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NEARBY



CM receives over 5 lakh suggestions on lockdown

NEW DELHI
Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Thursday said he has received an overwhelming response from people on suggestions regarding post-May 17 lockdown relaxations. He said maximum number of people had suggested that educational institutions remain closed till the summer break.

CITY ▶ PAGE 3

'Movement for essential services to be allowed'

NEW DELHI
The Haryana government gave an undertaking in the Delhi High Court on Thursday that movement of people engaged in essential services – government and private doctors, nurses, policemen, courts and municipal bodies – will be allowed between Delhi and Haryana during the lockdown on production of e-passes.

CITY ▶ PAGE 3

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Migrant workers to get free foodgrains

₹3,500 crore of second tranche of stimulus to be spent on allocation to those without ration cards

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

A major focus of the second tranche of the economic stimulus package announced by Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Thursday is to provide free foodgrains for the next two months to migrant workers who do not have ration cards. The Centre will spend ₹3,500 crore for this purpose.

Quoting numbers from State governments, Ms. Sitharaman said there were an estimated eight crore migrant workers who had been housed in government and privately run relief camps across the country since the lockdown.

However, economists said this intervention was too little, too late, and that the free foodgrain provision should have been universalised to deal with widespread distress.

Credit facilities

Apart from measures for migrant workers, the second tranche announced by the government included an extension of credit facilities for urban housing, street vendors and farmers and an interest subvention scheme for small businesses.

The move to provide free foodgrain for migrant workers is an extension of the Pradhan Mantri Garib Ka-

MORE FOR MIGRANTS

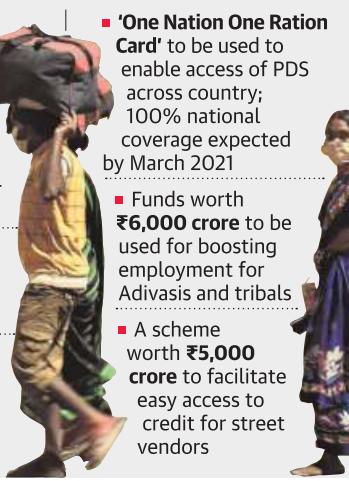
The second part of the "economic stimulus" package focusses on migrant workers and farmers

- Close to 8 crore migrants, who are not covered under the food distribution system, will be given 5 kg of grains per person and 1 kg chana per family per month for two months
- Affordable rental housing complexes planned under Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana
- Interest subvention worth ₹1,500 crore announced for MUDRA-Shishu loans of up to ₹50,000

Iyan Yojana, announced on March 27, which provided an additional monthly free rice or wheat allocation of 5 kg per person, and 1 kg of pulse per household from April to June to the 80 crore people with ration cards covered by the National Food Security Act (NFSA).

Over the past month, migrant workers and others without ration cards have struggled without access to this free food.

"For those who are non-card holders, meaning they are neither under the NFSA nor are they holders of any State-level cards, they shall be given [this benefit]... And



63 lakh agriculture loans worth ₹86,600 crore approved between March 1 and April 30

Concessional credit for 2.5 crore PM-KISAN beneficiaries worth ₹2 lakh crores

Centre had released ₹11,000 crore to States on April 3 to augment funds in their State Disaster Response Fund for setting up shelters for migrants

14.62 crore person-days of work generated under MGNREGA as of May 13

Housing and interest relief too on list

As part of the stimulus package, the Centre plans to create affordable rental housing for the urban poor and provide relief worth ₹1,500 crore to small businesses through an interest subvention scheme, apart from extending credit to street vendors and farmers. Street vendors will get ₹10,000 as initial working capital. PAGE 8

Empty package wrapped with speeches: Cong.

Congress chief spokesperson Randeep Surjewala called the stimulus package a *jumla* (empty promise), while senior leader Ahmed Patel dubbed it an "empty package wrapped with speeches". Addressing a press conference, Lok Sabha member Manish Tewari said: "The image of our migrant workers walking to reach their homes will haunt us for a long time." PAGE 8

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INSENSITIVE MEASURES, SAYS OPPOSITION ▶ PAGE 8
ONE FOR THE POOR ▶ EDITORIAL

if the person is remaining without card, he can also get it," Ms. Sitharaman said.

"We are engaging with the State governments to make sure that they know where these migrants are, they can approach them and give them. Because most of these migrants who have no cards are staying in camps run either by the government or by NGOs, and therefore, based on a rough assessment given to us by all the State governments, we think there are about eight crore migrants for whom benefit will reach through this free food grain supply," she said, adding that this is an initial as-

sessment, and that numbers may change.

The Finance Minister added that by August 2020, the ration card portability scheme will allow 67 crore NFSA beneficiaries in 23 connected States to use their cards at any ration shop anywhere in the country, allowing migrant workers to access subsidised food away from their home villages. The scheme would cover all beneficiaries by March 2021, she said.

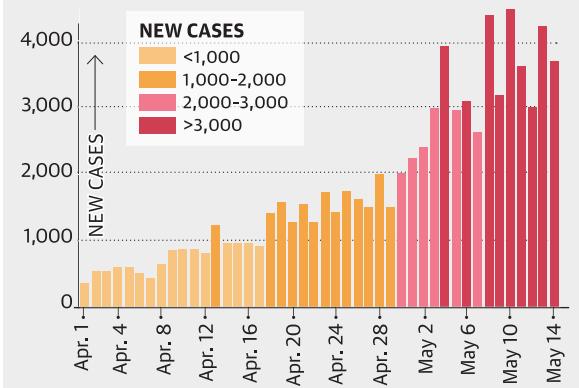
CONTINUED ON PAGE 8
INSENSITIVE MEASURES, SAYS OPPOSITION ▶ PAGE 8
ONE FOR THE POOR ▶ EDITORIAL

Doubling time slows to 13.9 days

3,722 new cases; death toll at 2,549

Consistently high

In the past seven days, more than 3,000 new COVID-19 cases were recorded each day in the country. 3,722 new cases were recorded as of 10 p.m. on Thursday



SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

India recorded another 3,722 COVID-19 cases and 134 deaths on Thursday, pushing the total number of cases to 78,003 and deaths to 2,549, according to the Union Health Ministry. The country has registered an average of over 3,500 new cases every day since May 7.

COVID-19

Health Minister Harsh Vardhan said in the last three days, the doubling time had slowed down to 13.9 days, while the doubling time in the past 14 days was 11.1 days.

"The COVID-19 fatality rate of the country currently stands at 3.2% and the recovery rate has further improved. Currently, we are at 33.6% [from 32.83% on Wednesday]. There are 3.0% active COVID-19 patients in ICU, 0.39% on ventilators and 2.7% on oxygen support," he observed.

On Thursday, there were 14 States/Union Territories that had not reported any cases of COVID-19 in the last 24 hours, including Andhra Pradesh, Chandigarh, Gujarat and Jharkhand, he said.

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MORE REPORTS ON PAGES 2, 3, 4, 5, 8, 9, 10, 11 & 12

+ 15 migrant workers die in U.P., M.P. road accidents

Tragedy strikes home-bound groups at Muzaffarnagar, Guna

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GHAZIABAD/BHOPAL

In two road accidents, 15 migrant labourers lost their lives on Wednesday night and in the early hours of Thursday in Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh.

In Uttar Pradesh, six were killed and five seriously injured around 11.30 p.m. on Wednesday when a State transport bus ran over them on the Delhi-Saharanpur highway near Muzaffarnagar, the police said. They were walking from Punjab to their homes in Bihar. Four of the dead were from Gopalganj and the others from Patna and Bhojpur.

In Madhya Pradesh, nine migrants were killed and 50 injured when the truck in which they were travelling collided with a bus on a highway in Guna district.

The truck was on its way to U.P. from Mumbai and the bus was returning to Ahmedabad. The highway has no median. Officials said many of the workers were from Unnao district of U.P.

In April, the Railways announced that advance reservation, including e-tickets, would not be allowed "till further notice".

"Regular passenger service including Mail/Express, Passenger and Suburban services have been cancelled until further notice... Competent authority has desired that all tickets booked for the above trains for the period up to June 30, 2020 may be cancelled and full refund generated as per provisions..." a Railways order said.

The Railways suspended mostly all passenger services from March 22. However, as part of efforts to gradually restart operations, it announced earlier this month that 15 pairs of special trains would be run to and from New Delhi.

Guna Collector S. Viswanathan said, "Police and revenue teams and doctors



Death on the road: The truck that carried migrant workers lying mangled in Guna, Madhya Pradesh, on Thursday. ■ PTI

zone to hold an investigation.

Compensation ordered
Mr. Adityanath also announced compensation of ₹2 lakh each to the families of the dead and ₹50,000 each to the injured.

Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav tweeted: "First train accident and now bus accident, why the lives of workers are so cheap? Can't the poor of the country reach home via Vande Bharat Mission?"

Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan wrote on Twitter: "I pray that the soul of the deceased may rest in peace and their families get the strength to ensure this deep loss."

Guna Collector S. Viswanathan said, "Police and revenue teams and doctors

Railways cancels tickets till June 30

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Railways has cancelled all tickets booked till June 30 and promised full refund to the passengers.

However, the Shramik Specials or the 15 pairs of special trains started on May 12 will continue.

The Railways said a total of 800 Shramik Specials were run from various States till May 14, ferrying over 10 lakh people. Additionally, for the special trains, so far over 1.25 lakh tickets worth ₹45.30 crore have been booked for more than 2,34 passengers.

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CONTINUED ON PAGE 8

audited by committee," said an official statement.

Of the 8,470 cases, 3,045 people have recovered and 530 are still undergoing treatment, said the health bulletin released by the Delhi government.

Health Minister Satyendar Jain on Thursday said that doubling time for COVID-19 cases in the city was current-

ly 11-12 days. "Earlier it was three to four days and then six to seven days. We would be in a more comfortable position if the doubling time is 20 days or more than that," he said.

"The novel coronavirus threat would not end in one or two months, as we thought. We have to learn to live with the virus," the Minister said.

Work from home may stay for govt. staff

Draft paper moots staggered attendance and variable hours as a matter of policy

Home rule

Excerpts from the Dept. of Personnel and Training's draft consultation paper on work from home for govt. employees

- Eligible staff can work from home for 15 days a year
- Employees will be provided with laptops or desktops
- Employees might also be reimbursed for Internet services used while working from home
- Classified papers and files cannot be processed from home

and Parliament matters", which require utmost attention, is among the proposals. An employee working from home cannot process "classified papers/files". "Extra protocol for all VIP

Ministry of Home Affairs, no classified information shall be handled through e-office. Therefore, classified files shall not be processed in e-office during work from home," the draft paper said.

The National Informatics Centre (NIC) may evaluate the existing security protocol for remote access of classified file and information in consultation with the Home Ministry and propose suitable guidelines and the standard operating procedures (SOP) for handling classified information in e-office, it said.

Till the time, classified files shall be processed on standalone computers only as specified in the Central Secretariat Manual of Office Procedure (CSMOP)."

There are 48.34 lakh Central government employees.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 8

House helps left without help amid pandemic

Most rendered jobless as employers refuse to let them into their homes or pay dues

HEMANI BHANDARI
NEW DELHI



House helps residing in Sudhamapuri jhuggi. ■ HEMANI BHANDARI

Eight-month pregnant Sangeeta, a domestic help, resumed work at her employer's house a week ago, but two days after her services were used, she was asked not to come back. The employer did not even ask if she needed any help with her pregnancy – monetarily or otherwise.

The Hindu spoke to seven house helps residing in the jhuggi's west Delhi's Sudhamapuri and all of them said their employers had treated them harshly at a time when they desperately needed their help. Despite the Delhi government allowing domestic help to start working again, the employers were not ready to use their services or pay them their dues.

Sangeeta said she worked in four houses in Moti Nagar and three of them asked her not to come immediately and that they will let her know when she can join work later. The fourth employer left her the most disappointed. "I had to ask for work even in full pregnancy because we don't have money. When

am poorer than you". Kajal said when she "literally begged" for money, she was told by one of the employers, "Why don't you eat langar or go to hunger relief centres?" When she replied that the rice given at those centres is not properly cooked, she was allegedly told, "Bring the food home and boil it."

"These are the same women who asked us to knead the dough and make chapatis for them. Today, they are treating us like we don't exist," she said.

Sharing her experience, Gudiya, 35, said she went to her employer's house four days ago and was turned away. "I pleaded with her to

let me come and work. She asked me to leave and call her on phone. She is not

Timings

DELHI

FRIDAY, MAY. 17
RISE 05:31 SET 19:05
RISE 01:32 SET 12:40
SATURDAY, MAY. 16
RISE 05:30 SET 19:06
RISE 02:06 SET 13:34
SUNDAY, MAY. 17
RISE 05:30 SET 19:07
RISE 02:37 SET 14:26

Delhi Weather	max	min
Delhi City	40	24
Safdarjung	40	24
Palam	41	23

Delhi Pali Today
38°C A dry and very warm weather with partly cloudy sky to prevail during the day. Night remains comfortable.

Delhi Pali Tomorrow
40°C Rise in temperature. The weather will be hot and dry during the day. Night will be comfortable.

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IN BRIEF

People hurl stones at municipal staff in Capital

Residents of north Delhi's Prem Nagar pelted stones at municipal staff deputed at a school here to distribute ration, when it was found that stock had run out, a senior municipal official wrote to the Delhi government on Thursday. The official raised concern for the safety of the staff. Similar issues were earlier reported at dry ration distribution centers in Adarsh Nagar, Mangolpuri, Sultanpur among others, the letter stated.

Allow stranded students in hostels after screening'

NEW DELHI
The Jawaharlal Nehru University Students' Union (JNUSU) on Thursday wrote to the university Vice-Chancellor urging the administration to allow stranded students in the Delhi-NCR to return to their hostels after proper screening for COVID-19.

With no onward facilities, several left stranded at New Delhi station

Absence of transportation kept people running helter-skelter to reach destinations

SHINJINI GHOSH
NEW DELHI

With the absence of onward facilitation, many arriving at the New Delhi station on Thursday found themselves stranded even as they made multiple calls in a bid to arrange private cars.

Vikas Kumar, a civil engineer working in Kolkata, reached the city at around 11 a.m. only to be welcomed by an empty parking lot, sans autos and taxis. His journey was only half way through, as he was Karnal-bound.

"It has been three hours already and I have been waiting here, trying to arrange for a cab that will take me to Karnal. Who knew there won't be any arrangement? Some of the co-passengers had private vehicles pick them up. But for people like me who has a long distance to cover, that is not an option," he said.

For 21-year-old Shivandan Kumar, the wait was longer, as he did not have the means or requisite information to board the special



A rickshaw-puller ferrying a passenger, who came walking from Gurugram to catch a train from New Delhi Railway Station, on Thursday. ■ R.V. MOORTHY

train to Patna.

"I had gone to Mathura just before the lockdown to drop my sister at her in-laws' place and got stuck there. I took a truck from there and reached Delhi in the afternoon to take a train back home. But the police did not let me enter as I did not have a ticket. I am penniless right now and do not know how to book an online ticket," he said.

"Everything is shut here and I have not been able to arrange even food. How do I

go back?" asked the man from Bhagalpur.

Long wait

Even as hundreds got to make their journey back to their home States, several labourers, with no resources to buy tickets for the special trains, continued their wait outside the station.

Jitender Sahni, who hails from Samastipur district in Bihar, has been outside the New Delhi station's Pahar ganj entrance for three days. Camping under a tree with

his wife and two children, he said that despite being close to the station, their wait for the train was turning out to be "endless."

"We want to go back but we cannot afford the tickets. Every time we try to approach the entrance, police personnel send us back, stating that only those with tickets can enter. Where will we get ₹5,000 for the tickets? We have walked from Faridabad, over two days, and reached the station with the hope we can return. It seems nobody cares about us," said Sahni, a daily wag-

er. Sitting next to the Sahni family, Rajendra Swain, from Odisha's Cuttack district, added: "There have been several people who have been coming throughout the day and asking for details. These children have been lying on the sidewalk for three days. Even though I have arranged for a ticket for Friday's train, I will probably have to spend the night under this tree itself."

RWA comes to the rescue of maid as employer leaves her in the lurch

She was found weeping on the road after she tested positive

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

House help of the Defence Colony family, which was tested positive in April, was found on the road sobbing. She claimed she was tested positive and was asked by the family to leave the house.

Resident Welfare Association president Major (Retd) Ranjit Singh said that around 11.30 p.m. on Wednesday, security guards informed him about a woman on the road. "When we enquired, she told us that she used to work in the house and now she has been tested positive. She said she was asked by the family to leave after the test result

came," he said.

COVID-19

Though she was asked to go to a hospital, Mr. Singh got the impression that she wanted to go back to her employer's house. "We consoled her. A doctor in the locality was also called to console her. We asked her if she had any relatives we could call. She shared a relative's number, which we called," Mr. Singh said.

The police was informed and a few hours later, an ambulance was called to take her to the hospital, Mr. Singh said. But the vehicle was allegedly

not equipped to take COVID-19 patients. Therefore, it was sent back.

Shifted to hospital

Subsequently, around 6 a.m., the woman was shifted to a facility in Defence Colony. "I've been informed that she is stable," said Mr. Singh.

In April, three members of the aforementioned family were tested positive. The man passed away while his wife and son recovered. An FIR was registered against their security guard, who was allegedly present around the religious centre in Nizamuddin, which he hid from the family. He was later tested negative.

Cane-do spirit



A police officer seen beating a vegetable vendor at Vivek Vihar in New Delhi on Thursday. ■ R.V. MOORTHY

HIMACHAL PRADESH JAL SHAKTI DEPARTMENT NOTICE INVITING TENDER

Online bids on item rate basis are invited by the Executive Engineer I&PH Division Pooh, on behalf of Governor of Himachal Pradesh in electronic tendering system in two covers for the under mentioned work from the contractor/Bidders of appropriate class enlisted with Himachal Pradesh Jal Shakti Department are as under:-

Sr. No.	Name of work	Estimated Cost	Earnest Money	Time period	Cost of form
1.	Remodeling of FIS Burtam Basti in GP Sunnam Tehsil Pooh Distt. Kinnaur (HP) SH-C/O CC lining 1.3:6,C/O Cut Cover, C/O PCC R/Wall & C/O Wire crate.	19,19,939/-	9900/-	Six months	400/-
2.	Providing WSS to Pooh Village in G.P Pooh Tehsil Pooh Distt Kinnaur (HP) SH- Providing Household connections ,Laying and Jointing of Gravity Main , Distribution system.	11,59,485/-	23200/-	One Year	400/-
3.	Providing WSS to Pooh Village in G.P Pooh Tehsil Pooh Distt Kinnaur (HP) SH- Providing Household connections ,Laying and Jointing of Gravity Main , Distribution system.	15,74,377/-	23616/-	Three months	400/-
4.	Remodeling of FIS Server in GP Labrang , Tehsil Pooh District Kinnaur (HP) SH-C/O intake Chamber, C/O RCC R/Wall ,C/O Wire rope arrangement for crossing Pipe at Source, C/O wire crate wall & C/O CC Lining 1:3:6 at various Rds) Rd 0 to 840) Job-1	22,38,112/-	33572/-	Six months	400/-

1. Tender inviting notice and other instructions can be downloaded or viewed online from the portal <http://hp.tenders.gov.in> by the firms/individual registered on the website which is free of cost.

2. As the bids are to be submitted online are required to be encrypted and digitally signed, the bidders are advised to obtain Digital Signature Certificate (DSC) from suitable vendors or from any authorized agency at the earliest.

3. KEY DATES for E-Tender are as under:

1. Date of online publication	8-05-2020 11.00AM Upto 12-5-2020 5.00PM
2. Downloading of e-tender documents	8-05-2020 11.00 AM Upto 12-5-2020 5.00PM
3. Date of submission of e-tendering	12.05.2020 5.00 PM Upto 27.05.2020 5.00PM
4. Date of Physical submission	28.05.2020 10.30AM
5. Date of opening bid	28.05.2020 11.00AM.
6. Date of opening Financial bid	Will be intimated separately

CONDITIONS:

4. The e-tender documents shall be uploaded online in 2 (two) covers:
 - i) Cover-1 shall contain scanned copies of "eligibility information/ Technical bid". ii) Cover-2 shall contain "Financial Bid" on the prescribed form.
 - 5. Cover-1 shall contain Scanned copies of following "eligibility information" (Scanned copies to be uploaded)
 - i) The Earnest money in the shape of small saving instruments, demand draft or fixed deposit duly pledged in favour of Executive Engineer, I&PH Division Pooh, Before 26.5.2020 upto 10:30AM
 - ii) Certificate of registration per their class with any Government Department/Government undertaking, Pan card, Adhar card, removal of income tax Income Tax clearance certificates and, EPF, GST issued by the appropriate authorities.
 - vi) The Contractor should produce the experience certificate duly issued by not less than the rank of Executive Engineer that he has been completed/Commissioned of similar nature of work should not be less than 90% to any capacity.
 - vii) Conditional tenders shall not be accepted. viii) Undersigned reserves the right to reject (any or all the tenders without assigning any reason)
 - 6. Cover-2 shall contain SOQ where contractor will quote his offer for each item.
 - 7. The tenders of the contractors/firms who fail to fulfill the eligibility information will be summarily rejected.
 - 8. The negotiation /clarification, if any will be taken from the successful contractor/bidder only in respect of no error , omission and technical aspects in financial bid.
 - 9. The representatives of the firm should inspect the site himself and make conversant with the site conditions.
 - 10. If opening day is a holiday, the tenders shall be opened on next working day at the same time.
 - 11. The offer of the tender shall be kept open for 120 days.
 - 12. Before submission of on line Bids, Bidders must ensure that scanned copies of all necessary documents has been uploaded with Executive Engineer, Jal Shakti Division ,Pooh, Distt.Kinnaur,(HP).

HP /0375/20-21

UTTARAKHAND POWER CORPORATION LTD.

(A Govt. of Uttarakhand Undertaking)
Victoria Cross Vijeta, Gabar Singh Urja Bhawan, Kanwall Road, Dehradun-248001, Corporate Identity No.: UA40109UP2001SGC025867/2358, Tel. No. (0135)-2763572-76, Fax No: (0135)-2760228, Website: www.uktenders.gov.in

E-TENDER NOTICE (SPECIFICATION NO. CCP-II/6/2020-21)

Uttarakhand Power Corporation Ltd, Dehradun invites e-tender for work of Checking & Testing of LT Single Phase, Three Phase meter (including LT CT connected meter) of following packages:-

Name of Package	No. of Connections	Estimated Cost (₹ in Lacs)	Average yearly Turn Over of preceding three Financial Year (₹ in Crores)	Earnest Money (₹ in Lacs)	Cost of tender Document including GST (₹ in ₹)
Garhwal Zone	188000	8700	1750	605.69	9.09
Haridwar Zone	73000	7350	1150	261.70	4.00
Kumaon Zone	114000	4600	1300	369.51	5.54
Rudrapur Zone	75000	4350	800	247.46	4.00

Last Date & time of online request for Tender and submission of tender in online & offline mode

Date of opening of Part-I of tender in online & offline mode

For further details, please visit our website www.uktenders.gov.in.

Superintending Engineer, Corporate (Contract & Procurement-III)

No. 210/EE(CM)/UPCL/A-2/Date 13/05/2020

"SAVE ELECTRICITY IN THE INTEREST OF THE NATIONS, Use LED Bulb Save Electricity" (Toll Free No. 1912) "Pay Electricity bill online 24x7 from www.upcl.org" (For information on Electricity Theft, Informer may report to Toll Free No. 1800 180 4185 / Fax No. 0135-2760911)

UPSRTC forms committee to check issue of exorbitant fare from IGIA

Taxis are priced between ₹10,000 and ₹12,000 for first 250 km

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI/LUCKNOW

The Uttar Pradesh State Road Transport

IN BRIEF

'Call all-party meet to discuss migrants' plight'

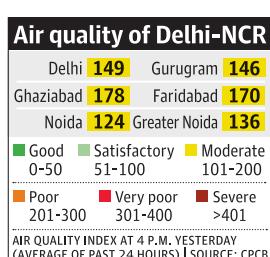
NEW DELHI Leader of the Opposition in the Delhi Assembly Ramvir Singh Bidhuri on Thursday demanded that Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal call an all-party meeting urgently to discuss the plight of migrant workers and other COVID-19 issues. Mr. Bidhuri said in the absence of a proper system, thousands of workers were leaving for their home towns on foot daily.

Centre's reply sought on delinking site from app

NEW DELHI The Delhi High Court on Thursday sought the Centre's response on a plea seeking to delink from Aarogya Setu mobile app a website which is promoting sale of medicines through e-pharmacies. The court asked the Centre to submit its response within 10 days and listed the case for further hearing on May 29.

Kejriwal, Kadian take oath as NDMC members

NEW DELHI Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal and Delhi Cantt. MLA Virender Singh Kadian took oath as members of New Delhi Municipal Council (NDMC) in a special council meeting held on Thursday. The oath of faith and allegiance to the Constitution of India was administered by NDMC Chairman Dharmendra.



Doctors' association hits out over salary dues

NEW DELHI The Delhi Medical Association on Thursday hit out over the non-payment of salaries to doctors of the North Corporation for the last three months. North Delhi Mayor, Avtar Singh had appealed to the CM to accept the fifth Delhi Finance Commission's recommendation for a special fund for municipal hospitals retrospectively and release ₹1,500 crore to the corporation to help pay salaries.

Lockdown leaves mother waiting for son's medicine

HEMANI BHANDARI NEW DELHI A 45-year-old woman has been running from chemist shops to hospitals here in search of a medicine for her son, who suffers from mental health disability. She said the medicine is only available in Kanpur and she is unable to go there owing to the lockdown.

The woman from west Delhi's Basai Darapur said her son, who worked at a factory before lockdown, has been undergoing treatment for mental health for the past 13 years. She said she used to get the medicines for 30 days from Kanpur.

"I have checked in RML Hospital where I admit him when his mental health deteriorates but they too don't have it. I have checked in almost all medical shops here," she said.

The woman said the last time she received the medicine was through a relative who had come from Kanpur in the first week of March. "The medicine lasted a month. Had I known about this lockdown, I would have stocked it for two-three months. For the last two months, I am giving him another similar medicine but he has been unusually silent," she said.

The woman said she had also called the Kanpur hospital, asking them to deliver the medicine but they refused, saying that there were no courier services operating.

"I am just waiting for the lockdown to end so I can go to Kanpur and get the medicines," she cried.

CM receives over 5 lakh responses in 24 hours

Maximum suggest educational institutes remain shut

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Thursday said his appeal to the people for suggestions regarding lockdown relaxations post-May 17 has received an overwhelming response.

The responses were received on various sections such as transport, industries, businesses among others, he said, adding all the suggestions given by the people of Delhi were discussed in a meeting with the Lieutenant-Governor.

"Two days back, I had asked whether the lockdown should be extended or lifted. In only 24 hours, we received more than 5 lakh responses, including around 4,75,000 messages on WhatsApp, 10,700 e-mails, and 49,000 calls," he said. Mr. Kejriwal said the maximum number of people had suggested that educational institutions remain closed until after the summer break. Some said hotels should not resume facilities but restaurants must open barring dine-in arrangements but take-away or home-delivery must resume.

There were also suggestions that barbershops and hair salons must not resume services. In the same way, cinema halls and swimming pools, and other such gathering places must not open for now. "A lot of people have also asked the logic behind not going out after 7 p.m. they are of the view that the timeline should be relaxed. However, every suggestion that I saw said that senior citizens, people with other serious ailments, children below 10 years and pregnant women should stay home," he said.

"Everyone has suggested strict fines must be imposed on those not wearing masks. People have suggested the opening of parks," he said.

He also added that many people have given their suggestions for the resumption of transport services, including autorickshaws and taxis, with only one passenger allowed in autos and two passengers in taxis and disinfection of these vehicles after each ride. A majority of people are in favour of the resumption of bus ser-



A man sells masks on a hot Thursday afternoon in the city.

• SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

vices, he said, but with not more than 25 people travelling on a bus. People have also suggested that metros should be open in a limited manner.

3 changes in next phase

The government said it had conveyed to the L-G three changes it wants in the next phase of the lockdown from May 18. The changes are opening of markets and shopping complexes with non-essential shops on the odd-even basis, starting of public transport, including metro and buses, and allowing labourers to travel inside Delhi for work, it told the L-G. "All these changes would not be applicable in the containment zones," said a source.

The government will prepare SoPs for implementation of each of the changes after which the L-G will then convey these to the Centre.

Govt. stops sharing hospital-wise death figures

It had stopped sharing details of 'under investigation' COVID-19 cases in April

NIKHIL M BABU

NEW DELHI

The Delhi government on Thursday stopped releasing hospital-wise numbers of COVID-19-related deaths in the city, in a daily health bulletin.

The government spokesperson did not comment on the reason why the data is not provided. "The total number of deaths sent by hospitals is being audited and it will be updated again once it is complete," an official source said.

The number of COVID-19-related deaths reported by the Delhi government till Thursday is 115, the number of such deaths from just two city hospitals until Wednesday, accessed by *The Hindu*, is 176.

Virus spread

Total number of COVID-19 cases	8,470
Total deaths	115*
New cases in the past 24 hours	472
New deaths in the past 24 hours	9*

*CASES INCLUDE DEATHS IN APRIL, MAY

SOURCE: DELHI GOVERNMENT HEALTH BULLETIN

"There have been 69 COVID-19-related deaths in our hospital and six people were brought dead. All of them [75] were COVID-19 positive," said Minakshi Bhardwaj, medical superintendent of Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia Hospital.

pitals were not sending death summaries to the government in time. "We have written to hospitals to send reports of deaths immediately," the Minister said.

Lack of details

The

Delhi government, from April 15, had stopped providing details of "under investigation" cases, which are cases in which how the patient got infected by the virus is unknown, suggesting chances of community transmission.

The government also had stopped proving details of COVID-19 tests being done and later restarted it following a High Court order on May 4. But the Delhi government is still not providing the details of pending tests.

Essential services staff can cross Haryana-Delhi border with e-passes

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

The Haryana government gave an undertaking in the Delhi High Court on Thursday that movement of people engaged in essential services – government and private doctors, nurses, officials of police, courts and municipal bodies – will be allowed between Delhi and Haryana on production of e-passes during the COVID-19 lockdown.

movement of trucks carrying both the essential as well as non-essential goods between Delhi and Haryana (except to and fro between Containment Zones) as well as transiting through Haryana shall be allowed. Mr. Grover also said the Delhi-Haryana border is open and the roads near the border have not been dug up. The said border shall be kept open and shall be manned by security personnel, he added.

Driver at Secretariat tests COVID-19 positive

No Ministers checked for virus: official

NIKHIL M BABU
JATIN ANAND
NEW DELHI

A driver working at the Delhi Secretariat has tested positive for COVID-19, said officials on Thursday.

work for a while before he tested positive so chances of others getting infected are less. Also, he was not assigned to any particular official," the official added.

When contacted, the government spokesperson said various parts of the Secretariat were sanitised and no higher official or Ministers were tested for the virus as the driver did not come into contact with any of them.

Last month, personnel secretary of District Magistrate (South-West) Rahul Singh, was tested positive for COVID-19.

Following it, two more people working at the office tested positive but the DM had tested negative and the office was sanitised.

"There is no restriction on the entry of visitors to the Delhi Secretariat; Ministers are coming off and sanitisation is taking place regularly but we are still apprehensive," said a source.

"No decision has been taken about the central air conditioning at the building; though there is no evidence about whether or not it can have a role in the spread of the virus, many employees are concerned about their health due to it," the source added.

Following the incident, the officials posted at the Players Building are apprehensive about not only their own health but also the safety of their family members as they continue going to work.

"The driver was working for the health department and showed mild symptoms. He got tested and the result came out to be positive about three to four days back. He is currently under home isolation," an official told *The Hindu*.

The official said staff who came into contact with the driver were tested, but their results came out to be negative. "He was not coming to

the office," the source added.

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DELHI — 011-22307145

GAZIABAD — 0120 4186453

NOIDA — 8076623612/6396776904

GURUGRAM — 108/ 0124-2322412/

991519296/ 7015523417/ 9654231756

With no transport, govt's decision on offices unfair'

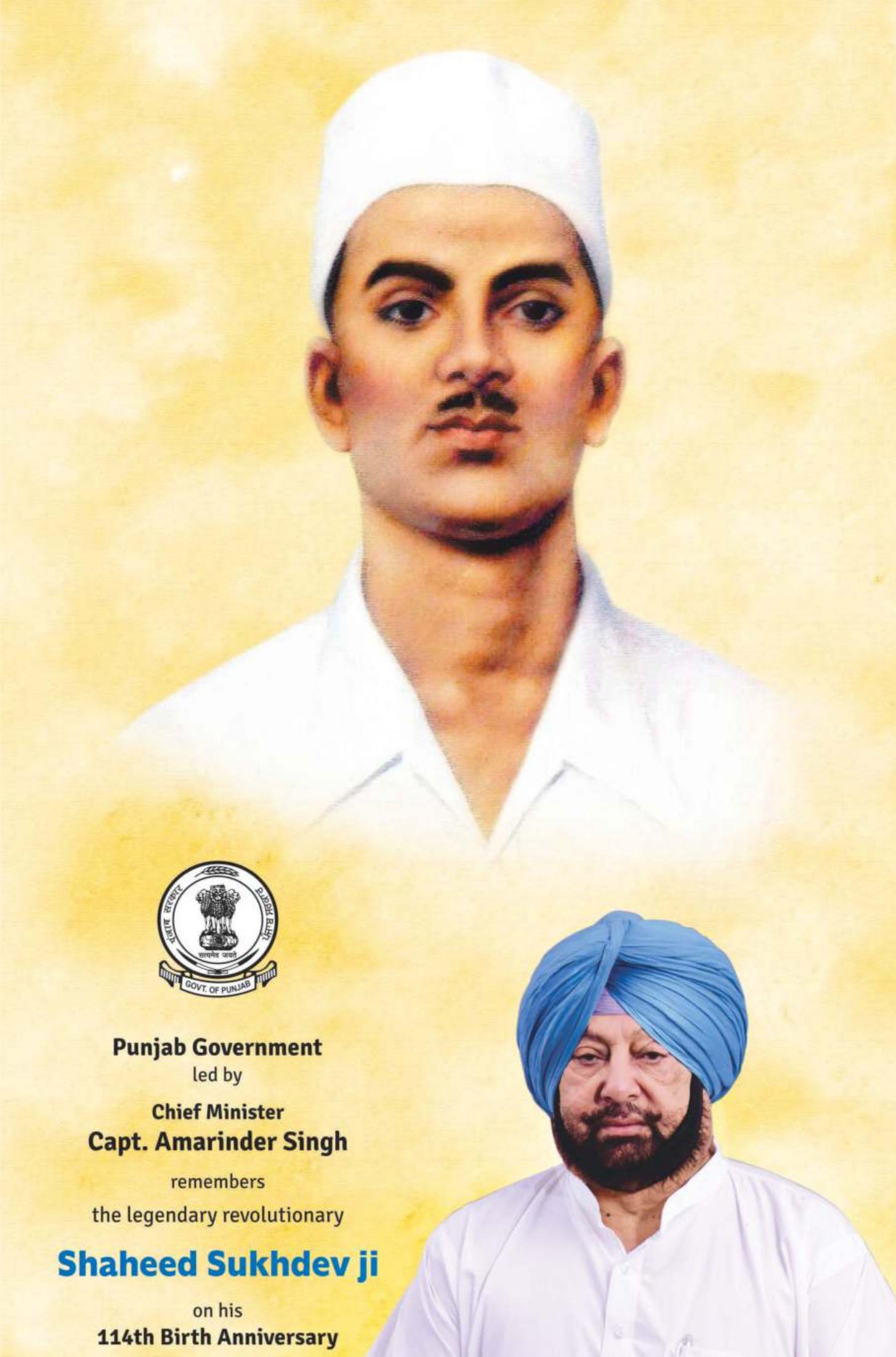
HC seeks Centre, Delhi govt's reply

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The Delhi HC said that the Centre's decision to allow private offices to open with 33% strength is discrimination against those without own vehicle. It added that it was unjust for such persons as no provision was made for them to commute to work during the lockdown.

A Bench of Justice Rajiv Sahai Endlaw and Justice Sangita Dhingra Sehgal issued notice to the Centre and the city government seeking their response on a petition to permit resuming of public transports.

"We have noticed in the court also that owing to this situation, the entire burden of court work has fallen on those having their own transport, with the others not sharing the workload at all," it added.



Punjab Government
led by
**Chief Minister
Capt. Amarinder Singh**
remembers
the legendary revolutionary
Shaheed Sukhdev ji
on his
114th Birth Anniversary

Delhi focal point of drug supply: Punjab STF chief 'Most traffickers came via the city'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHANDIGARH

As Punjab continues its battle against the drug menace, the State's Special Task Force chief has claimed that Delhi has become a major centre from where foreign nationals supply drugs.

STF chief Harpreet Singh Sidhu said on Thursday that as many as 180 foreigners had been arrested in connection with 147 cases over the past three years.

"Sixty-one foreign nationals were arrested in 2017, 81 in 2018 and 37 in 2019. There has been one arrest this year. Most of these arrested persons had come via Delhi, indicating that it has become a major centre from where foreign nationals supply drugs to

Punjab," he told *The Hindu*. Enhanced vigil along the India-Pakistan border and effective policing has forced smugglers to explore new sea, air and land routes, often under the garb of legal trade and commerce.

Supply ring busted

The recovery in January 2020 of 197 kg of heroin with 64 kg of other intoxicants and an illicit laboratory with six drums of chemicals by the STF from a house in Akash Vihar in Amritsar led to the busting of an international heroin supply ring.

"It revealed new efforts by drug traffickers to smuggle heroin into Punjab through the sea route from Gujarat," said Mr. Sidhu.

Workers board train for home after night at police station

They refused to return to their rented houses in Rohtak

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GURUGRAM

More than a hundred construction workers, including women and children, spent the night at Rohtak's Shivaji Colony police station premises on Tuesday after the migrants were called in large numbers to board a train to their home towns, but arrangements could not be made for all of them.

However, they were sent back to their homes in Madhya Pradesh by a train a day later.

Around 100 construction workers staying in the Shivaji Colony police station area got themselves registered online to return to their homes on Monday after the Station House Officer, Inspector Balwant Singh,

called up the local labour activists seeking details of the stranded workers.

These workers along with 30-odd farm labourers were then told to come to the police station on Tuesday afternoon to be taken to the railway station to board the trains to their home towns. Though all workers were called, only 35 farm labourers were taken to the railway station. The remaining were told to go back to their rented accommodations in a bus. "But none of these workers got down from the bus and the driver brought them back to the police station," said Bhawan Nirman Kamaar Union Rohtak president Sanjiv Kumar.

Demanding that they also be sent back home, these

workers claimed they had cleared the dues of their rented rooms, including electricity bills, and had nowhere to go. When they refused to leave the police station, arrangements were made for their stay inside the premises.

'Food not provided'

Though Mr. Kumar claimed the workers were not provided food on Tuesday night, the police officer denied his claims, saying that two social organisations arranged for their evening and next morning meals.

Eventually, the administration made arrangements for their return home and all workers boarded train to Madhya Pradesh on Wednesday afternoon.

11 new cases in Punjab; small units to open in Ludhiana

VIKAS VASUDEVA
CHANDIGARH

Punjab recorded 11 fresh COVID-19 cases on Thursday taking the tally of positive cases to 1,935, according to an official statement.

The health department said a major chunk of the cases were reported from Jalandhar and Ludhiana districts respectively. The active cases in the State are 1,680 and 223 patients have so far recovered, it added.

Meanwhile, Punjab Chief Minister Amarinder Singh allowed cottage industries in non-containment mixed-use areas of Ludhiana to immediately resume operations in order to support the opening of bigger industries that are



CM Amarinder Singh

dependent on the small ones for components.

He said that repeated requests had been received from industry associations to allow opening of industries with access control in non-containment zone of Ludhiana district.

The resumption of operations in these small units, which normally have labour

living on or in the vicinity of the premises, will be subject to requirements of access control and strict compliance with COVID SOPs," said the Chief Minister.

Meanwhile, in Haryana one COVID-19 death was reported while 25 more positive cases surfaced, taking the State's tally of confirmed cases to 818.

In the Union Territory of Chandigarh, two fresh cases surfaced on Thursday, taking the tally to 191. Meanwhile, the Chandigarh administration announced extension of summer vacations in all government and government-aided schools till further order, in the wake COVID-19 outbreak.

Offering only credit, loans shows insensitivity: Gehlot

'Central government needs to announce financial aid'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
JAIPUR

Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot on Thursday raised a question over the economic package announced by Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman in two days.

Mr. Gehlot accused the Centre of showing lack of sensitivity by offering only credits and loans during the distressing period of COVID-19 pandemic and complete shutdown of economy.

"The Central government is not realising that the immediate need for poor people is to give them direct cash as an immediate financial support so that they have some money with

them to spend. It will stimulate the demand," Mr. Gehlot tweeted.

Mr. Gehlot pointed out that all schemes announced in the economic package were long-term measures, except the free foodgrains for the next two months. They would not provide immediate support to the poor, migrant workers, farmers and the destitute, he said.

'A ray of hope'

"The Central government needs to announce financial aid," the Chief Minister said, adding that offering only credits and loans would not serve any immediate purpose. He said the Mahatma

Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme could be a ray of hope for the poor in the rural areas as a social security measure.

Work for migrants

As Ms. Sitharaman had announced relief measures, the MGNREGA would ensure that the poor migrants get work when they reach home, Mr. Gehlot said.

While the flagship employment scheme would provide livelihood security for at least some days, the Centre must consider giving wages to all registered MGNREGA workers for the lockdown period, he suggested.

Odia worker on foot march dies of exhaustion

He was walking from Hyderabad

STAFF REPORTER
BERHAMPUR

Kasa Madkami, 22, a tribal migrant worker from Odisha's Malkangiri district, breathed his last due to exhaustion while walking back home from Hyderabad due to continuing COVID-19 lockdown.

Help from government or any one else eluded him even after death. His three compatriots paid up ₹ 8000 to hire an ambulance to transport his body from Bhadrachalam to his home at Tanginidanga village in Malkangiri district on Wednesday.

The deceased was the only earning member of his family.

He was working as a manual labourer in Hyderabad. The COVID-19 pandemic

and the subsequent lockdown took away his job in the city. It became hard for him and his friends to survive there.

No transport

Madkami and his three friends decided to return back to their homes in Malkangiri district. Dearth of inter-State transport and lack of money compelled these four migrant workers to take up the long walk from Hyderabad to Malkangiri.

They had reached Bhadrachalam in Andhra Pradesh on Monday (May 11), where exhausted by the long walk in the scorching summer heat, Madkami became unconscious.

His friends admitted him in a Bhadrachalam hospital, where he breathed his last.

Plea seeks release of quarantined Tablighis

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

A plea before the Delhi High Court has sought release of nearly 3,300 members of Tablighi Jamaat who were sent to various quarantine centres for around 40 days and not released despite reporting negative for COVID-19.

Social worker Sabiha Quadri, in the petition, alleged that many people have been illegally lodged in quarantine centres and submitted that several people in such centres have written letters to the authorities. However, they have not been considered.

The plea sought direction to the authorities to constitute a high-level panel to enquire as to whether continuous confinement of the members is a constitutional violation or not.

Rain relief



Motorcyclists take shelter under a bus stop after a dust storm and heavy rain lashed Delhi on Thursday, bringing down the temperature substantially. ■ SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

Truck driver held for 'ferrying' migrants to U.P.

33 workers found crammed inside the truck in inhuman conditions, say police

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

A truck driver was arrested for allegedly ferrying 33 migrant workers from the city to their hometowns in Uttar Pradesh amid the nationwide lockdown, the police said on Thursday.

All the migrant workers allegedly travelling in the truck were daily wagers residing in Ranholi and Mayapuri areas in Delhi, said the police. The driver, Hari Ram, was nabbed on Wednesday and his vehicle was also seized.

The alleged truck bearing Delhi registration number was stopped during picket checking at South Extension-I. The vehicle had a paper pasted on its windscreen reading "Medicine Emergency Services Provider". The vehicle was also found to be covered with multiple layers of covers using ropes which further raised suspicion.

On removing the covers,



Stranded migrant labourers board a truck to return to their home town amid nationwide lockdown. ■ FILE PHOTO

33 migrants were found crammed inside the truck in "inhuman conditions", he said.

'Paid ₹ 1,800 per person' The workers allegedly told the police that they hired the truck for ₹ 1,800 per person to drop them to their hometowns in Azamgarh, Mau,

Ghazipur and Banda districts of Uttar Pradesh and had paid ₹ 20,000 advance to the truck owner.

A case has been registered against Hari Ram at Kotla Mubarakpur police station under Sections 188 (disobedience to order duly promulgated by public servant), 269 (negligent act likely to spread infection of disease dangerous to life) and 270 (malicious act likely to spread infection of disease dangerous to life) of the Indian Penal Code and Section 3 of the Epidemic Diseases Act, the DCP said. The police are also looking into the role of the truck owner in the matter.

Of the 33 workers, 29 were handed over to the Ranholi police station while the other four were handed over to the Mayapuri police station with the request to send them back to their respective rented accommodations, said the officer.

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S.N.	Job No.	Name of Work	Tender Amount (Rs. Lacs)
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2	06/GM(R)/SM(WC-5)/2020-21	M/o Building (Repair of Staff Quarter No. B-03/113, B-3/15, B-10/A3/A, B-10/A5D in Sector-34), Noida	₹ 7.36
3	15/GM(R)/SM(WC-5)/2020-21	M/o Road (P/F Retro Reflective Signage Direction Board and Repair of Drain in Sector-53), Noida	₹ 16.91
4	02/GM(R)/SM(WC-2)/2020-21	M/o Road (P/F MS Jaal at different location in village- Nithari Sector-31), Noida	₹ 20.66

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This is for notice of general public to a political party to register itself by the name of "ABINAV BHARAT JANSEVA PAKSH". The office of the party is located at Kamini Housing Society, Gali No.1, Mahalaxmi Nagar, Gas Godownwala Bajra, Ambarnath (East), District-Thane, Maharashtra-410105. This party has submitted application to the Election Commission of India, New Delhi for its registration as Political Party under Section 29A of the Representation of People Act, 1951. Name, address of the office base and other details as follows:

President: Mahaveer Raghunath Gadekar
S/o Raghunath Gadekar R/H No.197,
Tadwali, Ambarnath (East), Taluka-Ambarnath, District- Thane-421501, Maharashtra.

General Secretary: Ravi Kumar Patel, R/o No.5, Ambarnath, Dist- Thane, Maharashtra-421501, Maharashtra.

General Secretary: Ravi Kumar Patel, R/o No.5, Ambarnath, Dist- Thane, Maharashtra-421501, Maharashtra.

If anyone has any objection to the registration of ABINAV BHARAT JANSEVA PAKSH they may send their objection with reasons thereof, to the Secretary (Political Party), Election Commission of India, Nirvanan Sadan, Ashoka Road, New Delhi-110001 within 30 days of the publication of this notice.

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Back at work



Liquid gold: With life in Andhra Pradesh limping back to normalcy, people employed in rural industries are reporting for work. The picture shows people heating sugarcane extract to make jaggery in Visakhapatnam on Thursday. ■ K.R. DEEPAK

'Situation in LG plant area under control'

Company management unveils support measures for gas leak affected people

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

VISAKHAPATNAM

The LG Polymers management on Thursday said the plant at R.R. Venkatapuram remained "completely controlled" by all measures.

Reacting over the May 7 incident which claimed 12 lives and affected many, the company said: "We have begun the transportation of the styrene monomer inventory within the plant as well as in the tanks at the Visakhapatnam port by vessels to South Korea to prevent and eliminate all risk factors."

In an official release, the company said a team of technical experts from its Seoul headquarters arrived at the plant on Wednesday. The team is investigating the cause of the incident.



Too close for comfort: The LG Polymers plant, situated close to residential areas in Visakhapatnam. ■ K.R. DEEPAK

"We have already been supporting responsible rehabilitation, which is the main objective," it said.

LG Polymers India has identified comprehensive support measures to resolve the situation quickly and res-

ponsibly. A media release from the company said a special task force was currently supporting the bereaved families and those affected by the gas leak and visiting them at the hospitals and their homes.

'Decision on shifting polymers only after report'

VISAKHAPATNAM

The Andhra Pradesh government will decide on the demand for shifting the LG Polymers plant on the basis of the recommendation of the high-power committee probing the accident, according to Municipal Administration Minister Botcha Satyanarayana. The committee was also mandated to study the status of 86 hazardous industries in the State, he said.

Food and medical services had been organised for the returning residents. Various support activities such as supplying medical and household goods and sanitisation of homes would be continued, it said.

BSNL tells Rehana Fatima to 'compulsorily retire'

Will take legal recourse, says activist

STAFF REPORTER
KOCHI

₹200-crore revenue loss for TDB due to lockdown

The Travancore Devaswom Board (TDB) has suffered revenue loss of over ₹100 crore from Sabarimala alone during the past three months owing to the lockdown, according to board president N. Vasu. Mr. Vasu told *The Hindu* on Thursday that the board's total revenue loss was ₹200 crore, as devotees were not allowed in 1,245 major and minor temples under it. This year, pilgrims were not permitted to visit Sabarimala during Vishu too, badly hitting the board coffers.

10 electrocuted in Prakasam district of A.P.

Ten persons – nine of them farm workers – were electrocuted and one was injured when a live electric wire fell on them between Raparla and Machavaram villages in Prakasam district on Thursday. The incident occurred when the driver of an overcrowded tractor lost control of the vehicle and hit an electric pole on the roadside, leading to the instantaneous death of nine persons, the police said. One died later in the hospital.

Liquor smuggling surges in A.P. due to high tax

The 75% tax on alcohol in Andhra Pradesh has led to an upsurge in bootlegging from Telangana. In the last 4-5 days alone, the Telangana police have registered more than 20 cases of bootlegging against people trying to smuggle alcohol to Kurnool. This raises questions about border security and puts in the spotlight the police apparatus in both the Telugu-speaking States. Officials maintain that bootleggers are using interior roads instead of highways and are hence able to cross borders.



Rehana Fatima

The order said it was not acceptable that Ms. Fatima "was ignorant of the consequences of her actions, as public tension was already mounting up at the point of time due to the movement against women entry in Sabarimala." Hence, her acts were intentional.

"The action comes at a time when the police have not even registered a chargesheet in my case while proceedings are under way at the Central Administrative Tribunal on a petition I filed against my suspension," said Ms. Fatima.

The inquiry found her guilty and the order was issued asking her to go on compulsory retirement with immediate effect.

"The Cabinet has also given the nod for a ₹39.9-crore Perumon bridge across Ashtamudi Lake in Kollam district.

Govt. clears 6.5-km tunnel to Wayanad

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

The government has cleared the construction of a ₹658 crore two-lane tunnel road in the Anakkampoyil-Kalladi-Meppadi corridor that would run parallel to the landslip-prone Thamarassery pass that links Kozhikode to Wayanad.

On completion, the 6.5-km tunnel will be the third longest in the country. Kerala's longest is the 962 m tunnel at Kuthiran, between Thrissur and Palakkad.

The new road would be 30 km shorter than the present one. The Konkan Railway Corporation, which prepared the detailed project report, will execute the project on a turnkey basis, Minister for Public Works G. Sudhakaran said on Thursday.

The Cabinet has also given the nod for a ₹39.9-crore Perumon bridge across Ashtamudi Lake in Kollam district.

TTD awaits government's nod to allow darshan

Safety protocol has been readied

S. VIJAY KUMAR
CHENNAI

The Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD) is waiting for a nod from the Andhra Pradesh government to allow darshan for devotees at Tirumala, TTD Chairman Y.V. Subba Reddy said on Thursday.

Talking to *The Hindu*, Mr. Reddy said the TTD had written to the State government that darshan could be allowed for about 10,000 devotees a day to start with, considering physical distancing in accommodation, queue, and darshan.

Though an average of 85,000 to 1 lakh devotees visited Tirumala on a daily basis from across the country,

the COVID-19 safety protocols would not permit such huge gatherings.

The TTD management, in consultation with health and other officials, has chalked out a safety protocol for staff, security personnel and devotees. The plan is to issue a limited



The TTD has chalked out a safety protocol for devotees.

number of darshan tickets online and provide detailed instructions to devotees on the rules to follow. Sufficient numbers of masks, hand sanitisers and thermal scanners would be made available at the Alipiri security check point and at Tirumala for devotees. A quarantine block has been established to accommodate staff or devotees with symptoms of COVID-19.

"Though the temple is closed for devotees, routine rituals are being conducted. We have enough funds to pay salaries and run hospitals and educational institutions owned by the TTD," he said.

Cats keep forest staff on tenterhooks in Hyderabad

Civet cat rescued, shifted to zoo; leopard escapes into a farm on the outskirts of the city

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

HYDERABAD

A leopard which disappeared into a farm after being sighted at Katedan here on Thursday is keeping forest officials and the police on tenterhooks.

This was among the two incidents of wild cat sightings in the city on Wednesday and Thursday.

In the first instance, a civet cat (Asian palm civet) was spotted on the ramparts of Noorani Masjid near Fateh Darwaza of Golconda Fort late on Wednesday.

Rumours of a black panther sighting immediately



spread, keeping the residents nearby awake the whole night. Much to their relief, the animal was rescued early on Thursday by a forest team, and shifted to

the Nehru Zoological Park.

Close on the heels of the rescue came news of the sighting of a leopard on the road near the Katedan underpass, on the periphery of Mylaredevpally. The feline was reportedly found sitting on the road for close to one and a half hours before the police and Forest teams began rescue operations.

It was reported that a person who went too close to the animal was attacked and received mild injuries.

Pursued by rescue teams, the animal later entered an 80-acre farm on the Shamshabad route. Police and For-

est department officials, together with rescue teams from Nehru Zoological Park, secured the area and were attempting to capture the big cat when reports last came in.

The Forest department said two trap cages and nets had been set up on the farm, along with 25 CC camera traps. Three special teams under the FDO, Shamshabad, would keep night vigil at the farm, supported by the police. Rescue teams from the zoo, comprising veterinarians equipped with tranquilliser guns, have been stationed at the spot.

In observation made at 6.00 p.m., Panipat, Haryana recorded an overall air quality index (AQI) score of 303, indicating a dangerous level of pollution. In contrast, Aizawl, Mizoram recorded a healthy AQI score of 33.

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

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

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

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

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

Kerala prepares for rise in cases, 3 die in Karnataka, A.P.

26 added to Kerala tally, Andhra Pradesh sends migrants to camps, quarantine

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Two more COVID-19 deaths were reported in Karnataka on Thursday taking the total toll to 35. Andhra Pradesh witnessed one more death and 68 new cases.

Kerala expected to take on a surge in cases, and prepared to focus on specialised protocols for management and immunity-building of the general population.

Universal wearing of masks and social distancing would have to be way of life. Crowding must be avoided in public places and shopping malls and restaurants would have to make new arrangements like having fixed time-slots. People and families must take up only necessary travel, and restrict get-togethers with limited attendees, Chief Minister Pinarayi

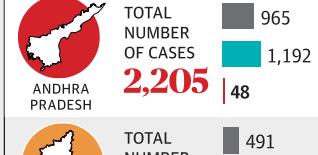
Flouting norms

Though the government is doing its best to contain the spread of the virus, people in many places do not strictly adhere to the physical distancing norms



No rules here: People thronging Prakasam Bazaar in Nalgonda, Telangana, on Thursday.

■ SINGAM VENKATARAMANA



An 80-year-old resident of Dakshina Kannada admitted following a stroke died due to septic shock.

The surge in cases continued in Telangana with 47 more cases, taking the total to 1,414. The Greater Hyderabad area accounted for 40 of the 47 cases.

Cases dip in T.N.

After 10 days, Tamil Nadu reported less than 500 cases of coronavirus disease on Thursday. With 447 persons testing positive for COVID-19, the State's tally climbed to 9,674. Nearly 80% of the new cases were in Chennai.

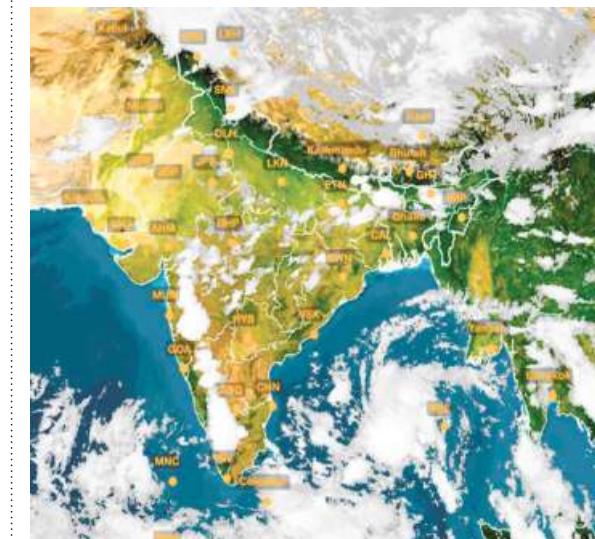
Of the 447 (253 men and 194 women), 22 persons, who had returned from Maharashtra, tested positive for the infection in five districts.

As Chennai's tally of positive cases climbed to 5,637 with 363 new patients, two more persons - aged in their 40s - who tested positive died in the city. This took the total deaths to 66 in the State.

(With inputs from Vijayawada, Chennai, Bengaluru and Hyderabad Bureaus)

WEATHER WATCH

RAINFALL, TEMPERATURE & AIR QUALITY IN SELECT METROS YESTERDAY



TEMPERATURE DATA: IMD; POLLUTION DATA: CPCB; MAP: INSAT/IMD (TAKEN AT 18.00 HRS)

Forecast for Friday: Thunderstorm accompanied with lightning and gusty winds at isolated places over Jammu & Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, west Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, sub-Himalayan West Bengal, Assam, Maharashtra, Goa, Telangana, coastal and south interior Karnataka and Kerala and with lightning at isolated places over Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand, Odisha, coastal Andhra Pradesh, north interior Karnataka and Tamil Nadu.

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	9.2...	36.6...	24.6	Kozhikode	2.4...	35.4...	26.6
Ahmedabad	—	41.1...	29.8	Kurnool	—	41.0...	29.8
Aizawl	—	31.6...	18.1	Lucknow	—	38.0...	24.4
Altahabad	—	40.6...	25.0	Madurai	10.4...	38.0...	25.2
Bengaluru	—	34.9...	23.7	Mangaluru	—	36.2...	25.5
Bhopal	9.4...	39.9...	23.2	Mumbai	—	34.5...	27.0
Bhubaneswar	—	36.2...	26.2	Mysuru	—	34.9...	23.0
Chandigarh	—	34.7...	22.3	New Delhi	—	41.1...	22.6
Chennai	—	36.0...	29.0	Patna	—	36.4...	26.2
Coimbatore	—	38.2...	25.8	Port Blair	14.0...		



One for the poor

Foodgrains will offer immediate relief, but workers need more substantive succour

More than 50 days since a nationwide lockdown was announced by the Union government, it is clear that what was done as a public health measure to protect people from the COVID-19 threat has snowballed into a major economic crisis for the urban poor in general and migrant labour in particular. The travails of migrant workers have been well-documented. With loss of livelihoods, they have been pushed into penury in their places of work. And with the lockdown initially preventing inter-State travel, many have embarked on arduous journeys to their native places to get some support at a time of acute distress. In the second of a series of measures that are part of a ₹20 lakh crore economic package, Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman has tried to address the needs of these sections, apart from small farmers. She has recognised that migrant workers have taken to the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme in a major way after the Centre gave explicit instructions to reopen the scheme. As in the past, this remains a lifesaver for people dependent on fragile livelihoods, and the decision to extend it to the monsoon season is welcome. The government should also ensure that wages are paid without delays, a major problem with the scheme's implementation lately. A waiver or at least an extension of the 100-day limit per household too would have helped. It is now up to the States to ensure the scheme is implemented properly.

For migrants who are still stationed in their places of work and who are not beneficiaries of the National Food Security Act or State schemes, the Finance Minister has promised 5 kg of foodgrains per person and 1 kg of channa per family per month for two months. This will bring the number of people receiving subsidised foodgrains close to the legal requirement of the National Food Security Act (67% of the population). It is a welcome relief for many starved workers, but the government could have extended the Public Distribution System coverage to include more people who are suffering from loss of jobs and livelihoods, besides migrant workers. Ms. Sitharaman also announced that the 'one nation, one ration card' scheme to allow migrants access any fair price shop across the country will be implemented by March 2021. But this scheme, as implemented now, has been utilised only sparingly by migrants, and concerns from States like Tamil Nadu where PDS is near-universal are yet to be addressed. Many of the announcements, including one for small farmers, are a combination of liquidity and credit-easing measures or the extension of existing schemes. As things stand, they fall short of the substantive fiscal measures that could stimulate demand in the economy. After all, that seemed to be the crux of the Prime Minister's promise of spending ₹20 lakh crore.

Lockdown syndrome

Quick recovery from the virus-induced economic crisis is possible with good policies

Official data capturing the economic impact of the nationwide lockdown are starting to pour in slowly. The country's industrial output, as measured by the Index of Industrial Production (IIP), contracted by 16.7% in March, according to statistics released by the government on Tuesday. This is in contrast to a growth rate of 2.7% witnessed during the same month last year. The sharp fall can largely be explained by the nationwide lockdown that was imposed by the Centre in the last week of the month. The manufacturing sector, which witnessed a contraction of about 20%, was the worst hit among the key sectors, perhaps due to disruptions in the labour market caused by the lockdown. In terms of end-goods, capital goods and consumer durables witnessed a roughly one-third contraction in size as the sale of non-essential goods was obliterated by the unexpected lockdown. Analysts say that industrial output is likely to fall even further in April when the economy was in complete shutdown. In fact, some estimates suggest that the economy's overall output in the first quarter of FY21 could be cut by one-fourth and growth for the whole financial year could well turn out to be negative. So, March's gloomy industrial production figures are likely to be soon forgotten as a flood of bleak economic data hits the country further down the road. That said, it should be noted that FY20 IIP growth was set to post a weak show even before the lockdown was imposed in late-March.

The COVID-19 crisis being a temporary external shock, much like demonetisation in 2016 but much larger in scale, can theoretically lead to a quick bounce-back in economic activity once the lockdown is lifted. But the actual pace of the recovery in industrial production and even the wider economy will depend on the policy environment created by the government after the crisis. The economic rescue measures announced by the Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Wednesday, such as more loans to small and medium scale enterprises and looser credit standards, can help the recovery by allowing businesses to find their feet soon. Obviously, the key will lie in the implementation of these measures. Previous attempts by the Reserve Bank of India and the government to flush the system with liquidity, after all, have failed to improve credit flow to businesses. The government must also ensure that bureaucratic red tape does not kill any nascent recovery at a time when businesses, whose balance sheets have been hit hard by the crisis, need the freedom to adjust to a new economic reality. The government's emphasis on self-reliance as its new economic agenda, however, does not bode well for such hopes.

Stop the return to laissez-faire

Labour laws are civilisational goals and cannot be trumped on the excuse of a pandemic



R. VAIGAI & ANNA MATHEW

doment of the unorganised workforce, the employers want the state to reintroduce laissez-faire and a system of indenture for the organised workforce too. This will take away the protection conferred on organised labour by Parliament.

Colonial exploitation

The move is reminiscent of the barbaric system of indentured labour introduced through the Bengal Regulations VII, 1819 for the British planters in Assam tea estates. Workers had to work under a five-year contract and desertion was made punishable. Later, the Transport of Native Labourers' Act, 1863 was passed in Bengal which strengthened control of the employers and even enabled them to detain labourers in the district of employment and imprison them for six months. Bengal Act VI of 1865 was later passed to deploy Special Emigration Police to prevent labourers from leaving, and return them to the plantation after detention. What we are witnessing today bears a horrifying resemblance to what happened over 150 years ago in British India.

Staring at starvation, lakhs of workers started walking back home. Many died on the way. More than a month later, the Centre issued cryptic orders permitting their return to their home States. Immediately employer organisations lobbied to prevent the workers from leaving. Governments responded by delaying travel facilities for the workers to ensure uninterrupted supply of labour for employers.

Employers now want labour laws to be relaxed. The Uttar Pradesh government has issued an ordinance keeping in abeyance almost all labour statutes including laws on maternity benefits and gratuity; the Factories Act, 1948; the Minimum Wages Act, 1948; the Industrial Establishments (Standing Orders) Act, 1946; and the Trade Unions Act, 1926. Several States have exempted industries from complying with various provisions of laws. The Confederation of Indian Industry has suggested 12-hour work shifts and that governments issue directions to make workers join duty failing which the workers would face penal actions.

Thus, after an organised aban-



K.V.S. GIRI
Government of India Act, 1935 enabled greater representation of Indians in law-making. This resulted in reforms, which are forerunners to the present labour enactments. The indentured plantation labour saw relief in the form of the Plantations Labour Act, 1951.

Dignity through democracy

By a democratic legislative process, Parliament stepped in to protect labour. The Factories Act lays down eight-hour work shifts, with overtime wages, weekly offs, leave with wages and measures for health, hygiene and safety. The Industrial Disputes Act provides for workers participation to resolve wage and other disputes through negotiations so that strikes/lockouts, unjust retrenchments and dismissals are avoided. The Minimum Wages Act ensures wages below which it is not possible to subsist. These enactments further the Directive Principles of State Policy and protect the right to life and the right against exploitation under Articles 21 and 23. Trade unions have played critical roles in transforming the life of a worker from that of servitude to one of dignity. In the scheme of socio-economic justice the labour unions cannot be dispensed with.

The Supreme Court, in *Glaxo Laboratories v. The Presiding Officer, Labour* (1983), said this about the Industrial Employment (Standing Orders) Act, 1946: "In the days of laissez-faire when industrial relations was governed by the harsh weighted law of hire and fire, the management was the supreme master, the relationship being referable to a contract bet-

ween unequal... The developing notions of social justice and the expanding horizon of socio-economic justice necessitated statutory protection to the unequal partner in the industry namely, those who invest blood and flesh against those who bring in capital... The movement was from status to contract, the contract being not left to be negotiated by two unequal persons but statutorily imposed."

Any move to undo these laws will push the workers a century backwards. Considering the underlying constitutional goals of these laws, Parliament did not delegate to the executive any blanket powers of exemption. Section 5 of the Factories Act empowers the State governments to exempt only in case of a "public emergency", which is explained as a "grave emergency whereby the security of India or any part of the territory thereof is threatened, whether by war or external aggression or internal disturbance". There is no such threat to the security of India now. Hours of work or holidays cannot be exempted even for public institutions. Section 36B of the Industrial Disputes Act enables exemption for a government industry only if provisions exist for investigations and settlements.

No statutory support

The orders of the State governments therefore lack statutory support. Labour is a concurrent subject in the Constitution and most pieces of labour legislation are Central enactments. The U.P. government has said that labour laws will not apply for the next three years. Even laws to protect basic human rights covering migrant workers, minimum wages, maternity benefits, gratuity, etc. have been suspended. How can a State government, in one fell swoop, nullify Central enactments? The Constitution does not envisage approval by the President of a State Ordinance which makes a whole slew of laws enacted by

Parliament inoperable in the absence of corresponding legislations on the same subject.

Almost all labour contracts are now governed by statutes, settlements or adjudicated awards arrived through democratic processes in which labour has been accorded at least procedural equality. Such procedures ensure progress of a nation.

In *Life Insurance Corporation v. D.J. Bahadur & Ors* (1980), the Supreme Court highlighted that any changes in the conditions of service can be only through a democratic process of negotiations or legislation. Rejecting the Central government's attempt to unilaterally deny bonus, the Court said, "fundamental errors can be avoided only by remembering fundamental values", as otherwise there would be a "lawless hiatus".

The orders and ordinances issued by the State governments are undemocratic and unconstitutional. The existing conditions of labour will have to be continued. Let us not forget that global corporations had their origins in instruments of colonialism and their legacy was inherited by Indian capital post-Independence. The resurgence of such a colonial mindset is a danger to the society and the well-being of millions and puts at risk the health and safety of not only the workforce but their families too.

In the unequal bargaining power between capital and labour, regulatory laws provide a countervailing balance and ensure the dignity of labour. Governments have a constitutional duty to ensure just, humane conditions of work and maternity benefits. The health and strength of the workers cannot be abused by force of economic necessity. Labour laws are thus civilisational goals and cannot be trumped on the excuse of a pandemic.

R. Vaigai and Anna Mathew are advocates practising at the Madras High Court

States cannot be left to the Centre's mercy

Not only are the States not paid what is due to them, they have also lost the powers to raise their own sales tax revenues



PRAVEEN CHAKRAVARTHY

Karur MP S. Jothimani recently conducted a telephonic survey of 30 lakh people in Tamil Nadu on the re-opening of liquor shops in the State during lockdown 3.0. An overwhelming 89% were opposed to the move.

The Maharashtra government too decided to permit liquor shops to open but was quickly forced to reverse its decision in some parts of the State following protests. Similar protests against the sale of alcohol were seen in various States. This may be largely due to fears of crowding and the consequent spread of COVID-19 rather than about alcoholism and its potentially deleterious societal impact.

Whatever may be the reason, it is clear that permitting the sale of alcohol during the lockdown is an unpopular move among the majority. Why then have popularly elected governments in nearly every State resorted to this move? The answer lies in what happened 'at the stroke of midnight hour' on July 1, 2017.

A triple blow

It is apparent that financially broke State governments are forced to adopt desperate and re-

viled measures such as opening liquor shops to mobilise money for their fight against COVID-19. The question is, even if they are strapped for resources, surely there must be other means to raise funds in this struggle to save lives than to prey on people's alcohol addiction? Therein lies the rub.

All the States have come together like "pearls on a string" in the spirit of cooperative federalism for the economic integration of India, said Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the stroke of midnight hour on July 1, 2017 when he launched the Goods and Services Tax (GST). What was not mentioned was that the States on that "pearl string" were now stuck to the Centre's neck forever. GST forced the States to surrender their powers to raise resources independently through local State taxes and place them entirely at the mercy of the Centre for most of their financial needs.

Most States raise resources through a combination of their own taxes and a share in the Centre's taxes. For richer States such as Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Gujarat, Delhi, Karnataka, Punjab, Haryana and Kerala, 70% or more of their revenue comes from taxes generated within their State boundaries. Nearly half of these were from the sale of goods and services within the State and the remaining half, from a combination of excise duties on petrol, electricity, alcohol, land registration fees, etc. Before GST, States were free to

charge sales taxes as legislated by their State legislatures. If a State had a natural disaster, they could raise additional resources for rehabilitation by raising sales tax rates on goods and services.

For the sake of GST, States sacrificed their fiscal powers in the promise of 'economic efficiency' and 'tax buoyancy', which never materialised. Under GST, States are legally entitled to their share of tax revenues collected in their State. But they are now reliant on the Centre to release these funds to them periodically. When the GST was enacted, States were also guaranteed a minimum tax revenue every year for a period of five years. In the midst of the current pandemic, the Centre has reneged on both these promises.

This is a triple blow for the States – not being paid what they are owed, not being helped with additional resources, and bearing the brunt of the pandemic's impact. Not only are they not paid what is rightfully due to them, they have also lost the powers to raise their own sales tax revenues. So, how are they supposed to fight this health calamity with no mo-

ney?

The other available options for States to raise funds are through taxes on sale of petroleum products, alcohol, lottery tickets, electricity, land or vehicle registration. During this extreme lockdown, demand for petroleum products, electricity, land and vehicles has dwindled substantially. So, the only option left for most States is to raise funds through the sale of alcohol. For the large, richer States, alcohol sales account for more than one-third of their State tax revenues. One could argue that alcohol consumption could even potentially increase during the lockdown and hence States have been tempted and coerced to resorting to raising monies from people's alcohol habits. Ironically, the States are being forced to rely on alcohol for resolving a health crisis.

Can't the States borrow money to tide over this crisis? In order to do that, they need the Centre's approval to raise their borrowing limit or to stand as guarantors. Since States do not have clear revenue visibility, the rates at which they can borrow are very high and their ability to borrow is severely undermined. They are once again dependent on the Centre to borrow funds from the market and then release them to the States.

The pre-GST era

How would the States have handled this crisis in the pre-GST era? One, they would have had the

funds raised through sales taxes to themselves and not be at the Centre's mercy to release funds. Two, they would have raised taxes on select essential goods sold in their States (say, mangoes or coconut oil) in accordance with their norms. Just as it is clear that COVID-19 has to be fought in a decentralised manner at the local level and not through a Delhi diktat, the resources needed to fight this disease should also be raised locally and not be dependent on Delhi's whimsical magnanimity.

The Centre has defaulted on its financial obligations to the States at a critical juncture. Former Finance Minister Arun Jaitley's catchphrase "cooperative federalism" has proved to be neither cooperative nor federalist in times of this crisis. The idea of 'one nation, one tax' is deeply flawed in an economically and politically divergent India, as I have argued since 2015. Ruling parties and alliances in States can change every five years. The efficient functioning of a GST regime cannot be beholden to political party affiliations at the Centre and the States. Democratically elected State governments cannot be expected to govern with no fiscal powers. Five States account for half of all GST collections in the country. It is time these bigger States challenge the very idea of GST.

Praveen Chakravarty is a political economist and a senior office-bearer of the Congress party



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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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

Boosting demand
The major stimulus announced for MSMEs will rejuvenate the supply side, but the major problem lies in boosting overall demand ("Major stimulus package for MSMEs", May 14).

COVID-19 has hit the poor very badly. The government needs to put substantial money and purchasing power in the hands of the underprivileged who are not taxpayers. If this is not done, the consumption cycle will not be revived. Apart from this, other economic stimulus packages for agriculture, industry, public and health

infrastructure are also crucial. They will also help create employment opportunities.

A. MOHAN,
Chennai

Exploiting workers
The fact that parties in opposition to the BJP, including the Congress, were conspicuous by their absence in the symbolic protests held by the Left and a few regional parties lays bare the failure of the Opposition to stand together behind the masses on a crucial issue ("Parties protest against dilution of labour laws", May 14). Why can't States decrease daily working hours for individuals and employ

disturbing to see the Congress government in Punjab also ask workers to work for 12 hours a day. If even the Opposition parties implement exploitative policies, who will speak on behalf of the workers?

N. RAVEENDRA BABU,
Hyderabad

The decision of some State governments to dilute labour laws flies against the letter and spirit of the Constitution ("Provide income support, restore jobs", May 14). Why can't States decrease daily working hours for individuals and employ

more people? For example, if an industry needs to run for 12 hours a day, it can employ one set of workers for a six hour-shift and another set for the next six-hour shift. This will also increase employment. It also goes without saying that an overworked person is likely to suffer from serious health issues.

Are India's labour laws too restrictive?

PARLEY

For employers, availability of skilled workforce and worker-management ties are more vital

Some State governments including Uttar Pradesh (U.P.) and Madhya Pradesh (M.P.) have proposed ordinances to exempt manufacturing establishments from the purview of most labour laws. In a discussion moderated by Suresh Seshadri, Amit Basole and K.R. Shyam Sundar look at the backdrop for this move and consider what lies ahead for the country's labour and industrial relations. Edited excerpts.

Are the ordinances justified given the need to both preserve and create jobs in the wake of the COVID-19 crisis?

K.R. Shyam Sundar (KRSS): First, let me express my profound sense of shock [at the] changes or even disruptions that M.P. and U.P. governments have introduced on the pretext of creating employment and attracting investment. This is a very dangerous kind of political legitimacy that has been invoked.

There are three issues here. The Constitution provides a number of basic rights, and, under the directive principles of state policy, a number of assurances. Now, the kind of changes that have been made, they potentially will hurt, will dis-enable the realisation of the constitutional objectives. Second, the facility of the concurrent subject has been abused. And, we should bear in mind that the national codification and the labour law reform process is on. What is the unholy hurry on the part of the State governments to do this? But, I have an explanation: given the COVID situation and the national lockdown, the trade unions that are already weak cannot mobilise their forces and conduct any kind of a State-level or national struggle. This is a clear case of vulnerability, which the state has exploited.

Now, whether the labour laws constitute rigidities, the answer, in a cautious sense, is 'indecisive' because there are research studies on both sides. The World Bank survey, 2014, asked employers... and the employers did not rate labour law regulations as [among] the top five or seven or 10 irritants. For them, the availability of skilled workforce

and cooperative labour-management relations were far more important than flexible labour laws. So, the gravest implication of these labour laws [changes] is that it will create industrial discontent, even a kind of labour unrest, which will stifle any hope of achieving industrial progress. And, employers will not benefit because these provisions will hurt labour welfare and thereby labour efficiency.

Amit Basole (AB): One must remember in all of these discussions that India still remains, what economists call, a labour-surplus country. Particularly at the lower ends of the labour spectrum where less education is required, there is usually an excess supply of labour which gives more bargaining power to employers. So, the responsibility of the state in such a context is to safeguard the interests of labour through legislation because the market does not give them the necessary protection.

Second, on the question of how they act as constraints or barriers: of course employers will always want to have a freer hand in managing labour relations, setting wages, conditions and so forth. That just follows from the nature of the capital-labour relations. That does not mean that the state should allow them that free hand. Will employers hire more workers if they are given a freer hand? Possibly, if certain other conditions are also met. [If not], there is no reason to believe that labour laws by themselves will do anything to improve job creation.

Of course, they will make working conditions worse, and life worse for workers. But, on the plus side, will you get any benefit out of a total increase in employment? That is not clear. The well-known things that act as constraints on job creation [include] the overall health of the economy, the level of demand in the economy. What is people's purchasing power? Are their wages rising or not? What is the stability of the business climate? Is the state trusted by businesses, small and large businesses, to deliver on its promises? What are the export conditions like? Is the government following a con-



GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCKPHOTO

sistent policy, sending out the correct and consistent signals on what it wants to promote and what it doesn't want to promote? All of these macro policies, industrial policies, trade policies govern the climate of job creation, in addition to the overall health of the economy. If none of that is in place, a simple tweaking of the labour laws basically worsens working conditions and doesn't achieve much else.

Was lack of flexibility an issue regarding manufacturing and job creation even before the pandemic?

AB: There is also an issue of diversity of employers when we talk about manufacturing. We're talking about some very large companies. We're talking about small and medium companies, we're talking about very small workshops also. And they all experience the government and the labour regime differently. It is certainly possible that at the lower end of the manufacturing spectrum, the labour laws have been arbitrarily and extortiously imposed. There is always a possibility that bribes can be extracted in the name of labour laws not being covered, making life difficult for employers, which creates incentives for them to double book, keep workers off the books. So, do the labour laws act as a constraint on good job creation? In this particular sense, yes, because they do incentivise some employers to evade showing workers on their books, for fear that even if they're following laws, the state may come down on

C The state needs to safeguard the interests of workers, particularly those at the lower-end of the labour spectrum

AMIT BASOLE,
Professor

them on some pretext or the other.

Now, to use that to extend it to the entire manufacturing sector, to vastly productive industries, to large-scale manufacturing, where we know that the labour share of income has been precipitously declining, productivity has been rising, over there can we continue to use the labour laws argument to give this bigger and bigger contract labour force, create precarious working conditions and widen the rift between wages and productivity? We shouldn't be doing that. There, we are creating, actually, macroeconomic problems for the country in addition to making working conditions worse. So, there has to be a little bit more of a nuanced understanding of where exactly labour laws are a constraint and what can the government do to make life simpler there, while not going beyond a non-negotiable floor.

Industry is reported to have urged the Centre to mandate the return of workers and warn labour of penal consequences. Is this implementable and what does it bode for employer-employee relations?

KRSS: The state and the employers could ask the employees to report for work, only if two conditions are

met. Given the imposition of lockdown and suspension of public transport, there must be enabling conditions like resumption of public transportation or private provision of transportation by the employers... [Second] COVID SOPs [must be] effectively implemented at the workplace because the workers could withdraw from a potentially hazardous workplace. And third, there must be work. If these three conditions are satisfied and still the workers do not report, action can be taken against them, as per the company rules or agreements or the standing orders under the Industrial Employment Standing Orders Act, 1946. But, the workers should be given a fair hearing.

Do these ordinances risk compromising workers' rights, including safety?

KRSS: So, the professed objective of ensuring occupational safety and security may not be realised for primarily two reasons. Both [ordinances] have frozen the conditions of work like lighting, temperature, dust and fumes and brightness... and there is every incentive for the employer to ignore [these conditions] given the labour market opportunistic behaviour. And these may lead to unsafe working conditions. Second, the extension of working hours. It is well known that long hours of work, repetitive work... deficient conditions of work, pose a considerable threat to occupational safety and health.

One justification spoken of is the need to make India a more attractive destination than China for setting up manufacturing plants.

AB: Regarding competitiveness with respect to labour, it is true that a race to the bottom is a general accepted principle. It is ironic in a way in the globalisation period, that countries compete on low wages, and primarily on that sort of labour element, particularly the labour-surplus countries. But that said, those are again never the only factors when investment decisions are considered. Almost always, the overall business climate, the reliability of the state and its policies, the infrastructural situation, electricity

supply, logistics and transport, the quality of labour and the skill of labour, human capital issues. All these things matter as much, if not more, than the level of wages and the laxity, or lack thereof of the labour laws. So, if we don't do anything on the other fronts, and only expect that somehow, with the stroke of a pen, diluting labour laws will magically bring in investment then we are very sadly mistaken.

Given that job creation is crucial and that trade unions have been weakened, what lies ahead for our labour force?

KRSS: During the financial crisis when the trade unions were taken into confidence by the employers, the trade unions were willing to offer concessions in terms of deferring increments, agreeing to regular overtime wage rate, or to work on a Sunday or to have some kind of structured lay-off systems. So, instead of making macro-level, uncalled for interventions, which are draconian, the governments should have held social dialogue and asked the trade unions: "Look these are difficult times, we need to create jobs, we need to get out of the COVID crisis, how can we go about it?" And then, if the trade unions set unreasonable demands, then there is a call for introducing certain directives.

AB: At this point, in the immediate months to come, the responsibility actually lies squarely on the government to restore some health to the labour market... because we were in a slowdown, even going into the lockdown. [P]rivate investment may not pick up. Jobs also may not come back. In the immediate term, there is a necessity for the government to come out with a fairly strong fiscal package that creates optimistic conditions by providing employment to people, something that tightens the labour market a little bit, puts money in people's pockets, and creates demand in the economy; the private investment then will follow as it usually does. And, once that happens, once there's some health restored in the economy and economic growth has been restored, then, a lot of these things are discussable: we can go back to the labour reform issue.



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Scan the QR code to listen to the full conversation online

Keeping Asia-Pacific afloat

The marine environment in the region is getting strained, jeopardising lives and livelihoods

ARMIDA ALSALAH ALISJAHBANA

For generations, the Asia-Pacific region has thrived on our seas. The seas provide food, livelihoods and a sense of identity, especially for coastal communities in the Pacific island states. Sadly, escalating strains on the marine environment are threatening to drown progress and our way of life. In less than a century, climate change and unsustainable resource management have degraded ecosystems and diminished biodiversity.

Levels of overfishing have exponentially increased, leaving fish stocks and food systems vulnerable. Marine plastic pollution coursing through the region's rivers has contributed to most of the debris flooding the ocean. While the COVID-19 pandemic has temporarily reduced pollution, this should not be a moment of reprieve. Rather, recovery efforts need to build a new reality, embedded in sustainability.

Lack of data

Despite a seascape celebrated in our collective imaginations, research shows that our picture of the ocean is remarkably shallow. Insights from 'Changing Sails: Accelerating Regional Actions for Sustainable Oceans in Asia and the Pacific', the theme study of this year's Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), reveal that without data, we are swimming in the dark. Data are available for only two out of ten targets for the Sustainable Development Goal 14, 'Life Below Water'. Due to limitations in methodology and national statistical systems, information gaps have persisted at uneven levels across countries.

While there is much we cannot see, images of plastic pollution have become commonplace. Asia and the Pacific produces nearly half of global plastic by volume, of which it consumes 38%. Plastics represent a double burden for the ocean: their production generates CO₂ absorbed by the ocean, and as a final product enters the ocean as pollution. Beating this challenge will hinge upon effective national policies and re-thinking production cycles.

Environmental decline is also affecting fish stocks. Our region's posi-

tion as the world's largest producer of fish has come at the cost of over-exploitation. The percentage of stocks fished at unsustainable levels has increased threefold from 10% in 1974 to 33% in 2015. Generating complete data on fish stocks, fighting illicit fishing activity and conserving marine areas must remain a priority.

While the most connected shipping economies are in Asia, the small island developing States of the Pacific experience much lower levels of connectivity, leaving them relatively isolated from the global economy. Closing the maritime connectivity gap must be placed at the centre of regional transport cooperation efforts. We must also work with the shipping community to navigate toward green shipping. Enforcing sustainable shipping policies is essential.

The magnitude of our ocean and its challenges represent how extensive and collaborative our solutions must be. Trans-boundary ocean management and linking ocean data call for close cooperation among countries in the region. Harnessing ocean statistics through strong national statistical systems will serve as a compass guiding countries to monitor trends, devise timely responses and clear blind spots. Through the Ocean Accounts Partnership, ESCAP is working with countries to harmonise ocean data and provide a space for regular dialogue.

Translating international agreements and standards into national action is also key. We must fully equip countries and all ocean custodians to localise global agreements into tangible results. ESCAP is working with member states to implement International Maritime Organization (IMO) requirements. Keeping the ocean plastic-free will depend on policies that promote a circular economy approach. This minimises resource use and will require economic incentives and disincentives.

Our oceans keep our economy and our lives above the waves. In the post-COVID-19 era, we must use the years ahead to steer our collective fleets toward sustainable oceans.

Armida Salsiah Alisjahbana is Executive Secretary of ESCAP



NOTEBOOK

Rescuing Indians left stranded by war, disaster or pandemic

Sailors, pilots and other officials are the unsung heroes of evacuation efforts

SUHASINI HAIDAR

"Pin drop silence in the control room please" said the ship's commander. We were a small group of journalists squeezed deep into the hull of the Indian Naval warship INS Mumbai, as it made its journey towards Beirut harbour in 2006.

The ship had set sail along with accompanying frigates INS Brahmaputra and Betwa and the tanker ship INS Shakti from Larnaca two days before, on a mission called Operation Sukoon, to evacuate 3,000 Indians and others stuck in Lebanon after Israel declared war.

Above stairs, bunks were being emptied out to accommodate more than a thousand men and women who would board the next day, while the ship's cavernous kitchens had vats of food on the boil to feed the guests. In the control room, the commander was communicating with Israel

Defence Forces (IDF) commanders to ensure that our fleet would be given safe passage into the harbour. It was tense till the last minute, despite prior diplomatic clearances.

Like with all such evacuations, logistics can be planned, but the really big task is getting all civilians to register to board the ship. Despite the dire threat they faced, many didn't want to leave and lose their jobs. Some had entered the country illegally, and had no papers. Officials had to work quickly against deadlines to ensure they didn't miss their ride home.

There were other unusual moments. Many of the Indians leaving had married other foreign workers while in Lebanon, and their wives came to bid them tearful farewells at Beirut harbour. When we returned with them by Air India flights from Cyprus, we were shocked to see equally teary welcomes for them

from their Indian wives at Delhi airport!

In Libya and Yemen

In 2011, I watched another naval ship bearing the tricolour steam into Libya's Tripoli; this time, I was standing at the harbour, as my cameraman and I had flown into Tripoli some days ago. With the UN's go-ahead for NATO's mission, it was clear that getting more than 15,000 Indians working in Libya out would need a massive naval and flight operation.

The Yemeni evacuation of 2015 too saw some very tricky moments, as diplomats negotiated flight windows between air raids by the Saudi defence forces on Houthi rebels who had taken over the capital, Sana'a. While journalists were not allowed to cover Operation Rahat, I remember a long conversation with naval officers who had been on board ships like the INS Tarkash from Ye-

men to Djibouti which evacuated nearly 5,000 Indians and other nationalities, speaking of how they had to deal with AK-47-armed Yemeni gangs who also wanted a passage to safety. After some very dangerous moments, the naval commanders negotiated to have the Indians allowed on to the ship, and agreed to take some Yemenis, after they had disarmed.

The current repatriation effort, Operation Vande Bharat, comprising operations to bring home lakhs of Indians stranded due to the COVID-19 lockdown, is certainly India's most extensive, and involves dozens of countries; but these operations are much more orderly and far less dangerous than those that preceded it. As in the past, however, there will be hundreds of brave officials, diplomats, pilots and crew, and sailors and soldiers who will be the unsung heroes.

The Hindu

FROM THE ARCHIVES

FIFTY YEARS AGO MAY 15, 1970

Place of English in Education
(From an editorial)

Fifty three of the 72 universities of India are now offering degree courses in the regional language, according to a statement made by the Union Minister for Education, Dr. V. K. R. V. Rao during the debate in the Lok Sabha on the University Grants Commission (Amendment) Bill. What the Minister says may be correct, but it is at the same time misleading in one sense. For the vast majority of university students opt for the English medium and in some cases, as in Bombay University, the regional languages do not come into the picture at all. There is nothing surprising about this preference of college students for English, since it gives them freedom of movement and opportunity not only in India but in other countries as well, and opens to them the gates of science and technology in all fields. The Government of India has been trying to arrange for translations of English books into all the regional languages but it will be a long time before up to date sets of books are available. However, there is a striking contrast between the place of English in higher education and its role at the primary and secondary school level.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO MAY 15, 1920.

The end of an empire.
(From an editorial)

We publish elsewhere a summary of the terms of the Turkish Treaty as well as the appeal by the Viceroy to the Muslims of India. It is beyond question that these terms will be received throughout the country with feelings of the profoundest dismay and indignation. They outrage every single canon of justice and fair-play; they eventually cast to the winds solemn pledges; they exhibit a contemptuous disregard of the feelings of the whole Islamic world; and last but not least with a hypocrisy more disgusting than flaunting spoliation they seek to dock the ethics of the thieves' kitchen with the threadbare garment of those famous Fourteen Points. The Crusaders have triumphed and religious fanaticism has reason to gloat over this its most conspicuous success. The Turk has been turned bag and baggage out of Europe, on the sacred soil of which he only retains Constantinople and the few miles of the Peninsula. The boundaries in Asia, assures the message naively, are to remain the same with the trifling difference that they will exclude Syria, Palestine, Arabia, Mesopotamia, Armenia and Kurdistan.

FROM PAGE ONE

Migrant workers to get free foodgrains

The One Nation One Ration Card scheme was to cover all States by June 2020. As *The Hindu* had reported last week, Food Ministry data shows that inter-State transactions under the scheme have been very low, around 200 per month since the lockdown, due to poor awareness and the stalling of biometric authentication due to the pandemic.

"The need of the moment was to universalise the Public Distribution System to provide food to whoever needed it, especially since the grains are available in the Centre's godowns," said Prof Jayati Ghosh, who chairs the Centre for Economic Studies and Planning at Jawaharlal Nehru University.

IM-Ahmedabad professor and economist Reetika Khera, who had calculated that 10 crore people have been excluded from NFSA coverage due to growth

since census 2011, said the new intervention would not even cover that shortfall.

For returning workers without livelihood in their villages, Ms. Sitharaman said States had been directed to enrol them under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA). She said 14.6 crore person days of work have been generated under the scheme till May 13, claiming that this was 40-50% higher than work generated in May 2019.

However, data shows that less than 14 crore person days of work have been provided in April and May 2020 together, while 64 crore person days of work were provided in April and May 2019. A senior Rural Development official clarified that Ms. Sitharaman meant to refer to e-muster roll data, showing that 50% more person-days of work were offered this May.

Doubling time of cases slows to 13.9 days

The Ministry said, "So far, 26,235 persons have been cured".

According to data from State Health Departments, the nationwide death toll stood at 2,649 on Thursday. There were 51, 560 active cases out of a total of 81,859 cases.

Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu and Gujarat added an average of 1483, 628 and 429 new cases everyday since May 7

COBAS 6800 for nation
Dr. Vardhan on Thursday visited the National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC), here and dedicated COBAS 6800 testing machine to the nation.

The Minister said in a release, "This is the first such

testing machine that has been procured by the Government for testing of COVID-19 cases and is installed at NCDC. COBAS-6800, is a fully automated, high-end machine for performing real time PCR testing of COVID-19. It will provide quality, high-volume testing with a high throughput of test around 1200 samples in 24 hours. It will largely increase the testing capacity with reduction in dependency".

Dr. Vardhan said COBAS 6800 was a sophisticated machine that minimised the chance of contamination as well as the risk of infection to health care workers as it could be operated remotely with limited human intervention.

Work from home may stay for govt. staff

The third phase of the lockdown ends on May 17 and a fourth phase may be announced by the government. Several Central employees are not able to reach office in the absence of public transport.

In a communiqué to all departments, the DoPT said the COVID-19 pandemic had necessitated many Ministries to operate from home to maintain social distancing.

It is quite likely that in the near future, the Central secretariat would continue to go for staggered attendance and variable working hours to maintain social distancing at the workplace.

"Therefore, SMS alerts should be sent for all such receipts and files to the next officer in the channel."

The Ministries/Departments concerned, who were not yet using the e-office module, would make an endeavour for its expedited implementation in their secretariat, attached and subordinate offices in a "time-bound manner".

At present, about 75 Ministries/Departments are actively using e-office platform, of which 57 have achieved more than 80% of their work.

Railways cancels tickets booked till June 30

As per data from the Railways, 20,149 people travelled through the special trains on May 13 and the number went up to 25,737 the next day.

For the Shramik Specials, the Railways said they were being run only after concurrence was given both by the State which was sending the passengers and the receiving

State. These 800 trains were terminated in various States like Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Manipur, Mizoram, Odisha, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Telangana, Tripura, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, West Bengal.

Stimulus for small businesses, vendors, farmers

Affordable rental housing for urban poor and credit for middle-class housing part of package announced by Minister

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Centre will help create affordable rental housing for the urban poor and provide relief worth ₹1,500 crore to small businesses through an interest subvention scheme, apart from extending credit for street vendors, farmers, and middle-class housing.

Apart from free food for migrant workers, these are the major highlights of the second tranche of the Atma-nirbhar Bharat Abhiyan stimulus package, announced by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Thursday.

Affordable housing

Noting that migrant workers and other urban poor face difficulties in finding affordable housing, the Finance Minister said a scheme to build

rental housing complexes through public private partnership mode would be launched under the existing Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY) scheme. Both public and private agencies will be incentivised to build rental housing on government and private land, while existing government housing will be converted into rental units.

The credit linked subsidy scheme for lower middle class housing under PMAY will also be extended by one year to March 2021, and is likely to benefit 2.2 lakh more families, said Ms. Sitharaman, expressing the hope that this would also create jobs and stimulate demand for the steel, cement and construction industries.

Street vendors who have been hit hard by the lock-



Package deal: Nirmala Sitharaman with Anurag Thakur addressing a press meet on Thursday. ■ SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

down will be given access to easy credit through a ₹5,000 crore scheme, which will offer ₹10,000 loans for initial working capital.

The scheme will be launched within a month

and will benefit 50 lakh vendors, said the Finance Minister.

Subvention relief
Small businesses who have taken loans under the MU-

DRA-Shishu scheme, meant for loans worth ₹50,000 or less, will receive a 2% interest subvention relief for the next year, which will cost the government ₹1,500 crore.

The Centre plans a drive to enrol 2.5 crore farmers who are not yet part of the Kisan Credit Cards scheme, along with fish workers and livestock farmers, and provide them with ₹2 lakh crore worth of concessional credit. NABARD (National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development) will also extend additional refinancing support worth ₹30,000 crore to rural banks for crop loans, Ms. Sitharaman said.

"The only fiscal outlay in today's announcements are the ₹3,500 crore for food grains to migrants and ₹1,500 crore for the MUDRA

loanees. So only ₹5,000 crore is actually coming from government coffers, while the rest are credit-based measures," said Himanshu, an economist at Jawaharlal Nehru University's Centre for Economic Studies and Planning.

'Half-hearted'

Terming the government's approach as "stingy and half-hearted", he noted that at a time when demand is down, any moves to provide liquidity are not going to help, adding that putting cash in people's pockets would have been a better approach.

"Banks are parking money with the RBI (Reserve Bank of India), so the problem is not liquidity, but rather the appetite of people to take credit at this time," he said.

Empty package, wrapped with speeches, says Congress

Finance Minister displayed arrogance, ignorance, says party

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI



Randeep Surjewala

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman displayed "arrogance, ignorance and insensitivity" while giving out details of the economic stimulus package that has turned out to be a *jumla* (empty promise), the Congress said on Thursday.

While the party's chief spokesperson Randeep Surjewala called the stimulus package a *jumla*, senior leader Ahmed Patel said, "It is an empty package wrapped with speeches since the last three days."

Addressing a joint online press conference, Lok Sabha member Manish Tewari and party spokesperson Supriya Shrinate said the humanitarian crisis surrounding the migrant workers is a defining image of the coronavirus crisis in India, but the government had fallen woefully short in addressing it.

"The image of our migrant workers walking to reach the safety of their

homes will haunt us for a long time. Was it not your responsibility to answer what are you doing about them?" Mr. Tewari asked the government.

'Bamboozling people'
"You are trying to bamboozle people by throwing big numbers at people," Mr. Tewari said, adding that the government had earmarked only ₹3,500 crore of the ₹20 lakh crore stimulus package.

"All the government has done is announce loan *meals* (fairs) for different sets of

people. Where is the assistance?" asked Ms. Shrinate.

She added that only direct cash transfers on the lines of Congress' NYAY minimum guarantee scheme to the bottom 13 crore households would have helped the poor cope with the crisis.

"MGNREGA (Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act) wages have been revised annually for a decade now. Today's FM (Finance Minister) announcement no big deal. Nothing on what's urgently needed: 1. Provide wages for month of April. 2. Increase no. of MGNREGA days to 200. Ironic that those who ridiculed MGNREGA now rely on it," tweeted former Union minister Jairam Ramesh.

Former Congress chief Rahul Gandhi tweeted: "There is dense darkness and times are difficult. Have courage, all of us are standing for the safety of all of them. We will ensure that their screams reach the government..."

Citing Ms. Sitharaman's announcement that migrant workers will be provided with jobs under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS), CPI(M) general secretary Sitaram Yechury called it a callous joke and an attempt at hoodwinking the public. "There are eight crore migrant workers as per Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, so if the promise is that every migrant worker will get a job the moment they return to their village under the MGNREGS, at the rate of ₹202 per day of wages, this



Sitaram Yechury

amounts to just 2.2 days of work for every migrant worker in the whole year per their current allocation," Mr. Yechury told *The Hindu*.

Ms. Sitharaman had said the government had generated 14.6 crore man days of work up to May 13 under the MGNREGS, which is 40-50% higher than previous May.

"Bulk of the announcements are essentially providing loans whether it is for street vendors or housing loans for the urban poor or farmers," Mr. Yechury added.

Trinamool Congress lead-

er Derek O'Brien said that after announcing the lockdown with just four-hour notice, abandoning the migrant workers, the government was now shedding crocodile tears.

Rashtriya Janta Dal MP Manoj Jha said: "They try to overwhelm people by numbers and skirt the critical issues and areas. Why the government has decided to choose the 'easy loan corridor' when it could have handed them over guaranteed money for at least coming five to six months."

Jugglery of statistics'
BSP MP Danish Ali said: "There is absolutely no intention to help the migrant workers," he said.

CPI general secretary D. Raja called it a jugglery of statistics and political rhetoric with no substantial announcement. "There are no jobs in the cities or in the villages and the government is insensitive towards the suffering of the poor," he said.

India reminds China of claims over Gilgit-Baltistan

Beijing has teamed up with Islamabad to build a dam there

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI



All quiet: Soldiers along the Line of Control on the Indo-China border in Bumla. ■ AP/FILE PHOTO

The recent incidents of face-off between the troops of India and China are neither correlated nor have any connection with other global or local activities, Army chief Gen. Manoj Naravane said on Thursday. The statement was supplemented by official spokesperson of the Ministry of External Affairs Anurag Srivastava who reminded China about India's claims over Gilgit-Baltistan where China has teamed up with Pakistan to build the Diamer-Bhasha dam.

Mr. Srivastava said both sides understand the importance of maintaining peace. "India and China attach im-

portance to tranquillity and it is essential for the overall development of bilateral ties."

He reminded China about India's claims over the territory of Gilgit-Baltistan under Pakistan's control. "Our position is clear. The entire territory of Jammu and Kashmir is part of India."

The assertion is impor-

tant as it was made a day after Power China, one of the biggest Chinese power companies, received a contract to build the Diamer-Bhasha dam which once completed will allow Pakistan to use the waters of the Indus for irrigation. Islamabad claims that the dam will help reduce downstream flood by the Indus.

India, China face-offs not related, says Army chief

'No connection with global events'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Gen. Manoj Naravane

short duration face-offs between border guarding troops do occur along the Line of Actual Control due to the differing perceptions of the alignment of boundaries which are not resolved," he said.

All such incidents were managed by established mechanisms wherein local formations "resolve issues mutually" as per protocols given by the Prime Minister after the Wuhan and Mamallapuram summits, he said.

Cong. trying to save Nirav Modi, says BJP

Party member deposes as witness

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Mumbai and Allahabad high courts, deposed as a defence witness in the case and claimed that the charges against Mr. Modi will not stand up under Indian law.

He added that Justice Thipsay had joined the Congress in 2018 and had met top party leaders like Rahul Gandhi, Ashok Gehlot and Ashok Chavan.

"The 'judge sahab' is not acting in his individual capacity but is working at the behest of the Congress," said Mr. Prasad.

India non-committal on talks with Taliban

Traditional ties with Afghanistan will continue to guide our policy, says govt.

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI



Zalmay Khalilzad

India will "continue to be guided" by its friendship with the Afghan people, said the government, remaining non-committal on renewed questions of whether it would open direct talks with the Taliban.

"We have our own perspectives on Afghanistan, and our traditional and neighbourly ties with the people of Afghanistan will continue to guide our Afghanistan policy," a government source said, when asked about the suggestion by U.S.

In an interview to *The Hindu* last week, Mr. Khalilzad said he favoured India-Taliban talks, the first time a U.S. official had openly made that suggestion.

"It is for India to decide its role, but I do think engagement between India and all the key players in Afghanistan ... is appropriate given India's regional and global position. India is an important force in Afghanistan and it would be appropriate for that [India-Taliban] engagement to take place," Mr. Khalilzad said.

External Affairs Ministry officials declined to comment on whether India

would change its long-held position of dealing only with the elected government in Kabul, while considering the Taliban a terrorist organisation backed by Pakistan.

The comments by Mr. Khalilzad have led to a renewal of interest in whether India will shift its stand. "There is no doubt more pressure to engage with the Taliban, but India has always dealt only with the authority in power, and talks with the Taliban would be premature at this point," former diplomat Asoke Mukerji told *The Hindu*.

Scuffle for food at Bihar stations

Violence breaks out among returning workers for packets provided by authorities

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

PATNA

Even as Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman announced on Thursday that migrant workers will be given free foodgrains for the next two months, a group of workers were seen resorting to fistcuffs to get food packets at the Katihar railway station in Bihar.

In a video clip that has gone viral on social media, a group of migrant workers are seen mobbing a person carrying a bag of food packets at the railway station, fighting and pushing one another.

A local journalist told *The Hindu* that the violent scuffle took place on Wednesday when a Shramik Special train, carrying workers from Delhi en route to Purnea, had stopped at the Katihar railway station. The local administration had arranged for food packets to be distributed among the travellers.



Desperate times: Belongings of migrant workers lie on a road after a stampede took place while they were trying to board a special train to Bihar from the Bathinda railway station. •PTI

However, on seeing a person carrying a bag of food packets, the hungry workers did not wait for them to be distributed and mobbed the man.

In a similar video, travellers from another special train from Delhi are seen looting food packets arranged by the administration at the Barauni station in Begusarai district.

As the group of men push and shove each other, a baton-wielding policeman and some women health workers are seen standing by help-

lessly. "We're too hungry... For several days, we had not eaten full stomach," a worker told a local journalist.

Thousands of migrant workers are coming to Bihar from other States and district administrations have made arrangements for food and water bottles at railway stations before transporting them to quarantine centres in their respective districts and blocks by buses.

The State Disaster Management Department is running about 3,665 quarantine centres at the block level in districts where currently over 1.3 lakh migrants are housed.

About 2.5 lakh migrants are expected to reach the State in the next one week by over 200 trains.

Bihar has reported 966 COVID-19 positive cases with seven deaths. So far, more than 350 migrants have tested positive.

253 new cases in M.P., tally rises to 4,426

Maharashtra toll crosses 1,000

25 fatalities, 991 new cases reported in Mumbai; State's tally increases to 27,524

STAFF REPORTER

BHOPAL

The count of COVID-19 cases in Madhya Pradesh surged to 4,426 on Thursday as 253 new cases were reported during the day, said the Directorate of Health Services.

Indore, the worst-hit city in the State, saw the steepest spike of 131 cases on the day, while Bhopal reported 42 new cases and Burhanpur 35, according to a bulletin issued by the Directorate.

Besides, five deaths were reported during the day. The death toll in the State stands at 237.

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

PUNE

The number of new COVID-19 cases and fatalities continued to rise in Maharashtra, with the State's death toll touching 1,012 on Thursday. Continuing the trend over the last week of over 1,400 new cases everyday, the State saw 1,602 cases, taking the total to 27,524.

State Health Department officials said as many as 512 persons were discharged, taking the cumulative number of persons discharged till date to 6,059. The number of active cases (excluding discharged and deaths) stood at 20,441.

Dharavi sees 33 cases

STAFF REPORTER

MUMBAI

Dharavi reported 33 COVID-19 cases on Thursday, pushing the tally to 1,061. It also reported nine deaths, taking the total to 49.

The new cases were from

Matunga labour camp and Kumbharwada. Dharavi reported two new deaths, that of a 70-year-old man from Vaibhav Society and a woman from Indira Nagar. Seven deaths were conveyed to the ward office and recorded during the day.

As per figures, 25 of the fatalities were reported from Mumbai city, taking the city's death toll to 621.

Pune district, according to State Health Department figures, reported five deaths

to take its death toll to 175. However, district authorities said that the figure had risen to 178.

"77% of the deaths reported today had high-risk comorbidities such as diabetes,

hypertension, asthma and heart disease," said State Surveillance Officer Dr. Pradeep Awate.

Of the new cases, Mumbai city reported 991 new cases as the city's cumulative tally touched 16,738.

The tally in Pune district has risen to 1,305, with the district reporting at least 136 new cases, officials said.

Besides Mumbai and Pune, the other sharp spike in cases came from parts of the Mumbai Metropolitan Region (MMR), with Thane reporting 102 new cases to touch 1,381. Navi Mumbai reported 95 new cases to reach a total 1,113.

Gujarat records 324 cases

With 20 deaths, toll rises to 586; State tally now at 9,592

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

AHMEDABAD

Gujarat on Thursday recorded 324 COVID-19 cases and 20 deaths. The State's cumulative tally has increased to 9,592 and the death toll has risen to 586.

The tally in Pune district has risen to 1,305, with the district reporting at least 136 new cases, officials said.

Besides Mumbai and Pune, the other sharp spike in cases came from parts of the Mumbai Metropolitan Region (MMR), with Thane reporting 102 new cases to touch 1,381. Navi Mumbai reported 95 new cases to reach a total 1,113.

In Ahmedabad, 265 cases and 19 deaths were reported, bringing the city's tally to 6,910 and the toll to 465. Ahmedabad's mortality rate is around 6.7%, which is above the national average that stands below 4%.



Waiting game: Migrant workers waiting for transportation to reach the railway station in Ahmedabad. •PTI

Meanwhile, a controversy has erupted regarding the number of tests being conducted in the State. As per the Health Department's data, the number of tests per day has reduced. On Thurs-

day, only 2,412 tests were conducted against a capacity to test 3,000 samples per day. Moreover, the State government also disallowed private laboratories to conduct COVID-19 tests.

+ Odisha reports 86 fresh COVID-19 cases

As many as 63 of the patients had returned from Surat in Gujarat

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

Bhubaneswar

As many as 86 COVID-19 positive cases were reported from the districts of Odisha, taking the State's total to 624 on Thursday.

Sixty-three of the 86 new cases had returned from Gujarat's Surat – 42 in Ganjam, 13 in Kendrapara, five in Bhadrak and three in Khordha district.

Of the remaining 23 cases,

20 had returned from West Bengal, one from Karnataka and two were detected in a containment zone, according to the State government.

Of the 624 cases, 463 were under treatment at exclusive hospitals. While 185 have recovered and three have died so far, 594 persons are kept in hospital isolation.

Subroto Bagchi, the State government's chief spokesperson for COVID-19, ex-

pressed satisfaction that 84 of the 86 cases were detected in the temporary medical centres (TMCs) set up at the grassroots level where the returnees were undergoing 21-day quarantine.

Samples tested
The State had tested 77,150 samples till Wednesday midnight, according to the Health Department.

The State's inter-ministe-

rial committee on the pandemic has decided to start testing facilities in the government-run medical colleges in Bolangir, Koraput and Baripada, to ramp up the capacity to 15,000 per day. About 4,500 samples are being tested per day at eight laboratories.

According to the government, more than one lakh people had returned till Thursday.

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KSEB KERALA STATE ELECTRICITY BOARD LIMITED - E-TENDER NOTICE
Office of the Deputy Chief Engineer,
Electrical Circle – Shornur
E-Tender ID : 2020_KSEB_355408_1 * Construction of
Sub Regional Store Building at Shornur * PAC: Rs . 77,14,569/-
* Last Date : 30-05-2020 11 AM
Visit www.etenders.kerala.gov.in and www.kseb.in
- Ref: PR /MC1 /D126- E- Tender /2020

SOUTHERN RAILWAY
MATERIALS MANAGEMENT DEPARTMENT
CHENNAI - 600 008
CORRIGENDUM
E-Tender Notice for the supply of stores No. 23/2020
Dated : 13/05/2020
Southern Railway has implemented an e-system. All advertised tenders will be dealt through e-procurement system only. No manual offer/postal offer will be entertained. These tenders can be accessed under the link [>SR->COS](http://www.ireps.gov.in)
Sl. No. **E-Tender No.** **Description** **Tender Closing date & time**
1. B2/20/5060/EOT CABLE JELLY FILLED TELECOM 6 QUAD From 31.03.2020 Extended upto 19.05.2020 @ 14.30 Hrs.

Railway reserves the right to issue any corrigendum to the tenders

Important Notice to Vendors; e-procurement is in the link www.ireps.gov.in

Deputy Chief Materials Manager / Construction / Egmore / Chennai - 600 008.

INSTITUTE OF WOOD SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY
(INDIAN COUNCIL OF FORESTRY RESEARCH AND EDUCATION)
18th Cross, Malleswaram, Bengaluru - 560 003.
No. 1-11/2019-20/IWST/Estd/123 Date:13.05.2020
ADVERTISEMENT NOTICE FOR EXTENTION OF DATE
The last date for receipt of application pertaining to Advertisement No.1-11/2019-20/IWST/Estd/1374 dated 18/3/2020 for the post of "Forest Guard" is extended till 30.06.2020. For details, please visit Website <http://iwst.icfre.gov.in> and www.icfre.gov.in

Sd/- Director.

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केंद्र, तिरुचिरापल्ली, तमின் 600 020, तमின்
टेलिफोन : 01 44 - 24437162, 24437193, 2443740, ई-मेल : cslr@icsir.res.in

No. 2(312)/2013/Pur **NOTICE INVITING E-TENDER** 14th May, 2020

CSIR-CLRI has advertised for 1. Synthetic Blood Penetration Tester for Surgical gown/Coverall, 2. Hydrostatic Pressure/Head Tester, 3. Water Bacterial Barrier Penetration Tester for surgical gown/Coverall, 4. Water Vapour Transmission Rate Tester for surgical gown/Coverall, 5. Water Impact Penetration Tester for surgical gown/Coverall CPP portal.

Please visit www.tenders.gov.in for further details. Details are also available on www.cslr.org. Tender closing date: 27th May, 2020, 3.00 PM.

Stores & Purchase Officer
For & on behalf of COUNCIL OF SCIENTIFIC & INDUSTRIAL RESEARCH

14.05.2020

SOUTHERN RAILWAY
Tender Notice No. W.503/CNTF/OT/2020-21/01
Dated : 06/05/2020

On behalf of President of India, Chief Administrative Officer, Construction, Southern Railway, Egmore, Chennai - 600 008 invites E-tenders for the following items from Established and experienced manufacturers and suppliers of pre stressed concrete sleepers to Southern Railway. The receipt of E-tender will be closed before 15.00 hours on the due dates mentioned against each item and will be opened on the same day.

Sl. No. **Tender No.** **Description of item**
1. CNMSR 428 Manufacture and supply of Mono-block concrete sleeper set for 1 in 8 1/2 turnouts (Pre tensioned type) to Broad Gauge 60 Kg as per Drg. No. RD50 T-4865 (for General Layout) and part drawings thereof to suit 60 Kg UIC Rail/52 Kg Rail etc. (set consists of 67 nos.)

2. CNMSR 429 Manufacture and supply of Prestressed Mono-block concrete sleepers set for 1 in 6 Turnout (Pre tensioned type) to BG 60 Kg as per Drg. No. T-5691 (for General layout) and part drawings thereof to suit 60 Kg UIC Rail etc. (set consists of 114 nos.)

3. CNMSR 430 Manufacture and supply of Prestressed Mono-block wider concrete sleepers for Level Crossings (Pre tensioned type) to Drg. No. T-8671 with 60 Kg (UIC) running rail and 52 Kg check rail for 25 TAxe Load etc.

Sl. No. **Quantity** **Approx tender value in lakhs** **Date at 15.00 hrs on** **EMD In Rs.** **Period of completion**
1. 62 sets 152.75 24.06.2020 3,05,500/- 6 Months

2. 20 sets 132.16 24.06.2020 2,64,320/- 4 Months

3. 2500 numbers 68.38 24.06.2020 1,36,750/- 6 Months

The detailed description of the items and tender documents can be downloaded from the website www.ireps.gov.in. The detailed terms and conditions are available in the website.

Chief Administrative Officer/Construction/Chennai - 8.

Quarantine nights



Window to the world: Inmates of a quarantine facility at Sion in Mumbai spend the

Virus diagnostic test may be delayed

The technology needs more confirmatory testing and changes in configuration, officials say

JACOB KOSHY
NEW DELHI

A promising technology developed by a laboratory funded by the Department of Science and Technology to accelerate COVID-19 testing in India may be delayed for several more weeks.

The Chitra GeneLAMP-N, developed by the Sree Chitra Tirunal Institute for Medical Sciences and Technology (SCTIMST), Thiruvananthapuram, needs more confirmatory testing and changes in its configuration, officials said.

The technology uses a method called loop-mediated isothermal amplification (LAMP). The objective, like that of the gold-standard RT-PCR tests, is the same: to detect the presence of viral RNA. Both achieve this via a series of chemical transformations. The LAMP method is said to be faster but is a relatively newer technology,



Fast, but complicated: The new test uses a method called loop-mediated isothermal amplification (LAMP). ■REUTERS

more complicated in its design and has not been tested extensively for COVID-19 detection.

N gene test

Most RT-PCR kits focus on two different genes, the E (envelope) gene and the RdRP (RNA dependent RNA polymerase) gene. The

World Health Organization recommends a E and RdRP test, while the U.S.'s Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) requires an N gene test. The N gene test is a confirmatory test and widely employed in Germany and China, among other countries. However, the design of it is complicated and can be

expensive. The CDC protocol says three regions of the N gene must be analysed but the Chitra-model tests two to confirm the identity of the virus.

Though the Chitra test passed an initial assessment by the National Institute of Virology in Alappuzha, a subsequent assessment showed that it was not performing as accurately as desired. "We are testing two N gene regions, so we need to recalibrate the machine to test both of them independently as a common cut-off wasn't working well," Asha Kishore, Director, SCTIMST, told *The Hindu*. "This is expected as all technology being used today [for COVID-19 diagnosis], such as RT-PCR or TruNat, have undergone multiple evaluations. This is a confirmatory test and needs to be absolutely solid. We need time until May end."

The Chitra test could potentially speed up the testing of a batch of suspected COVID-19 samples by 15 times and cut costs by two-thirds. The technology is licensed to Agape Diagnostics Ltd., an Ernakulam-based company.

Faster, cheaper

Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan tweeted: "Sree Chitra Tirunal Institute for Medical Sciences & Tech, Trivandrum, an Institute of National Importance, of the @IndiaDST, has developed a diagnostic test kit that can confirm COVID19 in 2 hours at a low cost."

The steady rise in confirmed cases in India is due to an acceleration in testing. The Indian Council of Medical Research reported having tested 1.94 million samples as of Thursday with Dr. Vardhan claiming that India was now testing about 100,000 samples a day.

Surveillance test for migrants

A cohort of 25 people will be identified and throat or nasal swab collected

BINDU SHAJAN PERAPPADAN
NEW DELHI

The Union Health Ministry on Thursday said a decision had been reached to use one-time RT-PCR-based pooled sampling for surveillance purposes for migrant workers in institutional quarantine facilities, international passengers in institutional quarantine facilities and hotels earmarked for quarantine, and for surveillance purposes in green zones (districts with no case or no case reported in last 21 days).

Issuing fresh guidelines for pooled sampling for migrants/returnees from



A one-time RT-PCR-based pooled sampling will be conducted. ■T. SINGaravelou

abroad/green zones, the Ministry said a cohort of 25 people would be identified and throat/nasal swab would be collected following laid

down protocol by trained laboratory personnel under appropriate protective gear (apron, hand glove, face-shield/goggles, N-95 mask), as per the ICMR protocol.

As per the new guidelines, the report will be conveyed to the quarantine/concerned facility within 24 hours.

"If any of the pooled samples tests positive, individual samples would be tested from the aliquoted samples preserved in the laboratory," notes the Ministry.

Giving details of the process of collection of samples, the Ministry said proper labelling (name/age/gender/specimen ID) needed to be

done on specimen container.

"Twenty-five such samples of such cohort would be packed in triple layer packaging and will be transported to the identified laboratory under cold chain as per ICMR guidelines," noted the Health Ministry. The guidelines add that the outer container mentioning "be tested for SARS-CoV-2" will also bear the details of sender (name/address/phone number).

It adds that the samples will be aliquoted and thereafter pooled samples from 25 specimens shall be tested in the laboratory by RT-PCR method.

The Railways on Thursday said it had started recording the destination address of passengers booking tickets on the website to help facilitate contact tracing. "With effect from May 13, IRCTC is taking the destination address of all passengers booking tickets. This will help in contact tracing, if required later," a spokesperson said.

People are most infectious in the initial period of infection, when it is common to have few or no symptoms.

Cloth masks obstruct a high portion of the droplets from the mouth and nose that spread the virus.

IN BRIEF



Leh protests against new containment rules

SRINAGAR

Local people held a demonstration in Ladakh's Leh district on Thursday against the Union Territory administration's new COVID-19 containment rules and the move to charge between ₹2,500 and ₹3,000 at non-administrative quarantine facilities from the students and pilgrims who had returned. Scores of protesters took to the streets in Leh's Chuchot, a containment zone, and began a demonstration against the rules to counter the pandemic in the region.

129 arrested for violence at Bengal's Telinipara

KOLKATA

The Police have arrested 129 persons in connection with a violence at Telinipara in West Bengal's Hooghly district. Clashes erupted between two communities on Sunday, allegedly due to a dispute over use of a public toilet. The Home Department on Thursday said strong action had been taken against the miscreants. It took to social media, assuring people that senior officials, along with large number of forces, were patrolling the area round the clock: "Administration is committed to ensure peace."

Transfers of CPWD officers suspended

NEW DELHI

The Union Housing and Urban Affairs Ministry has suspended the rotational transfers of Central Public Works Department (CPWD) Group A, B and C category officers till April 30, 2021 due to the pandemic. In an order issued on Monday, the Ministry said transfers would be allowed in certain conditions, including administrative reasons such as the need to fill vacancies due to retirement, promotion etc. on compassionate grounds; and any other with specific approval.

BMS to stage protest over suspension of labour laws

Workers suffering due to violation of Migrant Labour Act'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh, a trade union affiliated with the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, on Thursday announced plans to carry out a nationwide agitation against the suspension of labour laws by the Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat governments, which are all ruled by the BJP.

The BMS said in a statement a virtual meeting of its national office bearers was held on Wednesday where the recent withdrawal of the labour laws was "strongly condemned".

Other States including Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Goa and Odisha had either already implemented or were planning to increase the daily working hours from eight to 12, it said.

"This is unheard in history and is rare even in most undemocratic countries.



In a recent meeting, the BMS has 'strongly condemned' the move. ■PTI

The BMS State units have written to the Chief Ministers of all the States but only the Chief Minister of M.P. has shown the courtesy to meet our delegation," the statement said.

'No way out'
Referring to the plight of the migrant workers during the pandemic and lockdown, the Mazdoor Sangh said these issues had been aggravated "mainly because there is gross violation of the Mi-

grant Labour Act by most of the States. And hence, we are pushed to the wall and there is no other way out except going for agitation."

The agitation planned by the BMS included a letter-writing campaign by local unions to the district authorities to raise the issues of wage payment, job losses and relief measures for workers from Saturday till May 18.

Demonstration dates
Protests against the States' suspension of labour laws and extension of working hours would be held at district and industrial estates on May 20, while maintaining social distance, it said.

State, industry, company and sector-level conventions would be organised on May 30 and May 31 to press for the demands of the workers and withdrawal of the labour law suspensions, the BMS added.

NHRC issues notices to States

Maharashtra, M.P. pulled up over plight of migrants

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) on Thursday issued notices to the Maharashtra government over the "inappropriate approach" adopted for the release of prisoners to avoid the SARS-CoV-2 infection and the incident of a pregnant migrant giving birth on the road.

In the second case, it also issued notice to the Madhya Pradesh government as the woman was walking from Maharashtra to Satna, her home town, when she was forced to give birth on the road.

Taking cognisance of a

complaint by its prison monitor Maja Daruwala, the NHRC noted that "allegedly, the policy adopted by the Maharashtra government to decongest jails has arisen due to the misinterpretation of directions given by the Supreme Court in the matter".

She asked the NHRC for its intervention to ensure the safety of prisoners.

"The Commission has observed that it is aware of the fact that in many jails, the prisoners as well as the staff members have fallen prey to COVID-19 owing to overcrowding, lack of manpower and medical facilities," an NHRC statement said.

The NHRC asked the Chief Secretaries of both States for a report in four weeks.

Masks crucial to prevent infection spread: scientists

Face covers reduce transmissibility per contact

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI

In light of convincing research evidence that face masks are a great tool to stop community spread of COVID-19, a group of scientists across the world have come together to issue an open letter promoting the use of masks by members of the public.

Arguing that the simple task of wearing a mask reduces transmission and thereby, mortality, the scientists have pressed for wearing masks, even defining it as any face covering, as a key public health intervention.

The steady rise in confirmed cases in India is due to an acceleration in testing. The Indian Council of Medical Research reported having tested 1.94 million samples as of Thursday with Dr. Vardhan claiming that India was now testing about 100,000 samples a day.



Well shielded: Children wearing masks and travelling in an autorickshaw in Puducherry on Thursday. ■S.S. KUMAR

Non-medical masks have been effective in reducing transmission of coronavirus.

Cloth masks can be washed in soapy water and re-used.

Places and time periods where mask usage is required or widespread have been shown to substantially lower community transmission. Public mask wearing is most effective at stopping spread of the virus when the vast majority of the public uses masks.

Laws appear to be highly effective at increasing compliance and slowing or stopping the spread of COVID-19. The statement said: We have an urgent message about some critical new scientific research. It strongly suggests that requiring fabric mask use in public places could be amongst the most powerful tools to stop the community spread of COVID-19.

An international cross-disciplinary review of the scientific research by 19 experts and other recent research shows that:

People are most infectious in the initial period of infection, when it is common to have few or no symptoms.

Cloth masks obstruct a high portion of the droplets from the mouth and nose that spread the virus.



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Back home in U.P., migrants worried about jobs

Over 9 lakh workers have returned to the State during lockdown, govt. says

OMAR RASHID
SITAPUR

Satish Kumar turns restless when asked what he thinks about the Uttar Pradesh government's plans to provide jobs to the migrant workers who have returned to their homes during the lockdown.

"There are thousands of people returning to their villages... they are starving. How will they employ all?" he asks. Mr. Kumar stands within the walls of the Chandra government primary school in Pisawan, Sitapur, which serves as a quarantine centre for migrants before they are allowed to go home. He was working as a labourer in Haryana in mustard and wheat fields, when the lockdown forced him towards his native place. After much struggle, he reached Sitapur on May 11.

Mr. Kumar is sceptical of the government's announcement that employment opportunities would be provided to the migrant workers. In Haryana, he says, he earned ₹360-₹500 daily. In his village, if he works under the rural employment guarantee scheme, he is likely to earn relatively less.

"Why would I leave my village in the first place if I was getting work here," he asks. He calms down to say that if the government can guarantee him any form of employment, he is unlikely to return to Haryana.

"I will earn only ₹200. But every penny will be worth it, in the presence of my family. My kids won't have to walk [on the highway]," said the father of three.

More than 9 lakh migrant workers have returned to



Towards a bleak future: Migrants travelling on a truck to reach their native places amid the COVID-19 lockdown in Prayagraj on Thursday. ■ PTI

U.P. during the lockdown, the government said. Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath plans to provide employment to 20 lakh such people. The process starts right at the quarantine centre. Anil Singh, the revenue official for this centre, says, "They

will get the type of jobs they want."

A large notebook details the names, addresses, phone numbers and date of arrival of the migrants at the centre. However, the columns under educational qualification, skills and experience have

not been filled for days. Most under quarantine here are labourers.

Labour Minister Swami Prasad Maurya said the "work nature" of the migrant workers would be observed during quarantine and employment provided to them

as per their skill set. While some were daily wage labourers, construction workers, vendors and non-skilled workers, others may have mechanical and technical skills.

Many young migrant workers, especially those employed in technical jobs, are reluctant to work as labourers back home.

Rajesh Mishra worked as a supervisor in a Delhi-based footwear firm and came back to Sitapur on May 4 with his wife and child. He is yet to make up his mind about going back, and is assessing employment options that the government could offer.

"Even if I get employed as a supervisor under the MNREGA, I will do it. But digging work with a shovel? That I cannot do," he asserted. If suitable employment is not provided, he says he will have no option but to return to Delhi.



Ram Nath Kovind

vetting the saved money to combat COVID-19 and mitigate the people's economic plight," said the statement.

"In the President's estimation, this will be a small but significant contribution to realise the government's vision of making India self-reliant (*atmanirbhar*) and energise the nation to take up the challenge to fight the pandemic and continue our journey for development and prosperity simultaneously," it said.

President to forgo 30% salary for a year

Plans for new vehicle deferred

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

President Ram Nath Kovind has decided to forgo 30% of his salary for the whole year apart from directing officials to adopt other austerity measures in the wake of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, a communiqué from the Rashtrapati Bhavan said on Thursday.

The domestic tours of the President will be substantially reduced, guest lists as well as food menu at official ceremonies will be cut, and plans to purchase a new presidential limousine (estimated to cost ₹10 crore) have been deferred.

"The President has given instructions to the Rashtrapati Bhavan to set an example by economising the expenditure, making optimal usage of resources, and do-

Search on for soldier missing in Sikkim

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Army on Thursday launched a massive search for a soldier who went missing after a snow clearance party was hit by an avalanche at Lugnak La in north Sikkim.

"A patrolling-cum-snow clearance party of 17-18 soldiers came under a sudden snow slide. All personnel have been recovered, except one soldier. Intense search is in progress," Army sources said.

All rescued soldiers are safe, the sources said, adding one of them was seriously injured and undergoing treatment.

U.K. HC rejects Vijay Mallya's plea

Authorities may soon issue a directive allowing his extradition, says ED official

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI



Vijay Mallya

Enforcement Directorate (ED) official.

Mr. Mallya may be brought on board a special plane, as international flight operations have been suspended due to the global lockdown. Following a hearing in February, a Division

Bench of the High Court of Justice, on April 20, turned down Mr. Mallya's appeal against the Senior District Judge's order on December 10, 2018, for his extradition.

The High Court concluded that a *prima facie* case was made out against the businessman for fraud, misrepresentation to the bank in securing credit facilities, conspiracy and money laundering, as adjudged by the lower court.

The CBI and the ED have alleged that between September 1, 2009, and January 24, 2017, Mr. Mallya conspired with A. Ragunathan, S. Borkar, A. Nadkami, A. Shah, Y. Agarwal, B. Batra, O.

Bundellu, S. Srinivasan, R. Sridhar and others to commit cheating.

The accused fraudulently got loans sanctioned from the bank to the now-defunct Kingfisher Airlines (KFA) in the order of (a) ₹1,500 million on October 7, 2009, (b) ₹2,000 million on November 4, 2009, and (c) ₹7,500 million on November 27, 2009, with the intention not to repay them.

Mr. Mallya was allegedly involved in false representation to the bank on KFA's financial condition and the value and/or availability of securities. The funds raised through loans were diverted and laundered.

Navy's personal protective equipment gets patent

It is identifying eligible firms for licensed production

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

A low-cost personal protective equipment (PPE), designed and produced by the Navy, has received a patent, bringing it a step closer to mass production, the Navy said on Thursday.

The patent was successfully filed by the Intellectual Property Facilitation Cell (IPFC) of the Defence Ministry, in association with the National Research Development Corporation (NRDC), an enterprise under the Ministry of Science and Technology, the Navy said in a



A pilot batch of PPE has been produced at the Naval Dockyard Mumbai.

Short Service Commission to be made more attractive

Part of efforts to cut mounting pension burden: Gen. Rawat

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

As part of measures to reduce the mounting pension burden of the Army, efforts are on to make the Short Service Commission (SSC) more attractive, Chief of the Defence Staff Gen. Bipin Rawat said on Thursday.

"We are looking at making the SSC more attractive. Looking at a year's training [course] while exiting after 14 years. We are also looking at other courses and options," Gen. Rawat told a small group of journalists. Other incentives include a lumpsum amount and medical facilities under the Ex-



Gen. Bipin Rawat

servicemen Contributory Health Scheme.

The courses can be professional or technical courses such as MBA or M.Tech. to give the skills for a second employment as a civilian.

Currently, the SSC is for 10 years, which can be extended by up to four years.

At the end of 14 years, there is an option for permanent commission (PC).

Gen. Rawat said about 25%-30% of the SSC officers would be granted PC so that they are kept motivated. "So the SSC officers will compete to get PC. The rest can leave," he said.

The Army's pay and pension bill has been increasing over the years, accounting for 60% of its budgetary allocation.

During the last five years, though the growth in the defence budget has been 68% and the growth in salaries 75%, the pensions have increased by a staggering 146%.

A Naga village in Manipur has prepared for its lockdown returns with what ecotourists might pay to experience – cottages on a hill with a view.

The Tungjyoti Village Council has built 80 cottages to quarantine community members who are coming back after being stranded in various parts of India due to the lockdown.

Tungjyoti, inhabited by the Poumata Naga tribe, is in the Poumata subdivision of Senapati district bordering Nagaland. The village is about 110 km north of Manipur's capital Imphal. The cottages on a hill



Ready for returnees: The cottages have been erected on a hill in three clusters. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

about 1 km from Tungjyoti have been erected in three clusters for people returning from as many zones. Volunteers have been deployed to ensure the returnees maintain physical

distancing norms and check into a zone marked red, orange and green with plastic ropes.

"Ours is a big village with about 1,000 households. People from the village

stranded outside wanted to return home. We built the cottages to keep them in a safe place after discussions among all stakeholders," said S. Kho John, a Tungjyoti village leader and president of United Naga Council, an apex Naga social organisation in Manipur.

The tin-roofed cottages, made of bamboo and other local materials, have been electrified. Each cottage meant for one person has an electric bulb, a charging socket, a bamboo bed, a bamboo gas table and a toilet, besides piped water, Mr. John said. "We spent about ₹3 lakh to make the cottages," he added.

Three information

centres have also been erected with the fittest among the villagers assigned with the duty of coordinating with the people arriving from outside.

Family members have been entrusted with providing food and other essential items to the returnees, while the village authorities have taken the responsibility of volunteers, who would be guarding them round the clock for ensuring they do not break the rules.

About a 100 people from Tungjyoti are studying or working in other parts of the country. A few returnees were expected to reach the village by Thursday evening.

SUDOKU

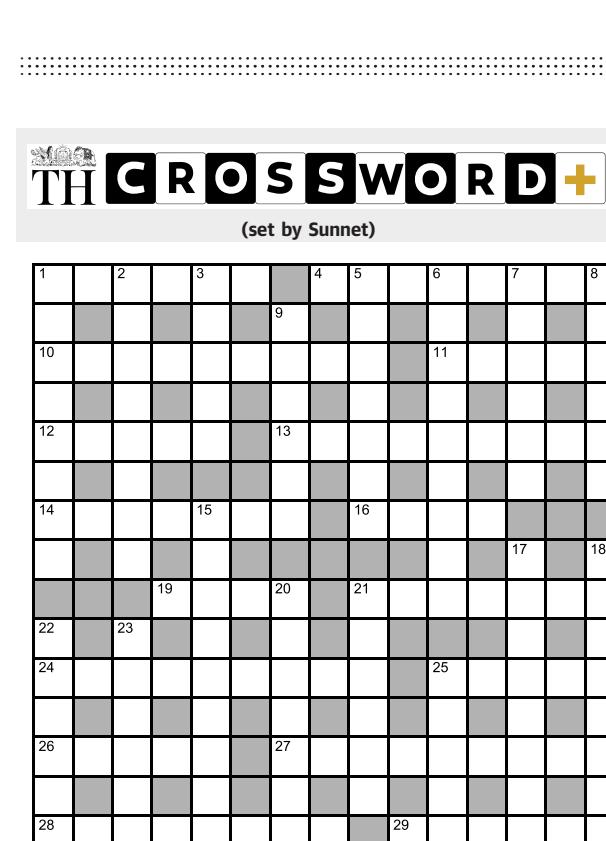
4			6		5			
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DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★

Solution to puzzle 12935

FIRE	PLACE	FOIL						
OEH	SLIN							
TRACTORS	EIGHTY							
CIT	UPUR							
KEEPYOURSHIRTONTHE								
BEAST	EAEED							
L	A	T	C					
VERTICAL	ASYET							
YRRE	UE							
PALAEONTOLOGIST								
TIVB	TIAT							
CINEMA	EXTERNAL							
COLLECTOR	TRIRENE							
ENDS	SUSPENDED							

Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

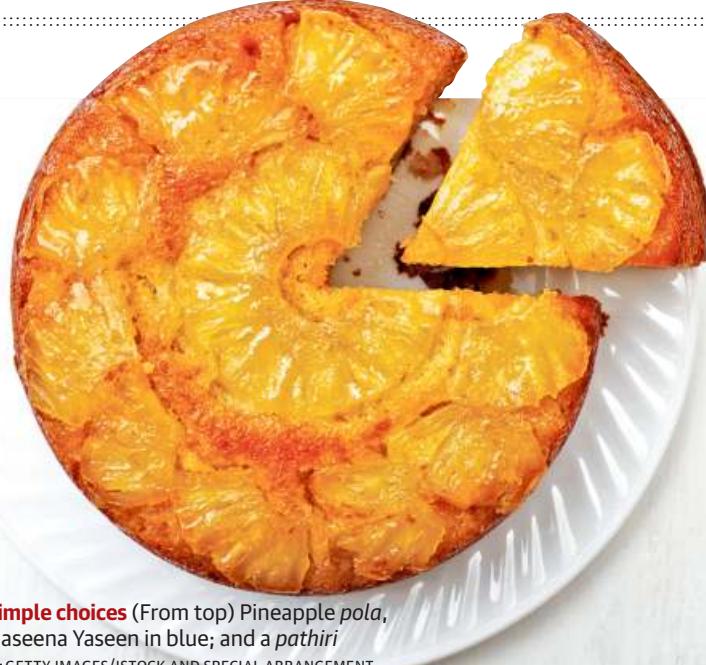


- 14 Lock chased current player (7)
- 16 Entrance exam for admission to post graduate programs (4)
- 19 Beauty in conversation with inventor (4)
- 21 Tree company's business head (7)
- 24 A police department's leads for users (4,5)
- 25 Mesh protects one's corn (5)
- 26 White as a bird (5)
- 27 Lad is worn out by corona emission (5,4)
- 28 Place most hope on pipe binding (8)
- 29 Prop tablet on one side (6)
- DOWN
- 1 Fair to cast last five (8)
- 2 Reactive agents steer individual's awkward stand (8)
- 3 Just in some qualifiers (5)
- 5 Wanting to lift a statue (7)
- 6 Currency is note and some coin? True (9)
- 7 Look, especially evacuated flue is converted (6)
- 8 Creator's abode that is on the face (6)
- 9 Fits resort's message (6)
- 15 The planes transported large animals (9)
- 17 One having charge, to avoid Iowa, is not dutiful (8)
- 18 Page on offer (8)
- 20 Worry about single child's relationship (7)
- 21 Expensive colts broke down by the beginning of the year (6)
- 22 Jack up rating of Stone (6)
- 23 Six somehow shun the protector (6)
- 25 Bring up odd note placed below image (5)

FAITH

Guru bhakti bhava

Guru Parampara offers obeisance to the lineage of preceptors who have handed down the spiritual tradition to posterity from the hoary past. It is held that Lord Nar



Simple choices (From top) Pineapple pola, Haseena Yaseen in blue; and a pathiri

• GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCK AND SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

K JESHI

"It is carrot pola for Iftar today," announces home baker Haseena Yaseen. The delicacy from Malabar is also called carrot egg cake and is prepared with mashed carrots, beaten eggs, sugar, and a dash of cardamom powder. "I steam this mix in a pressure cooker, and carrot pola is ready," says Haseena, adding, "Though there is a shortage of fruits, dates and nuts, we are managing to make some Malabar specialities. We also make pineapple pola."

For Haseena, Iftar this year has been different because of the COVID-19 lockdown. "Every year, we invite friends and relatives over. This time, it is a smaller and quieter affair."

But the positive thing is the family members are able to pray and break their fast together. "Usually, people are out at work, even during the fasting. This time, we are spending a lot more time together," says Haseena.

R. Mohammed Ali, who runs a garment business, is of the same opinion. "It's been a happy and content month of Ramzan fasting this time. As my mother prepares kanji (rice porridge) for Iftar, I help her in the kitchen to make crisp vadas as accompaniment. I have never done this before. As food supplies are hit, we keep it simple – for example a fruit chaat with whatever we have."

Time is moving a lot slower, says Mohammed Saleem, who has never missed fasting in 10 years, but he feels everything is more meaningful and intimate. "I miss my nonbu kanji though," sighs Saleem. In South India, during Ramzan, most mosques offer this mildly-spiced rice porridge made with lentils. This year, because of the lockdown, preparing nonbu kanji at the mosques is banned. Instead, Saleem keeps his energy levels going with steamed vegetables and salads. "Our meals are more vegetarian, as getting meat is difficult."

Shaima Saleem rings in Ramzan the Malabari way with kaiveeshal appam, a snack made with beaten eggs, sugar and refined flour. "You have to mix them all together. Then, pour the batter over oil through the hole of a coconut shell. You can make shapes like jalebi. Children love it."

Haseena says, "Our friends love the Iftar spread, especially kilitkoodu. It is made with mashed potatoes and minced meat coated with



A different kind of IFTAR

While piety and prayer remain steadfast during Ramzan, the Iftar feast has had to undergo some adjustments during the lockdown

a layer of egg, and broken vermicelli on top for the crunch. And chatti pathiri, a layered pancake made with shredded chicken. The dish resembles a lasagna. For the sweet version, the filling is usually a mix of grated coconut, sugar and dry fruits."

Some of Shaima's other specialities include nendran pazham

rolls stuffed with grated and fried coconut, ghee and dry fruits, called unnakai; erachi pathiri made with minced meat (now replaced with minced soya) and thari kanji made with sooji, vermicelli, and milk. "What we miss the most is not being able to distribute the goodies to our neighbours," she says.

Carrot pola

INGREDIENTS

- 2 carrots
- 1/2 cup water
- 5 eggs
- 4 tbsp sugar
- 5 tbsp milk powder
- 1 tbsp ghee

METHOD

Cut carrot into pieces and boil in water. Add the boiled carrot, eggs, sugar, milk powder, ghee and blend in a blender. Pour in the mixture in a flat-bottomed kadai greased with ghee. Place the kadai on top of a tawa and keep it on fire to get an evenly-steamed carrot pola. Keep on low heat for about 15 minutes till a stick inserted comes out clean.

Chicken cake

INGREDIENTS (FOR THE CHICKEN FILLING)

- 1 cup boneless chicken
- 1/4 tsp turmeric powder
- 1/2 tsp pepper powder
- 1/2 tsp chilli powder
- 1/4 tsp cut ginger
- 1/4 tsp cut garlic
- Salt
- 3 tsp oil
- 1 tsp ginger-garlic paste
- 1 crushed green chilli
- 2 finely-chopped big onions
- 1/4 tsp garam masala powder
- A handful of coriander leaves

INGREDIENTS (FOR CAKE)

- 3 eggs
- 1/2 cup coconut oil
- 1 cup milk
- 1 cup maida

METHOD

Cook boneless chicken with turmeric powder, pepper powder, chilli powder and salt and keep aside. Shred the cooked chicken in a blender. Heat oil in a kadai. Add ginger-garlic paste and wait for the raw smell to disappear. Add crushed green chilli and finely-chopped onion. Add garam masala, chilli powder, turmeric powder, and coriander leaves. Add shredded chicken and mix well. Turn off the flame and keep aside. In a blender, add eggs, milk, coconut oil and maida and blend well. Add the prepared chicken filling and mix well. Pour this mixture into a flat-bottomed kadai greased with oil and place the kadai on top of a pan. Keep on low heat for 20 minutes, then flip the kadai upside down on the pan to heat the upper portion of the chicken cake for five minutes in low heat. Remove from flame when evenly cooked and a stick inserted comes out clean. Wait for it to cool down.



RANJANI GOVIND

The Indian Institute of Horticultural Research (IIHR), in Bengaluru has developed a technology to make jackfruit juice, chocolates and cookies. "It took me three years of research to develop this technique," says CK Narayana, Principal Scientist, and Former Head of the Division of Post Harvest Technology, IIHR, Hessaraghatta.

Jackfruit, unlike the mango, was largely ignored until a few years ago. "Jackfruit is believed to have originated in the Western Ghats and finds mention in traditional systems of medicine," says Narayana. Its benefits are varied. "100 grams of jackfruit bulbs provide 95 calories of energy, which is better than honey. The fruit is made of soft, easily digestible flesh with simple sugars such as fructose and sucrose that replenish energy instantly."

Narayana spoke to us on what makes jackfruit special. Excerpts:

How much jackfruit is grown in India?

As per the National Horticulture Board Statistics, we produce 1.74 million tonnes annually. Tripura, Odisha, Assam, West Bengal, Karnataka, Kerala, Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand produce more than one lakh tonnes. Most are natural hybrids and each has a unique taste and texture. Many farmers grow jackfruit in their field bunds or backyards for their consump-

tion. Huge quantities come from forests where they grow wild.

Could you talk about the field gene bank?

IIHR Bengaluru, a subsidiary of Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR), is a National Active Germplasm Site (NAGS) for jackfruit. We maintain a collection of more than 75 types collected from all over India. This is a continuous process and we keep enriching our gene bank. We help custodian farmers who have been conserving jackfruit trees in their homes or orchards for several generations. We recognise and reward these farmers, and also spread these rare types among other farmers and growers.

Was jackfruit always a part of our traditional diet?

Long ago, before India became self-sufficient in food grains, people from Kerala, coastal Karnataka, and Maharashtra used to boil jackfruit seeds and eat them during the rainy season or drought as no other food was available. After rice and wheat were made available in plenty, post the Green Revolution, people stopped eating jackfruit seed as it was seen as a symbol of poverty. Over the last few years, jackfruit started getting attention from global scientists, policy makers and farmers.



A cooler with some heat

Aam pora sherbet (fire-roasted raw mango sherbet) with chilli powder

• CHANDRIMA SARKAR

Cheers to the sherbet

There is more to the Iftar refreshment than just Rooh Afza. Sweet or sour, rimmed with spice or thick with fruit, sherbets hold their own through this summer month of fasting

PRABALIKA M BORAH

Unlike what many like to imagine, Roza observers do not break their fast with heaps of food. Iftar is a process that begins with a sip of water. Followed by a date and sherbet, which is important because "it gives relief to the tired body after long hours of fasting during the summer," says expert on Hyderabadi cuisine, Mehboob Alam Khan.

Iftar is not all about kebabs, pulao, biryani, kheer, and other interesting treats. Sherbet – a cooling drink made of sweet, diluted fruit juices – is as important as the food. Every household has its signature sherbet. It can be made with any seasonal fruit or, if one prefers, using home-made fruit preserves or concentrate.

Following food discussion groups is a great way to find ideas. With the mango season on, mango juice seems to be on top of the list, followed by watermelon and mint cooler. There is a huge demand for milkshakes and almond rose milk as well.

Fatima Shah, a Dubai-based home baker, says that even though the favourite drink is the milkshake, traditionally what is served in their home is an Iranian shikanji made with sugar-cane vinegar, sugar and mint. "If sugarcane vinegar is hard to get, one can use apple cider vinegar," she informs.

Something as simple as lemon juice or nimbu paani also does wonders to the body. Hyderabad-based Arabic scholar and entrepreneur Izzath Uroosa says the logic behind sherbet has more to do with taste. "We break our fast with water and a date. After that if you get a glass of fresh juice, imagine how soul-stirring it would be? It doesn't just instantly cool the body, it also refreshes our mind. I prefer the kairi ka juice without the masalas. The other popular sherbet is Rooh Afza with balanga (basil seeds). Balanga or sabja is known for its cooling properties, so it is a natural choice. Soaked balanga added to a glass of red rooh afza is Instagram-worthy as well."

Mehboob Alam Khan, however, prefers the raw mango juice prepared in a slightly different way, with the mango being burnt over a bed of red ambers. He says, "It is a slow process but the smokiness in the drink is worth the time and effort." Or mix khus syrup in your lemonade for a more refreshing experience if you don't want to slog, he suggests.

He also adds, "Badam (almond) milk is a hugely popular drink, but preparing it is laborious and expensive. I would not suggest it especially in times like these."

As families look to stay healthy and move away from packaged drinks and concentrates,

Roasted raw mango cooler

INGREDIENTS

- 500 gm raw mangoes
- 43 gm (adjust as per your taste) caster sugar (white or brown)
- 2 tbsp cumin seeds
- 1/2 tsp whole black peppercorn
- Black salt to taste
- 2 sprigs mint leaves
- 750 ml water
- Ice cubes

FOR GARNISHING (OPTIONAL)

- 1 tsp smoked paprika
- 1 tsp salt
- Lemon

METHOD

Place the raw mangoes on a BBQ hand-held grill, start roasting on the stove top, and keep the heat low for the mangoes to cook. Roast them on all sides, so that they get charred evenly on all the sides. After roasting, transfer the mangoes to a bowl of cold water. Leave them for 10 minutes, then peel the burnt skin of the raw mangoes. Squeeze the mangoes or use a knife to take out the pulp. Dry-roast the cumin seeds in a pan until fragrant and one shade darker in colour; keep aside. In a food processor, add the roasted cumin seeds and black peppercorn, blitz until a coarse powder forms. This is the roasted spice powder for the cooler; keep aside to use later. Add the mango pulp, sugar, black salt and mint leaves in a food processor. Blitz until smooth, strain this mango mixture through a strainer, and keep aside. In a jug, add 750 ml of water, raw mango pulp mixture and 1 tsp of roasted spice powder, and stir well. The consistency of this cooler would be a little thicker, so adjust water accordingly. Pour in the glasses, add ice cubes and serve. For optional garnishing, mix smoked paprika and salt in a plate. Rub lemon wedge around the rim of the glasses, now firmly touch the rim of the glass onto paprika salt until fully coated.

(Recipe by Chandrima Sarkar)

there is a steady search for recipes with natural ingredients. "There are many traditional Ramzan recipes that use herbs and jellies with cooling properties as part of the Iftar meal to break the fast," says Rayhana Nainar, a home-maker. "Nannari (Indian Sarsaparilla) can be had either as a water-based sherbet or with cold milk.

Since palmyra fruit are in season in much of South India these days, nannari sherbet can be served along with the pulp. Some people like to add a dash of lime juice to cut through the sweetness," she suggests. Sounds tempting.

be blended into rice or wheat without the taste being compromised. After our laboratory trials, we collaborated with a food processing industry (an IIHR off-site incubatee) in Mangalore district to introduce this into the market as ready-to-eat chapatis.

We have also developed a jackfruit seed chocolate, where the seed flour is blended with other food additives and non-sugar sweeteners and wrapped in chocolate. The jackfruit comprises almost 50% of the weight of each chocolate, reducing the calorific value by one-third, while raising its mineral content, as the fruit seed is rich in iron, zinc and calcium and other phytochemicals.

The seed flour-based cookies we developed have 10% lesser calories and high amounts of iron, calcium, magnesium and zinc compared to the commercially available cookies. The licence to manufacture the cookies has been given to an entrepreneur in Shivamogga in Karnataka. Production will begin once lockdown is lifted.

What are the nutritional benefits of jackfruit?

Jackfruit is a wonderful gift of nature. The ripe fruit is a delicious dessert, while the unripe one can be cooked as a vegetable, as it has crude as well as dietary fibre. The seed is rich in resistant starch and phytochemicals that have medicinal properties.

In jackfruit seed chocolate, the seed flour is blended with other food additives and non-sugar sweeteners and wrapped in chocolate

What is IIHR doing to build awareness of the nutritional benefits of jackfruit?

We have been organising jackfruit diversity shows for the last three years. I have also started researching ways and means to use every part of the fruit (edible



Sweet experiments

Jackfruit in chocolates, cookies, and seed flour that can be stored for a year...

C.K. Narayana, Principal Scientist at Indian Institute of Horticultural Research, is giving the fruit new forms

Virus may never go away, warns WHO

European Medicines Agency says data from trials suggest vaccine could possibly be ready in a year

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
THE HAGUE

The European Union's medicines agency suggested on Thursday that a vaccine for the COVID-19 could be ready in year, even as the World Health Organization (WHO) warned that the disease may never go away.

World leaders past and present have insisted that any eventual vaccines and treatments should be made available to everyone free of charge, with the global death toll from the disease nearing 300,000.

The pandemic has caused massive social and economic upheaval across the planet and while some nations have



Prolonged crisis: People in front of the Basilica of the Sacred Heart of Paris after a partial lifting of restrictions imposed two months ago to fight the pandemic. • AFP

begun easing punishing lockdowns, fears of a second wave have kept many businesses shuttered and people confined to their homes.

Washington ratcheted up tensions over the crisis by accusing China of trying to steal research, and U.S. President Donald Trump upped the rhetoric with a colourful phrase that was likely to infuriate Beijing.

"We just made a great Trade Deal, the ink was barely dry, and the world was hit by the Plague from China. 100 Trade Deals wouldn't make up the difference – and all those innocent lives lost!" Mr. Trump tweeted.

'Best-case scenario'

With the race to find a vaccine gathering pace, the European Medicines Agency said one could possibly be ready in a year based on data from trials under way.

Announcing the forecast at a video news conference, Marco Cavaleri, the EMA's head of biological health threats and vaccines strate-

gy, stressed that it was a "best-case scenario".

"We know also that there may be delays," he said, voicing scepticism over reports a vaccine could be ready as early as September.

Patent-free science

And world leaders were among 140 signatories to a letter published on Thursday, saying any vaccine should not be patented and that the science should be shared among nations. "Governments and international partners must unite around a global guarantee which ensures that, when a safe and effective vaccine is developed, it is produced rapidly at scale and made available for all people, in all countries, free of charge," it said.

A vaccine could allow countries to fully reopen from shutdowns that have battered economies and thrown millions of people out of work.

But the WHO cautioned that the virus may never be wiped out entirely.

'Wave of bankruptcies'

The U.S. is the country hardest-hit by COVID-19, logging a total of more than 84,000 deaths.

Top infectious diseases expert Anthony Fauci has said reopening too soon risks triggering uncontrollable

outbreaks, but Trump dismissed the call for caution as "not acceptable".

The tensions between health and the economy were thrown into sharp relief on Wednesday when Federal Reserve chief Jay Powell warned of a potential "wave of bankruptcies" that could cause lasting harm.

Further signs of the damage to businesses emerged on Thursday when Lloyd's of London forecast the pandemic will cost the global insurance industry about \$203 billion.

And Australia released figures showing almost 6,000,000 people lost their jobs as the country's virus shutdown took hold in April, the steepest monthly drop in employment since records began more than 40 years ago.

But the reopening of economies continued across Europe, where the EU has set out proposals for a phased restart of travel and the eventual lifting of border controls.

"This virus may become just another endemic virus in our communities and this virus may never go away," said Michael Ryan, the global health body's emergencies director.

"HIV has not gone away – but we have come to terms with the virus."

The UN also warned that the outbreak risked a major mental health crisis and called for urgent action to address psychological suffering.

Mr. Trump has been pushing for a swift resumption of economic activity in the U.S., often against the advice of health officials, as he tries to jumpstart the world's largest economy before a November election.

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Mass testing in Wuhan over new cluster

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
WUHAN

Nervous residents of China's pandemic epicentre of Wuhan queued up across the city to be tested for COVID-19 on Thursday after a new cluster of cases sparked a mass screening campaign. Long lines of physically distanced people formed at makeshift testing sites set up in parking lots, parks and residential complexes as it rained in the metropolis of 11 million people. More than 3,800 people have died from COVID-19 in the city, accounting for the majority of fatalities in China.

China rejects U.S. charge of vaccine research theft

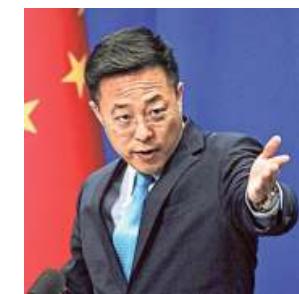
'Hackers are trying to steal data on COVID-19 cures'

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
BEIJING

Beijing accused on Thursday of smearing China after Washington alleged Chinese hackers were attempting to steal research on developing a vaccine against the COVID-19.

The claims have added fuel to tensions between the global superpowers, who have traded barbs over the origin of the pandemic that has killed 3,00,000 people.

U.S. authorities said on Wednesday that Chinese hackers were trying to obtain coronavirus data on treatments and vaccines, warning the effort involved Chinese government-affiliated groups and others.



Zhao Lijian

ity Agency said China's efforts posed a "significant threat" to the U.S. response to COVID-19.

"China expresses strong dissatisfaction and firm opposition to such smearing," Foreign Ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian told a regular press briefing.

"Judging from past records, the U.S. has carried out the largest cybertheft operations worldwide," Mr.

Zhao told reporters.

He stressed that Beijing has significant achievements of its own in the fight against the pandemic.

China is "also leading the world in COVID-19 vaccine research and treatment", and therefore has more reason to worry about cyber espionage itself, Mr. Zhao said.

He added that the country has cracked down on cyber-hacking, and that any cyber attack hindering the global fight against the pandemic should be condemned by people around the world.

Responding to U.S. President Donald Trump's reference to COVID-19 as the "Plague from China", Mr. Zhao said the U.S. should stop blaming and discrediting others, and focus on their own prevention and control work.

Despite Fauci's caution, Trump pushes for opening of schools

The virus has 'had very little impact on young people'

ASSOCIATED PRESS
WASHINGTON

President Donald Trump called on Governors across the nation to work to reopen schools that were closed because of the coronavirus, pointedly taking issue with top medical adviser Dr. Anthony Fauci's caution against moving too quickly in sending students back to class.

The President accused Dr. Fauci of wanting "to play all sides of the equation," a comment that suggested he is tiring of the nation's top

infectious disease expert.

"I think they should open the schools, absolutely. I think they should," Mr. Trump told reporters at the White House, echoing comments he had made in a television interview. Our country's got to get back and it's got to get back as soon as possible. And I don't consider our country coming back if the schools are closed."

Dr. Fauci had urged caution in testimony before a Senate committee on Tuesday, although he made it clear that he believes reo-

pening decisions will likely differ from one region to the next.

"We don't know everything about this virus and we really better be pretty careful, particularly when it comes to children," Dr. Fauci told the committee.

Mr. Trump said the coronavirus has "had very little impact on young people," although there is growing concern over cases of a mysterious inflammatory syndrome in young people that is thought to be related to the virus.

China rebuts Taiwan on WHO participation

'Its real intention is to use the crisis as a pretext to seek independence'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI

China opposed any move by Taiwan to use the COVID-19 pandemic as a "pretext" to seek independence, its Embassy in New Delhi said on Thursday.

Taiwan was looking to "hype up Taiwan's participation in the World Health Organization (WHO)" while "their real intention is to solicit foreign support and seek independence under the pretext of the pandemic", the Chinese Embassy in New Delhi said in a statement.

"We are firmly opposed to that and have repeatedly clarified our position," said the statement, which was issued in response to comments made by Taiwan Foreign Minister Joseph Wu in an interview with *The Hindu* on Wednesday.

Mr. Wu said Taiwan's sta-

tus had limited its ability to share information about COVID-19 and its arrangement with the WHO was "far from satisfactory". He called for "full participation" in the WHO and for Taiwan to interact with countries on "an equal basis".

Taiwan is not a member of the WHO. China has opposed its inclusion in the World Health Assembly (WHA), the organisation's decision-making body, citing the 'One China principle', although Taiwan participated in the WHA as an observer from 2009 to 2016.

Relations have been strained after the Democratic Progressive Party's (DPP) election win in 2016. In the statement, the Embassy said the DPP "has been stubbornly adhering to 'Taiwan independence' separatist status" and "undermined the politi-

cal foundation for the region's participation in the WHA".

India is among the 179 of the 193 member states of the UN that do not maintain any diplomatic ties with Taiwan. While the U.S. has been pushing for Taiwan's inclusion in the WHA, the move will require a simple majority from member states.

Ahead of next week's WHA meet, India has found itself in the middle as it takes over as chairperson of the executive board. The government is yet to make a final decision on whether to support the U.S. move to include Taiwan or to accept China's objections to it, officials said.

Joseph Wu

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Taiwan sent an email on December 31 to the WHO, the same day Wuhan authorities alerted the body, and asked for more information about the outbreak. The email, later made public, did not provide any new information or warning about the pandemic that had been ignored.

We urge the relevant Indian media take a correct stance on issues of core interests concerning China's sovereignty and territorial integrity, adhere to the one-China principle, do not provide a platform for 'Taiwan independence' forces, and avoid sending wrong messages to the public," the statement said.

The Chinese Embassy statement rebutted Taiwan's claims that it had been excluded from the WHO and that it had provided an early warning on the pandemic that had been ignored.

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The Chinese Embassy statement rebutted Taiwan's claims

MARKET WATCH

	14-05-2020	% CHANGE
Sensex	31,123	-2.77
US Dollar	75.56	-0.13
Brent oil	30.19	1.07

NIFTY 50

	PRICE	CHANGE
Adani Ports	308.40	-0.95
Asian Paints	1522.40	-40.90
Axis Bank	401.95	-12.05
Bajaj Auto	2702.65	6.65
Bajaj Finserv	4790.25	-26.15
Bajaj Finance	2112.00	-49.05
Bharti Airtel	539.85	-16.10
BPCL	309.70	-6.85
Britannia Ind	3118.70	39.15
Cipla	569.75	-0.45
Coal India	128.65	-1.95
Dr Reddy's Lab	3732.00	-47.60
Eicher Motors	14031.85	-239.80
GAIL (India)	85.45	-3.90
Grasim Ind	511.40	-11.55
HCL Tech.	517.45	-11.30
HDFC	1632.40	-80.35
HDFC Bank	893.70	-33.95
Hero MotoCorp	2241.35	53.75
Hindalco	117.20	-6.35
Hind Unilever	2006.05	10.30
ICICI Bank	327.40	-10.65
IndusInd Bank	428.00	-20.60
Bharti Infralet	209.65	13.50
Infosys	658.15	-36.00
Indian Oil Corp	75.15	-0.85
ITC	163.80	-1.60
JSW Steel	175.20	-7.15
Kotak Bank	1173.10	-13.60
L&T	871.65	8.75
M&M	400.45	-12.60
Maruti Suzuki	5114.05	77.95
Nestle India Ltd.	16242.50	-269.85
NTPC	89.35	-3.70
ONGC	76.15	-2.05
PowerGrid Corp	160.80	-5.85
Reliance Ind	1435.95	-60.50
State Bank	167.95	-6.15
Shree Cement	19310.80	-452.45
Sun Pharma	455.95	3.60
Tata Motors	83.80	-3.40
Tata Steel	268.55	-8.00
TCS	1902.35	-47.30
Tech Mahindra	515.70	-29.05
Titan	846.00	-14.45
UltraTech Cement	3609.50	62.80
UPL	391.85	2.20
Vedanta	89.15	-1.10
Wipro	186.00	-3.70
Zee Entertainment	169.65	-4.50

EXCHANGE RATES		
Indicative direct rates in rupees a unit except yen at 4 p.m. on May 14		
CURRENCY	TT BUY	TT SELL
US Dollar	75.36	75.68
Euro	81.36	81.71
British Pound	91.98	92.37
Japanese Yen (100)	70.47	70.77
Chinese Yuan	10.61	10.66
Swiss Franc	77.39	77.72
Singapore Dollar	52.94	53.17
Canadian Dollar	53.51	53.74
Malaysian Ringgit	17.38	17.46
Australian Dollar	48.47	48.69

Source: Indian Bank

First tranche of package seen at ₹5.9 lakh cr.

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI
The economic package announced by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Wednesday, which was the first tranche of the ₹20 lakh crore package announced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, is estimated at ₹5.9 lakh crore by a Goldman Sachs report.

"Our calculations suggest that the measures announced would amount to ₹5.9 trillion, or 2.8% of FY21 GDP," the report said.

A relief package of ₹1.7 lakh crore was announced earlier by the government.

"We expect a remaining ₹4.4 lakh crore of announcements (2.1% of GDP) over the next few days," the report said.

The first tranche of measures include ₹3 lakh crore collateral free 4-year tenure loan for micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) with moratorium on payment for first 12 months. A loan provision of ₹20,000 crore for stressed MSMEs was also made and a ₹30,000 crore special liquidity scheme for investment in debt papers of NBFCs was announced, among other schemes.

The loan will be provided against the ₹94,000 crore receivables of the discoms and will be secured against re-

ceivables, and additionally guaranteed by the respective state governments.

Venkataraman Rengarajan, MD, Alvarez & Marsal (India), believes that the announcement for discoms to clear dues are extremely critical for the infrastructure sector.

"Hope it is implemented speedily and in the right manner. A very timely move," Mr. Rengarajan said.

The funds will be infused

within a couple of days by offering concessional loans to state electricity discoms, which would be 150 basis points lower than the usual lending rates by the PFC and REC.

According to Vivek Sharma, senior director - Energy, CRISIL Infrastructure Advisory, the ₹90,000 crore stimulus to clear outstanding dues of power generators is a big positive as it will ease liquidity pressure.

This transition is expected to benefit auto companies and used car dealers, who were impacted by the rise of taxi aggregators and metro rail across the country.

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought about a significant change in the perspective regarding transportation usage in the minds of consumers. Due to the impact of COVID-19 and the implications of strict physical distancing norms, we anticipate that there will be a considerable decrease in the use of public transport and shared mobility," said Vivek Srivastava, head, Marketing, Passer-

ger Vehicle Business Unit (PVBU), Tata Motors.

"The demand for personal mobility will increase due to the customer's need to ensure personal safety," he added. He said although

CBDT notifies reduction in TDS/TCS

Extending concession to salaried class could have increased year-end tax burden: Finance Secretary

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA NEW DELHI

Following Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman's announcement of a reduction in the rate of tax deducted at source (TDS) and tax collected at source (TCS) for non-salaried payments, the Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) notified revised rates that will be applicable from May 14, 2020 to March 31, 2021.

Clarifying on why the TDS rate had not been reduced for the salaried class, Finance Secretary Ajay Bhushan Pandey said TDS was deducted from salary after considering various eligible deductions such as 80C of the salaried person.

This, he said, had been done to ensure that the salaried individual did not have to bear the burden of paying higher taxes at year end.

"If we reduced the TDS rate for salaried class, then their compliance burden



Booster dose: The Centre cut TDS in a bid to boost liquidity for businesses, says Ajay Bhushan Pandey. ■ GRN SOMASHEKAR

would have increased because they would be required to pay higher taxes at the year end along with interest. Hence, TDS rate has not been cut for them," he said. He further said that cash withdrawal of above ₹1 crore from banks would continue to attract 1% TDS and

such a transaction would not enjoy the benefit of reduced TDS rate.

Foreign remittances

Similarly, there had been no cut in the TDS rate for foreign remittances as well as where the tax is required to be deducted or collected at

higher rate due to non-furnishing of PAN/Aadhaar.

Speaking to reporters, Mr. Pandey said there were 23 such items in which there was a reduction in TDS rate and seven items with lower TCS. He said a 10% TDS was levied on interest on securities, interest on bank account, dividend payments, which has now been reduced to 7.5%.

"This is done to ensure businesses have liquidity," he said. In the notification, the CBDT said while TCS on sale of motor vehicles above ₹10 lakh has been cut to 0.75% from 1% earlier, TDS on 23 items has been reduced to 7.5%.

The CBDT said TDS on payment for life insurance policy has been reduced to 3.75% from 5% earlier, while that on dividend and interest as well as rent for immovable property has been cut to 7.5% from 10%.



Bear grip: A rise in COVID-19 cases and lack of clarity on government's stimulus acted as a dampener. ■ PAUL NORONHA

Weak global cues pull down Indian equities

Fed comment on weakness also weighs

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT MUMBAI

The Indian equity indices tracked weak global cues on Thursday and erased all of the gains registered on Wednesday with the benchmarks shedding more than 2% each even as the government continued to announce more sops to support the economy.

While the fresh set of incentives for farmers, street vendors and migrant workers, among others, was announced after market hours, investor sentiment took a hit after the U.S. Federal Reserve Chairman Jerome Powell hinted at a long period of economic weakness due to COVID-19.

Also, reports of fresh clusters of COVID-19 cases in countries such as China, South Korea and Hong Kong continued unabated with Thursday's net sales pegged at ₹2,153 crore.

Incidentally, market participants are not expecting a sustained upswing in the coming days even as the government will continue to announce more sops as they feel investor sentiments will be more influenced by the manner in which the ongoing pandemic behaves in terms of fresh cases.

Affordable housing to cement a place in realty sector

Urban poor, migrant workers to benefit from extension of CLSS under PM Awas Yojana, say realtors

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT MUMBAI

The announcements by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman for providing rental housing facility for urban poor and migrant labourers as well as extending the credit linked subsidy scheme (CLSS) under PMAY by one more year will give impetus to affordable housing and kick-start consumption of construction materials, according to analysts and developers.

Ashok Mohanani, chairman, Ekta World and president (elect) NAREDCO, Maharashtra, said "The announcement whereby the Centre would be providing

₹11,000 crore to the States that will help provide basic necessities such as food, water and shelter will give a temporary relief to the migrant workers. This measure will stop 60 to 65% of reverse migration which, in turn, will revive the construction activities."

Anshuman Magazine, chairman and CEO, India, south east Asia, middle east and Africa, CBRE said, "The announcement on affordable rental accommodation for urban and migrant workers under PPP partnership will open newer avenues for the construction industry."

"For middle-income group, the extension of CLSS

starts to revive. This, in turn, will help the construction sector to restart operations at the earliest," said Shishir Baijal, CMD, Knight Frank India.

Mrinal Kumar, partner, general corporate, Shardul Amarchand Mangaldas & Co., said the government-funded housing in cities being converted to affordable rental housing complexes through PPP will give the much required impetus to revive the real estate sector and other related industries.

He said extension of CLSS will become a key driver for boosting the economy and attract foreign direct investment into the sector. Rohit

Poddar, MD, Poddar Housing and Development Ltd. said, "We look forward to the affordable rental housing complexes for migrant workers and urban poor as it will help address housing problems of these workers."

Murali Malayappan, CMD, Shriram Properties Ltd., said the extension of CLSS is a breather for the affordable housing sector as it will boost the sale of affordable housing units as home buyers will continue to get loans from banks and housing finance companies at a subsidized interest rate. "It will also fuel related sectors such as building materials, cement and steel," he added.

Searches for 'remote', 'work from home' jobs up by 261% since Feb.

3% surge in online tutor postings in Jan.-March: Indeed

MINI TEJASWI BENGALURU

Job seekers' searches for remote work have increased by over 261%, as a share of all searches, on Indeed India, since February 2020.

Indeed, which claims to be the world's number one job search engine, with presence across 60 geographies, says job seekers are increasingly searching for terms like 'remote', 'work from home' and related categories in the last two months.

"Our data shows that searches for remote work have increased by over 261% as a share of all searches, on Indeed India since February 2020, indicating a clear surge in search for flexible jobs that can be done remotely or from home. Overall, job searches have increased by 278% on Indeed between September 2019 and March 2020," said Sashi Kumar, MD, Indeed India.

Even as the job market

slows down in the wake of a global pandemic, essential services continue to drive demand, such as in the medical and public health fields. Despite the temporary slump in the sector, healthcare continues to be one of the foremost drivers of the nation's economic growth.

"As per Indeed, job seekers in India have shown greater interest in working in healthcare over the course of the past year (February 2019 to March 2020), with the number of job searches seeing an increase of 5% during this period. Bengaluru holds the largest

share of jobs in healthcare nationally, with 10% of all medical jobs located in the city. It is followed by Mumbai and New Delhi, both with 8% of all medical jobs in the country, and Chennai and Hyderabad, with 7% and 5% of the same respectively.

IN BRIEF



Tendulkar settles lawsuit against Spartan

NEW DELHI
Sachin Tendulkar has decided to settle his lawsuit against sports goods manufacturer Spartan in the Federal Court of Australia after the company apologised for "breach of contract". Tendulkar alleged that Spartan failed to comply with its obligations under the agreement by failing to pay him royalties and endorsement fees as per the agreement signed by both parties. Spartan had continued to use Tendulkar's name and image even after the termination of the agreement. PTI

IOC creates \$800m fund to address crisis

LAUSANNE
The International Olympic Committee said on Thursday it had created an \$800 million fund to tackle the financial hardships created by the coronavirus pandemic which has forced the postponement of Tokyo Games. IOC president Thomas Bach said the body had released "an envelope of up to \$800 million to address the financial consequences." The envelope has two parts: \$650m which "refers to the cost of organisation" of the postponed Games and \$150m as an aid package for the Olympic movement. AFP



NRAI recommends Anjum for Khet Ratna

NEW DELHI
The National Rifle Association of India (NRAI), on Thursday, recommended World Championship silver medallist Anjum Moudgil, in pic, for the Rajiv Gandhi Khet Ratna, coach Jaspal Rana for the Dronacharya and proposed the names of Manu Bhaker, Saurabh Chaudhary, Abhishek Verma and Elavenil Veliyathan, all multiple gold medalists in World Cups last season, for the Arjuna Award.



99% sure of Serie A start in June: CONI president

ROME
The president of Italian Olympic Committee (CONI) said on Thursday that he is "99%" sure that the Serie A season will restart next month following its coronavirus-enforced suspension. "From one to 100, what do I think the chances are Serie A starts on June 13? I'd say 99%", Giovanni Malago told public broadcaster RAI. AFP

COVID-19: uncertain times for Kashmir's cherry growers

Lockdown has further impacted the market chain which had been disrupted because of the curfew

PEERZADA ASHIQ
SRINAGAR

Kashmir's first crop of cherry fruit, expected to cross the 11,000 metric tonne (MT) mark this year, is starting at uncertain times due to the novel coronavirus pandemic and the lockdown.

"Double Glass, a variety of cherry, will hit the markets next month. Due to the nationwide lockdown, all mandis are closed."

The fruit growers have already suffered huge losses due to last year's clampdown and subsequent lockdown, Jammu Kashmir Kisan Tehreek (JKKT) general secretary Ghulam Nabi Malik.

The market chain of cherry has already seen a disruption due to the curfew imposed in the wake of the Centre's move to revoke J&K's special status. "We used to sell the crop even

Sainz to Ferrari, Ricciardo to McLaren

Vettel's decision to leave the Italian team at the end of the season triggers a game of musical chairs

FORMULA ONE

S. DIPAK RAGAV
CHENNAI

There are still huge question marks over the 2020 Formula One season's viability, but that doesn't mean the teams are not looking to the future.

Sebastian Vettel's decision to leave Ferrari at the end of the year triggered a set of moves that will see Carlos Sainz Jr. taking over from the German in 2021 and Daniel Ricciardo slipping into Sainz's seat at McLaren, both of which were confirmed on Thursday.

Means business

Sainz had been hung out to dry when Renault replaced him with Ricciardo for 2019. If not for Fernando Alonso's exit, the 25-year-old might not have landed the McLaren gig. But in helping McLaren to its best finish in five years, Sainz proved he had to be taken seriously.

In the Spaniard, Ferrari sees a driver capable of consistently bringing home the



What a turnaround! Sainz, dumped by Renault after Ricciardo's arrival, made his presence felt at McLaren in 2019. The Ferrari drive in 2021 will be the crowning glory of his career. ■ FILE PHOTO

points on a Sunday even if he isn't as quick over a single lap, with the team set to throw its weight behind Charles Leclerc.

It is a good place for Sainz to be in. Without the pressure of expectations that befalls most Ferrari drivers, he

can grow into the role.

In a quirk of fate, Ricciardo has yet again taken Sainz's seat, but this time the latter would feel he has had the better of the 'exchange'. It is, at best, a sideways move for the Australian.

Leaving a race-winning

team in Red Bull for Renault, a decision that was questioned at the time, hasn't served Ricciardo's career well.

With the regulation changes planned for 2021 deferred until 2022, Renault's ability to make drastic gains is limit-

Athens the toughest in my Olympic journey: Paes

The 18-time Grand Slam champion relives his seven Summer Games

KAMESH SRINIVASAN
NEW DELHI

Leander Paes was visibly emotional as he soaked in the nostalgia of clips from his seven Olympics – Tokyo, if he plays, will be a record eighth – during a conversation with Olympic Channel.

"In the Olympics, there are about 10,000 athletes. Each athlete has a story, about how they got there. Some of us are lucky to win medals. In my eyes, every single Olympian is a champion. I salute the passion and spirit of the athlete," the 18-time Grand Slam winner said.

His Atlanta Olympics singles bronze medal behind Andre Agassi and Sergi Bruguera may be fresh in the minds of connoisseurs 24 years on, but many may not remember that Paes was close to winning a doubles medal with Ramesh Krishnan at the Barcelona Games in 1992.

"I still chat with Fernando [Meligeni]. I tell him, 'this medal has your name also,'" he said of the bond he shares with the player he beat to win that bronze.

"Athens was the toughest Olympics. I had worked so hard to get there, after being wrongly diagnosed with a brain tumour. We had a match point," Paes said about his (and doubles partner Mahesh Bhupathi's) bronze play-off defeat to Ivan Ljubicic and Mario Ancic of Croatia.

"I love rewriting the history books. It will be great for India to have the record of a tennis player competing



Paes with Agassi at Atlanta. ■ FILE PHOTO

in eight Olympics. The physical fitness is the easy part. With one more year, the emotional happiness and mental fitness are required. Once tennis starts, I will take a call," said Paes.

He credited his father Dr. Vece Paes, a hockey bronze medallist at the Munich Olympics in 1972.

Paes said he was happy with the first "time off" in his 30-year professional career, using the period to care for his father and 14-year-old daughter Aiyana, cook and clean.

Inherent talent

Paes Sr., who joined the video chat, acknowledged that his son had inherent talent and fast-twitch muscles, which made him quick.

"The support system, coach, parents, Davis Cup captain have all played their role. On your own, it is difficult," the 75-year-old said.

England players may start training soon

Can opt out if they perceive risk

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
LONDON

England players could tentatively start their outdoor skill-based training in the coming weeks with the ECB eyeing resumption of international cricket with a series against West Indies in July, said its director of cricket Ashley Giles.

However, as per health directive issued by government wing, the players – across all sports in UK – will

have an option to "opt out" if they have any apprehensions of health risk.

"These are the very first tentative steps back to playing cricket," Giles was quoted by ESPN Cricinfo, indicating that it could be done in controlled environment. "This is individual-based training, so in many ways we should be able to get control of the environment so it's safer to go back to practice than it is to go to the supermarket."

Balbir Singh Sr. suffers two cardiac arrests

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Hockey legend Balbir Singh Senior continued to remain critical and on ventilator support after suffering two more cardiac arrests early on Wednesday morning. The 96-year-old, three-time Olympic gold winner, remains in the ICU in Mohali,

his grandson Kabir said on Thursday.

"Nana ji suffered two more cardiac arrests yesterday morning. His condition has not deteriorated since then but he continues to be very critical and on ventilator assistance. Doctors are continuously assessing his condition," Kabir said.

It should sit with those guidelines and requirements. And not a second before.

What are the chances of the ICC World T20 happening?

I would think it is very slim.

The global economy has

tanked. We have seen the number of deaths go up.

To make a call on cricket

is disrespectful to the times

Carlsen adds four events

on May 3, the World No. 1 revealed the prize-fund for the five-leg Tour would be \$1 million.

The four events added to the Magnus Carlsen Chess Tour are: Lindores Abbey Rapid Challenge (May 19-June 3), Online Chess Masters (June 20-July 5), Legends of Chess (July 21-August 5) and Tour Final (August 9-August 20).

The four events will be

live on Chess24.com.

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प्रधानमंत्री

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