-January.

The domestic market slumped on Friday

after the crisis at YES Bank triggered a sharp

sell-off in financial stocks. Investor senti-

ment was further dampened by the contin-

The rupee fell nearly 0.63 per cent to end at 73.78 against the US dollar - the lowest level for the domestic currency since October 2018. The rupee almost touched the 74 level in intra-day trade.

Shares of YES Bank crashed 56 per cent a day after the Reserve Bank of India (RBI)

founder of Valentis Advisors.

placed the lender under a moratorium

and superseded its board. Market players

feared the crisis at the bank would spill over

was unexpected. Everyone was aware that

there is some problem, but no one expected

"The RBI's move to curtail withdrawals

into the economy.

Most Asian markets fell more than 2 per cent on Friday. European markets, too, opened sharply lower as coronavirus weighed on various sectors of the economy. US stocks were volatile on Friday, as jittery investors took cover in perceived safe havens such as bonds and gold. The Dow Jones Industrial Average was down about 500 points to 25.622 as of 12:15 am (IST).

Globally, the number of cases neared 100,000 and the death toll surpassed 3,200. The economic toll has prompted many central banks to cut interest rates.

However, experts raised doubts over the effectiveness of the move. Turn to Page 10

cent, it allows for a write-off of these bonds. Classified as a quasi-equity instrument, AT-1 bonds are intended to provide additional cushion to a bank's overall capital adequacy. Turn to Page 10



₹3.000 cr

Advertisers

during IPL

₹3,270 cr

₹4,000 cr

BCCI will earn from

broadcasting and

sponsor contracts

like with Vivo

other rights, and key

expected to spend

digital rights per annum

HIGH-STAKES GAME

IPL in the time of corona: Stakeholders want closed-door matches

SURAJEET DAS GUPTA & AGENCIES New Delhi, 6 March

Some key stakeholders in the Indian Premier League (IPL), which starts on March 29, are urging closed-door matches with no ticket sales to minimise the coronavirus risk.

With the tournament just weeks away, the health ministry has already flagged its concerns to the sports ministry. A meeting is expected between the brass of the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) and the health ministry next week.

The move comes even as BCCI president Sourav Ganguly on Friday reiterated that "everything is on schedule" for the country's most popular and rich sports tournament, which will have 56 matches across nine cities with the finals on 17th May.

Given the colossal amounts of money at stake, concern is mounting over the impact of coronavirus. A top executive of one of the companies closely involved with the IPL said: 'There will obviously be concern about the health impact when 30,000 to 40,000 fans are in one stadium for so many hours for the next seven weeks across the country. One way out is to follow what many other countries are doing in Europe and what people are planning to do in the US, that is, to have closed door matches with no ticket sales.'



A Business Standard e-mail to the BCCI on whether it would agree to such a proposal, along with questions on what safety arrangements it will discuss with the health ministry, remained unanswered.

Ticket sales in the stadia constitute ₹8-10 crore of the income of a team. This is very small compared to the total revenue and, if needed, can be compensated by the BCCI. Only1per cent of cricket fans watch the IPL in

a stadium. The rest prefer to watch it on television or on OTT platforms.

For Disney (earlier Star TV) the stakes are very high as it has to spend over₹3,270 crore per annum for the broadcasting and digital rights for the IPL. Lack of an audience would obviously adversely impact the brand building exercise for a team, especially as the latest valuation of the eight teams is estimated at \$5.7 billion, based on data by Brand Finance, for $the \ country's \ most \ popular \ sports \ tournament.$ This time it will have over 56 matches across nine cities with the finals on May 17.

₹220-250 cr

750-800 million

platforms

Disney/Hotstar spends on broadcasting and

Viewers will be watching

matches on TV and digital

Each of the eight teams will

make from share of BCCI's

central revenues plus their

own sponsors and ticket sales

of the match in their home city

Ganguly, however, pointed out that cricket tournaments were on all over the world. England are already in Sri Lanka; South Africa is already here in India (three ODI matches from March 12); and county teams are travelling all over the world to play, including to the UAE and Abu Dhabi. Turn to Page 10

COMPANIES

Big Bollywood movies may face coronavirus heat

TaMo cuts JLR's full year Ebit margin guidance

Some of the biggest films in Bollywood face an uncertain future thanks to the virus. The film business is in for a rough ride in the crucial March–Mav period. Nearly₹500-crore worth of business is riding on films such as Baaghi 3, Sooryavanshi, 83, and Coolie No 3, which are releasing during this period. VIVEAT SUSAN PINTO about1percent.

Coronavirus is set to weigh on Tata Motors-owned Jaguar Land Rover's full year performance, the Tata group flagship said on Friday. "The reduction in China sales ... is estimated to reduce Jaguar Land Rover 's (JLR's) full year EBIT (earnings before, interest and tax) margin by SHALLY SETH MOHILE reports

P14

BACK PAGE

& SOHINI DAS report

Global GDP may lose \$77-347 bn, Asia to be hit significantly: ADB

The COVID-19 outbreak has the potential to significantly harm the Asian economies, and the global economy may suffer losses of \$77–347 billion, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) said on Friday. The virus outbreak may impact developing Asian economies through numerous channels, including sharp declines in domestic demand, lower tourism and business travel, the ADB said.

















2 COMPANIES

IN BRIEF Maruti Suzuki cuts production by 5.38% in February



Carmaker Maruti Suzuki India cut production by 5.38 per cent in February at 140,933 units, according to a regulatory filing by the company. The firm had produced a total of 148,959 units in the same month last year. Total passenger vehicle production stood at 140,370 units last

month as against 147.550 units in February 2019, a decline of 4.87 per cent, it added. The company increased production of its mini cars comprising Alto, and S-Presso by 5.16 per cent at 29,676 units as against 28,221 units in the year-ago month. However, it reduced production of compact cars, including WagonR, Celerio, Ignis, Swift, Baleno, OEM Model (Glanza supplied to Toyota) and Dzire by 5.55 per cent at 75,142 units as compared to 79,556 units in February last year. ΡΤΙ

₹750 cr paid by JAL was obligation for **Jaypee Infra: NCLT**

The ₹750 crore deposited by Jaiprakash Associates with the Supreme Court registry was a payment towards obligation of the debt-ridden firm and should be treated as the asset of the corporate debtor, the NCLT has observed while approving the bid of NBCC for JIL. **PTI** the bid of NBCC for JIL.

Honda resumes pre-launch booking of WR-V



Honda Cars India said it had commenced the pre-launch bookings of the updated version of its compact SUV WR-V. The new WR-V will be powered by BS-VI compliant petrol and diesel powertrains. Buyers can pre-book the model with an amount of ₹21,000 at all authorised dealerships ΡΤΙ across the country.

Antony Waste extends closing day of ₹200-cr IPO

Antony Waste Handling Cell has extended the closing day for its ₹200-crore initial public offering to March 16. The IPO was to close on Friday, however, managed to garner only 50 per cent subscription due to the fall in the secondary market. **PTI**

Tata Steel's branded business to grow at 10% in FY20

Tata Steel expects its branded steel sales to retail and MSME sector to grow by 10 per cent in the current fiscal, lown in the econom[,] officials said on Friday. The company's branded products, about 4.4 million tonne, are sold through distributors and dealers network. Consumption is almost equally distributed among both retail and MSMEs. "Our branded steel business is growing at 10 per cent even though the sector is expanding by only 5 per cent," Tata Steel chief marketing and sales (branded products) Sanjay S Sahni said. "We will finish the year with a 10 per cent growth in FY'20 and we expect similar growth in the next year also," he said. He was speaking on the sidelines of Manufacturing & MSME Conclave, organised by The Bengal Chamber of Commerce. PTI

Passenger Cars.

Tiguan Allspace was launched in Mumbai on Friday, barely two weeks before the introduction of the company's second SUV for the year. Five-seater T-Roc will hit the markets on March 18.

ruption to economies, which originated in China, won't upset their middle-term stated goal of crossing 100,000 unit sales in the next four years. There have, however, been minor hiccups for the roll-out of some models.

PVR Cinemas aims to reach the 1,000 screens milestone in the country by next March-end, an official of the multiplex player said. The company already has 841 screens across 176 properties in 71 cities. "We will do the 100-screen count this year (2019-20)." PVR's chief growth and strategy officer Pramod Arora said. ΡΤΙ

PVR Cinemas eves

1,000 screens by

March next year

NCLT approves **Cochin Shipyard's** plan for Tebma

The Chennai Bench of the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) has approved the resolution plan of Cochin Shipyard (CSL) for Chennai-based shipbuilding firm Tebma Shipvards (TSL) under the Corporate Insolvency **Resolution Process**

Govt okays TCS, **DLF** proposals

The government has ΡΤΙ

On track to sell 120,000 cars by '24: Volkswagen

PAVAN LALL Mumbai, 6 March

The launch of seven-seater SUV Tiguan Allspace, the biggest new car for Volkswagen this year, is part of the German company's strategy in which SUVs form the core of its product line-up, according to Steffen Knapp, director for Volkswagen

Knapp says the coronavirus dis-

For example, the BS-VI versions of Polo and Vento TSI (petrol) engines are currently available only in man-



in the domestic market, at ₹33.12 lakh (ex-showroom) PHOTO: KAMLESH PEDNEKAR

1:00

are delayed by around two months, showing some slowing, Knapp says. Volkswagen officials have said.

Exports have also been under pressure. Mexico, which is a big market for impacted by the coronavirus out Volkswagen India, is a little shaky break. Clearly, Volkswagen is aiming because of exchange rates and other to capture as much 'mind-space' as

ual transmissions. The automatics economic fluctuations, and is thus 'The supply chain has been man-

aged well with regards to being

Vision 2.0. which will be an all-in aggressive play from the VW Group - in terms of pricing, localisation, depth, and width of products," says Suraj Ghosh, principal analyst (powertrain forecast) at IHS Markit. "For now, they're basically showcasing their diverse portfolio, be it at bodytype level or technology level."

Across the car market, sales have been hurting. Market leader Maruti Suzuki reported an almost 4 per cent drop in sales for February, against the same time last year. Mahindra & Mahindra saw sales skid by over 40 per cent for the same time and for Tata Motors, it was a

decline of 34 per cent. So, is the market showing any silver lining? Knapp says the original assessment was they would see an uptick from sales for the industry, which has been under pressure for over a year now, by July this year.

'The problem now is you can't shipping and logistics.

possible among the Indian customers read the market with the outbreak of as it builds up momentum for its the coronavirus. I have an issue in reading the first quarter. As of now, we are at -5 per cent in sales, which is not what I anticipated," Knapp says.

Even if that is the case, Knapp says the company is on track to sell 120,000 cars over the next five years as announced last year. "That is the number we are targeting and at which point we will be sustainable in India and all our plans for that are on track.

The company's smallest SUV, the VW Taigun, which is to be its volume generator, will be launched next year. It is going to have 95 per cent localisation versus 80 per cent presently and should drive the market forward."

According to Ghosh of IHS Markit, all carmakers, who have any direct or indirect sourcing from Hubei province, currently face a high risk of production disruption because of extended shutdowns, uncertainty, and high costs around

TaMo slashes Jaguar full year Ebit margin guidance by 1%

SHALLY SETH MOHILE Mumbai, 6 March

he coronavirus outbreak is set to weigh on Jaguar Land Rover's (JLR's) full performance, vear Tata Motor's said on Friday.

The outbreak, which has claimed more than 3,000 lives globally, continues to spread at a rapid pace in several countries.

This has prompted the Mumbai-based firm to lower full vear earnings before interest and tax (Ebit) margins by 100 basis points.

"Recognising that the present situation is highly uncertain and could change, the reduction in China sales is estimated to reduce JLR's full year Ebit margin by about 1 per cent. However, the free cash flow in the fourth quarter is still expected to be modestly positive," the company said. P B Balaji, chief financial officer, Tata Motors Group, had given a guidance of 3 per cent Ebit for the full year after the December quarter. He cautioned that it could be hit by the virus outbreak.

The cut in full year outlook is set to dent the performance in the March quarter. According to analysts' estimates, a 100 basis points cut in Ebit for the full year will lower the Ebit margin for the January-March quarter by 4 per cent as three quarters have already at Reliance Securities, expects Q4 for FV20 and FV21 but we remain



Prepared to deal with impact, says Mercedes-Benz

The global automobile industry is well prepared to deal with the impact of the coronavirus outbreak due to its strong supply chain management mechanism, according to a senior Mercedes-Benz official.

'... I firmly believe the auto industry is probably one of the best prepared industries for this type of problem because it has lot of experience in supply chain management," Mercedes-Benz India Managing Director and CEO Martin Schwenk said.

down in China sales.

crore. Net profit at the con-

In the December quarter, Tata Motors reported a consolidated the statement. JLR expects this to the impact of COVID-19. "We may profit before tax of ₹1,350 crore; the improve during March itself. loss before tax of $\gtrless 29$ 228

disruptions). I would believe the industry should be able to mitigate to some extent the impacts (of the coronavirus)," he said. are still operating with reduced staff and facilities, Tata Motors said in

age of a critical component could impact production at some point. Speaking about the impact on

PTI

domestic business, Tata Motors same period a year ago had seen a However, retail sales are expected said, in the days ahead, there will be to recover more gradually uncertainties with regard to supply of parts for the BS-VI ramp up. This could lead to limited volume losses in Q4. This is, however, expected to recover as market demand is likely to improve gradually upon transition into BS-VI. "The timeline for a complete re-balancing of supply and demand is dependent on further developments in the coming four to six weeks. The domestic business is poised to overcome the current challenge with a limited impact on the overall FY21 performance," the company said.

Two Microsoft employees contract virus



BLOOMBERG 6 March

Microsoft Corp disclosed the first known cases of coronavirus infection among its employees Thursday, joining fellow tech giants Amazon.com. and Facebook. in revealing the disease in their ranks.

Microsoft said two employees, one working out of its main Redmond, Washington campus and a second, a remote LinkedIn worker, have contracted Covid-19. Both have been quarantined, a company representative said.

We are working closely with local public health authorities to provide the necessary support for our colleagues and their co-workers," a Microsoft spokesman said in a statement.

One of the pair worked on Microsoft's main campus and came into close contact with a small number of fellow staffers, who have been notified about the situation. Microsoft has determined that the second worker didn't have any contact with people either at Microsoft or its unit LinkedIn.

Microsoft had asked workers who can to do their jobs from home through March 25 and that guidance remain unchanged based on the new cases. Separately, Google told its Bay Area employees that they can work from home because of the virus, according to a person familiar with the matter. The voluntary policy covers headquarters in Mountain View, California, as well as campuses in Sunnyvale and San Francisco. Just this week, Google called off its flagship conference, a May event called I/O, that brings together thousands of people from around the world who partner with or build apps and websites for Google's digital services.

He said there had always been "some kind of disruptions" that the auto industry faced in the past. Schwenk referred to tsunami that hit Japan in 2011, as an example, saying its ripple effects were felt at the time in the entire global auto industry. ...every manufacturer has set up processes, procedures and teams to deal with that (supply chain

BS REPORTER

to set up SEZs





passed. Mitul Shah, vice-president to be highly subdued because of have to cut earnings for the stock

optimistic of the long-term poten-

COVID-19's impact on Tata



Year-to-date, the company's shares have dropped 38 per cent. It closed at ₹114.25 on Friday, down 9.07 per cent. The viral outbreak comes amid Tata Motors efforts to turn around the UK subsidiary that has been battling disruption. This (disruption) from diesel to gasoline and slow-

tial," Shah added.

Motors has been spooking investors. loss of ₹26,961 crore in the corresponding period last vear. Coronavirus has significantly impacted China sales with February retails

had aggravated because of Brexit, month, about 20 per cent of dealers sudden change in buyer preference were open which has improved to

solidated level at the end of these three months was ₹1,756 crore, against a net **CORONAVIRUS OUTBREAK**

down around 85 per cent over 80 per cent now, although most Spread of the virus to other markets such as South Korea, Japan, and Italy will also impact sales in those markets, it added. JLR imports a relatively

small percentage of parts from China with the majority being sourced from Europe and the UK.

year-on-year. "In the first half of the Though over 95 per cent of its tier-1 and tier-2 suppliers in China are now open, they are operating at reduced capacity. The company said a short-

Deadline for Air India's initial bids could be extended, says Puri

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA New Delhi, 6 March

Civil Aviation Minister Hardeep Singh Puri (*pictured*) indicated that the deadline for submission of preliminary bids for Air India could be extended even as he emphasised that the disinvestment process is going on extremely well".

Making a second attempt to privatise Air India in as many years, the government on January 27 came out with a Preliminary Information Memorandum (PIM).

'There is a lot of interest... A lot of entities have come and asked us queries. Today is the last date for (the) queries," he said. The Minister of State for Civil Aviation also said extra time would be given to people but did not elaborate.

government The extended the deadline till March 6 for bidders to submit additional queries regarding the proposed disinvestment. The earlier deadline was February 11.

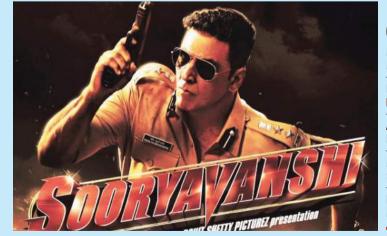


Govt considering relief for airlines

The government will consider providing relief to the airlines industry, amid the impact of the coronavirus outbreak, Civil Aviation Minister Hardeep Singh Puri said, adding airlines are quite clear on what they want and that there are many things "we can do to

provide relief".

Friday's box office business of Baaghi 3 will be known by Saturday morning, since shows run late into the night, the sources



said. Executives of Nadiadwala Grandson Entertainment and Fox Star Studios, who have produced the film, were not immediately available for comment.

But Karan Taurani. vice-president, research, Elara Capital, says advance ticket bookings of Baaghi 3 have been impacted 35 per cent and total collections in the next few weeks could fall 20 per cent to ₹160 crore from ₹200 crore estimated earlier.

"Q4FY20 (fourth quarter of financial year 2019-20) is turning out to be the worst quarter for

Bollywood in two years, because of coronavirus," he said.

If the trend is anything to go by, other films could face a similar fate, too, said industry sources. Sources at Reliance Entertainment — which is producing Akshay Kumar-starrer Soorvavanshi and sport drama 83. featuring Ranveer Singh and Deepika Padukone - say they are monitoring the situation closely.

Leading multiplex operators that Business Standard spoke to said that they had not received intimations yet from film

BUSINESS OF FILMS MONEY RIDING FROM MARCH TO MAY: ₹500 crore

FOOTFALLS FOR BAAGHI 3: Down 20-30%

ADVANCE BOOKINGS FOR BAAGHI 3: Down 35%

MOVIES POSTPONED: No Time to Die Mission Impossible 7

BIG MOVIES RELEASING IN MARCH, APRIL: Sooryavanshi & 83

producers to push back releases. However, Hollywood releases have been pushed back, including Daniel Craig-starrer No Time to Da and Tom-Cruise headlined Mission Impossible 7, which will now be released at the end of the current calendar year.

Film events such as the IIFA 2020, to be held end of the month, have been postponed for now. Globally, films such as The Invisible Man, which released last week, and Pixar's Onward that released on Friday, are seeing a business impact in China, Italy

and the US, markets where coronavirus cases have been high.

In India, Ayushmann Khurrana's Shubh Mangal Zyada Saavdhan has seen business slip in the second week, following its release on February 28. From ₹44.84-crore collection in the first week, the film lost steam in the second week, collecting only ₹14.1 crore, said trade experts. Analysts like Taran Adarsh have termed the business as average.

One more film, Thappad, starring Taapsee Pannu, has seen its collections steadily decline from Monday trailing to ₹1.65 crore, in terms of collection on Thursday.

Adarsh said that Thappad had found patronage in the Delhi-NRC region in the last two weeks. But given the outbreak in Delhi over the last two days, footfalls in theatres are likely to dwindle, trade sources said.

In a report on Friday, Abneesh Roy, executive vice-president, research (institutional equities), Edelweiss, said the brokerage expected coronavirus to sting multiplex operations in the near term. "We expect waning footfalls as virus-wary consumers shun high-density areas as well as modest content performance in Q4FY20," he said.





PTI









Big Bollywood movies face coronavirus heat

IIFA 2020 have been postponed for now

VIVEAT SUSAN PINTO & SOHINI DAS Mumbai, 6 March

Some of the biggest films in Bollywood face an uncertain future thanks to a crown-shaped virus. As suspected cases of coronavirus steadily increase in India, the film business is in for a rough ride in the crucial March-May period.

Nearlv₹500-crore worth of business is riding on films such as Baaghi 3, Sooryavanshi, 83, and Coolie No 3 that are releasing during this period.

The first of them, Baaghi 3, starring Tiger Shroff and Shraddha Kapoor, which released on Friday, has already felt the heat with footfalls at theatres in Mumbai, Delhi and other metros down at least 20-30 per cent, trade sources told Business Standard. This comes as people avoid crowded and enclosed spaces for

fear of catching the virus, which has no known cure yet.

Film events such as

Voda Idea puts AGR dues at ₹21K cr as Read calls on FM

Telco, seeking to make a new start, was advised to pay principal amount soon

MEGHA MANCHANDA New Delhi, 6 March

ust a few hours before Vodafone Group CEO Nick Read's meeting with Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman and then Telecom Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad on Friday, the company announced that it had completed assessing its dues linked to adjusted gross revenue (AGR). At ₹21,533 crore, Vodafone Idea's calculation of the AGR liability turned out to be less than half of the government estimate.

While Read offered "nocomments" after his meetings with the ministers, sources in the Department of Telecommunications (DoT) indicated that the company was "positive" about India and that it wanted to make a "new and good beginning" in the country. Read, who's maintained that

it would be tough to continue as a going concern without relief from the government, was advised to pay up at least the principal amount of the AGR dues before March 17, the next date of the Supreme Court hearing. "We want Vodafone Idea to stay invested in India.... With the digital push by the government of the day, there's enormous business opportunity in India. But there was need for the company to upgrade its technology," a top official said. It is learnt that the Vodafone

brass "acknowledged" not making provision for AGR dues in est up to February 2020." the books of accounts earlier.

"The company was in contempt of the Supreme Court, as



FM Nirmala Sitharaman and Vodafone CEO Nick Read (centre) during a meeting in New Delhi on Friday, Read is visiting India at a time when the telecom industry is facing a crisis PHOTO: PTI

will at least have to pay the this, the company has paid principal amount to avoid ₹3,500 crore. contempt from the apex court,"

A few days ago, Vodafone had made a strong plea for Earlier in the day, Vodafone setting off ₹8,000 crore of GST Idea, the UK telco's joint ven-(goods and services tax) credits. a three-vear moratorium along ture with Kumar Mangalam with 15-year staggered payment Birla-led Idea, in a statement to the stock exchanges said, "The of AGR dues at a simple interest company has today filed its selfrate of 6 per cent, drastic cut in assessment of the AGR liabililicence fee and fixing of a floor ties with the DoT. The selfprice for calls and data.

assessment discloses the In December, Birla had said company's AGR liabilities to Vodafone Idea may have to shut aggregate ₹21,533 crore, includif there was no relief on the ing a principal amount of ₹6,854 statutory dues. "If we are not getting anything, then I think it crore for the period from FY 2006-07 to FY 2018-19 and interis the end of the story for Vodafone Idea," Birla had said. "It does not make sense to put

made a similar point.

ings call a few months ago had

However, according to official calculations by the DoT, Vodafone Idea owes the govit has not paid the entire ernment more than ₹53,000 amount assessed by the DoT. It crore as part of the AGR dues. Of

the official added.

rejected a plea by companies such as Bharti Airtel and Vodafone Idea for extension in the payment schedule and asked them to deposit the full AGR dues, estimated at ₹1.47 trillion for the industry. It threatened to start contempt proceed-

ings against top executives of these firms for non-payment. Last October, the Supreme Court had upheld the government's definition of AGR, by which it calculates levies on telecom operators. The order dealt a blow to the telecom industry, which had for years argued that AGR should only include revenue from core good money after bad... We will telecom operations. Telecom shut shop." Read in a post-earnoperators now have to pay dues

> of the past 14 years along with interest and fines.

Last month, the apex court

ABHIJIT LELE Mumbai, 6 March

IndusInd Bank's promoters will hike their stake in the private sector lender by buying extra shares from the market.

Promoters of IndusInd Bank

to hike stake

The promoters of the bank -IndusInd International Holdings (IIHL) and IndusInd - plan to acquire additional shares from

open market in within the overall regulatory cap prescribed for promoter holding in private banks, the bank informed the

The stake hike BSE on Friday. Promoters held will be within 14.38 per cent stake the overall in the bank at the regulatory end of December cap prescribed for promoter 2019. IIHL had 10.59 per cent stake holding in private banks while IndusInd held 3.79 per cent.

Friday, On IndusInd stock closed 5.62 per cent lower at ₹1,014.3 per share on the BSE.

The bank will see a leadership change with Sumant Kathpalia taking charge as managing director (MD) and chief executive officer (CEO) from March 24, for a three-vear term.

Kathpalia will succeed current MD & CEO Romesh Sobti, who has been at the helm of affairs for over a decade now. Sobti's term as MD & CEO will end on March 23.

HDFC Bank in talks with Goldman Sachs' Talwar for CEO role

BIOOMBERG New York/Mumbai, 6 March

Harit Talwar, the head of Goldman Sachs Group's consumer-banking business, is in the running for one of India's top banking jobs.

HDFC Bank, India's largest private-sector lender, has held talks with Talwar for the top role, according to people with knowledge of the matter. The bank has been looking for a new leader to replace Aditya Puri, one of the longest-serving banking chiefs in India, whose term ends in October.

The Mumbai-based lender has a market capitalisation of about \$86 billion, giving it a bigger standing than major US banks like Goldman and Morgan Stanley. A spokesman for HDFC Bank declined to comment and Goldman representatives didn't immediately respond to an emailed request for comment.

Talwar joined Goldman in 2015 and was the face of its push into consumer banking. The Wall Street giant had eschewed business with Main Street for most of its more than 150 years in existence. That has changed as it seeks new business lines to help boost growth.

Before joining Goldman, Talwar led the US cards division for Discover Financial Services. He also spent 15 years at Citigroup, with roles tied to cards, loans, and retail banking.

HDFC Bank has had a panel in place to find a successor to Puri, who has said his



Harit Talwar is now the head of Goldman Sachs Group's consumer-banking business

replacement should be better than him and shouldn't require 18 months of handholding for the job. The bank has largely skirted the crisis in India's shadow lending sector that fueled bad loans and weighed on the fortunes of some of its peers. However, it's vulnerable to weakening consumer demand as the nation's economic growth slows.

Puri, 69, has led HDFC Bank since 1994 when it was incorporated in Mumbai. It is India's largest privatesector bank both by assets and market value, and has more than 5,000 branches across almost 2.800 cities. The lender's profit rose 33 per cent to ₹7420 crore (\$1 billion) in the three months ended December 31.

Future Group probing financial abilities rumours

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA New Delhi, 6 March

Kishore Biyani-led Future Group on Friday said it is investigating the "rumours" regarding its financial abilities, a list of lenders and debt numbers circulating on social media that have led to hammering of stock prices of its listed entities.

messages" have apparently Referring to rumours that "impacted some of our listed have been doing rounds and,

"Any such rumours, messages on the fundamentals or our operational and financial abilities as a Group are totally baseless and false," said Future Such "baseless rumours or Group founder Kishore Biyani.

lenders and debt numbers for

"Apart from the weak market conditions emanating from the coronavirus fear, these baseless rumours or messages have apparently impacted some of our listed company stocks in the past few days," he said in a mes-

"We are investigating into ₹290 apiece.

BSNL loss widens over 2.5 times to ₹39K cr

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA New Delhi, 6 March

State-owned BSNL's loss swelled by over 2.5 times to ₹39,089 crore during the April-December 2019 period, Minister of State for Telecommunications Sanjay Dhotre has told the Rajya Sabha.

The public sector telecom firm had recorded a loss of ₹14,904 crore in the previous financial year 2018-19. "BSNL has informed that its total accumulated loss during the current financial year i.e. 2019-20 (upto December 31, 2019) is ₹39,089 crore," Dhotre said in a written reply to a query in the Raiva Sabha.

The government on October 23 last year approved a ₹68,751-crore revival package for loss-making BSNL and MTNL, including 4G spectrum allocation and voluntary retirement scheme (VRS)

FinMin to Infosys: Make **GSTN portal efficient**

DILASHA SETH & DEBASIS MOHAPATRA New Delhi/Bengaluru, 6 March

The finance ministry has asked Infosys to deliver on making the goods and services tax network (GSTN) portal efficient for tax payers, sources said.

The ministry told Infosys it was the company's responsibility to deliver satisfactory performance of the portal and it should meet expectations of the tax payers, the sources said.

The grievances of taxpayers are utmost priority and onus of its resolving lies on the Infosys, the IT major was told at a meeting on Friday, they said. Finance Minister Nirmala

812 814

Lincoln Pharma all set to foray into regulated markets

Ahmedabad, 6 March

Ahmedabad-based drugmaker Lincoln Pharmaceuticals plans to foray into regulated markets such as Europe. Australia, and



sage to its stakeholders.

authorities for suitable action thereof," Biyani said. Future Group, Bivani said it is impacting its listed entities. Future Group has presence in the Indian retail and fashion sectors, with popular super-

market chains like Big Bazaar and Food Bazaar, and lifestyle stores such as Brand Factory and Central. Shares of Future Retail on

Friday fell by 1.66 per cent to

VINAY UMARJI



company stocks in the last few specifically, one WhatsApp this and if required shall also be days" and it may approach the message portraying names of approaching the regulatory 'regulatory authorities for suitable action thereof", according to a regulatory filing by the

group firm Future Retail.

The Union Cabinet also approved merger of

the state-owned telecom firms and till the completion of the process, MTNL will operate as a subsidiary of BSNL, Telecom Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad said here while sharing details of the revival package.

The package includes raising of ₹15,000 crore sovereign bonds to meet the immediate capital requirement of both the companies, 4G spectrum allocation worth ₹20,140 crore; Rs 29,937 crore for VRS covering 50 per cent of their employees; and ₹3,674 crore for goods and services tax that will be levied on allocation of radiowaves. Over 78,300 BSNL employees and 14,378 at MTNL have opted for VRS which is expected to significantly reduce financial burden from both the companies.

Sitharaman deliberated on the status of the portal to address grievances.

She also spoke to an Infosys representative for a short period. She told the representative that "Infosys has done so much for the country and we expect it to do much more for the smooth operations of GSTN".

According to sources, she also said the company could directly approach her if it was facing any problem.

Text messages sent to Revenue Secretary A B Pandey and GSTN Chief Executive Officer Prakash Kumar remained unanswered.

Kumar made a presentation on initiatives taken by GSTN to strengthen trations.

Sitharaman said Infosys could directly approach her if it was facing any problem

and streamline the portal.

GSTN recently launched a new tollfree number for help desk, which will be operational 365 days for answering queries related to indirect tax.

The meeting discussed various measures for streamlining the GST return filing process, enhancing revenue and compliance management with a purpose to create synergy among central and state tax adminis-

market share in the battery market in India,

besides focus on other verticals like flash-

financial year, Eveready registered a 16 per

crore, and its Ebitda margin for the core

battery business stood at 23 per cent. The

Ebitda margin for flashlights also stood at 14

crore primarily to pay off debts of around

The company also sold land in Chennai

During the third quarter of the current

lights, luminaries, and appliances.

Brazil, in line with its plan to grow overseas footprint. The company has upgraded



Khatraj near Ahmedabad with ₹30-crore investment to meet go up further post Lincoln regulatory standards of these Pharma's foray into regulated countries. It is also planning a markets. With presence in more than green field facility, which would 60 countries, the company has be built as per regulated market reported export sales of ₹174.7

standards to cater exclusively to these regions. crore for the nine months end-"Documents and dossiers ed December 2019 and expect are ready for products meant

regulated markets. for Inspection by regulatory authorities from these markets is also in the process. We should be able to enter the countries with 5-6 products in the next six months," said Mahendra Patel, managing director,

the same to cross ₹225 crore in FY20. However, with the company expanding portfolio in lifestyle and chronic, it is targeting sales of ₹500 crore in the next 2-3 years, said Patel. "Going forward, we are

building a strong portfolio in lifestyle and chronic segment, especially in women health

Lincoln Pharmaceuticals. The company has develcare and dermatology, to comoped 300-plus formulations in plement our strong presence in 15 therapeutic areas, with prodacute segment," said Patel, uct/brand portfolio in antiadding that the company was infective, respiratory system, also planning to apply for a gynaecology, cardio & CNS, global patent for this novel anti-bacterial, anti-diabetic, solution.

anti-malaria among others. Of the 20 patent applications it has filed, the company has been awarded five patents.

More than 65 per cent of the company's revenues comes from exports, a share that could companies.

Meanwhile, the company recently approved amalgamation of Lincoln Parenteral (subsidiary) with Lincoln Pharmaceuticals. The restructuring aims to bring synergies for both

NCLT asked to decide on Lakshmi Cotsyn liquidation within 10 days

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, 6 March

The National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT) has asked the Allahabad bench of the NCLT to decide within 10 days on the liquidation of Kanpur-based textile manufacturer Lakshmi Cotsyn.

A two-member bench comprising Justice Bansi Lal Bhat and Shreesha Merla

observed that plea for liquidation of Lakshmi Cotsyn is pending before the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) on the pretext of one or the other miscellaneous application being filed in the matter.

"Such conduct on the part of different characters cannot be permitted to thwart the course of insolvency resolution proceedings under I&B Code," it said

Burmans of Dabur hold 9.26% in Eveready

AVISHEK RAKSHIT & ISHITA AYAN DUTT Kolkata, 6 March

The Burmans of Dabur have increased their holding by another 3.34 per cent in Eveready Industries in the past two days. After the transaction, the Burman family's holding in India's largest battery maker stands at 9.26 per cent.

The investment in Eveready has been furthered via Guardian Advisors. This portfolio management firm, owned by Arjun Lamba and others, manages investment for the Burmans and other families. Sources said this investment in Eveready was on behalf of the Burman family.

In a regulatory filing with the BSE, Guardian Advisors, while disclosing the deal, said the acquisition of the stake was via open market and 2,429,068 shares accounting for 3.34 per cent of the total were acquired. Earlier, asked about the Burman family's interest in Eveready, Mohit Burman, vice-chairman at Dabur India, had stated the family believes Eveready is a strong brand and a market leader in its domain which is the primary factor behind increasing its stake.

'The group (Williamson Magor) is going through a tough time and this has even reflected on its stock price. But the company, brand and its core business remain intact," Burman had stated earlier.

Eveready is part of the Williamson



The Burmans may consider further investments into Eveready depending on how the company performs, sources said

Bharat Engineering, and others.

Sources said the Burmans might conhas been focusing on its core business, sider further investments into Eveready depending on how the company performs. The source pointed out that the Burmans are yet to decide if the investment would be strategic in nature or will be long-term cent decline in its operating revenue at ₹317 investment. The stock saw erosion from around ₹405 apiece during March 2018 to the current level of ₹61, mainly because of inter-corporate deposits to group comper cent. panies and the uncertainty of repayments. and Hyderabad to raise money worth ₹200

After the sale of its loss-making tea busi-Magor Group (WMG), which also owns ness to Madhu Jayanti International last firms such as McLeod Russel, McNally year, Eveready, which has over 50 per cent





Boeing's current CEO blames predecessor for MAX mess

New York, 6 March

oeing Chief Executive David B Calhoun largely blamed his predecessor for the crisis over the 737 MAX, which remains grounded after two deadly crashes, in an interview published on Thursday.

Calhoun, a longstanding board member who took over as chief executive on January 13, told the New York Times that the problems at Boeing were even bigger than he anticipated.

"It's more than I imagined it would be, honestly," Calhoun said. "And it speaks to the weaknesses of our leadership." He said predecessor Dennis Muilenburg had ramped up Boeing's plane production too quickly.

"I'll never be able to judge what motivated Dennis, whether it was a stock price that was going to continue to go up and up, or whether it was just beating the other guy to the next rate increase," he said.

'If anybody ran over the rainbow for the pot of gold on stock, it would have been him." The MAX has been grounded since March 2019 following two crashes that killed 346 people. March 10 marks the one-year anniversary of the second crash on an Ethiopian Airlines plane.

A board member since 2009,

On Thursday, Boeing commercial plane chief Stan Deal told a Washington aviation conference that the company was still targeting mid-2020 to win regulatory approval for the MAX

October when Boeing stripped Muilenburg of that role.

On December 23, Boeing named Calhoun as CEO, finally ousting Muilenburg entirely, and saying the company needed to "restore confiregulators, customers and all other the crisis.

Calhoun was named chairman in stakeholders." Calhoun remains on the board, but Lawrence Kellner was named as non-executive chairman as

Calhoun, who had publicly praised Muilenburg prior to the ouster, appeared in the interview to dence" and "repair relationships with downplay board responsibility for

Calhoun told the newspaper that he and the rest of the board did not question Muilenburg after the first MAX crash in October 2018 of a Lion Air plane in Indonesia and that the board trusted Muilenburg's instincts as an engineer and longtime Boeing executive.

BLOOMBERG

climate change.

Thursday.

focus on global, systemic

efforts to reduce greenhouse

gases, rather than just replac-

ing their own emissions-heavy

assets with cleaner ones to

make themselves look good,

Chief Executive Officer Darren

Woods said in New York on

ting targets and then selling

assets to another company so

that their portfolio has a dif-

ferent carbon intensity has not

world," Woods said at Exxon's

analyst day. Exxon is focused

on "taking steps to solve the

problem for society as a whole

and not try and get into a beau-

European oil explorers in their approach to addressing cli-

companies see oil and gas

ty competition."

"Individual companies set-

6 March

"If we were complacent in any way, maybe, maybe not, I don't know," Calhoun said. "We supported a CEO who was willing and whose history would suggest that he might be really good at taking a few more ' The newspaper also reported risks.' that Calhoun implied that pilots were partly to blame for the crashes, saying in Indonesia and Ethiopia, "pilots don't have anywhere near the experience that they have here in the US.' Pilots groups criticized Muilenburg for blaming pilots for the accidents. Investigations of the crashes have pointed at a flight handling system that malfunctioned and made the plane impossible to control.

Boeing has been developing new software and training in an effort to win regulatory approval to resume flights on the MAX.

On Thursday, Boeing commercial plane chief Stan Deal told a Washington aviation conference that the company was still targeting mid-2020 to win regulatory approval for the MAX.

rivals' climate goals a 'beauty competition' crowded market for renew- industrial levels. Renewables ables where they have little

Exxon CEO Woods calls

expertise. Exxon Mobil dismissed long-Much-derided plastic even came in for some praise, with term pledges by some of its Big Exxon Senior Vice President Oil rivals to reduce carbon Jack Williams arguing that it's dioxide emissions as nothing more than a "beauty competi-"a net benefit to society and to tion" that would do little to halt the environment."

By contrast Royal Dutch Energy companies need to Shell Plc, Repsol SA and Eni SpA have pledged to make large reductions in carbon the industry's investment case. emissions over

the long term, while last month **Energy firms** need to focus on BP Plc went a global, systemic step further with efforts to reduce target to а greenhouse become carbon neutral by 2050. gases, rather

Companies than just replacing their changing their production mix own emissionheavy assets with "doesn't change solved the problem for the the demand" for cleaner ones to oil and gas, make themselves look good, CEO Woods said. "If you don't have a **Darren Woods** viable alternative said in New York on Thursday set, all you're

doing is moving Woods' remarks, which out from one echo those made by Chevron company or one country to tive fuels in transport and re-

Corp. CEO Mike Wirth earlier someplace else. It doesn't solve thinking industrial processes. this week, underscore the the problem." divide between U.S. and Exxon sees world demand

for oil and gas growing substantially out to 2040, even mate change. Both American under the goals of the Paris Agreement, which seeks to own operations including demand growing for decades limit temperature rise to 2 reducing methane emissions and refuse to compete in a degrees Celsius above preand gas flaring.

part of the December shakeup.

Gunmenkill 32 in Afghanistan

AP/PT

Gunmen opened fire on Friday at a ceremony in Afghanistan's capital attended by prominent political leaders, killing at least 32 people and wounding dozens before the two attackers were

The Islamic State group claimed responsibility for the attack on its website. Afghanistan's upstart IS affiliate has declared war on the country's minority Shiites. Many of those at the ceremony were Shiites because it was commemorating the 1995 slaying of Abdul Ali Mazari, the leader of Afghanistan's ethnic Hazaras, who are mostly Shiite.

involved in the attack, which came less than a week after the US and the group signed an ambitious peace deal that lays out a path for the withdrawal of American forces from the country.

Interior Ministry spokesman Nasrat Rahimi said 32 people were killed and 81 wounded in the attack in

Kabul, 6 March

slain by police, officials said.

not hurt and later went on TV to

The Taliban said they were not

forms who were there targeted people, there were casualties, dead and wounded," said witness Ghulam the Dasht-e-Barchi neighborhood of Mohammad, according to Associated Kabul. The Health Ministry also Press video.

reported 32 people were killed but said 58 were wounded. Opposition leader Abdullah Abdullah, who is the country's chief executive and was a top contender in last year's presidential election, was among several prominent

were unhurt.

denounce the violence.

civilians in the crowd.

Several witnesses said that, amid

"Individuals with military uni-

the panic, members of the security

forces guarding the event had fired on

political officials who attended the ceremony but left before the attack and Several TV journalists were covering the ceremony inside a walled compound when the gunmen began shooting, and a reporter and a cameraman for a local broadcaster were among the wounded. Karim Khalili, the chief of Afghanistan's high peace council, was delivering a speech when the gunfire interrupted him. He was

Two assailants died in the attack, the first to hit the capital since June 2019, according to officials. Police said one attacker tried to enter the diplomatic mission but was prevented by police guarding it.

A policeman who witnessed the attack said a suicide bomber who was travelling on a motorcycle was also killed. AFP/PTI

In any case, it remains to be seen whether oil giants can generate big profits by producing carbon-free energy. Solar, wind and battery storage projects haven't shown they can fund the huge dividends that underpins

to Exxon.

such as wind and solar won't

be enough to meet demand

growth on their own, according

WORLD 5

To underscore his point, Woods said that global emissions have risen 4 per cent since the Paris Agreement was signed four

> years ago and energy demand is up 6 per cent. For the energy industry to truly address climate change, Woods

believes major technological breakthroughs are needed in the fields of carbon

capture, alterna-

The company is investing in all of these fields but admits that progress will take time. Exxon is also taking steps to reduce emissions from its



Britain's PM Boris Johnson visits the Mologic Laboratory in London, on Friday. Mologic has won a funding to come up with a coronavirus testing kit that can be used by health workers in developing countries where there is sparse access to specialised laboratory facilities. PHOTO: AP/PTI

Suicide attackers strike outside US embassy in **Tunisian** capital

A double suicide attack shook the Tunisian capital Tunis on Friday as assailants wounded six people including police guarding the US embassy, authorities said. An explosion rocked the Berges du Lac district where the embassy is located around midday, causing panic among pedestrians and motorists in the area.

CEOs beware, shareholders want you to go green fast

BIOOMBER

6 March

Most listed companies are duty bound to hold a general meeting for all shareholders at least once a year. They're typically dull gatherings at which the annual report gets signed off and the board gets reinstated. In recent years, disputes about executive pay have triggered some fireworks. This year's round of UK conferences could be spicier than usual, as asset managers press the companies they invest in to reveal more about the risks posed to their businesses by the climate crisis.

UK fund managers have been flexing their muscles more frequently in recent years. The Investment Association, which represents 250 UK asset managers overseeing 7.7 trillion pounds (\$10 trillion), keeps a scorecard of how many company resolutions meet objections from at least 20 per cent of shareholdings, or which the board withdraws before a vote, adding them to what it calls its public register.

In the three years it's been compiling the data, the number of companies facing what's deemed "significant shareholder dissent" has increased by almost 10 per cent, while the number of individual resolutions facing opposition has grown by about 20 per cent. Last year, about a quarter of the 620 or so companies on the FTSE All-Share index made it onto the Investment Association's register.

Traditionally, the main battleground has been executive pay, with more than a third of last year's list comprised of companies falling foul of investors on remuneration. But this year, the Investment Association will start pressing UK companies to align with the Task Force for Climate-Related Financial Disclosures, an initiative set up by the Financial Stability Board and chaired by Michael Bloomberg, the founder and majority owner of Bloomberg LP, the parent company of Bloomberg News.



The association is asking British companies to detail how they assess climate-related risks, what steps they're taking to mitigate those impacts and what metrics they use to measure progress. Given that its members own about a third of the UK stock market, its views carry a lot of clout.

At least one major UK company already faces a hard-hitting resolution aimed at making it more green. Amundi SA, Europe's biggest fund manager with more than 1.6 trillion euros, and Jupiter Fund Management Plc are among investors in Barclays Plc planning to back a resolution in May asking the UK bank to halt loans to energy companies that aren't aligned with the Paris Agreement on climate goals. The move is being coordinated by the non-profit group ShareAction.

The increased focus on the desire for money to do well socially as well as financially is a global phenomenon. Earlier this week, three of the world's biggest pension funds – California State Teachers' Retirement System, Japan's Government Pension Fund and the UK's university steward USS Investment Management - issued a joint statement applauding efforts to

incorporate environmental, social and governance issues in portfolio construction. "Skeptics that continue to question the growing role of sustainability within the global investment community should realize that they are quickly becoming the minority," the trio said.

Adding to the drumbeat, Norway's sovereign wealth fund, the world's biggest with about \$1.1 trillion in assets, said earlier this week it wants the companies it invests in "to go from words to numbers in their sustainability reporting." For companies it deems to be falling short, it will consider backing what it called "a well-founded shareholder proposal calling for reasonable disclosure.'

This shift in attitudes isn't because investors have signed up to the Extinction Rebellion movement and started worshiping teen climate icon Greta Thunberg. It's because the fund management community has come round to the view that what's happening to the environment poses a clear and present danger to the longterm viability of many of the companies it invests in. It's a capitalist response to a financial threat.

6 YES BANK CRISIS

First bank seizure in 14 yrs triggers chaos

The last time such an action took place was in 2006 when the RBI seized control of United Western Bank



Account holders gather outside a branch to withdraw money, in Thane, on Friday

Angry & confused, people queue up outside branches

SUBHAYAN CHAKRABORTY & SHREYA JAI New Delhi, 6 March

rijesh Upadhayay and his B team in Gurugram have been up since 6 am, frantically tex-ting their superiors to find out the the situation was only temporary and that their money was safe. "In the fate of their salary accounts. Upadhayay's employer, a large consultancy firm, has salary accounts tomers first," one employee said. with the ill-fated YES Bank for all employees across the country.

We've been assured that company will prepare alternative measures soon. For now, my money is stuck. What is more troublesome is that the net banking service is down and several branches might be shut during the long weekend of Holi," he said.

Alternatives sought

ed

employers told them to

give the details of an alternative account where their salary Staff at a branch would be transferred. In said there have the meantime, compebeen rumours on WhatsApp for tition banks have startsome time. But making hay. "Outreach tents of ICICI "we have no clue Bank, Kotak Bank and what the future holds since the other private lenders were stationed at large higher-ups have corporate buildings

their account and withdraw all funds. Across branches, the busiest peo-

ple were the relationship managers. case of ownership changing hands, the new owners will put the cus-

Cash crunch

Several security guards restricted the people from talking to the media under order from the branch manager. "My fixed deposit is stuck. How will I take out so many lakhs in tranches of ₹50,000?" asked a 60-year-old resident of Diplomatic Enclave, one of the poshest localities of Delhi.

A worker, refusing to share his pro-Some tech employees said their fession and name, said: "Both mine and my wife's account is

here since we both work nearby. When our son joined college, I opened his account here as well. All of us are worried."

Across east Delhi, shop and restaurant owners were enquiring if the bank would survive ccess internet banking.

joined by several expats, there to close about my legal right to withdraw ₹50,000, that they backed down," Kumar said, visibly angry. However, they now want to see the receipt from the hospital before allowing any transaction, he added as he rushed back to the hospital, negotiating Daryaganj's dangerous traffic.

Asked about the situation, the Branch Service Leader (Manager) said journalists were not allowed on the premises and no comments would be shared in the immediate future.

Staff at the bank's Karol Bagh branch said rumours of a disaster had been circulating on office WhatsApp groups for some time now. But "we have no clue what the future holds, since higher-ups have refused to share any details", said an employee.

Public vs private banks

The RBI action may have sharpened the inherent divide between public and private sector banks at a time when the public's trust in the banking system has taken several hard knocks. The Centre's hope of prodding more private banks into noncorporate banking may also suffer.

Auto driver Rajen, a long-time customer of a government bank, at all. Many complained claims he was enticed multiple about not being able to times to take out a loan from YES Bank but firmly held out. "People

While some branches saw usual

Jeet and Barkha, a young couple

two of them, said they had initially

Moody's cuts bank's ratings



"The ratings remain under review, with the direction uncertain," Moody's said downgrading YES Bank's long-term foreign currency issuer rating to Caa3 from B2. It has also downgraded the bank's long-term foreign and local currency bank deposit ratings.

The downgrade "is a result of an event of default triggered by the RBI's 30-day moratorium," the rating agency said in a statement.

"Despite the event of default, the Caa3 rating takes into account Moody's expectation that although recovery rates for the banks' senior creditors may be high given the close involvement of the Indian authorities and stated intention to resolve the bank quickly, the ultimate timing and form of eventual resolution remains uncertain."

"Actions by the authorities to date have not reduced the probability of default as evidenced by the moratorium announcement, and highlights the continued uncertainty around private sector bank resolutions in India and the recovery prospects for senior creditors," it said.

Moody's said it expects a higher probability of low loss rate for depositors. "Moody's expects high recovery prospects for the principal and interest on the bank's deposits, as indicated by the final rating on those instruments."

E-payments disrupted, PhonePe hit hardest

NEHA ALAWADHI & PEERZADA ABRAR New Delhi/Bengaluru, 6 March

With the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) placing YES Bank under moratorium, digital payments associated with the bank have been affected. And PhonePe, the Walmart-owned payments platform, seems to have been hit hardest.

On Friday, Sahil Kini, cofounder of application program interface (API) infrastructure company Setu, tweeted that digital payments such as National Electronic Funds Transfer (NEFT), Real-Time Gross Settlement (RTGS), Immediate Payment Service (IMPS) and Unified Payments Interface (UPI) that depend on YES Bank at the backend were not going through.

The ease of UPI, which was developed by National Payments Council of India (NPCI), comes from the fact that it lets account holders of banks send or receive money from their smartphones without going through net banking. Thirdparty apps partner with banks to enable the money transfers.

team has been working all "YES Bank's infrastructure night to get the services back was the most battle-tested. But up as soon as possible. We hope now all access to it has been to be live in a few hours." shut down. So people are unable to transact money, their ments platform and Google money is stuck, or they can't Pay account for about 70 per settle money with the bank due cent of the UPI app market, to payment facilitation probaccording to industry lems," said Nikhil Kumar, sources. However, Google another co-founder at Setu.

PhonePe's problem

Since YES Bank is PhonePe's exclusive UPI partner, the latter's users have been affected the most. "PhonePe is actively looking for new partners and the service is expected to be up and running in the next couple of hours," a source said on Friday.

'The moratorium caught the company by surprise. PhonePe had partnered with YES Bank, because it had a there was an implementation more progressive infrastrucdelay," said Narendra Yadav, ture. PhonePe is closely worksenior vice-president, Paytm ing with NPCI and RBI to solve Pavments Bank. the issue. It affects the overall UPI ecosystem. The number of party app's market share to 33 overall UPI transactions are per cent was being considered down by at least 50 per cent," by NPCI last year, but was put the source added on the back-burner According



DIGITAL TRANSACTIONS **THROUGH YES BANK** In guarter ended Sept 2019

1 billion UPI transactions

264.8% Annual increase

60 million Transactions processed

The Bengaluru-based pay-

40% Market share

80% Annual growth

PAYMENT SYSTEM

103 million Transactions

189% Annual increase

ADHAAR-ENABLED

UPI

IMPS

The RBI's objective seems to be to ensure too many withdrawals don't happen. Payments are a tiny part of that. RBI should have allowed it." said Setu's Kumar

to the YES Bank moratorium.

Fintech impact

Other fintech operators which rely on YES Bank to settle their transactions have also been experiencing issues. "The impact on Flipkart and Myntra is limited to PhonePe (which are also owned by Walmart). These firms have multiple payment partners and have already set up contingency plans," said an e-commerce industry executive, who did not wish to be quoted. RazorPay, another big player in the UPI payments space, said its payment gateway was unaffected. "While our auxiliary services are facing some minor disruptions, we are working with other banks and authorities to resolve the issues at the earliest," said Harshil Mathur, CEO and co-

Pay, which has at least four banks as its partners, has founder of RazorPay. been largely unaffected by We will temporarily withhold payouts to merthe YES Bank moratorium. With 200 million regischants with YES Bank tered users and 20 million accounts. This is to ensure daily active users, PhonePe that no merchant's funds get

sees as many as 500 million blocked. We have provided monthly transactions. our merchants the option to "The NPCI had anticipatchange their registered bank ed such a situation. No thirdfrom YES Bank to another account," said Sampad Swain, party app provider should have more than 33 per cent of CEO and Co-founder of paythe market share - somements gateway Instamojo. thing it was considering, but

Food delivery firm Swiggy which also partners with YES Bank, did not see any impact on its services as most of its transactions take place through multiple payment partners such as Google Pay, Amazon Pay and Pavtm. It also uses payment instruments such as credit and debit cards and food cards



Investors

YES

targeting employees any details". especially of firms with salary accounts in YES Bank," said a Noida-based techie.

At the Non Resident Indian (NRI) branch in Chanakyapuri, bank executives were seen comforting their 'high net worth' customers by promising ₹50,000 by Monday, without fail. "Kisi ko bhi ments getting stuck and ATMs bhej do sir, main aapka paise aapke ghar bhijwa dunga (Send anyone to what happened, and are being told the branch and I will send money to your house)," said an executive at the Diplomatic Enclave branch.

The bank had been a favourite of such individuals — NRIs, corporate People with urgent needs have been executives and Indian nationals earning in foreign currency — pulled in by the low interest rates. "A 6 per cent annual interest rate and Amazon gift card on opening NRE/NRO savings account," claimed a board outside.

But on Friday, none of that mattered for Smita, whose salary has been stuck. An employee at the embassy of a European nation, Smita up outside the branch. They were out. It's only after I confronted them

the Mayur Vihar branch.

trolled across branches. But customers are more irked by online pavrunning dry. "Most people don't even it's a server crash," said Sunaina Sharma, a marketing professional.

Urgent need

hit the hardest. Ravi Kumar, 38, who has a salary account at the Daryaganj branch, is desperate. With his wife currently admitted to the G B Pant hospital, he hasn't been keeping up with the latest news. On Friday morning, he rushed to the branch, hoping to secure cash on an urgent basis, but was told no cash could be withdrawn. "They initially led me to believe and other embassy executives lined that no transactions could be carried

"You are adding to the get attracted to the shiny offices and chaos. Limit the transfer glass walls. But only government thinks of poor people," he said. online. Why would you

want hundreds of people lining up at the branch," said a 35-year old at to low footfall on Friday, long queues were seen at the Janpath

Cash disbursement has been conbranch, located in a busy office district in the heart of the city. While chaos reigned inside, two constables from the local police station were seen making the rounds, keeping incredulous depositors at bay. who have six accounts between the

planned to withdraw money from each. But bank staff rebuffed the request. "Most of my working capital is stuck and there is no provision for high-value customers as well. This is not the ease of doing business we are bombarded with everyday," said business owner Jeet, pointing to a large government hoarding on the main road announcing easier financial transactions.

Some names have been changed on request

Sameer Nigam, PhonePe's to sources, the NPCI has not yet chief executive officer and found a way to resolve the elec- Samreen Ahmad contributed founder, tweeted, "The entire tronic payments issues related to this story

The proposal to limit a third

Raising capital priority: Prashant Kumar

ABHIJIT LELE Mumbai, 6 March

Soon after taking over as administrator of ailing private sector lender YES Bank, Prashant Kumar got cracking to get the bank out of moratorium as soon as possible.

Kumar, who was inducted into the new role from his job as chief financial officer (CFO) at State Bank of India (SBI), told Business *Standard* that bringing stability in operations, giving customers confidence about service and raising fresh capital are his immediate priorities.

SBI's infusion of ₹2,450 crore for 49 per cent stake in YES Bank

will be treated as part of the investment book.

YES Bank would be run independently and focus will be on turnaround to make it a robust bank and a good investment (for SBI). Kumar said. He held review meetings with senior YES Bank executives. He even interacted with some customers.

As CFO of SBI, Kumar worked hard to improve the credit and financial profile of the country's largest lender in the last few quarters.

SBI stepped in to salvage the ailing YES Bank at the behest of the Centre and the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) to ensure stability in

the banking system. This plan has been in works for many weeks now

group executives said.

After the moratorium, rating agencies said a prompt resolution at YES Bank, which minimises losses to depositors and creditors, could result in stabilisation or upgrade of ratings.

However, if the moratorium is extended, it could lead to lower recovery rates for creditors and a further downgrade in ratings.

YES Bank can continue to pay off its liabilities arising from repurchase transactions (repo).

However, the RBI's moratorium prevents YES Bank from making full and timely payment of some other operational liabilities, such as uncollateralised derivative obligations.

NEWSMAKER: RAVNEET GILL, FORMER MD & CEO, YES BANK Betting big on the wrong bank

DEV CHATTERJEE

Mumbai, 6 March

Fifty-six-year-old Ravneet Gill has two passions - good sleep and workout. Both would have been in short supply in the past 12 months since he took over as managing director and CEO of YES Bank. During that period, two key parameters of the bank - deposit mobilisation and gross nonperforming assets-significantly worsened. That is, deposit mobilisation fell by 7.26 per cent (Q2 FY20) on a quarter-on-quarter basis, and gross non-performing assets rose to 7.4 per cent (Q2 FY20). On Thursday, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) superseded the board. Surely, the former CEO of Deutsche Bank would not have expected to leave in such

circumstances.

To be fair to him, Gill's work was extremely challenging, considering the huge bad debt of ₹45,000 crore left by his predecessor and the bank's cofounder Rana Kapoor, in the corporate loan portfolio. No wonder, JP Morgan has estimated its equity share value at just Re1a share. On Friday, after the RBI action, the shares of the bank fell to a low of ₹5.65 before recovering.

Besides bad debt, which was a legacy issue, his main hurdle was fundraising. And that is where he faltered by over-promising. While he was able to raise ₹2,000 crore last August, that was too little, too late, "The bank needed a large dose of capital, and it was not coming from any investor," said a former YES Bank official. The crux of the problem, his detractors say, is that

he remained just another good executive but failed to make the transition to take up a challenge that required him to be entrepreneurial.

Gill tried several times to raise significant capital by approaching Microsoft and PayTM initially, but it seems that no one wanted to throw good money after bad. Last October, the bank announced that it had received a \$1.2 billion binding offer from an investor and informed the stock exchanges without naming the investor. When the investor's name did come out -Canadian investor Erwin Singh Braich and one Citax - it shocked the market as Braich had a chequered history and had filed for bankruptcy in the past and Citax's financials were not that impressive. But the continuous announcements of marquee investors,



queueing up to invest in the bank, kept coming in. Interestingly, many institutional investors and former promoter Kapoor were able to exit the stock during this phase.

In 33 years as a banker, Gill worked in Deutsche Bank's private wealth management and corporate bank

divisions in the initial years. In 2003, he took over as head of corporate banking and held the position till December 2008, when he was appointed head of coverage for global markets. He became India CEO of Deutsche Bank in 2012. Gill was also appointed on the advisory boards of Daimler India and the IPL franchise, Rajasthan Royals. More importantly, he was well connected. In an interview, Gill said he frequently played tennis with former RBI governor Raghuram Rajan in New Delhi and was close to him.

Despite the pedigree and connections, Gill faced stiff opposition from the bank's board and top management. A whistle-blower wrote to the board and the RBI about Gill's high expenses on buying art and re-designing the CEO's office in Mumbai's plush Indiabulls Towers and sacking top officials. Gill denied the allegations, even as several top

officials quit the bank.

The die was cast in January after independent director Uttam Prakash Agarwal exited the board, alleging that the bank hid information that it lost ₹1 trillion in fixed deposits and failed on the corporate governance front. YES Bank officials called Agarwal's allegations baseless and said he was not even 'fit and proper', as per the RBI criteria, to hold the position. But the fact remains that Agarwal was head of the bank's audit committee and alleged that it failed in corporate governance, which makes it a serious charge. The fact that Gill did not take the charges seriously will not sit well with many corporate governance experts. Things only went downhill from there

Speaking to Business Standard a few years back, Gill had said he was a very positive person ... "Well, my blood group is B+, and I suppose being positive is in my blood.'



YES Bank administrator Prashant Kumar held review meetings with senior bank executives

and was being managed by a small team of senior bankers headed by SBI chairman Rajnish Kumar and

YES BANK CRISIS 7

Debt investors stare at ₹3K-cr hole...

Nippon India's schemes saw maximum impact following perpetual bond write-offs

JASH KRIPLAN Mumbai, 6 March

he mutual fund (MF) industry is bracing for a full writeoff of YES Bank's perpetual bonds. This is after the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI's) draft reconstruction scheme proposed the writing-off of additional tier-I (AT-I) capital bonds issued by the lender.

While some fund houses have already written down the exposure to YES Bank's AT-1 bonds to zero, others are monitoring the situation.

'Such a move will lead to a sharp dip in net asset values (NAVs) of exposed schemes," said a fund manager. As many as 29 MF schemes have debt exposure to the private lender, with majority concentrated in AT-1 or perpetual bonds. The total debt exposure to the bank stood at ₹2,783 crore as on January 31, 2020, shows data from Value Research.

Nippon India MF — which has among the largest exposures to YES Bank's AT-1 bonds — has marked it down to zero. At the end of January 31, the fund house had an aggregate exposure of ₹1,770 crore to the bonds, according to Value Research.

After fully writing off the exposure, four schemes of Nippon India MF saw sharp dips in their NAVs. The NAV of Nippon India Strategic Debt Fund was down by 25.4 per cent (20 per cent of scheme assets exposed), while that of Nippon India Credit Risk Fund's dropped 11.9 per cent.

The fund house has also decided to segregate or side-pocket the YES Bank exposure in five of its schemes. after the bank was downgraded to 'D' or default grade on Friday.

Baroda MF has also decided to mark down debt exposure to zero and side-pocket the exposure. As on January 31, the MF had ₹53 crore of debt exposure to YES Bank. In the Baroda Treasury Advantage Fund, the exposure was 26.87 per cent of scheme assets as of January 31, 2020. "The valuation adjustment reflects the realisable price of the security on the date of valuation. In the draft reconstruction plan ... the instruments qualifying as AT-1 Capital issued ... shall stand written down permanently in full, from the Appointed date (date to be specified by the Central

ovt)," the MF said in its note. UTI MF decided to create sidepocket for YES Bank exposure, but refrained from taking full markdown at present juncture. Similarly, PGIM India Credit Risk Fund also created side-pocket for its exposure.

'Valuation agencies have already taken a markdown of 35 per cent These bonds carry equity-like cha acteristics, and are unlikely to treated on a par with other types debt securities," said a fund manag On Friday, Franklin Templete MF took a 47.5-per-cent markdow on its exposure to AT-1 bonds of Y Bank. Other exposed schemes (wi large-sized exposure) that saw a sha hit in NAV are UTI Credit Risk Fu (₹45-crore exposure as of January at 2.79 per cent; Franklin India Cred Risk Fund (exposure of ₹135 crore) 1.08 per cent; and Frankin India Sho Term Income Fund (exposure of ₹2 core), at 1.08 per cent.

ICRA downgraded all bonds YES Bank to 'D' citing restriction bank's payments to creditors after being put under moratorium.



	FEELING THE PINCH
y t.	As many as 29 MF schemes had debt expc sure to YES Bank

ar- be s of ger. ton VES vith arp und (31) edit) at lort 281	Scheme Name	Value (₹cr)	Assets (%)	NA chng(%
	Nippon India Equity Hybrid	587.58	7.47	-9.4
	Nippon India Credit Risk	468.45	9.50	-11.9
	Nippon India Strategic Debt	410.80	20.01	-25.4
	Franklin India ST Income	281.09	2.71	-1.0
	Franklin India Credit Risk	135.24	2.42	-0.9
	Nippon India Hybrid Bond	78.77	6.18	-8.9
	UTI Unit Linked Insurance Plan	72.07	1.62	-0.7
	Nippon India Credit Risk	71.65	1.45	-11.9
	UTI Credit Risk	71.25	6.38	-2.7
of on	UTI Children's Career Fund-Savings Plan	71.25	1.97	-0.8
	Kotak Credit Risk	62.99	1.23	-0.3
fter	Source: Value Research Ninnon India ME schemes saw sharp dins after exposure marked-down to zero			

Source: Value Research, Nippon India MF schemes saw sharp dips after exposure marked-down to zero Note: NAV change as on March 5, 2020, exposures may have changed as data is for January 31, 2020

Fund managers tell investors to switch bank mandates

Fund houses have urged investors to look at other bank accounts for their investment mandates if their mutual fund (MF) investments are linked to YES Bank

"We have asked investors to delink from YES Bank accounts as their funds could get blocked after redemption requests," said the chief executive officer of a fund house.

On Thursday, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) imposed a moratorium, capping withdrawal for accountholders at₹50,000. Among distribution platforms, Zerodha also urged investors to make the switch.

'We have cancelled all withdrawal requests made by clients to their YES Bank accounts so that the money doesn't get blocked. Please change, if your primary bank account is YES, to any other and withdraw the funds, Nithin Kamath, founder and chief executive officer of Zerodha said in a social media post to alert the investors.

"We are calling up our clients and telling them to immediately change the bank account mandates," said Bharat Bagla, an individual MF distributor.

Paytm Money stopped accepting fresh flows to YES Bank's mutual fund schemes. People in the know said there is uncertainty over the fate of YES MF after SBI takes over the bank. SBI has its own separate fund house, along with a stake in UTI MF. Holding YES MF could breach Sebi's cross-holding norms.

Currently, YES MF has three schemes running – YES Ultra Short Term Fund, Yes Liquid Scheme and YES Overnight JASH KRIPLANI Scheme.

THE COMPASS Not an opportunity, say wary analysts



SHREEPAD S AUTE

The Reserve Bank of India's (RBI's) draft reconstruction scheme for YES Bank, announced on Friday, may have provided relief to deposit holders. Imposition of withdrawal limits, announced on Thursday, had led to panic.

However, it is unlikely to change anything for equity investors, despite the sharp fall in share price. On Friday, the YES Bank stock plunged 56 per cent to ₹16.2. after hitting its lowest level of ₹5.55.

Despite the slump, experts have advised investors to sell on rallies. According to Kajal Gandhi, analyst at ICICI Direct:

'Though there is still no clari-Base=100 ty on the fresh fund infusion S&P BSE Bankex required in YES Bank, getting new business is going to be very tough for the lender even after (the proposed) fund raising. We don't see Mar 1.'19 any balance Compiled by BS Research Bureau sheet growth for YES Bank.'

Even the stock of State capital shall stand increased Bank of India (SBI) (which is acquiring 49 per cent stake in YES Bank), could see de-rating in the near term considering the latter's exposure to stressed sectors and its bailout, say analysts at ICICI

Direct. The brokerage sees minority shareholders on the losing side, and is advising them to exit. Another analyst from a domestic broking house echoes similar views.

"Even after reconstruction, the revival of YES Bank looks very difficult. We don't see the bank performing, at least in the medium term," he than staying with YES Bank," says. Even after the final she added.

place, it would take a year or two to streamline the bank and clean its balance sheet. YES Bank's latest available reports show it has ₹31,400 crore of loans with BB & below rating, which typically indicates high default risk.

reconstruction scheme is in

This potentially risky loan pool is 1.7x its net worth, adjusted for net non-performing assets, as of September 2019. However, the major issue for the bank would be to get adequate liability (deposits) to fund its business.

After the recent saga, analysts believe the bank may not see a good deposit base as it has lost trust. Further, the

Sensex

YES Bank

has been introduced largely to secure existing depositors' interests. There will be high equity dilution in YES Bank's existing share capital According to Mar 6,'20 the scheme, bank's the

reconstruc-

tion scheme

authorised to ₹5,000 crore comprising 24 billion equity shares of ₹2 each, as compared to 2.55 billion shares outstanding, as of

December 2019. Mona Khetan, analyst at Reliance Securities, believes the ultimate equity dilution for existing shareholders could be 90 per cent, even as additional tier-1 bonds have been permanently written down. "With a sharp correction in prices across BFSI stocks of late, investors have the opportunity to invest in better quality names with sound fundamentals, rather

...Equity not spared either, sees ₹3,300-cr erosion

Minority shareholders may see further dilution of 30% following the RBI's draft reconstruction scheme

JASH KRIPLANI Mumbai, 6 March

Retail investors are seeing a hit of more than ₹3,346 crore on their investments in YES Bank. In the December quarter, they were cumulatively the largest shareholder in the private lender with a 43 per cent stake.

According to the draft reconstruction scheme laid down by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), minority shareholders can see over 30 per cent dilution. The new investor in the bank, under this scheme, can acquire a 49 per cent stake at a minimum of ₹10 per share. December quarter, the share price of the pri-

On Friday, the company's share price closed at ₹16.20 per share on the BSE, following a 56 per cent drop.

At the end of December quarter, the number of retail shareholders in YES Bank stood at 1.6 million, an increase of 270,000 over the previous quarter. In the September quarter, retail investors' stake in the bank stood at 27 per cent. According to market participants, with YES Bank being a low-priced stock (with the last six-month average price of ₹49.3), retail investors were lured into it and grabbed large quantities, betting on the possibility of a revival in the bank.

LIC, the domestic insurance giant, so far, has seen mark-to-market erosion of ₹632 crore in its equity exposure to the bank.

Among other investor categories, the mark-to-market impact on FII investments in YES Bank was ₹1,189 crore. At the end of the

SBI Cards IPO proceeds could fund rescue plan



vate lender stood at ₹46.95 per share. Since then, the stock is down 65 per cent. For MFs, the mark-to-market hit on their equity exposure has been ₹399 crore.

WHAT THEY SAID...

"DOES THE FM KNOW THE NUMBERS THAT I HAVE TWEETED? IF SHE DOES, WILL





NEED ANY TO



TAKING A HIT Equity investors have seen sharp

wealth erosion in YES Bank

Investors / category	% stake	MTM impact*
Retail investors	43.66	-3,424.5
Flls	15.17	-1189
LIC	8.06	-632
MFs	5.09	-399
HNIs	4.3	-337
Source: exchanges * since Dec	31 2019	

ource: exchanges, * since Dec 31, 2019

In the past, too, according to brokerages, there have been cases where retail investors increased their stake in debt-troubled companies as they turned into penny stocks.

Lender mopped up ₹2,800 crore from share sale

KRISHNA KANT

Mumbai, 6 March

The windfall that State Bank of India earned from the initial public offering (IPO) of SBI Cards & Payment Systems would prove handy in its proposed investment in YES Bank.

According to the government draft restructuring plan for YES Bank, the country's largest lender will pick up a 49 per cent stake in the reconstituted YES Bank and infuse ₹2,450 crore in lieu of its stake.

The reconstituted YES Bank will have authorised capital of ₹5,000 crore divided in 25 billion shares with face value of ₹2 each. In comparison, currently, YES Bank has paid-up equity capital of ₹510 crore divided into 2.4 billion shares with face value of ₹2 each.

State Bank of India netted around ₹2,800 crore by selling a part of its stake in SBI Cards in the IPO that closed on March 5, 2020.

Net gains to SBI from the IPO are, however, likely to be lower as it will have to pay long-term capital gains tax gains (LTCG) on the profits that it will book in the share sale. LTCG is currently levied at the rate of 10 per cent on the gains made over ₹1 lakh.

The SBI Cards IPO closed at an opportune time as the proceeds can be easily invested in YES Bank without forcing SBI to alter any of its own growth and investment on its balance sheet and plans," said a source, speaking on the condition of anonymity.



RESCUE MATHS: GETTING THE NOs.

₹2,450 crore **Capital infusion by SBI**

₹2,800 crore **Proceeds from SBI Cards**

₹50.000 crore YES Bank bad loans#

₹27,700 crore YES Bank own equity* ₹25,000 crore Additional capital required

₹232.000 crore SBI equity* @September 2019

₹224,505 crore YES Bank advances*

*At the end of September 2019, #Analysts' estimates at the end of September 2019

₹25,000 crore to come out of its financial difficulty, based reported bad loans at the end of September 2019.

"According to its latest According to industry available balance sheet, YES sources, YES Bank requires Bank's total bad loans were fresh capital of around estimated to be around

₹50,000 crore. The bank had core capital or shareholder's equity of around ₹25,000 crore at the end of the H1FY20 (first half of financial year 2019-20) and needed a similar amount of fresh equity to cover the rest of losses on account of bad debt," a banking analyst said. He added, however, that

the quantum of bad loans could rise further or even reduce, as the bank is yet to declare its finances for the third quarter of FY20. YES Bank had earlier announced plans to declare its Q3FY20 results by March 14, 2020.

Some analysts also said SBI Cards would allow SBI to fund its future capital infusion in YES Bank.

"SBI Cards is expected to list with a market capitalisation of around ₹70.000 crore. which is likely to rise further, given its earnings record.

ASHLEY COUTINHO

Mumbai, 6 March

Brokers that have been issued bank

liquidity maze, with bourses halving

for leveraging and getting credit lines

guarantee on paying a small fee, and

subsequently a₹100-crore credit line

guarantees and FD receipts issued by

instruments, will be accepted by their

For existing benefits provided to

The NSE and BSE issued notice on

A₹50-crore FD, for instance, could

from exchanges for trading.

get a broker a ₹100-crore bank

Friday, saying no fresh bank

YES Bank, or renewals of such

respective clearing corporations.

members, the collateral value will

reduce to 50 per cent from Monday.

Further, a haircut in respect of shares

of YES Bank provided as collateral will

be revised to 100 per cent from March

6. No F&O contracts in YES Bank will

be available for trading from May 29.

from the exchange.

guarantees against fixed deposits

Given this, SBI can further dilute its stake in the company to make additional capital infusion in YES Bank when needed," according to an industry source.

After the initial public offering, SBI's stake in its cards venture will decline to 70 per cent, valued at around ₹49.000 crore based on the offer price.

Otherwise, YES Bank's assets base is around 10 per cent that of SBI.

YES Bank had total assets of around ₹3.5 trillion as on September 30, 2019, against SBI's ₹37.5 trillion.

Of this, SBI's core capital or net worth was close to ₹2.32 trillion at the end of the first half of the financial year, compared to YES Bank's ₹27,970 crore.

SHE PLEASE EXPLAIN HOW THE LOAN BOOK JUMPED IN FIVE YEARS FROM ₹55,633 CRORE TO ₹2,41,499 CRORE?

SBI SHOULD TAKE OVER THE LOAN BOOK OF YES BANK FOR ₹1, **RECOVER THE** LOANS, AND SIMULTANEOUSLY **ASSURE THE DEPOSITORS THAT** THEIR MONEY WILL **BE SAFE AND WILL BE RETURNED**"

P CHIDAMBARAM

Senior Congress

leader

SWIFTLY; IT WILL BE DONE VERY FAST. 30 DAYS IS THE **OUTER LIMIT. YOU WILL SEE** VERY SWIFT ACTION BY RBI TO **PUT IN PLACE A SCHEME TO REVIVE YES BANK**" SHAKTIKANTA DAS **RBI** Governo

CO-INVEST OR NOT" DEEPAK PAREKH HDFC Chairman (as told to CNBC-TV18) "INTEREST OF YES BANK'S **DEPOSITORS WILL BE PROTECTED. THERE IS NO** NEED TO PANIC. IT'S A **BANK-SPECIFIC ISSUE, NOT A** SECTORAL ONE" RAJNISH KUMAR SBI Chairmar

Broking industry fears drying up of liquidity

ACTION TAKEN BY EXCHANGES

The counter has seen the formation of a significant number of shorts in the recent past. Brokers holding a clearing and settlement account with YES Bank will be affected and will have to link a new account with the exchange.

The funds lying in this account are mostly those of clients and will be blocked. Also, broker money routed through the payment gateway of YES Bank - popular because it gives thirdparty authentication-is also stuck.

Brokers have blocked payouts to YES Bank accounts and disabled YES Bank in the payments gateway. Clients have been told to change their primary bank account or pay by cheque



fresh purchase in cash and derivatives till further notice. In a note to clients, the broker said it was working with regulators to shift the YSL settlement account from YES Bank to another private-sector bank.

Clients will be allowed to square off their existing open derivatives positions, along with their existing leveraged cash positions, under MTF/CnC/NRML(MTF is margin trading facility that offers leverage. CnC is used for delivery-based trading in equity without leverage. NRML is used for overnight trading of futures and options without excess leverage.)

The note reassured customers that the restrictions in YSL trading accounts were temporary and normalcy in operations and risk policy would be reinstated at the earliest.

"Over the next few days, the YSL team will work closely with you to collect cancelled cheque leaves of other banks that you would be banking with. This would ensure all future pay in/pay-out of cash obligations to and from the exchanges would not be affected by the gazette notification," the note observed.

11 March **Reduction in remaining 50%** of collateral

9 March Reduction in 50% of collateral (FDs) of YES Bank are likely to get into a values for bank guarantees the collateral value of such guarantees. Bankguarantees are typically used





withdrawal requests made by clients to their YES Bank accounts so that the money doesn't get blocked. Clients have been told to change their primary bank account, if it is YES Bank, to any other and withdraw the funds," said Nithin Kamath, founder, Zerodha.

He added investors needed to update their demat accounts if YES Bankwas the beneficiary account. Dividends from stocks get credited to this account and clients may not be able to withdraw this money.

YES Securities Ltd (YSL), a wholly owned subsidiary of YES Bank, meanwhile, said it would not allow

t is increasingly looking

as if the world economy

is in for a major deflation

because of coming debt de-

faults. The massive load of fi-

nancial risk appears to be be-

coming unsustainable. Why?

we first need to ask if anyone

would hand over a machine

pened after John Maynard

To answer this question

The Keynesano virus



gun to a monkey. Yet, glob-**MARGINAL UTILITY** ally, this is what has hap-TCA SRINIVASA-RAGHAVAN Keynes wrote the most influ-

ential economics book of the 20th century. It said governments must spend money to increase aggregate demand when it fell below a certain level.

He meant well, but he forgot that governments are run by politicians. The result after about 80 years is there for all to see.

The world is heading towards another massive letting out of air because politicians think they can spend their way out of every crisis that might cost them votes, regardless of the real reasons for the crisis.

Thus, even if the latest Chinese virus acts as the trigger, it is only the proximate cause for the coming deflation. If not this, it would have been something else.

The fundamental cause has been the political response to an economic problem. For example, as politicians have done, trying to compensate for low or negative productivity by handouts financed by taxpayers.

The biggest culprit is the USA because it prints as many dollars as it wants to. But the costs of doing this for it are not as great as they are for the rest. Since 1971, when it unilaterally went off the gold standard, it has pumped trillions of dollars into the world economy and has destroyed several economies.

That said, the problem is not that the dollar is the world's reserve currency. Realistically speaking, it is the only one that can be.

The problem is that those who are in charge think they can print dollars ad infinitum. It's the irresponsibility, not the fact of the dollar being the reserve currency, that's the problem.

Bernie Sanders is a perfect example of this well-intentioned irresponsibility. Obama was another.

Keynes and the politicians

Before the Great Depression of 1929-36 the world grappled with the problem of igniting a revival differently. It simply waited.

But Keynes said no, if we wait, Communism will spread uncontrollably. So he provided his solution - print currency to finance budget deficits, which would be incurred to cure unemployment, which if left untreated, would lead to Red trouble

This was a good economic solution to a political problem. But as with all good technical solutions to political problems, it's gotten out of hand because these things can be overdone as they provide the easy way out. The monetary and fiscal excesses of politicians, which have led to what is called financialisation, have caught up with the world.

Financialisation, by the way, is a vague term to mean that an increasing proportion of world output is because money, instead of producing goods, is producing more money. The rude name for it is betting.

To give just example, a usually reliable estimate says there are \$600 trillion worth of derivatives floating around. Netting may take care of maybe half of that but what about the rest? Well folks, stick your head between your legs and start praying.

Such flaky bets had led to the crisis of 2008. They are leading to another now because politicians responded to the 2008 crisis with a Keynes++ solution. The world has pumped in around \$10 trillion between 2009 and now.

Back to pre-Keynes

So what should be done? Quite simply, we have to now discard the Keynesian solution. It has become like an addictive drug that causes hallucinations of well-being. The Congress since 1985 provides a perfect example of this.

But if not increased government spending what y

The end of Sri Lanka as we know it?

The coming election could mark the end of the country's poly-ethnic project. How it will survive as a nation remains to be seen



PLAIN POLITICS

ADITI PHADNIS

n a move that was not a surprise, earlier this week President Gotabaya Rajapaksa announced snap general elections in Sri Lanka. The island will go to the polls to elect a new Parliament on April 25. Till then the current prime minister and the president's elder brother, Mahinda Rajapaksa, will continue in saddle with 16 Cabinet ministers although they will not be able to take substantive policy decisions. The election is likely to sharpen ethnic and religious tensions, despite the superficial impression of political stability.

The last general elections were held on August 17, 2015. The verdict was pretty clear: the United National Party (UNP) won 106

seats in the 225 legislature while the United People's Freedom Alliance (UPFA) won 95 seats. Ranil Wickremesinghe became Prime Minister, while the Mahinda Gotabaya clan was relegated to opposition benches. The Illankai Tamil Arasu Kachchi (ITAK), an alliance of Tamil parties, won 16 seats, the People's Liberation Front (Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna or JVP) won six seats while the Eelam People's Democratic Party and the Sri Lanka Muslim Congress won one seat each.

Behind the figures were complicated stories of new political alignments: Parties which had been adversaries previously, came together to unite with the sole purpose of defeating Mahinda Rajapaksa, head of the Rajapaksa clan and leader of a Sinhala Buddhist revival. It was during Rajapaksa's presidency that the dreaded guerilla outfit, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) had been wiped out via a military operation overseen by his brother Gotabhava. Naturally, neither brother — nor any other member of the clan - was likely to be welcomed in the northern and eastern provinces of the country, dominated by the Tamils and Muslims. The north and east voted in large numbers for the Tamil coalition in 2015 and that interpreted this mandate to mean it was anti-Rajapaksa. So it sided with Wickremesinghe and the UNP.

It then became politically incumbent upon the Wickremesinghe administration to set right some of the historical wrongs done to the Tamil people, especially during the war years. The problem seemed to be that Wickremesinghe's heart was not in the integration project. The result was: the Tamils (and Muslims to some extent) saw talk of mechanisms for transitional justice and human rights as chicanery. And even the limited minority outreach sent up red flags among the majority Sinhala Buddhist, especially in Sri Lanka's deep south.

A controversial ideologue of the French Revolution, Louis Antoine de Saint-Just, said, as he was being led to the guillotine: When you make a revolution halfway, you dig your grave. Islamic militancy replaced Tamil militancy as the riposte to threats of Sinhala Buddhist domination. All of this erupted in the Easter Sunday bombings by Islamic radicals in 2019. The attacks took place in both Colombo and Batticaloa in the east. Disappointed by Wickremesinghe, fearful of the rise of Sinhala Buddhists triumphalism and anxious about their future, the Muslims now became the new militants.

Sri Lanka's economy, already flailing tiredly, just sank. The country faces a daunting foreign debt repayment schedule for its excessive foreign borrowings — \$17 billion in maturing foreign loans and debt servicing between now and 2023. In 2018, Sri Lanka's tourism earnings amounted to around \$4.4 bn. In 2019 this was around \$4 bn, as the industry staggered to recover from travel advisories from most European capitals, warning citizens not to visit Sri Lanka. Worse was to follow as President Maithripala Sirisena and the prime minister who had come together in a marriage made in hell, finally fell out and the president sacked the prime minister, creating a governance crisis of acute proportions. In Sri Lanka, in the last quarter of 2019, literally nobody was managing the store.

Then came the presidential elections earlier this year and unsurprisingly, Gotabaya Rajapaksa was elected to the top job against Sajith Premadasa of the UNP, who has now split away and formed his own party. Earlier this week, Sri Lanka's withdrawal from cosponsorship of the UN Human Rights Council resolution No 30/1 of 2015, which set out in detail a process for reconciliation and justice in the country to demonstrate its good faith to the international community, is the first sign of the divisive polemic that will dominate the upcoming elections. All the indications are that the Tamils will vote for the Tamils; the Sinhalese will vote for the Rajapaksas and those they back; and the Muslims will vote for the Muslims. The coming election will mark the end of Sri Lanka's poly-ethnic project. How it will survive as a nation remains to be seen.

TEA WITH BS ► GAUTAM MENON | PROFESSOR OF PHYSICS AND BIOLOGY, ASHOKA UNIVERSITY **Getting ready for Covid–19**

Menon explains to Rahul Jacob why viruses are "a given of humankind" and why wearing masks as protection is ineffective for most people

recent Sunday afternoon at the Ban-A galore International Centre (1916), an tured *dastangoi* (storytelling), an galore International Centre (BIC) feaavant garde dance performance and an uplifting talk on improving public education. The Thursday of Gautam Menon's talk on Covid-19 in late February is also a busy one that coincides with the opening day of an exhibition of artisanal work inspired by Mahatma Gandhi. As soon as Menon, a professor of biology and physics at Ashoka University and a leading authority on the spread of viruses, has tested the audio-visual system, I ask him if the government's public campaigns on how to avoid becoming infected have been too muted. "You have to balance the fact that you don't want to scare the public," he says, before going on to say that the public health messaging on adopting different types of behaviour such as, say, not shaking hands had been inadequate. In the past few days as the numbers of infected in India have escalated, there has been a greater sense of urgency. "The PM cancelling his attendance at Holi functions sends out the right message," Menon said in an email this week

One of the problems for health officials worldwide in slowing the infections is that the symptoms do not show for several days. This makes isolating the infected quickly and tracing people they have been in contact with extremely difficult when compared with the severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) outbreak that infected 8 000 people

begins, he seems an academic who, like the dastangoi artistes, dispenses wisdom through storytelling. His first slide is a screen grab of a CNN.com story from June 2015 about two patients in South Korea dying from MERS. Menon then details how the first victim from Korea travelled across the Middle East before returning home and infecting his wife, people who had visited him in the hospital and other visitors to the hospital. A rapid history of viruses, before pausing to reflect on the Spanish flu in 1918-19, which infected 500 million worldwide and killed 17 million in India, follows. "Infectious disease is a given of humankind. There will always be another around the corner." A poster of the Hollywood film Contagion pops up on a slide. "It's not a bad film," he says — in case we wish to download it that evening. The Covid-19 belongs to the family of coronaviruses that is "the second leading cause of the common cold" he says. He then briskly explains why SARS and Covid-19 originated in wet markets in China: The killing of animals and sloshing of water on the floors to clean up the blood allowed a mixing of fluids and made it easier for the virus to "spillover" from species such as civet cats, bats and pangolins to human beings.

Menon enthuses about the "groovy nature" of studying viruses because this spans virology, geopolitics and mathematics. Ronald Ross, who discovered the cause of malaria, argued that "epidemi ogy is in fact a mathematical subject" when calculating the rates of infection. Menon uses numbers to highlight that the disease is progressing rapidly into a pandemic but also to reassure the audience that the chances of dying from it is "minimal". The fatality rate of 2 per cent to 3 per cent is well below that of MERS, which was as high as 37 per cent, and of SARS at 10 per cent. The Covid-19 death rate also obscures that the elderly suffer much higher fatality rates (15 per cent). "Children tend to be hardly affected," he tells me. Demystifying the epidemic, he debunks the effectiveness of masks when worn by the average person. "The mask has to be worn and taken off in a specific way and one should take care not to touch it. (It provides) more psychological than real protection." American doctors on Twitter have argued that the stampede to buy masks by people

importance. A Canadian public official has likened it to washing one's hands as if one had chopped chillies and was about to put on contact lenses.

How prepared is India? The first health system to be tested was Kerala's, which. Menon points out, enjoys immense public trust. This is required when administering stav-at-home rules or guarantines such as those seen in China, where 60 million people were in lockdown for a month after the outbreak was made public on January 23. People accept these extraordinary conditions for the most part, he observes, when such rules are perceived to be "for the greater good and everyone is seen to suffer equally. One analogy could be demonetisation". While Kerala dealt with the Nipah virus effectively and India handled the quarantines of returnees from Wuhan well, "the number of cases was small". A Wuhan-sized outbreak involving tens of thousands would likely overwhelm India. China has many more doctors and hospital beds relative to its population than India and is a single-party government administered by technocrats. "Even the Chinese system was creaking at the seams," he says.

India's high levels of pollution leave large numbers battling coughs. Coughs in the audience punctuate Menon's talk, and he himself was suffering from one. This is an additional challenge for overloaded hospitals in India. "Respiratory distress as one possible symptom of the coronavirus infection in a country that contains 18 of the 20 world's most polluted cities, isn't particularly useful," he wryly points out.

After questions about how long a vaccine might take and whether Covid-19 came from a biological warfare lab, which Menon dismisses, the talk is wrapped up. Menon is surrounded by people who want the professor to play doctor. Is it safe to fly? Are vegetarians immune? Would cow urine help?.. Menon is taken for a brisk tour of the centre. In an illustration of the energetic private sector/appalling public infrastructure dichotomy that characterises Bengaluru especially, I am pursued by mosquitoes from the stinky nallah nearby and dust from a giant construction site as my Uber taxi drives away. The philanthropy of Nandan and Rohini Nilekani and corporate managerial smarts has made the BIC a unique place. Bengaluru, however, is characterised by dust pollution that rivals Delhi's as the city's pavements and roads are dug up in a manner that suggests an earthquake has struck. This has created a slow-motion crisis of recurrent coughs, asthma and lung ailments. With the Covid-19 epidemic upon us, years of apathy about pollution may have handicapped India's ability to fight it.

boost deficient aggregate demand? This is what economics has to grapple with. It must provide the intellectual justification for taking the G out of the Keynesian identity.

Whoever writes the mirror image book of Keynes' General Theory must bear in mind, like Keynes had done, that pre-emptive action is needed. The alternative is a Japan-like 30-year slump.

Keynes persuaded the rich to pay more taxes to revive the economy. Now someone has to persuade the beneficiaries of that tax-and-spend prescription to accept that governments can no longer come to their rescue. The beneficiaries must pay too.

Keynes thought gold was a "barbaric relic". But is it possible that he was wrong? Should not currencies have an anchor other than some IMF inspired fiscal deficit level of 3 per cent which is just an arbitrary number?

Keynes clothed his basic prescription in a lot of flimflam about various things which are no longer of anything but academic interest. Now his basic prescription is also only of academic interest.

and killed 800 in 2003. Temperature tests at airports have proved inadequate, leading to long quarantines that may need to be even longer. "The medical science is still to be established; 14 to 21 day (quarantines) is probably optimal," he says. Globally, Covid-19 has been less lethal than SARS or the Middle East respiratory syndrome (MERS) but it has been incredibly virulent. In addition to droplets from coughs and sneezes, a less typical mode of transmission could be faecal-oral because the virus has been found in stool samples, which "would be a problem in a country with poor sanitation like ours".

Tea for attendees is laid on by the BIC, and is a choice of tea and "instant" True South filter coffee decoction and salty biscuits. Menon, who worked at Chennai's Institute of Mathematical Sciences before joining Ashoka, is quickly surrounded by friends from academia. As Menon's lecture



not trained to use them will leave medical personnel on the frontline short of them. On stage. Menon regrets not having a bowl to demonstrate how thoroughly one has to scrub one's hands - on both sides, fingernails included and all the way up to the elbow. In a country where public toilets are often devoid of soap and people eat with their hands, this seems of mission-critical

The birth of an unlikely hero



PEOPLE LIKE THEM **GEETANJALI KRISHNA**

riot isn't normally the time when one's faith in humanity is reaffirmed. At least that's what I believed until I went as part of a factfinding team to north-east Delhi last Saturday. It was a wet and thundery day, made even more sombre by the harrowing testimonies we heard from survivors, especially those from Shiv Vihar, one of the worst affected localities during the violence. However, the day was brightened by our Uber driver, 41-year-old Gulfam Mansuri. First, after he realised why we were going to northeast Delhi, he put the taxi's meter off. "Since the riots began, I've been wondering how to help," he said. "If you don't mind, may I join you?" Then it

turned out that many in his extended family resided in Shiv Vihar before violence on February 24 and 25 and were compelled to seek shelter in the neighbouring Chaman Park. And just like that, Mansuri became our self-appointed guide.

That day, Mansuri introduced us to his extended family, listened to survivors' harrowing tales and throughout, shot videos to share with his friends and family. "The stories of the survivors shook me," he told us. "But I'm really inspired by all the ordinary middle class people whose hearts are so big that they've opened up their homes, kitchens and even coffers to aid their neighbours from Shiv Vihar," he said. Anyway, the day ended and we bid him farewell thinking this was the last we'd see of him. But the next morning, he called an activist from our team and told her that he was taking the day off and forgoing his daily earnings from Uber to offer his services in Chaman Park. What did he want to do, she asked him. He replied, "I simply want to help..." That morning Mansuri printed out a 100 application forms that have to be filled by anyone wanted compensation for damages incurred during the riots. "I went to Chaman Park and spent the next 10 hours filling the forms," he said when I called him later in the week. Moreover, he also inspired his nephew to join in the effort. "The following day, I went to Shiv Vihar," he said. "Here, I filled out forms for Hindu survivors too, for in my mind, suffering has no religion." He heard about a family which had survived an acid attack during the violence. Traumatised, they simply vanished after making their escape. "I'm trying to get their phone number to offer help and support to them," he said.

Volunteering in the relief effort, Mansuri was struck by the fact that so many survivors simply needed to talk about what they had gone through. "By simply giving them an opportunity to talk and adding some simple words of sympathy, I think I helped them a little," he said. After talking to him, I reflected that such acts of humanity by people like Mansuri are the biggest antidotes to the toxic atmosphere that has corroded our social fabric. In fact, this is what he said too while talking about his dreams for his son and daughter, 16 and 18 respectively. "I want them grow up in a liberal society where they're free to be what they want to be in a world where compassion would have defeated the forces of hate around us today.'



PEOPLE LIKE US KISHORE SINGH

few weeks ago, I returned from California, which now has the la-A California, which not a set of cases testing positive for coronavirus in the US. When my wife was testy with me, at first I didn't make much of it, since it is her default setting for the family. But when she began to take up cudgels over small issues such as my inability to tell the difference between kale, watercress and lettuce leaves, I suspected she was snowballing them into fights for a purpose. It all became clear when I was asked to lodge myself on the couch in the lounge - I was in quarantine.

"You can never be careful enough," I agreed with my wife, but perhaps she was being a little extreme. I washed my

hands frequently, carried sanitiser in my bag, and even used a disinfectant sprav for the toilet seat in our shared washroom. I only balked when asked to eat from disposable plates and have my evening tipple in a Styrofoam glass, though I'd reported no signs of fever, cold, cough or other ailment apart from the chronic fatigue of being constantly under my wife's watch. "You might be an asymptomatic carrier," she declared grandly, when I protested about the pariah treatment.

I thought that rich, especially since it was my son who was displaying evidence of a dry cough, and my wife who woke up with sneezing fits which she blamed on spring allergies. They'd cough and sneeze in tandem, burying their noses in their elbows - exactly what WHO has forbidden - but they're not much for following rules, both mother and son. It caused my daughter-in-law to despair, though she was as likely a carrier as him, both having recently returned from a vacation in Goa where they were more likely to have mingled amidst travellers and viruses from around the world. When she tried to coax her husband to go visit a doctor, he declined, "I'm more likely to pick up an infection there," he bandied with his wife. I suspect she may be considering packing him off to the lounge to share the couch with me.

By coincidence, and unrelatedly, my daughter had been in Goa. My wife, pointing out the risk air travellers are exposed to, suggested she stay not with us on her return, but with her brother and his family, since their house is closer to our daughter's office - thereby putting them at risk. Because she has never before been solicitous about such matters, my daughter declined, but it doesn't matter anyway since the office decided to self-quarantine staff by asking them to work from home instead. She's created a working perch for herself on her bed, positioning her laptop and shutting the bedroom door - "to work", she says, but she's likely bingeing on Netflix.

The cleaning lady hasn't been well, the gardener reported a cold, the cook is hounded by mysterious aches and pains. "We should give them some weeks off," I suggested to my wife, "just in case - you know ... " "Pshaw!" said my wife. "There's nothing wrong with any of them, they're all faking it." If they don't show signs of getting to the task at hand, they're in danger of being relegated to the lounge as well. That's good news, as then I might be allowed back into our bedroom.

Weekend Business Standard

Volume VII Number 32 MUMBAI | 7 MARCH 2020 WEEKEND RUMINATIONS

T N NINAN

Fast trains at slow speed

he issues to do with privatising railway services are not matters of principle, but practical questions to make the exercise a success. Many countries have privatised parts or all of their railway operations: The UK, Japan, Canada, Sweden, Australia, New Zealand, and so on. Egypt has started the process, while Argentina has moved much further down the road (or rail track). Many of these countries had begun a century or more ago with private railways, nationalised them when railway companies ran into trouble, and are now rolling back state ownership and/or operations.

India too began with private railway companies in the middle of the 19th century, nationalised them in 1951, and is now taking the first tentative steps in the opposite direction. Habibganj, the first private railway station (outside Bhopal), will soon be joined by 50 others; the initial plan was for 400. The two "private" Tejas trains (private in name only, because they are run by a state-owned company) will grow to 150 - hardly a bigdeal when there are 7,000 passenger trains being operated daily. Besides, the private dominance of most other forms of transport is already a fact of life: Ports and shipping, airports and airlines, toll roads, and passenger bus and trucking services. Only the railways remains a government monopoly.

So the issue is not an ideological one, of state or private ownership, but the fact that the privatisation of rail operations is far more complicated than with other forms of transport. Indeed, private railways has a chequered history. The construction and operations of the Indian railways in the mid-19th century were done by private companies with capital that was given a guaranteed return of 5 per cent. The scandalous history of how this turned out (the Indian taxpayer ended up paying Britain up to 4 per cent of GDP every year, much of it on account of the railways) was forgotten when the first private power generation companies were also offered guaranteed returns late in the 20th century.

When the first coast-to-coast railway line was laid in the United States in the latter half of the 19th century, among the incentives offered was free land that was bigger in acreage than entire states. The more contemporary privatisation of British rail, Thatcher style, has also been endlessly controversial, but Japan operates more than half a dozen private railway systems with overlapping operations on common rail networks. India had little success when it launched private container freight operations a few years ago. And, a proposal in the 1990s to privatise railway workshops was short-lived.

The risks and problems are obvious. With the railways operating in competition with new private trains, the obvious conflict of interest could lead to disputes - but there is no regulator proposed for settling them. There is serious lack of carrying capacity on the trunk routes, on which many of the proposed private trains are supposed to run. And viability is an obvious question when the railways routinely cross-subsidises passenger traffic with the revenue from freight operations, and when air fares can often be surprisingly cheap.

On top of all this, the mutual dependence between the existing railways and new private train operators will work smoothly only if the charges for services provided are manifestly fair. In the case of airports, some airlines have complained of excessive airport charges, once asserting that these are among the highest in the world. One hesitates once again to suggest the need for a sector regulator, given the unsatisfactory experience with such regulators in other sectors (telecom, aviation, etc). But there is no alternative.

Given these unresolved issues and complexities, it is just as well that the government is hastening slowly, one step at a time. The experience with 50 stations and 150 trains should be a learning experience, helping those in charge to frame sensible rules that are not unfair to the new operators but without attracting charges of crony capitalism, criticism by the government's auditor, and thereby potential scandal and court battles. The new trains should be fast, but the roll-out of the privatisation plan should be slow and well-considered.

Strong leader ≠ Strong economy

The data and the feel after six years under PM Modi prove a strong leader doesn't necessarily give us decisive economic leadership unmindful of immediate political risks

t's time we analysts of Indian politics made two confessions. First, that we've been debating the wrong question for some time. And second, that we've been peddling the wrong answer as well.

The question on top of the mind ever since the 1991 reforms has been: Does good economics make for good politics? Translated: Can you reform the economy, shrink the government and bureaucracies to cede some power to the markets, generate growth, and get re-elected? And if not, what is it that you need?

The answer has been, get a strong leader who isn't afraid to take political risks. That is the only way to get good economics. Such a strong leader will have the political capital to ride out the unpopular sideeffects of economic reform such as a rise in inequality and creative destruction of capitalism. Eventually, he will be a winner. As would be the rest of us.

The lived reality of recent political history demonstrates how we've been wrong on both counts. We are into the sixth year of our strongest leadership since Indira Gandhi. Some, particularly Narendra

Modi's supporters, might in fact argue he's been way stronger than her. He has, after all, taken risks and made decisions she didn't at her peak even if she would have wanted to, like abrogating Jammu and Kashmir's special status.

Or, as External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar, a rare genuine scholar in this Cabinet, said earlier this week at the annual conference organised by New Delhi-based Centre NATIONAL INTEREST for Policy Research (where ThePrint was the digital partner), through these decades, successive govern-

ments had been "kicking the can down the road" on many contentious issues. The Modi government has shown the strength to decide on these. Bell the cat, bite the bullet, take the bull by the horns, you can choose your metaphor.

So far so good, and the feeling might indeed be heady if you were a loyalist, which is a sufficiently large number of Indian voters to give Mr Modi's BJP its second full majority. But some questions follow. First up, if India's strongest and most audacious leader yet is practising good politics, has it led to good economics? Or just moderately better economics than under his weaker predecessors? Or at least, to steal a popular Americanism, less worse than before?

We are not asking you to start regretting who you voted for. Many considerations and motivations, not all economic, determine who you vote for. As also for your preference of an all-powerful. strong leader. There can be culture, nationalism, religion, oratory, charisma, and all of the above. The argument is about whether strong leaders make for good economics, even if the methods and ends they pursue may be profitable for them, in terms of getting re-elected.

Mr Modi's re-election with an even larger majority in the summer of 2019 proved two things. One, that he played good politics. And two, that while his economics was all getting twisted up, with stalling growth, rising deficits and record unemployment, voters didn't bother.

That is why we said we had got our first question wrong all these years: Does good economics make for good politics? It should have instead been: Does good, successful politics need to even bother about economics? The answer is obvious: If you know your politics, hit the right emotional buttons,

deliver some tangible, populist benefits at the doorstep of enough people, they will overlook unemployment, stalling growth, stagnating farm incomes, and so on.

In any case, his many voters don't even look at economic data. Particularly, when other instruments might be more effective in giving them a "feel-good" feeling. This "feel-good" is precisely the emotion which the Vajpayee government was hoping to ride in that ill-fated 2004 election on the slogan of "India Shining".

Having admitted that our basic proposition was flawed, we move to the next. That a strong leader necessarily gives us what we desire: Decisive economic leadership unmindful of immediate political risks and beneficial for all. Neither the data, nor the feel of the economy today brings us that comfort.

All economic indicators have turned negative and been so for some time: Growth, deficit, trade (exports and imports), investment, savings, employment, and so on. The only area where you see some good news is hard infrastructure. Never since 1991 has the Indian economy had such a sustained growth slowdown or stagnation in its economic data. Could it then be that the rise of a strong leadership is not a guarantee of good, bold economics?

The thing most difficult to find to substantiate what is, at best, an opinionated analysis, and, at worst, a subjective one, is data. We are fortunate, however, to find this gem, thanks to Quartz.com geopolitical reporter Annalisa Merelli, who's reported in detail on a study conducted by Stephanie Rizio and Ahmed Skali for the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology and Victoria University. The study has been published in the journal Leadership Quarterly and you can read Merelli's report on https://qz.com/1688397/data-provesit-authoritarian-leaders-are-bad-for-the-economy/.

These researchers studied the political and economic history of 133 countries from 1858 to 2010 (152 years) and concluded that strong leaders were "either damaging or inconsequential for their economies". What, then, about "benevolent dictators" like Singapore's Lee Kuan Yew or Rwanda's Paul Kagame, you might ask?

The study concludes that it is by sheer chance that the pantheon of strongmen may produce the odd good one. That they will have a negative impact on their respective economies is the rule by and large. "Strongmen mostly leave a country's economy worse than they found it, or simply 'ride the wave' of an economic growth that would've happened" nevertheless, Merelli reports from the study.

Not all of these leaders are dictators. Many rise in democracies and must face frequent elections. Why don't the voters then punish them faster, why are they more forgiving towards them than to the leaders they see as weaker?

In the Indian context, think about how, in less than three years of throwing Indira Gandhi out because of the Emergency, the voters brought her back? What is this irresistible pull of a strong leadership? We lean on the Melbourne researchers again, even though what they say isn't particularly flattering for the voters any where - though personally I adore monkeys. "In time of hardship," Skali told Merelli, "primates tend to accept, and follow, the authority of an alpha male".

This proves how, just as we were wrong in raising that first question — is good economics good politics - we were equally wrong in our answer, that strong leaders equal good economics. Look back on Mr Modi's years now. The boldest — and in my view the most welcome and reformist - step he had initiated, the new land acquisition bill, has been the only major decision he has retreated on.

At the peak of his power and popularity, he baulked at this risk. The only time he has done so in nearly six vears. The worst and the most reckless, demonetisation, he persisted with. It also benefited him politically, at least in the Uttar Pradesh elections, which followed immediately thereafter because it reaffirmed his strong and decisive image.

One thing I never imagined as a backer of freemarket reform, fair competition, low tariffs, freer trade, moderate taxes and minimum government, is that I might end up borrowing from Thomas Piketty to round off an argument, however complex it might be. His first book, I thought, was a nut-job. In the second now, Capital & Ideology, however, he is making sense. "Inequality is neither economic nor technological," he writes, "it is ideological and political." And it is bound to persist as long as strongmen leaders thrive in spite of it, riding their domineering politics and ideology.

By special arrangement with ThePrint

Lessons for handling virus shocks



MOHAMED A. EL-ERIAN

around the world, such as can- and are not particularly responceled work trips, a growing number of school closings and panic buying that has emptied store shelves. These actions inadvertently spread fear and sometimes misinformation, amplifying the negative economic and social effects.

treatment and immunity.) Even in the developing world, such simultaneous shocks are For the economy, the resulting rare except for fragile and failed previously prevailing notion that the most vulnerable segments of simultaneous blows to supply and countries where armed conflict lemand undermine all but one of and civil unrest disrupt produc-

The conventional wisdom at ing countries. A particularly sive to the traditional economic the time, which proved to be measures. (In this case, the estabincorrect, was that the negative lishment of a solid economic botgrowth shock was quickly reverstom requires medical advances ible and that, unlike their develpertaining to virus containment, countries had to be more concerned about cyclical forces than structural ones. Consider also the should be focused on protecting

important one for restoring economic activity is not to waste the limited policy flexibility on actions that don't address the oping counterparts, advanced underlying drivers of economic dislocations and insecurity. Instead, policy interventions

the Japanese experience — with the population and favouring conomic segments the those

Closingthegendergap

EYE CULTURE

ATANU BISWAS

n 2009, Pulitzer Prize-winning journalists Nicholas Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn, the husbandwife duo, penned the book Half the currently ranked 112th with a GGI value Sky: Turning Oppression into Opportunity for Women Worldwide. closed in another 50 years (i.e. around They narrated stories of a Cambodian the year 2070). teenager sold into sex slavery an Ethiopian woman who suffered devastating injuries during childbirth, a Zimbabwean mother of five, among others. Certainly, one Angela Merkel, one Indra Nooyi or one Dona Strickland cannot eliminate the darkness that millions of Malala Yousafzais or Nadia Murads suffer worldwide. There have been various attempts to quantify the gender gap prevailing in the world, though it's not an easy task because of data, model, and interpretation-related problems. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) introduced the gender inequality index (GII) in their 2010 Human Development Report, which is a composite measure reflecting inequality in achievement between women and men in three dimensions: Reproductive health, empowerment, and labour market. The GII ranges between 0 and 1, with 0 being 0 per cent inequality, and 1 being 100 per cent inequality. According to the 2019 report, Switzerland (GII=0.037) and Yemen (GII=0.834) are at the two

and Rwanda also feature in the top 10. The United States is at 53rd position, Russia ranks 81st, China 106th, and Japan 121st. Clearly, it's a sort of reflection of the mindset of the society concerned — not their standard of living.

The 2006-20 data shows that, at the current rate, the gender gap in India of 66.8 per cent — will be completely

Interestingly at the present rate the US needs another 242 years to establish gender equality. And China would need 1,612 (not a misprint!) years, although Mao Zedong, after the successful revolution, famously proclaimed that "women hold up half the sky". Nicaragua is doing very well the gender gap would be completely wiped out there within the next 17 years if the present rate sustains.



or at least the third time in → the last 10 years, advanced economies are getting sudden and accelerated exposure to something that is much more familiar in the developing world.

The hope is that, in the process of coming up with the right policies to deal with the effects of the spread of the coronavirus, they also internalise the emerging countries' lessons more quickly and fully this time.

The coronavirus has touched off an accelerating series of economic and social disruptions internal and external spillovers lenges to growth.

activity: Consumption, investment and trade but not governimpoverishment, devastate conment spending. sumption as well.

Also, by undercutting corpo-When it comes to economic and policy lessons from developrate earnings, the shocks impact ing countries for the advanced financial markets, fueling volatility and opening up the possibility world, there are two other examples in the last decade. of further economic damage because of sharp asset price drops The first was in the immediate

amplified by pockets of distressed aftermath of the global financial selling and liquidity stress. crisis when, once financial market It is rare for advanced countries failures were overcome, the policy

to suffer simultaneous supply and approach took an excessively cyclical orientation and failed to demand shocks that hit both manufacturing and services, have both appreciate the structural chal-

its ultra-low vields increasingly the chief drivers of economic tion and, because of a severe ineffective monetary policy and are critical to the recovery. And sense of insecurity or outright stubbornly low economic growth – "could not happen here."

during the region's debt crisis tem, use laser-targeted measures when, particularly in the summer rather than soaking the system of 2012, contagion from Greece and other more financially distressed countries spilled over and threatened to turn other countries' liquidity challenges into solvency problems.

predicament, policy makers in well by the developing world. advanced economies do a better job of internalising the lessons The writer is a Bloomberg Opinion from the experiences of develop-

when it comes to the important task of relieving stress in the The second was in Europe functioning of the financial syswith general liquidity.

Effective action is critical to maintaining trust and confidence in economic authorities, and the advanced countries under siege from the virus cannot afford to Let's hope that in the current repeat the mistakes known all too

> columnist ©Bloomberg

More action than noise on Women's Day?



YES, BUT... SANDEEP GOYAL

ast Tuesday Prime Minister Narendra Modi tweeted: "This Women's Day, I will give away my social media accounts to women whose life and work inspire us. This will help them ignite motivation in millions". He urged women all over the country to share their stories by taking control of his social media accounts for a day. The prime minister further added, "Are vou such a woman or do vou know such inspiring women? Share such stories using #SheInspiresUs". With more than 130 million followers across platforms, PM Modi is without doubt the most influential Indian political leader online. Throwing open his vast "social real estate" to women entitled "Barbie: you can be any-

The PM's clarion call acted as a starter gun for various governmental agencies, galvanising them to action. The Ministry of Human Resource Development. for example, said it would in collaboration with the University Grants Commission (UGC), be conducting round tables on seven themes ... education, health and nutrition, empowerment of women, skills and entrepreneurship and participation in sports, rural women and agricul-

ture and urban women ... in about 40 central universities around the country. But the most interesting initiative announced is a special weeklong programme commissioned by Doordarshan featuring chef Sanjeev Kapoor to highlight special recipes for healthy and nutritious food for women during pregnancy.

Elsewhere in the world, things are being done a bit differently. Microsoft, for example, is hosting a series of events to help girls learn the latest technology skills and coding basics to mark the International Women's Day. Microsoft's store on London's Regent Street will host hour-long coding classes

applause, and appreciation. chance to learn basic block coding concepts in a fun session built around Barbie and her friends, who will be represented as robotic engineers or astronauts. As part of the session. female leaders from different industries will be sharing their knowledge and journeys to success via a live stream. The emphasis at Microsoft this year is on "do" and "dare" rather than "discuss" and "debate".

Arch-rival Apple is similarly hosting a number of interactive sessions in London and in other geographies, dubbed "She Creates", giving girls the chance to learn a range of new skills from inspiring female creators. Sessions include an art lab focusing on pictures of positivity, hosted by illustrator Nikki Miles, and a design lab featuring Sophie Walker, chief executive of Young Women's Trust and author of Five Rules for Rebellion. Walker's

session will focus on activism. There is also a coding lesson focusing on augmented reality and enhancing product skills using Apple's latest iPad, iPhone and Mac products.

The Women's Day agenda at some other corporates has been a little different. Unilever, this past week, announced that it has has been welcomed with much thing". Attendees will have the the same number of women as

men in leadership roles globally them real equality. Giving them for the first time — a year ahead of its goal to achieve gender balance across management. Unilever went on record to sav that improvements had been driven by its dedicated diversity and inclusion team to implement a number of initiatives, including a network of nearly 100 diversity and inclusion champions, who have been driv- patriarchy has done is convince ing inclusive culture across its markets. Alan Jope, Unilever's

chief executive officer in fact emphasized, "Women's equality is the single greatest unlock for part of it. Actions like PM Modi social and economic development globally and having a gender-balanced workforce should be a given, not something that we aspire to".

Thankfully, the narrative around Women's Day is changing. Finally, more action than noise. Yes, there will be new brand campaigns this weekend by multiple brands on woman emancipation, and empowerment. But much of those are empty lip-service. Films created either for peer appreciation, or just to look good as a brand. The plot itself needs urgent metaactual path to the future is what Unilever is doing: Giving women their deserved place on the decision-making table. Giving them Sandeep Goyal is an advertising and equal opportunities; according media veteran

respect; giving them regard. The biggest challenge facing

women in India today, strangely enough patriarchy. is Regardless of a woman's experience, education or abilities, the patriarchal nature of our society fosters the perception that women are less qualified and less competent than men. What people that a strong and intelligent woman represents a problem; a disruption to the social order rather than an integral opening up his social media handles to catalyse change, and to usher in a better tomorrow can help alter some of these biases of the past. For a country worships Goddesses that Lakshmi and Saraswati for wealth and learning, and venerates Ma Durga as the manifestation of shakti, coming to terms with women-power should actually not be an issue. Yes, the narrative is being reconfigured; the dialogues are being re-written but the overall morphosis ... in the Microsoft and Apple mould.

(GII=0.501) ranked at 122nd position. The GII has been criticised for its complexity and difficulty in interpretation or understanding. Although it is meant to represent a loss of human development, the standard against which the losses are measured is not stated anywhere.

extremes on the list with India

In contrast, the global gender gap index (GGI), provided by the World Economic Forum every year since 2006 to measure gender-based gaps, is far simpler to understand. The GGI initially covered 115 countries - the coverage has been extended to 153 countries in 2020.

The GGI is calculated across four key pillars — economic opportunity, educational attainment, health and survival, and political empowerment. A higher value of the GGI, in the range of 0 to 1, indicates less gender disparity. According to the 2020 report, the world has closed 68.6 per cent of its gender gap and, at the current rate of change, it will take another 99.5 years to close the overall gender gap, 257 years to close the economic gap, and 94.5 years to close the political gap.

Iceland, Norway, Finland, and Sweden occupy the top four spots on the GGI list. Interestingly, countries like Nicaragua

However, such uniform progress over a long period is not quite realistic. It only reflects the present situation. Technological advances and social changes in the moderate to distant future are very difficult to predict, even for the fiction writers. And we should always keep in mind that policymakers, exceptional social reformers, and other stakeholders can always fastforward this process to ensure gender equality sooner than the predicted time limit.

Note that Lourdes Beneria and Iñaki Permanyer, in a 2010 article in the journal Development and Change, criticised the GGI for only capturing inequality in certain aspects of women's lives, and, therefore, making it an incomplete measure of gender inequality. Also, the GGI considers equal weights of four types of pillars, which is again questionable. Kristof and WuDunn, for example, emphasised the political empowerment of women.

Often, a small push can do wonders. The story of Beatrice Biira, an impoverished Ugandan girl, is now almost folklore. In 1991, then six-year-old Beatrice's life was transformed by a goat, gifted by a non-profit world hunger organisation. Her family could send her to school by selling the goat's milk, and now she has a graduate degree from a US university. Kristof and WuDunn also helped us see that the key to economic progress lies in unleashing women's potential - the Cambodian girl, escaping from her brothel, could build a thriving retail business that supports her family; the Ethiopian woman could become a surgeon: and the Zimbabwean mother of five, counselled to return to school, can earn her doctorate and become an expert on AIDS. Such possibilities are grossly hidden. Will it really take another century to unleash them?

The writer is a professor of Statistics at the Indian Statistical Institute, Kolkata

CBDT asks govt to tell PSUs to opt for **Vivad se Vishwas**

So far, no PSU has shown interest in the scheme

SHRIMI CHOUDHARY New Delhi, 6 March

eeing reluctance on the part of big taxpayers, especially pub--sector undertak-(PSUs) ings and

government-run firms, to opt for the Vivad se Vishwas scheme, the Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) on Friday took up the matter with Cabinet Secretary Rajiv Gauba, seeking his intervention in the matter, according to the two government sources.

CBDT Chairman P C Mody, in a meeting with Gauba, is learnt to have talked of the "implications" of the scheme for PSUs and other state-run firms and as to why they should come under it.

The Lok Sabha has passed the Bill on the scheme. The apex body apprised the

cabinet secretary of the "implications" for PSUs' balance sheets and also did a costbenefit analysis if they opted for the scheme, said officials privy to the development.

No PSU has opted for the scheme so far, sources said.

"State-run firms are not finding the scheme lucrative enough because they believe their cases have merit and require a legal recourse. They say if they settle the matter. there will be an impression of poor governance and flaws on their part," said an official informally briefed by one of the firms he approached.

Some big cases the tax department wants to settle include those of Life Insurance Corporation and Air India, and various companies state governments run.

Sources said the Income- to ensure that each eligible More on business-standard.com

ARCHIS MOHAN vants with suitable domain knowl-New Delhi, 6 March edge to specific clusters. "Once assigned to a particular sector the civil servant will spend

A parliamentary panel has asked the Centre to fill up vacancies in the Indian Administrative Services (IAS), judiciary, Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), Central Vigilance Commission (CVC), Central Information Commission (CIC) and domain." The committee expressed the Income Tax Appellate Tribunal. concern at the shortage of 1,494 IAS

The department-related standing committee on personnel, public grievreports on demands for grants for civil services. 2020-21 to the Rajya Sabha on Friday.



GIVING A NUDGE

Latest data suggest ₹4.5 trn of direct taxes locked up in litigations ■ Of which, PSUs and other state-run firms involved the tax amount of ₹1 trn

Tax department focussing on large taxpayers, including LIC and PSBs

Tax Department had identified at least 50 central and state PSUs, of which it approached at least 30. These state-run firms are in legacy tax rows involving about ₹1 trillion, according to sources in the know Experts, however, say

egging on PSUs to avail of the scheme would not be successful because their owner is the government, to which they will go if they avail of the scheme. Besides, the CBDT, which is monitoring each bit of the scheme, is learnt to be facing refusal in 20 per cent of the cases. The entities concerned are saying the scheme is "not beneficial for them" and in some cases they have no source in the tax department.

They are also focussing on international taxes case involving foreign banks Field officers have been directed to bring 100% disputed eligible cases under the scheme

case comes under the scheme. Meanwhile. Revenue Bhushan Secretary Ajav Pandey is holding a meeting with income-tax officials on March 9 to discuss the top 100 eligible cases, along with the feedback from large taxpayers who had been approached by tax sleuths so far.

"We have to prepare information for the review meeting called by the revenue secretary. These include a list of Central and state PSUs, an updated list of the oversight committee (an internal panel supervising the scheme) report, the status of top 50 advance tax cases with chief commissioners, and the expected amount of money to pay, said another tax collection in the fourth quarter ending on March 31," However, the department said a tax official has deployed all its resources

HIT CATC

CCI to check 17 laws for compliance

RUCHIKA CHITRAVANSHI New Delhi 6 March

The Competition Commission of India (CCI) is examining 17 pieces of legislation across different sectors to check if they are compliant with competition laws, Ashok Kumar Gupta, chairman of the CCI, said on Friday.

There are a number of rules that need to become compliant with competition regulations. Maybe some of the study was made public, the CCI had them already are... We will examine it in detail," Gupta said. The anti-trust watchdog will identify inadvertent policy-induced restrictions on competition. if any.

Gupta was speaking on the sidelines of a national conference on the economics of competition law. Stressing the need for antitrust regulations to

match the economic realities of the time, Gupta said, "In digital markets, enforcement priorities and remedies should generate optimal deterrence of anticompetitive conduct while preservng the incentives for innovation."

He also said the CCI is finalising its report on the telecom sector and competition practices within it. The commission had conducted a similar study on the e-commerce sector. Soon after ordered an investigation into Flipkart and Amazon for offering deep discount and their preferred seller model.

While the e-commerce companies managed to get an interim stay on the probe, the CCI is likely to submit an affidavit in the Delhi High Court to explain its stance soon, Gupta said.

The chairman also highlighted the

"THERE ARE A NUMBER OF RULES THAT NEED TO BECOME **COMPLIANT WITH** COMPETITION REGULATIONS. **MAYBE SOME OF THEM** ALREADY ARE... WE WILL EXAMINE IT IN DETAIL" ASHOK KUMAR GUPTA (Cl chairman

green channel system for deemed approval of combination schemes with nearly 30 per cent of the cases notified to the CCI this year processed under the and agriculture.

IN BRIEF

promote a speedy and transparent process for approval of combinations as also to create a culture of self-compliance." Speaking on the occasion, Bibek Debroy, chairman of Prime Minister's Economic Advisory Council, said the issues of competition extended beyond the ambit of competition law and that the extent of competition is predicated on the institutional structure and system of laws that undergird markets. 'There are elements in several statutes in India that inhibit competition."

automatic system, "This channel will

He said the government or the CCI need to step in when the requisite action is not taken by industry. He also said that while entry has been eased in manufacturing pursuant to economic liberalisation, barriers still exist in services

'Right talking' critics hate those doing right things, says PM

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA New Delhi, 6 March

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday hit out at 'right talking' critics of his government's decisions such as the new citizenship law and scrapping of special status for Jammu and Kashmir, saying they have hatred for people who walk the path of 'doing the right things'.

Speaking at the ET Global Business Summit, he said the 'right talking' gang which advocates for rights of migrants world over is opposed to India giving citizenship to persecuted minorities of neighbouring nations.

This gang talks of the constitution but opposes the temporary provision of Article 370 and full implementation of the Indian constitution in Jammu and Kashmir, he said.

"There is nothing wrong with talking the right things. But these people have a particular hatred for people who are doing the right things," he said. "So when changes are brought in status quo, they see this as disruptions." Modi said for his government development and good governance



"WHEN CHANGES ARE BROUGHT IN STATUS QUO, THEY SEE THIS AS **DISRUPTIONS''**

NARENDRA MODI PRIME MINISTER

are not subjects of convenience but of conviction. "Conviction to do the right things, the conviction to break the status quo," he said.

The Prime Minister further said direct benefit transfer of government subsidies and doles into the accounts of beneficiaries has led to the saving of thousands of crores of rupees.

Similarly, RERA law has helped save the real estate sector from black money, he said

vacancies in the CBI. Taking note of human resource and infrastructure

servants

India faces 'danger' from slowdown: Manmohan

India faces "imminent danger" from the trinity of social disharmony, economic slowdown and a global health epidemic, former prime minister Manmohan Singh warned on Friday, asserting that this "potent combination of risks" may not only rupture the soul of India but also diminish its global standing. In an opinion piece in The Hindu, Singh also warned that "India that we know and cherish is slipping away fast and the situation is very

> "grim and morose". Singh also offered his advice to address the challenges, callingita "three point plan".

Govt seeks Parliament nod for ₹54K-cr additional spending The government on Friday sought the Parliament's nod for an

additional ₹54,000-crore spending mainly to meet its obligation towards GST compensation to states and defence-related expenditure. Minister of State for Finance Anurag Thakur presented the second and final batch of supplementary demands for grants in the Lok Sabha. It sought authorisation for gross additional expenditure of ₹4.8 trillion. "Of this, the proposals involving net cash outgo aggregate to ₹53,963.58 crore and gross additional expenditure, matched by saving of the ministries/departments or by enhanced receipts/recoveries aggregates to ₹4.26 trillion," the supplementary demands for grants document said. PTI

Lok Sabha passes IBC (Second Amendment) Bill

previous promoters of the

IBBI chairman Lok Sabha on Friday passed The insolvency law provides a the Insolvency and new lifeline for stressed companies to save them from Bankruptcy Code (Second Amendment) Bill amid noisy premature death, IBBI protests. The bill seeks to Chairman M S Sahoo said on amend the Insolvency and Friday. The Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC) so Bankruptcy Code (IBC) provides for a time-bound that successful bidders of insolvent companies are and market-linked resoluring-fenced from any risk of tion of stressed assets. Sahoo criminal proceedings for said the average life of S&P offences committed by 500 firms has reportedly

IBC provides lifeline

for stressed firms:

come down from 90 to 18

companies concerned. PTI years over the last century. PTI Maharashtra Budget allocates ₹7K cr for farm loan waiver

Cuts stamp duty on Mumbai property

The first Budget of Maharashtra's Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) government has made a provision of ₹7,000 crore for the Mahatma Jyotirao Phule farm loan waiver scheme, the total outlay for which is ₹22,000 crore. The outlay for the scheme for the current fiscal was ₹15,000 crore. The budget for 2020-21 has provided ₹7,000 crore for the scheme. Meanwhile, petrol and diesel will be costlier by ₹1 per litre in the state, the state legislature was informed. Ajit Pawar in his Budget speech announced that VAT on petrol and diesel would be increased by ₹1 per litre. The Budget also seeks to provide a fillip to infrastructure development in the state by proposing an outlay of over ₹30,000 crore. Pawar also announced tax concession proposals. This included 1 per cent stamp duty concession for the next two years and other related charges applicable on registration of documents in the areas falling under the Mumbai Metropolitan Region Development Authority and municipal corporations o

Centre told to fill vacancies in IAS, CBI & govt depts

hange a s

The committee recommended grouping of ministries into clusters like 'rural cluster, 'social cluster' and

officers. It has backed promotion of ances, law and justice presented two tual, to retain the best talent in the

the rest of his career within the sector

concerned," it said. The committee

said this would "enable civil servants

to acquire skills, expertise and pro-

fessional excellence in a particular

The committee observed that the '360-degree performance appraisal of civil servants', based on the assessment by an expert committee and 'financial cluster', and assign civil ser-feedback from various stakeholders

iuniors should not harm hon 'lateral entrants', who are contrac- and deserving civil servants who enforce discipline and performance.

obs

The committee, headed by Bharatiya Janata Party's Bhupender Yadav, called for reorienting the training curriculum to make civil servants 'emotionally intelligent'. It asked the Centre to fill the 1,281 Administrative Tribunal because of cent of the total 24,018.

Tribunal. It called for filling up of 41 in the tribunal out of tota strength of 126.

the allocation of ₹802 crore for the CBI

against the projection of ₹1,386 crore,

the committee said fund constraints

should not impede the CBI from dis-

charging its mandate effectively. It rec-

It said ₹9.32 trillion is locked in tax

disputes on account of 89,398 appeals

pending in the Income Tax Appellate

ommended higher allocation.

The committee also recommended linking Aadhar card number with voter identity card to eliminate multiplicity of voter card.

It noted that 48,000 cases are still pending disposal in Central

subordinate courts, respectively, since 2018. The committee asked for filling up 397 vacancies of high court Judges. which is 37 per cent of the sanctioned 1,079 posts. There are 5,146 vacant posts of judicial officers in the subordinate courts, accounting for 21 per

deficit. It recommended a pre-litiga-

tion conciliation mechanism to

resolve the grievances of government

that judicial delays cost 0.5 per cent

of GDP of the country. It said the

increase in pendency cases was a

cause for worry. Pendency increased

8 per cent, 29 per cent, and 21 per cent

in the Supreme Court high

For judiciary, the committee noted

PTI Pune, Pimpri-Chinchwad, and Nagpur.

Himachal debt rises to ₹55,700 cr

Himachal Pradesh is currently facing a debt burden of over ₹55,700 crore, Chief Minister Jai Ram Thakur on Friday said adding that over 10 per cent of total Budget amount will be spent on loan interest payment in FY 2020-21. He said that the debt burden on the state rose to ₹55,737 crore. DTI

Sitharaman asks RBI to fix accountability

INDIVJAL DHASMANA New Delhi, 6 March

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman (pictured) has asked the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) to fix accountability in the YES Bank imbroglio. She told reporters on Friday that the RBI had been asked to assess the causes of problems at YES Bank and the role played by individuals. The government, she said, wanted the RBI to ensure that due process of law was followed with a sense of urgency and see if there was any regulatory gaps. She sought to differentiate between the way in which the Modi government was handling the YES Bank issue and the one adopted by the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) government in such cases. "Against how many people did they (UPA government) take action," Sitharaman asked.

Taking a dig at senior Congress leader and former finance minister P Chidambaram, she said United Western Bank collapsed in 2006 under the "self-appointed competent doctors".

Chidambaram had in a series of tweets asked why should stateowned State Bank of India (SBI) invest in YES Bank.

She said the UPA merged it with IDBI because of which the latter also lost. Also, the UPA government merged the failed Global Trust Bank with Oriental Bank of Commerce and washed its hands, she alleged. On the other hand, the Modi gov-

ernment was ensuring that consumers' interests were protected "Our approach has been to ensure that institutions don't collapse and above all to ensure that the interests of consumers, businesses, clients and depositors are safe. That is why the prime minister insisted that we increase the deposit insurance from

₹1 lakh to ₹5 lakh," she said. Sitharaman said the RBI and the government had been closely monitoring YES Bank since 2017.

Sitharaman said the government came into play in January 2020 after YES failed multiple times to raise capital from investors after making "genuine attempts". "Once in November 2019 there was no longer scope for getting any money and coincidentally, the chairman of their audit committee resigned in January 2020 ... that's when we started engaging." Sitharaman said.

► FROM PAGE 1 YES crisis, virus fears...

The 10-year US Treasury dropped to a new low of 0.7 per cent, signalling extreme risk aversion. "Investors are concerned that there is a demand problem globally. There is a tendency during such situations to sit on cash. If you are not earning revenue, any amount of interest rate cut will not help," said Andrew Holland, CEO of Avendus Capital Alternate Strategies. Overseas investors sold shares worth ₹3,594 crore. In the last 15 trading sessions, they have dumped shares worth nearly ₹20,000 crore. Domestic institutional investors bought shares worth ₹2,543 crore. The BSE Bankex fell 3.5 per cent. Shares of SBI dropped 6.2 per cent. IndusInd Bank and ICICI Bank fell by 5.6 per cent and 3.7 per cent, respectively. Axis Bank fell by 2.9 per cent and HDFC Bank by 1.5 per cent. Apart from banking stocks, metal and energy stocks declined the most, with their sectoral indices dropping 4.4 per cent and 3.2 per cent, respectively. Tata Steel, HDFC, and ONGC were the worstperforming Sensex stocks. On an overall basis, 1,919 stocks declined, and 527 advanced on the BSE.

AT-1 bondholders...

However, in terms of risks, they are riskier than tier-1 bonds. The RBI's draft reconstruction plan for YES Bank states that AT-1 bondholders shall not be entitled to get any compensation from the reconstructed bank on account of changes occurred during the reconstruction process.

Bondholders have invested ₹10,800 crore in YES Bank's AT-1 bonds, which constituted over 40 per cent of the bank's net worth (₹27,000 crore) as of September 30, 2019. While this isn't the first time that AT-1 bonds are being written down in India, YES Bank's instance drew flak from investors, as it is a widely held instrument across financial institutions, including MFs and insurance firms. "YES Bank is the first instance of a private bank facing this situation," said a bond dealer. The RBI has sought suggestions and comments from members of public, including the bank's shareholders, depositors and creditors on the draft scheme by March 9, after which it will take a final view. Bondholders would be sending their representation seeking conversion of AT-1 bonds into equity, and put them on a par with all shareholders, and are also planning to file a suit against this move, said the fund official.

In a letter dated March 4, written to YES Bank by Axis Trustees, the trustees expressed their concern with regard to CAPITAL POSITION in ₹ crore Tier-1 Bonds 11,107 Basel III AT1 10,800 Basel II Tier-1 307 **Tier 2 Bonds** 14,474 Basel III Tier-2 10,900 Basel II UT-2 1,344 Basel II LT-2. 2,230 Infrastructure Bonds 7.030 **Total Bonds** 32,611 AT: Additional Tier–1; UT–2: Upper Tier–2; LT–2: Lower Tier–2 Source: ICRA

their position on AT-1 bonds and had sought a face-to-face meeting with top executives of YES Bank. "Debenture holders are extremely apprehensive that the issuer bank (YES) will not be in a position to honour its obligation to the holders of AT-1 bonds and may act prejudicial to their interest," the letter mentions. Business Standard has reviewed the letter. Axis Trustee represents ₹8,450 crore in value of debentures. It is believed that YES Bank's inability to exercise its AT-1 bonds due for maturity on March 5 worth ₹82 crore trig-

gered the RBI action. "YES Bank's management was in talks

with various AT-1 bonds holders, asking them to exercise the option of converting their exposure into equity as they may not be able to exercise the call option," said a source. While in September quarter, the bank maintained common tier-1 capital of 8.7 per cent, with nearly ₹60.000 crore of loans likely to be written off, experts say capital adequacy might have dipped to less than 6 per cent. It also had a coupon obligation of over ₹8 crore on these bond to be met on March 5.

ED searches...

According to the official, Friday's search was based on evidence reflecting a ₹600-crore loan sanctioned by DHFL to Doit Urban Ventures, controlled by the family of Rana Kapoor. "The transaction had taken place when the housing finance company failed to pay its dues to YES Bank," said the official. The lender's debt exposure was to the tune of ₹3,700 crore in the DHFL debenture between April 2018 and June 2018, and also in July 2018. The ED is also probing the scheme of things behind YES Bank sanctioning a loan of ₹750 crore to Dheeraj Wadhwan's RKW Developers for a project near Mumbai's Bandra Reclamation. The agency came across this transaction during its probe into the DHFL promoters' role in financing funds to gangster Iqbal Memon (alias Iqbal Mirchi). Sources said the agency might also register a separate case against Rana Kapoor. However, for a separate case, a police complaint has to be registered for predicate offence to probe the matter under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA).

SBI says YES to rescue plan

The RBI, which superseded the board of YES Bank and imposed a 30-day moratorium on it, will appoint a new board of directors. SBI will be allowed to bring in two directors on the board. For at least one year, none of the employees will be terminated and will continue to get the same remuneration with the "same terms and conditions of service, including terms of determination of service and retirement". However, the board will be free to discontinue the services of key managerial persons at any point of time.

"The RBI has assured it will make the scheme effective within the moratorium period (of 30 days) so that depositors are not troubled for too long ... The deposits and liabilities will continue to remain unaffected as before. I know there is a temporary cap but every deposit and liability will be honoured," Sitharaman said. "I remember I had repeatedly said that I will not allow any institutions to fall off the cliff."

Earlier on Friday, RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das had said YES Bank's resolution efforts were aimed at maintaining "stability and resilience" in the Indian financial sector and the difficulties would be overcome "very swiftly."

Former State Bank of India chief financial officer Prashant Kumar was appointed administrator of YES Bank on Thursday, and each depositor will be able to withdraw up to ₹50,000 till the moratorium is in place, the RBI said in two official statements.

IPL in the time of corona...

But the fact is that the coronavirus has taken its toll on various sports events globally, even threatening the Olympics to be held in Japan. In Italy, the government has decreed that no sporting events with the presence of public will be held until April 3. In the US, discussions about barring fans for the NBA Basketball games, as they have for all European basketball matches, have started. In the UK, Premier League clubs are expecting to have to play some games behind closed doors. Ganguly tempered his confidence by adding that special arrangements would have to be made. "We will take all precautions. I don't know what the exact measures will be yet because the medical team is still discussing them," he said.

CORONAVIRUS OUTBREAK — — —



The number of coronavirus cases in India have increased sharply from six to 31 this week

PHOTO:PTI

Global GDP may lose \$77–347 bn, says ADB

Virus could wipe more than \$200 bn off THE INDIA ANGLE Asia Pacific economies this year: S&P

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA New Delhi, 6 March

he coronavirus outbreak has the potential to significantly harm the Asian economies, and the global economy may suffer losses of \$77-347 billion, Asian Development Bank said on Friday. In a separate report, S&P Global Ratings said the outbreak could wipe more than \$200 billion off Asia

Pacific economies this year. ADB said the outbreak may impact developing Asian economies through numerous channels, including sharp declines in domestic demand, lower tourism and business travel, trade and production linkages, supply disruptions, and health effects. "The magnitude of the economic losses will depend on how the outbreak evolves. The range of scenarios explored in the analysis suggests a global impact in the range of \$77-347 billion, or 0.1-0.4 per cent of global gross domestic product (GDP)."

"In a moderate scenario, where precautionary behaviours and restrictions such as travel bans start easing three months after the outbreak intensified and restrictions were imposed in late January, global losses could reach \$156 25, to Wuhan-based pharmapillion, or 0.2 per cent of global GDP," ADB said. China Pharmaceutical Group to supwould account for \$103 billion port the continued supply of of those losses, or 0.8 per cent of its GDP. The rest of developing Asia would lose \$22 bil-

picture of potential losses. We hope this analysis can support governments as they

prepare clear and decisive responses to mitigate the human and economic impacts of this outbreak." The Manila-headquartered

multi-lateral funding agency had in February announced \$4 million assistance for Asian countries to fight the deadly virus, that has claimed over 3,000 lives globally.

The ADB analysis takes into account various scenarios considered, estimated impact on individual developing Asian economies, the sectors within these economies including a hypothetical "worst case" scenario for a given economy in the event of a significant outbreak.

ADB said the analysis is meant to provide guidance for governments as they consider appropriate responses.

On February 7, it had announced \$2 million support to enhance detection, prevention, and response in China

and the Greater Mekong Subregion followed by another \$2 million on February 26 to support response in all its developing members.

Besides, a CNY130 million (\$18.6 million) private sector loan was signed on February ceutical distributor Jointown straints essential medicines and personal protective equipment. ADB also said it stands ready to provide further support to its developing members in their efforts to respond to the adverse impact of markets. COVID-19. "ADB will use appropriate means to address the identified needs including through existing and new financial assistance, emergency assistance lending, policy-based lending, private secinvestment, and entail," Das said.

The coronavirus outbreak in China will not have much impact on the Indian economy, except in the worst-case scenario, according to the estimates made by the staff of the Asian Development Bank. However, the worst-case scenario INDIVIAL DHASMANA is only hypothetical in nature

(As % of GDP)	Best	Moderate	Worse	Hypothetical
,	case	case	case	worst case
Agriculture, mining and quarrying	0	0	-0.01	-0.25
Business, trade, personnel and public savings	0	-0.01	-0.01	-0.58
Hotel, restaurants and other personal services	0	-0.01	-0.01	-0.07
Light/heavy manufacturing, utilities and construction	0	0	-0.01	-0.12
Transport services	0	0	0	-0.07
Note: Best case scenario is when travel ban and fall in domestic demand lasts for				

Note: Best case scenario is when travel ban and fall in domestic demand lasts for two months, in moderate case it lasts for three months, in worse case it is for Source : Asian Development Bank staff estimates

Foreign exchange reserves a cushion for India against virus impact: RBI governor

line was critical from the

point of view of preserving

global financial stability. The

global economy has been hit

hard by COVID-19. According

to IMF projections, the out-

break's impact on the global

economy will be 0.1 per cent

and 0.4 per cent on the

Chinese economy.

concerned, Das

said, "India will be

able to respond to

lenges emerge out

of the coronavirus

whatever

chal

As far as India is

SUBRATA PANDA Mumbai, 6 March

Reserve Bank of India Governor Shaktikanta Das (pictured) has asked the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to consider launching non-stigmatised currency

swap lines to ease possible liquidity and financing con-

INDIA CASES NOW AT 31, OVER 100,000 INFECTED GLOBALLY

ceremony to be

conducted without

public presence: BSF

Delhi fashion week,

Shooting World Cup

China may soon lift

Bhutan bars tourists

Cameroon, the

occupied West

and the Vatican

announce first cases

coronavirus deaths,

Netherlands records

Italy reports 49 more

deaths; total at 197

Iran reports 17 new

124 in total

first death

Bank, Serbia, Togo

after first case;

quarantine on

virus-hit Hubei

postponed

WORLD

INDIA

India's total number of confirmed cases rose to 31, after a person from Delhi with a history of travel to Thailand and Malaysia

tested positive 11 family members of the man have been home-quarantined

Tourism ministry tracking whereabouts of 450 Iranian tourists who entered the country in Feb

Army to expand quarantine facilities at multiple locations Coronavirus kits to be

sold only on doctors' prescription: FDA

Attari-Wagah border

Hotels not allowing tourists to check in despite prior bookings ANEESH PHADNIS

Mumbai, 6 March

Foreign tourists, particularly from Italy, South Korea, and Japan are being denied rooms in hotels as panic builds up over the rise of coronavirus cases in the country.

The issue was flagged by the Indian Association of Tour Operators (IATO) in a meeting with the ministry of tourism on Thursday.

'We have received complaints from tour operators from Punjab, Rajasthan, and Uttar Pradesh. In Agra, hotels are refusing rooms to Italian tourists. In Raiasthan, Italian tourists are being asked by hotels to undergo medical examinations before check-in despite showing no symptoms of coronavirus," said IATO president Pronab Sarkar. Till now 31 cases have been detected in India. "The tourism ministry has assured that communication is being sent to states to see that tourists are not harassed. Also, the health ministry is being asked to issue a travel advisory for those not affected by the virus," Sarkar said.

"Hotels could get thermal scanners to screen their guests," said Subhash Goyal, chairman of STIC Travel Group.

IATO has also requested the tourism ministry to set up a 24x7 control room and an online mechanism to assist foreign visitors in case of an emergency.

"Due to the sharp drop in business, it will become difficult for travel agents to survive. Many jobs will be at stake. The government should provide tax rebates for travel agents and reduction and waiver in interest rates," said Jyoti Mayal of Travel Agents Association of India.

Gold shoots up ₹1,236 in a day

RAJESH BHAYANI Mumbai, 6 March

The yellow metal witnessed a rally at Mumbai's physical market on Friday with standard gold (995) closing over 2.4 per cent at ₹44,237 per 10 gram, which is ₹1,236 higher than Thursday's rate. The yellow metal has seen a ₹2,000 jump this week and over ₹3,000 surge in the last two weeks.

After the 3 per cent goods Federal Reserve sharply cutand services tax (GST), price of the yellow metal crossed the ₹45,000-mark on Friday. Silver went up over 2 per cent to close at ₹47,125 per kg.

Gold has also been unshaken internationally by the coronavirus outbreak, with prices heading towards a multi-year highs. Experts are looking at a price of \$1,700 in the near term, although last week the yellow metal fell sharply before moving to the

\$1,680 level. Gold in India is trading at a huge discount compared to import rates. In early hours, gold was trading at around 1 per cent discount. During the day, the discount was at 1.5 per cent or \$16-22 per ounce. Jewellers said only forced demand for the precious metal has been seen. Otherwise, demand has almost evaporated. Their expectation is that once all central banks announce their stimulus packages, the market may see some profit booking.So, prices could

levels and US investors have fall a bit after customers enter not yet increased their gold allocations as much as they the market again. did that year. Metal Focus said that, The international market has seen another jump of over \$1,690 per ounce on Friday, a political and economic condi-

\$100 rise in three days, after tions suggest that, "institu-Fed's rate hike. tional investors' appetite for The price started moving gold will go up further. Investor positions are high in up after California declared a state of emergency amid the both tonnage and value terms outbreak that killed 11 at present.

Americans so far and infected 100 others. Metal Focus, a Londonbased consultancy, said in its

They are far lower than during previous peaks. This will leave considerable room for further rotation by latest report on gold that apart mainstream investors in gold from the virus spread and from stock and bond markets.

ting interest rates, "impact of

political turmoil and geopo-

litical tensions also proved

positive for the metal. Among

various problems, some that

stand out include uncertain-

ties ahead of the US presiden-

tial election, uncertainties

surrounding the Brexit nego-

tiations and ongoing tension

data released on Thursday

night also shows that global

gold exchange-traded funds (gold ETFs) and similar prod-

ucts added 84.5 tonnes, or net

inflows of \$4.9 billion, across

new all-time highs of 3,033

ETFs gave 4.4 per cent returns

in a month, breaching the pre-

vious record high in

in 2012, gold price was 10 per

cent higher than the current

September 2012.

This boosted holdings to

With the higher gold price,

The council also stated that

all regions in February.

tonnes

The World Gold Council

across the Middle East."

Markets extend slump; oil down 10% intra-day

World stock markets tumbled global economic growth foreon Friday as fears of economic damage intensified with the global tally of coronavirus cases

minor recovery. In the US, the Dow Jones cent. The 10-year US treasury celled non-essential travel. hed more than 500 points and vield, too, fell to a new all-time the S&P500 fell for the tenth low under 0.7 per cent, as flight time in the past 12 sessions as to bonds continued. the virus crippled supply chains The FTSE, DAX and euroand prompted a sharp cut to pean stocks continued their

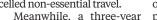
casts for 2020. per cent) after the Japanese At 11.30 pm IST, the Dow market dropped to a six-month low, with 97 per cent of shares Jones was down 513 points or

crossing 100,000. Brent crude, 1.96 per cent, and the S&P500 too, fell as much as 10 per cent was down 75 points or 2.50 per intra-day, before recording a cent. The Nasdaq Composite travel stocks have been among was down 240 points or 2.72 per the worst affected as people can-

Meanwhile, a three-v

slide (most of them fell over 3 outbreak of coronavirus and Opec responded by removing all limits on its own production.

Oil prices plunged 10 per on the Tokyo exchange's main cent as the development revived board in the red. Airline and fears of a 2014 price crash, when Saudi Arabia and Russia fought for market share with US shale oil producers, which have never participated in output limiting



lion, or 0.2 per cent of its GDP. S&P Global Ratings said, in a worst-case scenario. China could see growth of less than 3 per cent, while Japan, Australia, and Hong Kong could "flirt with recession".

ADB Chief Economist Yasuyuki Sawada said: "There are many uncertainties about COVID-19, including its economic impact. This tor requires the use of multiple knowledge and technical scenarios to provide a clearer assistance.

countries that have been adversely affected by coronavirus (COVID-19). It will also preserve their

problem. We don't have a problem because our foreign exchange reserves access to international capital are quite robust'

Although India is much "The point is a coordimore integrated with the nated swap line will act as a global economy than it was 10-20 years ago, it is not as second line of defence to bolster national reserves integrated in the global value across countries and chain as some other counstrengthen their individual tries. So, to that extent. India remains insulated, he said. abilities to safeguard against However, certain sectors risks that coronavirus may

will face challenges because He stressed that a swap they export to China.

pact between Opec and Russia ended in acrimony after

pacts. Brent crude was trading at

Moscow refused to support \$46.36/barrel (down 7.84 per deeper oil cuts to cope with the cent) at 11.46 pm IST. AGENCIES

Potential drug target against infection identified: Researchers

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Berlin, 6 March

Researchers have identified a protein present in the human body which they claim is important for the entry of the novel coronavirus into lung cells, an advance that may lead to a novel drug target for preventing the deadly disease.

The researchers, including those from Deutsches Primatenzentrum in Germany, said the new coronavirus, SARS-CoV-2, has spread worldwide, causing respiratory disease called COVID-19 in people leading to over 3,000 deaths, and infecting more than 90,000 individuals.

According to the study, published in the journal Cell, the virus has been spreading since December 2019, and is closely related to the SARS coronavirus that caused the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome pandemic in 2002-2003.

It noted that currently no vaccines or drugs are available to combat these viruses. The scientists sought to find out how the new coronavirus entered host cells, and how this process can be blocked.

They identified a cellular protein that is important for the entry of the novel coronavirus into lung cells.



The scientists have identified a cellular protein that is important for the entry of the novel coronavirus into lung cells

"Our results show that SARS-CoV-2 requires the protease TMPRSS2, which is present in the human body, to enter cells, said Stefan Pohlmann, study co-author from the German Primate Center. "This protease is a potential target for therapeutic intervention," Pohlmann said. The researchers said a drug camostat mesilate — approved in Japan for use in pancreatic inflammation — is known to inhibit the protease TMPRSS2.

They investigated whether this drug can also prevent COVID-19.

"We have tested SARS-CoV-2 isolated from a patient and found that camostat mesilate blocks entry of the virus into lung cells," said Markus Hoffmann, another co-author of the study. "Our results suggest that camostat mesilate might also protect against COVID-19. This should be investigated in clinical trials," Hoffmann said.



PEOPLE How Yehuda Maor is helping popularise ballet in Mumbai



trendy new cultural hub

TRAVEL Experiencing the Iberian spring in Lisbon

7 MARCH 2020

Business Standard

WIDE ANGLE Young lawyers to the rescue of detainees and riot victims

Panic looms large, perspective is in short supply. Devangshu Datta makes sense of Covid-19

he coronavirus, SARS-CoV-2, which causes the disease Covid-19, is much less lethal than earlier scourges like Nipah or Ebola. But it is lethal nonetheless, and has dealt a hard knock to the global economy. It has also infected global mindspace in appropriately viral fashion: websites dealing in the hardcore now feature videos of people making out in quarantine, wearing hazard suits and masks!

and there may be a long period when carriers have no symptoms. Infected persons can go for 14 days without symptoms. There are no medicines that work effectively, though candidate drugs like remdesivir are being tested. As the disease runs its course, somebody who's in poor health, or elderly, is at greater risk of dying.

India is just waking up to the possibility of a Covid-19 epidemic. Dealing with an epidemic, or ideally preventing one, requires coordinated actions by multiple authorities. It can only be done where there's a good public health system, including sufficient quarantine capacity, enough labs, skilled testers and robust detection mechanisms. On paper, India has such systems. In practice, systems vary hugely in terms of efficiency between states. Kerala has an excellent public health system, which draws comparison with First World countries; but kids die in large numbers routinely in Uttar Pradesh.

machines, reagents and test kits are being imported. The test takes around four hours and the technician has to be well-trained.

So, a potential victim must be quarantined, "just in case", until a sample can be tested. Testing could be one bottleneck because there's likely to be a global shortage of supplies, and technicians must be trained. Quarantine facilities across the country could be another bottleneck, for obvious reasons.

The panic, it's catching

T E NARASIMHAN, ANEESH PHADNIS, SOHINI DAS, RAGHAVENDRA KAMATH, ADITI DIVEKAR & NIKITA PURI

nside the offices of a global investment bank in Mumbai, panic stalks the floors. L Teams are being split up and separated into colour-coded zones, travel plans are on hold and conferences are being cancelled. "We serve our global offices on a number of functions and cannot afford to let work stall. As a precaution, key teams have been segregated so that if one person is infected, we don't have to quarantine the entire lot," says a senior executive at the organisation. Of a team of five, for instance, three are now COVID-19 IN NUMBERS working in one building and two in another.

Small and medium logistics companies have their own stories of risk and run. But big companies such as DHL and Fedex say that the international protocol for containment of Covid-19 lays down clear rules on health and safety of pilots, team members and customers. It is slowing down business, but is important to curb the spread of the virus, they reason. Small and mid-sized real estate firms in Mumbai have also defined strict protocols. At Vatika Business Centre in a Mumbai suburb, the office is dotted with precautionary signs and sanitisers. At another, M3M Group, there have been awareness programmes for construction workers. Almost every office is putting visitors through a preliminary screening about their recent travels and asking employees to declare their health status. Across cities, parties are being rescheduled and holidays postponed. The CEO of a mid-sized pharmaceutical firm says his nephew and niece have had to back out of a ski trip to Switzerland and there is no word on getting a refund on the bookings yet. He is planning to cancel an upcoming employee meet in Mumbai. In another drug firm, one of the sectors worst affected by the crisis, the CEO has been quarantined because he has just returned from a holiday in Egypt, considered to be a safe destination but the company's taking no chances. At airports, the gateways to the virus, inbound passengers are being delayed by two to four hours between landing and leaving the premises. The delays are likely to get longer with the airport authorities instructing that all passengers on incoming international flights be screened. And the ground staff, including catering, cleaning and security, will enter an aircraft only after all arriving passengers have been screened and cleared by the airport health organisation. At Mumbai airport, screening counters have been set up in the pre-immigration space. Doctors and paramedics, 65 of them for now, are on duty in three shifts round the clock. Any suspected case is taken out of the airport to the ambulance through a separate corridor and ferried straight to hospital for testing.

China, where the first cases emerged, is the world's industrial hub and home to onesixth of its population. Excellent transport linkages led to a quick spread and once China took emergency measures to selfquarantine, global supply chains started breaking down. China's lockdown has hit electronics, automobiles and, ironically, pharmaceuticals, since Hubei is a major global hub for Active Pharmaceutical Ingredients, or APIs.

Three months down the line, there have been deaths in Iran, Italy (which normally has open borders with the rest of the EU) and in other First World countries like Japan, South Korea and USA. The count of the infected (probably understat-

ed) is around 95,000 and the number of deaths crossed 3,000 in early March.

The Organisation guesses that the **ONE POSSIBILITY**, mortality rate is around 3.4 per cent. This number is subject to change. Mortality may spike as the disease hits coun- IT WILL JUST tries with poor public health **DISAPPEAR.THE** systems but we may also discover that far more people are infected, and the mortality rate is actually lower.

Epidemiological studies suggest the infection rate (R0

or "R nought" in the jargon) may be about 2.8, meaning 10 infected persons will infect 28 more. (Flu has an R0 of 1.3). The R0 is also subject to change as we get better stats. The best guess is an R0 of somewhere between 2 and 3. Worryingly, it seems that somebody who survives one bout of Covid-19 doesn't develop immunity people can be re-infected.

The virus is zoonotic. It started in an animal and mutated to attack humans. It's likely to have originated in bats, since it shares a large proportion of DNA with the SARS virus, which originated in bats and caused many deaths between 2002 and 2004. But we don't know which animal transmitted it to humans, and how.

We don't know how the infection propagates (is it aerial, or waterborne, for example) S o what are India's institutional systems for handling epidemics? The legal justifications for imposing emergency measures like shutting down

Act of 1897.

schools, retracting visas for

travellers, screening and

quarantining populations en

masse, importing medicines,

protective gear, scanners,

reagents, et cetera, are based

on the Epidemic Diseases

studying epidemic diseases

is the National Centre for

Disease Control (NCDC),

which issues advice. The

National Institute of Virology

The nodal agency for

THE DISEASE COULD GO DOWN World Health SEVERAL PATHS. **THE LEAST** LIKELY, IS THAT **MOST LIKELY IS THAT IT WILL HAVE SEASONAL**

IMPACT

(NIV) in Pune is a key player when it comes to research. Various labs around the country have the requisite certification of BSL-2, or better, where samples of a disease such as this can be tested. According to a briefing by the health minister, India can test up to 25,000 samples a day and it is importing gear to protect about 350,000 healthcare professionals.

Right now, 11 labs have the requisite capacity and BSL-2 certification to test for SARS-CoV-2. Another eight will be ramped up to test samples. Unfortunately, there is no easy one-shot blood test. Sputum testing requires PCR machines (also called thermal cyclers) to check for chemical reactions called PCR (Polymerase Chain Reactions) and RTPCR (Reverse Transcription Polymerase Chain Reactions), when reagents are introduced to samples. PCR

Tracking points of contact for a confirmed case and screening people at risk will be a monstrous task. Even China, with its utter disregard for fundamental rights and huge surveillance network, has struggled to do this.

Developing a vaccine for a virus can take several years. While a lot of resources are being thrown into vac-

cine development, and tools for genomic studies have improved, there are no guarantees that there will be a vaccine this year, or the next, for that matter. India missed the bus in terms of genomic research capacities because it did not participate in the human genome project. So we will depend on global R&D is this regard.

The disease could go down several paths. One possibility, the least likely, is that it will just disappear. The most likely is that, like other coronaviruses, it will have seasonal impact. Many coronaviruses can't handle high temperatures well, though some can - flu is more likely to occur in winter. In that case, infections will ease off once summer arrives and spiral up again next winter.

Misinformation and panic are dangerous things. Unfortunately, the Ministry of Ayush seems to have endorsed some homeopathic pills, which are useless. As social media jokes go, eating onion and garlic to keep people away will actually work better! One thing you can do is wash your hands a lot, and thoroughly, with soap. The virus is protected by a layer of protein which is removed by soap. This is about the best protective measure at the moment.

Let's hope that summer helps burn the virus out.

The bank's Hong Kong office is locked down, throwing planned projects and timelines out of whack. And where there were at least 50 trips a month to and from offices around the world, travel has dwindled to barely five flights.

Inside the India offices of another multinational company, employees are tagged by numbers: L0, L1 and L2. L0 is a confirmed infection; L1 are those who have been in contact with L0; and L2 are those who were in contact with L1. People who have travelled anywhere in Asia in the past few months have been asked to work from home and submit their travel itineraries, if any, for the months ahead.

While businesses have taken a hit, the crisis has also uncovered a human side to the cold and abstract face of globalisation.

T Thirukumaran, a mid-sized garment exporter, runs a firm

called Estee Exports Factory in Tirupur that buys buttons and zips from small suppliers in Guangzhou in southern China. He is having to charter his supplies out by special flights, spending three to four times more on freight. "How can I ask my Chinese supplier to bear this cost? He is already suffering so much," he says. So he will take the hit, because he is too small to negotiate a better deal with his buyers too.

Like him, a number of exporters, big and small, are absorbing the huge costs of using charter flights. In the last 10 days, a leading courier company is believed to have moved 142 tonnes of cargo from China to Mumbai.

T he demand for face masks has, meanwhile, skyrocketed across India. In a busy neighbourhood in Bengaluru, a chemist sells a long-time customer four N95 masks for ₹180 each, while declaring: "They cost ₹150, I am getting them for ₹160. You're lucky because I'm selling this to others for ₹400; they are really in short supply."

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2





3,000

Estimated

25,000

test every day

▶ Wash your hands often,

and thoroughly, with soap.

Avoid public spaces if you

are unwell and work from

home if you display any

symptoms.

Only patients and caregivers need protective

gear such as masks.

▶ Parents, try not to panic.

under 19 experience a

AWHO report says people

'relatively low attack rate'

3.4% Mortality rate,

PREVENTION PROTOCOL

according to WHO

<u>s</u>õ

deaths, globally

Samples India can



Business Standard WEEKEND | PEOPLE



Turning point

An Israeli-American ballet teacher is helping popularise the classical dance among the young and restless of Mumbai, writes Ranjita Ganesan

ehuda Maor's jaw drops. He is reliving a moment from his childhood in the 1950s when, aged six or seven, he had just seen the film version of a Bolshoi Ballet recital of Swan Lake. "It was just 'Wow'. I can't explain," says the Israeli-American, still wide-eved some 70 years later. He grew up in the culturally rich, mostly unreligious atmosphere of a kibbutz (commune) near Haifa in Israel, where Brahms would play at home, the opera and theatre were weekly fixtures, and children took piano and singing lessons. But nothing caught his imagination quite like the light, graceful movements of ballet. His parents did not entirely understand his fascination but they were supportive of his ensuing resolve to learn the classical European dance.

teens, he was taking full-time lessons by day, and dancing for a Tel Aviv production of Fiddler on the Roof by night. He pirouetted his way into the famous Bat-Dor by choreographer Ashley Lobo to join The Danceworx, his academy for international dance. Although Delhi didn't agree with him, Maor took Lobo's offer to move to his school in Mumbai, a city he loves except for its reckless autorickshaws. There, he took on the task of preparing economically weak but exceptionally gifted dancers for programmes in major international schools.

his class of first-time learners, the names of some of history's best-known ballet composers, Tchaikovsky and Mozart, were received with blank looks. Their parents would sometimes mistake "ballet" for "belly" dancing. Now, the children have developed recognition for even less obvious references and terms. Maor leaves them with names of dancers and compositions to look up on Google.

Ballet is fundamental to Western dancing, Maor observes. Training in this form is built into curriculums elsewhere in the world, and it prepares one for picking up other styles. He believes his classes at The Danceworx now match any international school. Students pay ₹3,000 a month for eight sessions or, if they have the talent but lack the money, are funded by the academy. Chauhan has returned after a year in Portland's Oregon Ballet Theatre on scholarship, and Shah is on a full-ride scholarship to the Royal Ballet School. Two more students, Dipesh Verma and Bobby Roy from West Bengal, are attending the Paris Marais Dance School in France. Of his students, Maor says, "They get into the schools on merit, not because they are poor." The ballet master's connections to global theatre circles do allow him to make appeals for any balance funding for flights or housing.

Maor's chosen dance form is all about "excellence". In his experience, ballet dancers have to be athletes, gymnasts, contortionists, and actors, and have a sense of music. It needs nuance: in performing one type of *plie*, dancers must act as if sinking under the weight of a brick, and in another type, they must appear like flying birds. He describes his role as that of a "sculptor" who shapes the

bodies of students into "instruments". His eye developed over fifty years of teaching — is able to spot a potential "ballet body" from the arch of the foot, the contours of the leg, and the silhouette of the muscles. A good teacher, he reckons, must know whom to nurture and whom to push. Those who have the potential are rigorously coached. Cultural differences

were a challenge for him at first. In his earlier career, Maor was used to seeing dancers privileging professional needs over personal ones. But in India, family comes first. Boys tend to outnumber girls here. Sons are more often given permission over daughters in India to dance for long hours in tight costumes, he shrugs. Still, demand has only risen, with the academy considering making batches of 60 students instead of 40. At The Danceworx's Andheri rehearsal studio, limber boys and girls in their teens and tweens arrive for classes through the day. A hip replacement two years ago has slowed him a bit so that Maor presides from atop a red stool and walks around the class now and then to manage the playlist and correct the dancers' postures.

After an hour of warming up on the barre, a whole 40 minutes more generous than in international schools, the ballerinas and ballerinos push them away to make room for centre work. They take to the floor in batches of four, performing short choreography that includes well-oiled spin cycles and feather-light soubresaut jumps. "There is a photographer here," Maor informs the room, and adds half jokingly: "Careful not to kick him." Throughout the hour-and-a-half duration, he sings instructions that remind them to move upwards or outwards, and execute promenades and arabesques. Sweat slowly begins to soak their t-shirts, and the dancers use their brief breaks to stretch in corners or snack on nuts, seeds, and sensible sandwiches. Maurice, a slender 14-year-old of modest means who has trained for a few years now, has the potential to go professional, Maor points out. He separates him from the class for a quick solo. Maor

doesn't hold back from being partial. "It creates some competition."

 $Ballet\,dancers\,are\,at\,their\,peak\,relatively$ briefly: from the teens to mid-30s. Around the age of 30, Maor transitioned from dancing to teaching dance because his body could not compete with younger contemporaries. Because Indian dancers tend to discover ballet rather late, he has introduced a method here which he calls the "Maor Placement Technique". It uses belts to exert muscles and "maximise one's training time". Now that his stock of custom made belts has run out, some resourceful students have been using the inner tube of bicycles instead.

The Danceworx's Lobo is upbeat about the potential for creating a stronger dance culture with ballet at the core. In his view, dancers who have emerged from poverty and excelled at street dancing must fortify their talent with classical knowledge. "If you don't know the rules, how will you break them?" Where ballet dancers tend to move upwards and off the floor in controlled ways, contemporary styles are danced more into the floor. With Maor leading classical training, Lobo's ultimate vision is to put Indian dancers in international schools, theatres, and dance companies. For this, the school which has bankrolled students on its own hopes for corporate funding.

While Maor enjoyed Taraporevala's film, he notes he is not as grumpy nor as emotional as the teacher played by Julian Sands. Remembering how the protagonist gifts his students vintage ballet dolls towards the end, he rolls his eyes and says, "I would never do that." But the struggles of students here did remind him of his own childhood. In other ways, things were more

THEY GET INTO THE SCHOOLS ON MERIT, NOT BECAUSE THEY ARE POOR

IF YOU DON'T KNOW THE RULES, HOW WILL YOU BREAK THEM?

77

difficult than in the movie. His first rehearsal studio in Bandra was dingy with no mats or ventilation. Still, him and his star students would train for hours there and leave totally exhausted. "On the way back," the teacher says, sounding nostalgic and ever-so-slightly paternal, "we would stop at a Starbucks and I would feed them."



The kibbutzniks would give him a few lira for the bus ride to the city, where he studied ballet twice a week. By his late

Dance Company, owned by the Baroness Batsheva de Rothschild, coming into contact with stalwarts such as Jeannette Ordman and Alvin Ailey. He remembers vividly two other performances he had seen growing up: the Indian classical dancers Ram Gopal and Shanta Rao. Perhaps that had been an early sign. The subcontinent beckoned decades later. For six years now, Maor has been introducing ballet to young dancers in the suburbs of Mumbai.

His initial experience of India was not idyllic. He landed in New Delhi well past midnight, and was put up in a place where he had to step over sleeping bodies to reach his room, and there was no water or food. "I woke up and everybody was speaking Hebrew," he recalls. "It was an Israeli backpackers' hostel." Maor had been invited

The story of how he discovered and trained Amiruddin Shah and Manish Chauhan, both young dancers from impoverished neighbourhoods of Mumbai, inspired the plot of a recent film, Yeh Ballet, written and directed by Sooni Taraporevala who had earlier made a short documentary on the subject. Somehow in its expansion from Europe to the Americas and South East Asia, ballet "skipped India", says the instructor. Back in San Francisco, where he had taught for twenty years before this, the fact he had trained with Natalia Makarova impressed one and all. In Mumbai, facing

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

The panic, it's catching

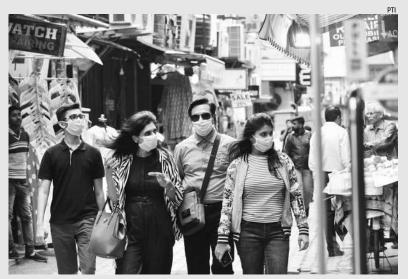
avirus case in India, 80 per cent of their business orders from around the country has been for N95 masks and toilet seat sanitisers, says Vikas Bagaria, founder of Gurugram-based PeeSafe. "Many offices are ordering masks for their employees and these orders go up to 2,000," he says. The company had stocked up on its masks inventory after reports of Delhi's failing air quality. "Unfortunately, no one saw coronavirus coming and we're bound to run out of stock," Bagaria says.

"Protective gear is precious now and we shouldn't allow it to be misused. It should only be used by caregivers of patients. It doesn't make much sense for the general public to wear masks," adds Sudarshan Ballal, nephrologist and chairman of Bengaluru-headquartered Manipal Hospitals. This was

Since the news of a confirmed coron- one of the private hospitals that the Karnataka government roped in when news of India's first positive case of coronavirus came in from Kerala (the patient has since recovered). Some places, like the Gandhi Hospital in Hyderabad, have earmarked lifts for patients and coronavirus caregivers.

Karnataka had its first brush with the global scare when a techie from Telangana visited Bengaluru on February 20. He fell sick and tested positive only after leaving the city. It's believed that he picked up the virus while meeting colleagues from Hong Kong while on a trip to Dubai.

Though the techie's flatmate, an Intel employee, has not tested positive, there's widespread fear after news of the techie staying there broke out. Health officials have been busy counselling residents of the society and



monitoring those exhibiting flu-like symptoms. Children from the area have reportedly been asked to stop attending schools, even if they aren't showing any symptoms.

The Karnataka chief minister has, meanwhile, confirmed that no one in the state has tested positive for coronavirus.

Multinational companies are, however, putting their own measures in place. "We have panels of doctors on standby across all locations. They are educating the employees," says Harshvendra Soin, chief people officer, Tech Mahindra. Like other multinationals, Tech Mahindra has also put off all internal meetings and gather-

ings and instructed employees to avoid in-person meetings with outside partners, and instead leverage video-conferencing technologies. Besides an emergency desk to help with medical queries, the company has stocked up on soap and food items across its offices. Similarly, all

incoming vendors and vis- While companies such need arises," says Aloke itors are being screened at **as Wipro have set up** Intel's Bengaluru office. in-house monitoring

While companies such teams to assess the

as Wipro have set up in- crisis, Amazon India, house monitoring teams to Flipkart, TCS, Godrej assess the crisis, Amazon Enterprises and Titan India, Flipkart, TCS, Godrej have put restrictions Enterprises and Titan have on international put restrictions on inter- travel for work national travel for work.

Work-from-home advisories have also been issued to offices at city-based Manyata Tech Park after an employee of a US-based software company returned to Bengaluru from an affected country and had flu-like symptoms. Though doctors declared the employee asymptomatic for coronavirus, the campus is being disinfected and employers being told to work from

home in the meantime.

Flight and hotel booking platform ixigo has, meanwhile, announced full refunds on flight bookings to 10 affected countries, including China, France, Germany, Iran and Italy. "We will continue monitoring the situation and

extend the waiver if the Bajpai, co-founder and CEO, ixigo.

The best way to contain this highly infectious disease, says Ballal, is to ensure self-assessment by patients. This includes avoiding public spaces if one is unwell and sticking to proper

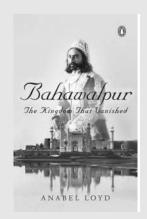
cough etiquette: using handkerchiefs, or elbows to cough into in the absence of one. "Only the very sick should be admitted to hospital," he says.

Meanwhile, ignorance and disinformation isn't helping matters. According to a survey conducted by fitness gear company GoQii, 32 per cent of people in India believe coronavirus is bioengineered in a lab in China.



Vanishing pasts

An account of a kingdom that acceded to Pakistan offers a useful way to understand tensions within Pakistani society in shaping its history, writes Chintan Girish Modi



BAHAWALPUR

read books about Pakistan with great interest. As an Indian, they help me cut through the jingoism of the present moment and connect with a shared historical, cultural and geographical landscape going back thousands of years. While the act of reading cannot heal old wounds between countries, it can certainly soothe people like myself who thrive on the hope that things will get better one day.

Bahawalpur: The Kingdom that Vanished, written by a British woman named Anabel Loyd, promises to nourish the curiosity of readers interested in a part of Pakistan that is rarely celebrated in the way Lahore, Karachi, Islamabad, Rawalpindi, Peshawar, Quetta and Chitral are. However, this book is not a people's history. It is based on the author's conversations with Salahuddin Abbasi, $grands on \, of \, Sadiq \, Muhammad \, Khan \, V-the$ last ruler of Bahawalpur - a princely state that chose to merge with Pakistan rather than India after the Partition of 1947. Abbasi was born on 29 July 1946, just a year before, in the western Himalayas at Al-Hilal, the summer house among the tea gardens of Palampur built by his grandfather in the 1930s. Loyd interviewed him over several weeks in 2016 to learn about the history of his state and his family against the backdrop of political upheaval in Pakistan. "He hoped, by telling his story to a foreigner who started with an open mind and scant knowledge of Pakistan, let alone of the Abbasi family, to avoid the whole spectrum of shades of truth and points of view that colour and reinterpret any Pakistani tale," she writes. Abbasi holds the mullahs and the military equally responsible for the corruption and decay that has seeped into Pakistani society, and also led to the destruction of his family heritage. Loyd is surprised to find that the sprawling family in Bahawalpur that used to exist 100 years ago has now been reduced to "a handful of aunts, uncles, warring cousins of closer or more distant kinship, all claiming some part of the broken Bahawalpur estate." When Bahawalpur acceded to Pakistan, the latter gained not only an operational welfare state but also a well-resourced army,

agricultural wealth and a large amount of funds. However, if this book is anything to go by, Bahawalpur did not receive much in return.

Though Loyd digs out stories of Bahawalpur's princes from old records, letters and the accounts of British travellers and civil servants, her narrative lens is largely shaped by her sympathy for Abbasi. She feels sorry "that Bahawalpur had vanished from the map so far as at least as foreigners were concerned, behind the borders of an unexplored and potentially perilous Pakistan". However, her concern is difficult to relate to because it focuses only on the faded glory of the Bahawalpuri elite "as the state was absorbed into the Punjab", and not on the hardships faced by the subjects in the kingdom. I wish she had moved beyond talking about glamorous nawabs, fleets of Rolls-Royces and remarkable **WHEN** palaces lost to view". BAHAWALPUR Abbasi, we are told, is the **ACCEDED TO** 62nd in a lineage that can be **PAKISTAN. THE** tracked back through the Abbasid caliphs of Cairo and **LATTER GAINED** Baghdad to Al Abbas Ibn Abdul AWELLal Muttalib, uncle of Prophet **RESOURCED** Muhammad. Why does this matter?ClaimingArab **STATE BUT DID** ancestry became a way to **NOT RECEIVE** legitimise one's stature among **MUCH IN RETURN** fellow Muslims, and indicate closeness to the roots of Islam. Abbasi's grandfather renamed his capital Baghdad-ul-Jadid, and also adopted a "courtly headgear to express his family loyalty to the Ottoman caliphate". The grandson continues to wear it to this day. Instead of dismissing this as trivia, the reader can use this information to understand how the theory of the divine right of kings was incorporated within an Islamic framework. It also points to the ongoing tension within Pakistani society. On the one hand are people who believe that "the foundations of Pakistan go back to the earlier history of Arab Muslim arrival in India, first through trade into Sindh and then through the conquest in 712 CE, by Muhammad bin Qasim". On the other side are the more secular-minded whose origin story is pinned on Muhammad Ali Jinnah's speech

from August 14, 1947 when he spoke of religious freedom, rule of law, equality for all and an inclusive and impartial government.

Loyd writes, "Pakistan has turned its face increasingly towards a medieval religious ideal. It attempts to destroy or envelop the diverse culture, individualism, liberality, education and colour of this part of the subcontinent in the burka of religious conformity according to the most puritanical interpretations of sharia." The burka metaphor is troubling because it harks back to the trope of the white Christian woman trying to save the brown Muslim woman without fully understanding how the latter negotiates her everyday existence. I do not think the author is being

Islamophobic, however. There is tremendous political backing within Pakistan

Cromwell's hubris

PARUL SEHGAL

ow suitably some writers come named. Muriel Spark, of the scorching short fiction. Judy Blume, of stories of young girls coming of age. Ann Patchett, in whose work families desperately try to repair their tattered ties.

Then there is Hilary Mantel, the author of several books, including an acclaimed suite of novels set in Tudor England, in whose own name can be discerned her themes - of cloaking and secrecy, the weight of responsibility and, as it happens, the particular pleasure of submitting to her lavish and gory imagination.

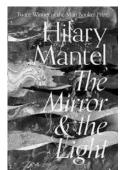
When a hawk makes a kill, it drapes its wings over its prey, concealing it from other predators. This gesture is called "mantling," and it's a fine description of reading Mantel's work. The world is blotted out as you are enveloped in the sweep of a story rich with conquest, conspiracy and mazy human psychology.

The Mirror and the Light is the triumphant capstone to Mantel's trilogy on Thomas Cromwell, the son of a blacksmith who rose to become the consigliere of Henry VIII and architect of the English Reformation. It's a story that could be the stuff of venerable and fusty historical fiction, but Mantel clears away the cobwebs.

The curtain here rises on Cromwell in 1536. He is 50 years old, rich beyond all his imagining and very much alone. A sickness carried off his wife and two daughters years ago. He is the king's chief confidant and fixer, although his primary duty is now "to get the king new wives and dispose of the old". He admits: "I am running out of ladies."

Henry is desperate for a male heir. He divorced his first wife, Katherine of Aragon forcing a split between Rome and the Church of England. His second wife, Anne Boleyn, mother of Elizabeth and the charismatic antagonist of the first two novels, has been beheaded for adultery. Cromwell was instrumental in bringing Anne to trial, which we saw in the second volume, Bring Up the Bodies. He rounded up her alleged lovers (including her brother) and squeezed out confessions. Whether they were true or trumped up is never known.

When The Mirror and the Light begins, Cromwell has never been more beloved to the king, who is now free to marry the docile Jane



THE MIRROR AND THE LIGHT Author: Hillary Mantel Publisher: Fourth Estate/HarperCollins **Price:** ₹799

Seymour. It is the beginning of Cromwell's undoing. A man who has worked in the shadows is now too visible, envied and feared. Tax rebellions spring up in the north. There's a movement to advance Henry's first child, Mary, as his heir. Seymour dies, after producing a son, and another wife must be sought. Cromwell chooses one for the king, and chooses badly. Anne of Cleves, selected to broker an alliance with Germany, cannot hide her distaste for

THE KINGDOM THAT VANISHED

Author: Anabel Loyd

Publisher: Penguin/Vintage

Pages: 285

Price: ₹599

for scripting an Islamic history that wipes out the Hindu and Buddhist past of the country. Indians do not have much to gloat over in this respect because the project of scripting a Hindu history for India that deprives Muslims, Christians, Dalits and adivasis a rightful place is well underway. "In 2017, Narendra Modi's Hindu nationalist government amended the Enemy Property Act to include Pakistani citizens and their legal heirs even if they are Indian

citizens," writes Loyd.

This review would be incomplete without taking a moment to call out the author's orientalist gaze, however unconscious it may be. Speaking of her plans to visit the region she wanted to write about, Loyd says, "Now I imagined a desert quest. An expedition, possibly involving camels, in search of Derawar and the further crumbling links of fortifications once intended to protect India's wealth." Instead of thinking about the place in terms of the people who live there, she reduces it to a tourist destination. Sample this: "The vast panoply of cultures, religions and unvisited treasures to be rediscovered ... Baluchistan and Kalat, names of wild imaginings in Edwardian diaries." Ugh!

Pages: 912

Henry. Worry and guilt begin to gnaw at Cromwell. "Dead queens blink at him, from behind their broken mirrors." Wolves gather outside his door.

This is the longest book in the series, the most mournful - and the slackest. It lacks the formal play (and humour) of Wolf Hall and the ruthless compression of Bring Up the Bodies, which tracked the events of just one year, culminating in Boleyn's beheading.

The startling, bony style of the first two books has been abandoned. The prose is plush, the sentences longer and more adorned, tricked out with little tassels and extended metaphors. Even as certain pages proved a slog, certain scenes repetitive, even as I entertained heretical thoughts about pruning certain sections, or striking them entirely, these choices follow a certain logic.

For more than a decade, Mantel has immersed her readers in the life of Cromwell, writing very close to the historical record and correcting the record where she has deemed necessary. It is too facile to regard the man as a Machiavellian monster of self-interest, she has argued. In his road-building projects that employed the poor lie the foundations of the welfare state. The son of a blacksmith broke with the orthodoxy of the time to insist that poverty was the product of circumstance, not character. But the magnetism of these books derives not from its mountain of facts but from its elisions all those gaps in our knowledge and understanding. How do we square Cromwell's cruelty with his intense, almost disabling desire to protect the vulnerable, all the lost, "roaring boys" he gave quarter and instruction? Has any character seen women, liked women, enjoyed their conversation and stratagems quite so much as he? Has anyone used them with such cold efficiency?

When we praise characters, we often say they "feel real". But the enduring characters are always elusive. No more so than with Cromwell, one of literature's great ambiguous characters. Till the end, he is full of surprises. When the wolves finally catch up to him and haul him off to the Tower of London on charges of treason, the plot and arrest are handled so smoothly, he can't help but marvel: "You would think he had done it himself."

© 2020 The New York Times

OUT NOW

MANAGEMENT

SYSTEM

RAM CHARAN

JULIA YANG

THE AMAZON And the state of t MANAGEMENT SYSTEM amazon

The guru of strategy execution and a management consultant explain what it takes to make the world's largest online delivery company a trillion-dollar behemoth. Ram Charan & Julia Yang Wiley ₹999,162 pages



JUST TRANSFERRED: THE UNTOLD STORY **OF ASHOK KHEMKA** tumultuous and man who came to be known as the foreverin-transit bureaucrat. Bhavdeep Kang & Namita Kala HarperCollins ₹599, 276 pages

Two journalists trace the controversial career of a

THE DALAI LAMA: AN COCONUT: HOW THE **EXTRAORDINARY LIFE**

A well-known Tibetan scholar, who collaborated with the Dalai Lama on several books, offers the first authoritative biography of this popular if controversial spiritual leader. **Alexander Norman** HarperCollins ₹799, 411 pages

SHY FRUIT SHAPED OUR WORLD A writer and photographer relates the long and often unexpected role of this common fruit in influencing world history. **Robin Laurance** Niyogi ₹450,240 pages

WEEKEND CULTURE

7 MARCH 2020

SMARTART



KISHORE SINGH

Creative problem

midst concerns that this week's Armory Show in New York would not proceed as planned, the popular art fair on the Hudson river's piers 90 and 94 opened to what is being described as a relieved success. Wellknown collectors arrived without the fanfare of masks despite Manhattan reporting its tryst with coronavirus. Other fairs globally are being more cautious and have cancelled or postponed indefinitely their annual outings, among them Art Basel Hong Kong and Art Dubai, both earlier scheduled for this month. The 15th edition of Art Tokyo, also this month, too, stands annulled. Amidst global jitters, more fairs, biennales and art events perched amidst the chasm of hope and despair are trying to read the tea leaves of what the immediate future holds for them. The possibility of millions billions? - of dollars of tradeable wealth has evaporated in a wisp of smoke.

Nor are fairs the only casualties of the art world, though clarity on what is shutting, or for how long, remains unclear. Among the consequences is arguably the most famous - or popular — museum in the world, the Louvre in Paris, where its staff forced a shutdown. Italy saw the temporary closure of some of its popular museums that have reopened with advisories limiting numbers and increasing space between visitors to a metre between them. They needn't worry - the queues have diminished to a trickle anyway.



Art Basel Hong Kong, 2019

The impact on The wait-andauctions will bear

CITA CARDE

Delhi has a trendy new cultural space in the Mughal-era Sunder Nursery, writes Veenu Sandhu

organised by the

Earth Collective

starting today

every Saturday

every Sunday, and

too (8 am to 1 pm)

he verandahs have disappeared. As have the ledges. And so the house sparrow, which was once commonly seen hopping on them, is fleeing our cities for the countryside where it can still find nesting places of its choice in the nooks and crannies of traditional homes. Now if we don't want this little bird to turn its back on our homes for good, we need to give it, well, a home.

Sparrows like to nest in holes stuffed with **The organic** vegetation and made snug and comfortable market has been with feathers, paper and other such warm, soft material. You can buy such a nest online - what's the fun in that, though? - or if you are in Delhi, you can head to Sunder Nursery adjacent to Humayun's Tomb this Sunday morning and build one at a special workshop that teaches you how to.

And while you are there, you can also check out the organic market for fresh farm produce, microgreens, groceries, jams, beverages, natural fertilisers, essential oils and a lot more. The market has been organised by the Earth Collective every Sunday, and starting today every Saturday too (8 am to 1 pm).

A 16th century heritage park complex sprinkled with protected Mughal-era monuments, Sunder Nursery is an idyllic getaway from the city within the city. It's a place where yesterday walks hand in hand with today, and where the wilderness and immaculately landscaped gardens lie side by side. In the last year or so, it has also emerged as Delhi's hippest new cultural space.

The winter months gone by have been particularly

busy in this city garden, which has two amphitheatres: one with a capacity of 500 and the other, a more intimate one, that can seat about 50 people.

Besides heritage walks, farming demonstrations for city-born and -bred children and workshops on birds and bees (literally), the sprawling 90-acre complex has hosted fashion shows, qawwali evenings, textile fairs

and dance performances such as kutiyattam and most recently an interpretation of the feminine form in sculptures through Odissi. In October last year, Kathakar, an inter-

national storytellers' festival, chose this open space as the venue for its 12th edition. Some of its earlier editions were held at the Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts, the India Habitat Centre and the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library in New

Delhi. "The amphitheatre was packed with 1,400 people," says Ratish Nanda, the CEO of the Aga Khan Trust for Culture that is behind the restoration and revitalisation of the garden, along with the Archaeological Survey of India and the Central Public Works Department. The rambling space, earlier called Azim Bagh, made it possible to accommodate the crowds that turned up for Kathakar.

The space is let out to artists and schools for annual functions as well. Also hosted here are silent reading sessions, wherein you can sit by, say, one of the many waterbodies in the garden alongside strangers with your book. It's a kind of an invitation to soak in a sense of community and companionship even while you are lost in your own private world.



PHOTOS: COURTESY AGA KHAN TRUST FOR CULTURE







out later this month, but they are expected to fare somewhat better since bidders have for some time shifted outside the auction room to bid over telephones or online

watch tenterhooks of the art world is sending shivers down its collective spine. Whatever shape the pandemic takes, organisers are loath to wish away months and years of planning and potential sales when the virus might

slow or cease with the approach of summer. But there is little doubt the industry is nervous. Private shows, gallery exhibits and artist programmes are easier to "postpone", but large events that require collaborative planning are seeing management heads locked in boardrooms as Plan A is exchanged for Plans B and C — a rare occurrence in the rarefied world of artists, art exhibitors, collectors, promoters and investors.

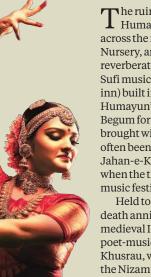
The most impacted are events where thousands of visitors are expected to concentrate at any given time. This does not include galleries where footfalls remain low. The impact on auctions will bear out later this month, but they are expected to fare somewhat better since bidders have for some time shifted outside the auction room to bid over telephones or online. Different markets may post different results, and that for the Indian market will be up for grabs with the New York sales later this month. How they fare - and the Christie's sale will be an important pointer — will reveal how Indian collectors are reacting to the medical emergency.

What of India itself? The current period before the onset of the summer hiatus is important for the trade. As of now, no museums have been shut, though some openings have been pushed ahead. Internationally, private sales are a lucrative segment of the business, but in India this constituency is underreported. It's anyone's guess how things will play out, but speculation is that private sales are likely to see a push. As for the market itself, the recent successful auction of fugitive Nirav Modi's seized art and personal effects should be a pointer to the availability of money and the propensity to spend. Isn't it what the doctor prescribes when times look bad?

Kishore Singh is a Delhi-based writer and art critic. These views are personal and do not reflect those of the organisation with which he is associated

Let there be love

The 15th edition of the Jahan-e-Khusrau Sufi festival reiterates the core message of the syncretic faith, says Veenu Sandhu



The ruins of Arab ki Sarai in the Humayun's Tomb complex, across the road from Sunder Nursery, are once again reverberating with the sound of Sufi music. The sarai (hostelry, or inn) built in the 1560s by Humayun's widow Hamida Banu Begum for the 300 Arabs she had brought with her from Mecca, has often been the chosen venue for Jahan-e-Khusrau since 2001, when the three-day annual Sufi music festival first began.

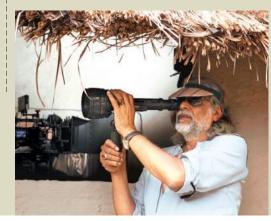
Held to commemorate the death anniversary of one of medieval India's most celebrated poet-musician-scholars, Amir Khusrau, whose resting place in the Nizamuddin dargah is not far

> (*Left to right*) Prakriti Prashant will translate the expressions of Sufism to Kuchipudi; Muzaffar Ali, the man behind Jahan-e-Khusrau; Gurdas Maan will be the showstopper this year

from here, this edition (the 15th) of the festival comes with a fitting message for a riot-torn Delhi: "Let Love Reign". "Each year, it is the same concern for the human predicament seen in the changing light of circumstances," says filmmaker Muzaffar Ali, the man behind the festival. "With new talent and new verse, we express the oneness of humanity."

Many of the voices at the festival this year are from Punjab: Gurdas Maan, the Nooran Sisters, Kanwar Grewal, Jasleen Kaur, Mamta Joshi. "Punjab is the strongest pocket of Sufi culture and talent," says Ali. "Poets like Baba Farid, Bulleh Shah, Waris Shah have illumined the world with their message of love."

Sufism, which is about looking



inward, has no one language, no one definition. It transcends sects, disciplines, forms and expressions. "An Ode to Khusrau", in which Kaushalya Reddy's disciple, Prakriti Prashant, will translate the expressions of Sufism to Kuchipudi, celebrates this all-encompassing essence. The festival opened yesterday with an "Ode to Rumi", the 13th century poet and Sufi mystic, presented by Kathak dancer Manjari Chaturvedi and musician Murad Ali.

Each edition, says Muzaffar Ali, is born out of the earlier edition. "There is a continuity of verses and voices. Each time different, yet with a resonance of the earlier one.'

The jagged walls of Arab ki



Jahan-e-Khusrau is on till March 8 at the Arab Ki Sarai in the Humayun's Tomb complex in New Delhi. For details, jahan-e-khusrau.com







With architectural gems, colourful nightlife and laidback vibe, Lisbon in February is a thing of beauty, says **Dhruv Munjal**

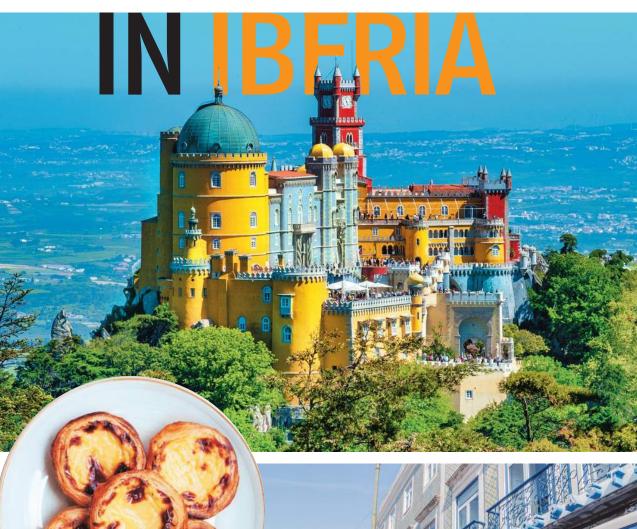
iguel isn't your typical bicycle tour guide. He's almost 65, potbellied and balding from the sides. Once the owner of an advertising firm, he now conducts bike tours of the city he grew up in for free. Last month, he cycled all the way from Vienna to Budapest, a journey that had him on the road for 10 straight days. "Money doesn't interest me too much. You don't know how long you'll live," he later says.

It's my second day in Lisbon, and, desperate to experience the city in the most authentic way possible, I swiftly book Miguel's tour on Airbnb. The next morning, as I scramble to get to Rossio Square — a tribute to King Pedro IV — to meet the 10'o clock starting time, Miguel greets me with a wide smile. He sets us up on our bikes — the rest of the group is mostly American — fires up a Camel Light and off we go.

Lisbon in February is a magnificent sight — a pleasant chill in the air, the rays of the sun descending on bright colourful rooftops, and the muddy green waters of the Tagus river glistening in the distance. In just under four hours and over 15 km, Miguel promises to take us through many of the Portuguese capital's incredible architectural treasures and

RIDING A BIKE IN LISBON IS FUN: THE CYCLING LANES ARE ALMOST AS WIDE AS THE ROADS, THE TRAFFIC IS SELDOM HEAVY AND YOU CAN TAKE YOUR BIKE PRETTY MUCH ANYWHERE YOU WANT

introduce us to a cultural past like no other in perhaps all of Europe. Even as metropolises





The world's best fondues

KATE KRADER & RICHARD VINES

t a time when small plates rule the table, fondue stands proudly as the ultimate large-format sharing dish, the European alternative to a steaming hot pot in Asia. Fondue's long, cheesy strands reach back to Homer's *The Iliad*, when the fromage of choice was made from goat milk. The dish, at its most basic just cheese and wine, gained international prominence in Switzerland in the 1930s when the Swiss Cheese Union promoted it from obscurity to push a glut of Gruyère and Emmenthal. The country continues to take fondue seriously, with more than one word to describe its various components. The delectable, crispy crust at the bottom of the pot is la religieuse (or "the nun") for reasons that aren't entirely clear.

Following is a tour of the finest fondues around the globe.

La Bonne Soupe, New York: Tucked away in midtown Manhattan, with the feel of a Parisian bistro, the restaurant has been specialising in melted cheese since the 1970s. Fondue au fromage, which comes with the option of garnishes such as spicy merguez sausage or a shot of kirsch, a requirement if you're from Switzerland.

Stable DC, Washington: Stable pays homage to the cuisine of Switzerland with such dishes as crispy potato rösti and landjäger air-cured, smoked sausage. The restaurant's fondues are based on an unconventional blend that includes old and young Schlossberger, a buttery, raw cow's milk cheese, accompanied by house-baked bread.

Geja's Cafe, Chicago: Two words are associated with Geja's: "romantic" and "fondue". The candle-lit dining room features a bubbling wine-spiked Gruyère version in classic enamelled pots, with platters of bread cubes, grapes, apples.



Palace Kitchen, Seattle: Palace's goat cheese lavender fondue has been a bestseller since chef Tom Douglas opened his seminal Pac Northwest restaurant in 1996. He took advantage of one of the era's hot ingredients, tangy goat cheese, and lightly scents it with the floral herb. Alongside are sweet and juicy D'Anjou pears and, for a slightly smoky bite, woodgrilled bread.

Le Chalet Savoyard, Paris: This restaurant specialises in the cuisine of Savov on the bor-

around it have succumbed to rapid modernisation in recent decades, Lisbon, with its famous yellow trams, cobbled streets and infectious laid-back vibe, continues to retain a gorgeous old-world charm.

Riding a bike in Lisbon is fun: the cycling lanes are almost as wide as the roads, the traffic is seldom heavy and you can take your bike pretty much anywhere you want. Our first stop is the Praça do Comércio, the city's main square. It once housed the Royal Palace, before the great earthquake of 1755 wiped out almost all of the city, including the imperial residence. Now, of course, the square is a defining symbol of Lisbon, home to shops, cafes and government offices. Youngsters perform kickflips on their skateboards in one corner as photo hunters queue up to get clicked alongside the statue of King José I.

When I tell Miguel where I'm from, he's quick to point out that the pastel blue government structure down the street overlooking the Tagus was once used to build ships for Portuguese explorers — the *São Gabriel*, which was commanded by Vasco da Gama on his maiden voyage to India in 1497, was put together in one of the bays of this very building.

Vasco da Gama is, in fact, immortalised in a monument — Padrão dos Descobrimentos (Monument of the Discoveries) — along the banks of the Tagus. The boat-shaped memorial also features Ferdinand Magellan, as well as Afonso de Albuquerque, the general who went on to become the second viceroy of Portuguese India. emonial gateway of sorts to Lisbon that serves as a sterling example of Portuguese renaissance architecture. One of the sides of the tower is adorned by a sculpture of the Indian rhinoceros — the story goes that when a rhino arrived on the shores of Lisbon as a diplomatic gift in 1515, thousands lined up to catch a glimpse of a specimen that had not been seen in Europe since Roman times. The Belém Tower is also where the

river is the Belém Tower, a cer-

Tagus merges with the Atlantic Ocean.

But the most popular landmark along the

Its monuments and museums aside, Belém is perhaps most famous for something entirely unrelated: pastel de nata, a traditional Portuguese tart made with egg and custard, and then dusted with cinnamon. Originally invented by Catholic monks, the tarts have been made famous around the world by Pasteis de Belém, the shop serving them for the last 183 years. Miguel suggests that some 10,000 tarts are sold by the café every day. I take back a pack of six for home, hoping they won't spoil before I reach Delhi. We finish our somewhat exhausting but extremely rewarding tour with a dash through LX Factory, once the setting for a sugar mill but now a fashionable nightlife haunt that teems with revellers post dusk.

In the evening, I hop on to the famous Number 28 yellow tram, a quintessentially touristy experience that is too hard to resist



▲ (From top) The Praça do Comércio, the city's main square; the Palácio da Pena in Sintra, located just outside Lisbon; traditional Portuguese egg custard tarts; Pasteis de Belém sells almost 10,000 of them every day; one of Lisbon's iconic yellow trams; the Belém Tower if you're, well, a tourist. The creaky tram, complete with wooden interiors from a bygone era, is a wonderful homage to the city, passing through the bustling tourist hubs of Graça, Alfama, Chiado and Bairro Alto. Alfama, a quiet neighbourhood located atop a hill, offers a stunning panoramic view of Lisbon. Its up-and-down streets, multi-storey homes — their exteriors often painted yellow and blue — and relaxed feel is everything Lisbon in a nutshell.

Later that night, I trudge off to Bairro Alto, the scene of Lisbon's dynamic nightlife. The narrow alleys play host to a number of bars, all booming to loud international music even as some musicians on the street entertain the crowd with fado, a form of Portuguese music characterised by melancholic tunes. After searching for the best places online, I step into Majong, a cosy, dimly lit restaurant with cabbage-shaped lights on the ceiling. I'm a beer person but Hugo, the bartender, coaxes me into trying a gin cocktail with ginger, which, to my surprise, I enjoy immensely.

Two days later, as I head to the airport, I run into Miguel again — he's leading a new group of cyclists out to see the marvel that is Lisbon. I wave out to him from the backseat of my Uber; he looks up and blows a kiss in my direction, wishing me a safe flight. That's when I realise that Miguel and Lisbon will both be missed. der with Switzerland. It offers a variety of fondues, including farmer-style, made with four cheeses and smoked bacon. The house speciality is fondue's show-stopping cousin, a slow-melting raclette scraped from a wheel of Morbier, a semi-soft cow's milk cheese with a distinctive dark line running through it.

St Moritz, London: This Soho establishment is London's oldest Swiss restaurant, dating to 1974, which is pretty ancient in terms of the city's fast-moving dining scene. Even Swiss customers are impressed by its authenticity and the choice of Swiss wines. The owner and chef, Armin Loelscher, says his bestseller is Fondue Motie-Motie, featuring imported Gruyère and Vacherin cheese and served with new potatoes and bread.

Swiss Chuchi, Zurich: Naturally, Switzerland is full of restaurants serving fine fondues, with Swiss Chuchi, at the Hotel Adler, as one of the most popular. With seating indoors and outdoors, you can choose from a wide range of local dishes, some of them rather unusual. The Lady Fondue features prosecco, pears, cherry liquor, and garlic.

Le Dézaley, Zurich: This traditional restaurant in the Old Town specialises in the cuisine of the Vaud region. It's cosy, with simple wooden furniture and friendly service. The signature fondue is manufactured from ripe cheeses of the region and has been a draw for diners for a century.

Warashibe Gyoza, Tokyo: Under the category of unconventional fondues is Warashibe, an izakaya where diners use dumplings as the dipping agent. Tabletop teppanyaki griddles are loaded down with shredded mozzarella and cheddar, then heated until it's all an oozy puddle. The cheese is surrounded by an army of gyoza for dunking; varieties include unconventional, cheese-filled ones as well as classic pork. Wine Universe, Singapore: Red cloths decorate the tables at this sleek spot, which features an international wine list and a menu that leans on the cuisine of Switzerland. Cheeses are carefully sourced from master fromager Marc-Henri Horner. Among the five kinds of fondue is La Singaporienne, spiked with chopped fresh chilli to add a blast of heat to the pot.

@ 2020 The New York Times









WEEKEND HEALTH

Sweettalk

Veer Arjun Singh on why shorter, sharper nutrition labels - the kind that skip a few ingredients such as sugar by many other names — are starting to make business sense

100% NATURAL JUICES. 100% NATURAL JUIC

here's apple juice concentrate in muesli, malt extracts in whole wheat cereal, and maltitol and maltodextrin in digestive ragi biscuits. The problem is not that sneaky sugar has found its way into daily consumables through obfuscation again. It's the fact that these products scream "zero added sugar" from supermarket shelves to be then picked up by health-conscious idealists who have bought into the illusion of a sugar-free diet.

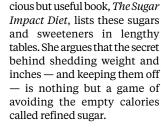
Identifying the sugar and artificial sweeteners hiding behind chemical names is a longstanding battle around the world. But what we are dealing with here is of a more primitive nature. The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) has finally expressed concern about why Indian nam-

keen and mithai don't have nutrition labels. The food safety body is holding discussions with sweet-makers about a new logo for products that have less sugar, salt and saturated fat and are made with natural ingredients. What has been reluctantly agreed upon so far is that these packaged Indian treats will display a manufacturing date and a best before date on their products from June 1. It's a far cry from finally knowing how much sugar goes into that gulab jamun that you send so blithely down the chute. But it's a healthy start. The lack of transparency in labelling is not unique to *desi* Indian sweet-makers or American multinationals. Chef Sanjeev Kapoor tells me about a popular bakery in Australia whose "freshly baked bread" sold like hot cakes, until it was

ar often consume it unintentionally or turn to chemically produced sugar-free alternatives. And there's a conflicting body of evidence about the risks of drinking "zero sugar" beverages, which are loaded with acesulfame potassium and aspartame disguised as "sweeteners 951 and 950", respectively.

As Kapoor says, in the hierarchy of preference, buying decisions have always been led by taste, followed by value and then health. Perhaps it is the reason why people rarely question "100 per cent" fruit juice that costs a modest ₹20 and tastes consistently sweet. The juice is made from concentrate, is pasteurised and often topped up with sweeteners and flavour enhancers, such as malic acid.

American nutritionist, fitness coach and author J J Virgin has made a business of identifving these sneaky sugars. Her verbose, offi-



mid the confusion caused **L** by the rise of lifestyle dis-

parent packaging helps too. The

ingredient of Valencia Orange

juice, for instance, is "100 per



Big brands are responding to the trend, too.

CHESS #1391

Bv DEVANGSHU DATTA

he Aeroflot Open in Moscow ended with a surprise winner. There was a four-way tie at 6.5 points from 9 rounds. A 14-year-old IM, Aydin Suleymanli of Azerbaijan, had the best tiebreak score, edging out Rinat Jumabayev, Rauf Mamedov, and Aravindh Chithambaram. Suleymanli won the title, and first prize worth €13,875 (approx ₹11 Lakh) as well as a GM norm.

Among the Indians, Aravindh had the best result of course. The 14-year-old M Pranesh (5.5) scored his final IM norm, while 12-year-old Bharath Subramaniyam (5.5) scored his first GM norm, with a round to spare. In the B section, two 14-year-olds, Rucha Pujari and Pranav Anand made WGM and IM norms respectively.

The Candidates will launch on March 15. Teimour Radjabov has dropped out for personal reasons and will be replaced by Maxime Vachier Lagrave. Alexander Grischuk (36) is the oldest player, in a field with an average age of 28. Fabiano Caruana and Ding Liren are favourites, but coronavirus may have derailed Ding's prep (and Wang Hao's prep as well), at least to some extent. Ding's reached Yekaterinburg this week to undergo quarantine prior to the event.'



The Third Grand Prix tournament for women is in play at Lausanne, Switzerland. The top seeds are World Champion Ju Wenjun and the last challenger, Aleksandra Goryachkina. The overall winner and runner-up will qualify for the Women's Candidates Tournament, in early 2021. Koneru Humpy leads the series with a win in the first GP in Skolkovo, and joint first with Alexandra Kosteniuk in the second GP in Monaco.

Humpy's not playing Lausanne and Goryachkina or Kosteniuk could overtake her if either of them wins Lausanne. Zhao Xue had to be replaced by Zhansaya Abdumalik due to quarantine. After Round 3, five players share the lead. This group includes Dronavalli Harika (2) who upset Ju Wenjun (1) in the third round.

The Diagram, White to Play (White: Parham Maghsoodloo Vs Black: Aydin Suleymanli, Aeroflot 2020) leads into an interesting illustration of Aydin's talent. Normal is 13. a3 but White played the new and inferior 13. f3?! Nxc314. bxc3g5!15. Bg3a5!!

Very deep positional sense. White is

discovered that the frozen dough was being imported from Germany. Legally, the company wasn't obliged to mention it. But the new improved customer awareness rightly turned it into a scandal.

"Well, 97 per cent fat free means three per cent fat. Many products that say 'zero cholesterol' on their packets were not supposed to have cholesterol in the first place," says Kapoor. Now that the world has latched on to a few bad words, the hard-won awareness about salt, sugar, cholesterol and saturated fat in packaged food is often being used against customers.

It's an unsavoury cocktail of misleading claims and lack of understanding of nutrition. The people who abstain from added table sug-

'HEALTH IS NOT ABOUT ONE INGREDIENT. SOMETHING FREE OF SUGAR MAY BE HIGH IN FAT OR SODIUM'

Chef and author

eases, some solutions are being offered in the form of more widely understood labels. Raw Pressery from Rakyan Beverages is leading the cold-pressed juice revolution in India. The labels on their juices claim that they have no added sugar, salt or preservatives and are not made from concentrate. The trans-

SANJEEV KAPOOR

cent Valencia orange". It's not the same as juice squeezed freshly at home, but compared with the sugar-laced fruit juices in tetra packs, it's refreshingly honest.

"High pressure bottling reduces the microbial load and does not require us to use preservatives," says Sreejit Nair, a former PepsiCo employee who is now the chief growth officer at Raw Pressery. He says that while "no sugar" is one of the key selling points, the company relies on honest labelling and packaging to attract customers who are willing to pay a premium for a good product. Their range of almond milk, for instance, uses maple syrup, which is often used as a sneaky sugar in liquids, but mentions it on the front of the package. "It's not like adding apple juice to the very bitter cranberry juice. We are upfront about our

ingredients," says Nair. Raw Pressery juices are sold in supermarkets, airports and flights and also Subway outlets and Cult gyms.

RAW

Health drinks are such big business that even the century-old Baidyanath Group, makers of chyawanprash and ayurvedic medicines, have dived into it. Their new venture, Shunya, makes a range of "no sugar, artificial sweeteners or preservatives" drinks, with herbal infusions such as ashwagandha, brahmi. khus and kokum.

Bread spreads are also helping lead the push for cleaner labels. Since "good fats" are now a widely accepted fact, peanut and almond butter are in vogue. New brands, such as Pintola, have eliminated sugar, salt and preservatives from the butters.

"Was it always possible to make juices and spreads without sugar, salt and food additives? Of course it was. Brands are now responding to a market trend that followed awareness," says nutritionist and diabetes educator Sheryl Salis who is also a part of FSSAI's Eat Right Campaign, which is about educating people to make healthier food choices.

"Even without added sugar, juices are generally high in natural sugar. The problem is that when they are marketed as healthy, people consume them in excess. And that's bad," says Salis. The 250ml Valencia Orange juice from Raw Pressery, priced at ₹100, has 27 gm of naturally occurring sugar.

But there's little headway. The headlines that followed Coca-Cola CEO James Quincey's India visit was around how India will soon be the global beverage giant's third-largest market. But, T Krishnakumar, president, Coca-Cola India, also said that the company is looking to reduce the sugar in their drinks to "below six grams in the next 3-4 years". A 330ml coke can currently has about 36 grams of sugar.

Nestlé, too, is committed to reduce sugar, sodium and saturated fat in its products. But its valiant effort in the form of Milkybar Wowsomes, which cuts the sugar in the chocolate by a third, was axed in less than two years of its launch in the UK owing to poor demand.

We have a few sugar-free alternatives, but maybe it's not the time for chocolates to rid themselves of sugar. "Health is not about one ingredient. Something free of sugar may be high in fat or sodium," points out chef Kapoor.

Sometimes it's just about reading the label right. Read the ingredients and not just the nutrition table. The word "added" should set off alarm bells. Remember that 20gm of sugar is five tablespoons of it. Ingredients are listed in order of their decreasing quantity, and sugar and sweeteners have many monikers. When you know your sugars, you'll know what to do when you spot high-fructose corn syrup in ingredients despite what the packet says.

returning material to free his position via 15.—Nxa216. Ra1 Nxc317. Ba6! With Ne2/ Kf2 to come. But black's 15th move causes a traffic jam by stopping Ba6. He doesn't want to recover material.

Play continued 16. a4 Na2 17. Ra1 Nxc3 18. Ne2 Bb4 19. Kf2 Bc2 20. Nxc3 Bxc3 21. Ra2 Bb1! 22. Re2 Rc4 23. Rc2!? Be1+! Black avoids a cute trap. [If 23.-Bxc2 24. Bxc4 dxc4 25. Rc1 Bxa4 26. Rxc3 Bb3 27. Bd6 and it's a draw after Ba3]. Now it's an easy win after 24. Kxe1 Rxc2 25. h4 Rac8 26. Bd6 R8c3 27. hxg5 Rb2 (0-1).

Devangshu Datta is an internationally rated chess and correspondence chess player



Legal angels

A group of young lawyers is educating protesters about their rights, assisting detainees, and now helping Delhi's riot victims rebuild their lives, all services pro bono, writes **Ritwik Sharma**

elp desks manned by lawyers from the Delhi Waqf Board as well as those from the Supreme Court Bar Association are visible at a government relief camp in the Eidgah and along the main road in Mustafabad. However, it's an informal group of lawyers, which calls itself Lawyers for Detainees, that has been leading the rebuilding efforts.

The riots that ravaged Northeast Delhi early last week left over 50 people dead, a majority of them Muslims. Lawyers for Detainees has so far set up three legal aid camps in Mustafabad. Many Muslims who fled from Shiv Vihar, one of the worst hit places, sought refuge in the nearby Chaman Park locality. Inside a galli, a medical and legal camp attend to people all day.

Mishika Singh, a lawyer who set up a WhatsApp group to bring together lawyers nearly three months ago, says some of them were in Northeast Delhi when the riots took place. They were tackling emergency calls, helping register police complaints and FIRs, following up on medico-legal cases, making sure postmortems were done in accordance with the law, bodies are released in a timely manner, and arranging ambulances. For the past week, they have started legal work for more than 500 people, guiding them in processing compensation forms, filing complaints, recording injury to property and individuals, trackin Shiv Vihar, left with his wife and 10day-old son when paramilitary police were called in. They first took refuge along with many others at a stranger's house in Chaman Park and later shifted to the relief camp at the Eidgah. "We hid in the dark for three days. We survived because we were locked in. The sounds of iron rods, blasts and abusive slogans of the rioters still ring in my ears," says the 39-year-old in a quivering voice. Many like him are too afraid to return to Shiv Vihar and have been queuing up at the legal camp.

While the maze of lanes in the neighbourhoods appear like emptied war zones, the main road also bears the odd scars of damaged property that include businesses and schools. Workers at a plundered and singed sweet shop say the riots have left a sourness between Hindus and

Muslims that will take time to heal. They are unable to understand why the violence occurred, they say. "Everything was fine here on February 24. People

"Everything was fine here on February 24. People were protesting (against the amended citizenship law) in Brijpuri Puliya. There was stone pelting at 7pm. An hour later, we all went home. Our shop was looted in front of our eyes. Police didn't come till February 26. We now fear going to Muslim homes," says Johny Pal, a worker. The lawyers' group, which offers services pro bono, has yet to collate its data, but all the complainants from Shiv Vihar are Muslims, says Singh. "People also fear there are bodies inside burnt houses. A couple of days back we were told bodies were thrown in a drain," she adds. Lawyers associated with NGOs such as activist Harsh Mander's Karwan-e-Mohabbat and



"THE RESPONSE OF THE STATE ADMINISTRATION HAS SHOWN A LACK OF WILL"

MISHIKA SINGH Lawyers for Detainees Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative, students and civil society members have also collaborated with Lawyers for Detainees under the banner of Citizens' Collective for Peace.

Nilesh Jain, a lawyer who works with activist-politician Yogendra Yadav's Swaraj Abhiyan, was in the thick of things when detentions over anti-Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA) protests became routine in Delhi. A proposed march, under the umbrella of "We the People of India", from Red Fort to Bhagat Singh Park in ITO was denied

permission by the police on December 18, 2019. A day later, before the march could begin, protesters were detained. "People called us from various

places including police stations in Mandir Marg, Chanakyapuri and Parliament Street. We responded by organising lawyers and forming a

group," he says on the genesis of Lawyers for Detainees. Initially, more than 250 lawyers were mobilised in the national capital. A majority were aged below 30. Calls soon came from Uttar Pradesh, where people were detained in places like Gorakhpur, Raebareli and Meerut. Jain also worked on a petition filed by the Deople's Union of Civil Libertice in the Allebabed

The other virus

It's still stalking riot-affected Northeast Delhi, writes **Anjali Puri**, after recent visits to destroyed neighbourhoods and fearful camps. Let's not forget it

uch was made of the "two Delhis" on view last month - the Delhi of ceremonial welcomes and grand state banquets during the Trump visit, and the Delhi of mob violence taking place in poor neighbourhoods less than an hour's drive away. The visitors have gone but the contrast holds. The wellordered and affluent parts of the city remain largely sealed off from what is still unfolding in areas that are, ironically, closer than ever before, because of the nearly 60-km-long Pink Line of the Delhi Metro. It's the mental journey, requiring sustained empathy, that is hard. Which is why, after a brief period of engagement with the virus of hate that convulsed Northeast Delhi, the conversation in the media and in living rooms — is now shifting to the prospect of another virus, Covid-19, stalking the land.

The horrors unleashed by the riots are still with us, however, even if the helmet-wearing mobs have retreated into the shadows. Nothing prepares you for Phase 7 Shiv Vihar. Even the media's dismal description of this neighbourhood as a "ghost town" seems pallid when you come face to face with the new architecture created by vicious hands in one constricted lane after another. There are rows upon rows of narrow homes, which were now unusable.

The camp, located in the Eidgah grounds at Mustafabad, is run by the Waqf Board in association with the Aam Aadmi Party-led Delhi government which, after failing to be on the ground during the riots, came inexcusably late to the rescue and relief story. This camp is where many of the newly homeless can be found, after huddling for days in the homes of kind strangers.

In a large crowded tent, a friend and I show a group of women, all petrified at the prospect of returning to the places they fled, pictures of gutted homes we took on our mobile phones. They watch transfixed. "No, none of these, but it's very close," exclaims one finally. "I heard it was burnt, I haven't seen it," she adds helplessly. (Later, I read a report that a man died of a stroke at the camp shortly after making the short journey to his burnt down house in Shiv Vihar.)

After visiting the camp two days in a row, I feel I am looking at a shattered version of Shaheen Bagh, the women no longer up there on a stage, leading the sit-in, but confined to a tent with their children while their next moves are being decided by other people. The atmosphere, too, is far removed from the heady, carnival-like celebration of national



The horrors unleashed by the riots are still with us, however, even if the helmet-wearing mobs have retreated into the shadows

of which some are so untouched by violence that the decorations from last Diwali still hang gracefully over their doorways, while	AFTER VISITING THE CAMP TWO DAYS IN A ROW,	symbols that the anti- CAA-NRC protests have been. Yet, as with Shaheen Bagh, what you mostly see around you at this camp is
their doorways, while	IFEELIAM	you at this camp is Muslims supporting

Ameri becam marc E RESPONSE Peop HE STATE Bhag perm INISTRATION 18, 20

ing missing person reports, etc.

Delhi's Aam Aadmi Party government had announced immediate relief of ₹25,000 each for those whose houses were burnt in the riots. Singh says the response of the state administration has shown a lack of will. Initially, she adds, there was no clarity over the compensation forms. "We had compensation forms with us. But earlier this week, the government began accepting forms. So we are asking the claimants to go to the sub-divisional magistrate."

Mohammad Tanveer, a tailor who rented a room





(*From top*) People outside the camps at Chaman Park; the Supreme Court Bar Association has also set up help desks at the Eidgah grounds in Mustafabad; and inside the legal camp at Chaman Park

the People's Union of Civil Liberties in the Allahabad High Court, alleging police brutality on protesters.

More cases followed in Delhi. "It became an everyday situation. Some were serial detainees," Jain says, adding that at police stations in Northeast Delhi such as Seelampur, Nand Nagri and Shastri Park, the cases were more serious. Many were detained for 24 hours or longer. Police would also forcibly check the phones of detainees, call up their families, harass and in many instances release them only after they wrote a note promising they would not take part in protests against the CAA and the update of the National Register of Citizens, he claims. "At Shastri Park police station, people were detained because they went to Jama Masjid to protest during (Bhim Army chief) Chandrashekhar Azad's rally in December. Photos of them standing peacefully with placards were cited as evidence against them."

Lawyers for Detainees points out that detenues in Central Delhi, in areas such as Mandir Marg police station where they were allowed to "play badminton and sing", were treated very well — although they comprised a large section of young protesters, just as in Northeast Delhi. The implication is that the working class is worse off than the privileged, even when the state clamps down on all protesters.

The lawyers' group drew members and point persons beyond Delhi as the anti-citizenship movement gathered steam across India.

Ishita Yadu, along with other lawyers based in Lucknow, has been educating protesters about their rights. Only this week, there was trouble at Ghantaghar where women have been leading an agitation. She alleges that the police attacked the protesters instead of taking action against the troublemakers who were produced before them. "The state machinery is able to exploit people because they are not aware of their rights."

When asked about being in the line of fire, she argues, "Every writ that we file is supposed to be against the state. So fighting against the state is something that lawyers should not be afraid to do. Also, lawyers should not be afraid of the state response to something that is illegal. If something is illegal, it is illegal irrespective of who is perpetuating it."

At a time when the police is being seen as prejudiced and state compliant in responding to anti-CAA protests, these young lawyers are offering hope to veterans too. But, as senior advocate Rebecca John says, "It shouldn't surprise us. Access to justice for all sections is a part of the duty of lawyers, both under the Advocates Act and the Constitution."

The women's movement in India, she adds, has a long history of legal association with survivors of sexual abuse. "But this kind of configuration where many young lawyers are functioning pretty seamlessly is a moment to celebrate."

anocca flag perched on arooftop flutters in the March breeze. Every now and then, among them, is a blackened travesty of a house, its gaping doorway inviting you in to survey mangled fans, fridges that look like battered trunks, smashed tiny kitchens, a TV that, having melted in extreme heat, reminds you of Salvador Dali's melting clocks. The floors are a carpet of glass shards, the pages of a child's notebook or a rubber slipper among them. And there is no other way to say this these are mostly Muslim homes, the horror of the arson attacks on them accentuated by the sight of the

unharmed houses on either side, or

splurged on, like a granite doorway

with engraved Urdu inscriptions.

Obviously, the riots were a

complex affair, the details still

being pieced together, and it is

on Hindus too. But the blighted

gallis of Shiv Vihar, and indeed

many other gallis in Northeast

Delhi, show what sometimes seems

to be lost in generic, overly careful

"both sides lost" arguments: the

informed, indeed forensic, acts of

The first time you see a home

possessions of the tenants have been

where the landlord is Hindu and

tenants Muslims, and only the

destroyed, you don't suspect a

half day I spent with a group of

volunteers helping people fill in

been devastated, but their shop,

rented from a Hindu, had been

spared – except for its contents,

pattern. But claims of such a trend

came up more than once during the

compensation forms at a relief camp.

Muslim landlord said their home had

In one case, a couple renting from a

savagery against Muslim homes

and livelihoods.

frequency of menacingly well-

painfully clear they took their toll

owner of the ill-fated home had

by the little embellishments that the

LOOKING AT A SHATTERED VERSION OF SHAHEEN BAGH

Muslims supporting each other in a common struggle aided by a sprinkling of liberals and other minorities. As at Shaheen Bagh, their spirited presence e appalling indifference

highlights the appalling indifference of the state.

While the BJP's Kapil Mishra has been crowdfunding for the "underprivileged Hindu families" afflicted by the riots, "echo chambers" of the non-bigoted on Facebook and WhatsApp are full of posts asking for clothes, grains, medical supplies, rubber chappals even, for all victims of the riots. The Sikhs, who enriched the life of Shaheen Bagh with their langars (community kitchens), are at the Eidgah grounds too, an immaculately dressed posse of them arriving with dinner on the very evening the camp is being set up. The next afternoon, crowds line up to receive the contents of Shiromani Akali Dal's truck that has arrived with relief materials. I notice two medical clinics, one manned by medical personnel from St Stephen's Hospital, the other from Holy Family Hospital. In a nearby lane, doctors from Alshifa Hospital are handing out medicines.

By contrast, a doctor friend who approached a big corporate hospital suggesting it send doctors to the riotaffected areas was told it was not undertaking any CSR (corporate social responsibility) work at present. Nor it appears are others from the corporate world in Northeast Delhi. The prime minister and home $minister announce \, on \, Twitter \, that$ $they will \, not \, attend \, Holi \, milans \, - \, out$ of deference to the rampant coronavirus. But in Parliament, the government wants to discuss the riots only after Holi and the Speaker insists on parliamentary etiquette being followed to the letter. Should one be surprised? This is, after all, the "other Delhi", and its show must go on.

AND ANOTHER THING

Virus in the works



S uddenly, from nowhere, the world is worried about and even obsessed with a new disease. There are about 100,000 total global cases of people infected with the coronavirus (Covid-19) and 3,000 people have died of it. This fatality rate of 3 per cent is about one third that of SARS, which was also a coronavirus. It was also zoonotic, meaning it could be transmitted from animal to human. The SARS outbreak of 2003 infected 8,098 people of whom 774 died. Meaning it was less infectious, or at least better contained, though more fatal when one actually got it.

The symptoms were high fever, headache and a dry cough (SARS stands for severe acute respiratory syndrome). The disease spread when an infected person coughed and the droplets carried to the mouth, nose and eyes of another person.

Coronaviruses do not kill people of themselves. It is usually the aggravation of a pre-existing condition, or a weak body, that tends to respond more poorly to an infestation of the virus. The disease kills usually people aged over 40 and rarely gets someone young because their bodies are healthier generally. Viruses don't reproduce them-

selves but require a host and then hijack it, forcing it to make copies of the virus. It also evolves through mutation and that is what explains the new varieties. A bacteria on the other hand reproduces by cell division. Bacteria respond to antibiotics but viruses do not, which makes them difficult to treat. We let the cold, which is also caused by a virus, to run itself out. This is not possible with other, more deadly viruses like AIDS.

Much is being made of the fact that people abroad are doing *namaste* instead of shaking hands as a means of avoiding the coronavirus. But skin to skin is not the only way in which it is transmitted and just washing one's hands is a good means of keeping safe.

For some reason China seems to be the point of origin of a lot of diseases that affect us globally. The Black Death was the name of a plague that wiped out millions of people around 1350. It was borne by rodents, which were hosts to fleas that were the actual carriers of the disease. Of course, people did not know how the disease was spread and till it was discovered that it was the rodents, the epidemic flared freely in the absence of countermeasures.

One contemporary account from Italy described the effect of the plague on people:

"In men and women alike, it first betrayed itself by the emergence of certain tumours in the groin or armpits, some of which grew as large as a common apple, others as an egg...



Our instinct even in this modern age is still to panic and act irrationally in the face of words like virus and plague

From the two said parts of the body this deadly gavocciolo (a tender swelling, a bubo) soon began to propagate and spread itself in all directions indifferently; after which the form of the malady began to change, black spots or livid making their appearance in many cases on the arm or the thigh or elsewhere, now few and large, now minute and numerous. As the gavocciolo had been and still was an infallible token of approaching death, such also were these spots on whomsoever they showed themselves." I was in Surat in 1994 when the

city was affected by the plague. There was little or no information on what this was and how it was to be countered. It was assumed that one reason was that it was because Surat was a dirty city. It was, there is no denying that, but it wasn't any more or less dirty than other Indian cities at the time. And also other Indian cities now, for that matter. I remember that the city was deserted in the day and a lot of the migrant workers who make up the city's population fled, going back to their villages in the north of India. Surat's plague was pneumonic and not bubonic, meaning it affected the lungs. That disease had 1,000 recorded

cases and 50 deaths. It was followed by a clean-up of Surat under a dynamic municipal commissioner named S R Rao who became a civic hero for transforming the city's cleanliness culture.

The thing about disease and the human body is that we still don't really understand a lot of it. Till only about 250 years or so ago, even the most advanced European medicine was based on Aristotelian principles of the four humours: black bile. phlegm, blood and yellow bile. This was mostly nonsense and cures were based on balancing these through blood-letting, vomiting, sweating or diet. Greek medicine came into the Islamic world after the conquest of Egypt and the most revered name in that space is that of Ibn Sina. Today when we have Rooh Afza, made by the company Hamdard, we are having Ibn Sina's formulation of a thousand years ago.

In that sense, medicine, even modern medicine, is not a science like mathematics or chemistry is a science but more like economics and the weather. There are no fixed conditions and there is a great deal of turbulence in the field. This is getting better as we better understand things like the genetic code but real and full knowledge is still not near, so far as I have understood it.

That is probably why our instinct even in this modern age is still to panic and act irrationally in the face of information or words like virus and plague. Surat emptied out that year but only 50 died in all. Many times more died in the same period also of avoidable causes.

The prime minister has cancelled his visit to Brussels as a result of the confusion and the fear of the spread of the disease and estimates from the OECD say that India will lose more than 1 per cent of its GDP growth to the coronavirus epidemic this year and also be affected the next.

One hopes that this is not the case, and also that like SARS, this disease having come now goes away as soon as possible.

GEAR

Adidas SL20 ₹10,999

Get fast



Reebok Zig Kinetica ₹11,999

Comfort is everything

The most comfortable pair of sneakers **Veer Arjun Singh** has ever worn can handle a bit of performance too

R eebok played it cool this time. Its biggest drop this season, the Zig Kinetica, does not fit any one category. It's neither a trainer nor a running shoe. There's Conor McGregor, the blue-eyed boy of mixed martial arts, promoting the pair and celebrities walking the ramp in it. It must be one of those sneakers that look dope with athleisure wear and can handle a little bit of exercise. With that assumption, I took it to the gym and wore it on the roads. And here's what I found.



The SL20 is a simple tradeoff between cushion and speed. But not everyone can go the distance, writes **Veer Arjun Singh**

I prefer speed over distance. That's because I trained in school to be a competitive middle-distance runner. Barefoot training was commonplace in those days. It helped me improve my running form and also taught me how to better handle the impact on landing. Racing flats, if not spikes, were the norm and clunky cushioned shoes were frowned upon.

The Adidas SL20 reminds me of those undernourished training days. My training shoes back then were competitive for the time, but clunky compared to what we get today. The SL20 weighs under 230 grams a piece. It's easily 100 grams lighter than my shoes then and still better cushioned. The elite marathoners' favorite Nike Vaporfly Next% astonishingly weighs a mere 200 grams.

It's true that a lighter shoe tends to help you run faster. But it's not that simple over distances. Reduced cushioning can also have you spend more energy on absorbing the impact, which defeats the purpose. It can also increase the chances of injury. A good shoe is carefully designed to have a form and fit that works with less cushioning. But it also takes some training to get used to the extra impact.

The Adidas SL20 fits true to size with no extra room. The pair has a narrow base but accommodates my broad feet without a problem.

It completely does away with the Boost midsole for a new, firmer compound called "lightstike". Scorecard The upper is a single layer of engineered mesh dotted with Design visible ventilation outlets. The **** tongue and the heel collar do not get any cushioning either. Performance Despite being barebones in $\star\star\star\star\star$ design, there's an extra layer of Comfort reinforcement around the midfoot and heel area. The laces are competitively thicker and give the narrow shoe a great fit.

The shoes feel quite airy for warm weather and barely heat up over long distances. The "lightstike" midsole gives it a firm underfoot feel. The pair almost feels like a racing flat, which lets you feel the surface, but has a little bit of cushioning. Apart from the weight, I feel the best thing about the shoe is its flexible mesh upper. It allows for a quick toe off followed by easy bends with each stride. It's especially helpful when you're running short bursts on elevated roads to improve strength and stamina or trying to increase your cadence (strides per minute). The torsion spring also helps is shifting

> the weight from the rearfoot to the forefoot comfortably. However, the thin Continental outsole, which is good for tracks, roads and pavements, gets a little slippery on grass.

Verdict 4/5

★★★★The Adidas SL20 is quite
responsive despite being
almost a flat racer. It helps inarm
ong
leimproving speed and agility as a
marathon trainer and is a great shoe
for short and middle distances. Spend
₹10,999 on this feather-light pair
when you can handle some impact
and your next goal is to get to the
finish line faster.

Design 5/5

The silhouette of the shoe takes after the ZigTech brand of performance shoes that Reebok introduced about a decade ago. Back then, they flew off the shelves more for their edgy, zigzag midsoles than for performance metrics. The new Zig Kinetica tones down the midsole disfiguration a bit and fuses it with the sneaker culture of the time. The result is a chunky "daddy sneaker" but one that is extremely well-cushioned and airy.

The Zig Kinetica is easily one of the best-looking sneakers to have launched in India this year. It's a chic basic, like the Nike Air Max 270, that will be sculpted by designers in myriad iterations and has the potential of gaining cult status if Reebok builds on it. The Zig Kinetica Concept_Type 1 in its four colourways is

already making waves worldwide. The reinforced upper is a mix of mesh

and synthetic with layered detailing. The one that I am talking about is the Radiant Red colourway. Although the poster pair of the launch is the Sunbaked Orange with a full black upper, I prefer the full red with its orange hued midsole. The pair is bold, chic and versatile.

Performance 3/5

One of the most sort-after sneakers of recent times is not just a pretty pair of shoes. That's not to say that you should buy it for a specific athletic vocation, but despite its weight — almost obese at 350 grams a piece — it does an impressive job of moving feet, and fast.



Scorecard

Design * * * * * Performance * * * * Comfort * * * * *

The feature that truly elevates it is a mix of three underlying technologies in its midsole and some delightfully cushiony tidbits. Used as trainers when weightlifting, you can rely on the pair's stability. It inspires a lot of confidence to go heavy. The thick neoprene tongue and a fluffy heel collar almost insulate

the feet from abrasion even when you wear it with shoe liners. The midfoot locks in well and despite its standard heel drop, the shoe is good for low-tomedium intensity conditioning drills and light treadmill runs.

With serious running, the shoe does better than expected. Its Floatride Fuel midsole wrapped between two cushioning technologies the ZIG Energy shells and the ZIG Energy bands absorbs a lot of impact and protects the heel as well as the shin. While it's great for casual running, the shoe feels too heavy and too warm beyond a few kilometres.

Verdict 4/5

Shoes rarely look this good in the gym and the "daddy sneakers" can handle a bit of running, too. Even so, the Zig Kinetica is not a performance shoe. It's simply the most comfortable and well-cushioned sneaker I have ever worn. And I wear a new pair every week. A sum of ₹11,999 is for comfort and style. Consider performance a bonus.





