



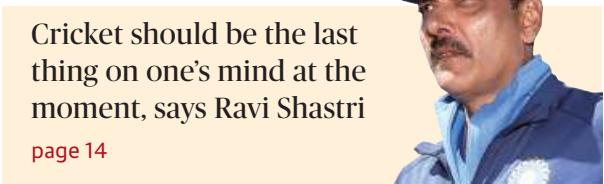
Migrant workers defy lockdown, stage protest in Kerala
page 5



EPF members can take out non-refundable advance amounts
page 8



Left with no work, Gond adivasis survive on *roti* and salt
page 9



Cricket should be the last thing on one's mind at the moment, says Ravi Shastri
page 14

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NEARBY



Stay where you are, Kejriwal tells workers

NEW DELHI
Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Sunday appealed to migrant workers trying to return to their villages in other States to remain in Delhi and assured them that his government has made all necessary arrangements for their food and shelter.

CITY ▶ PAGE 3

Centre suspends two Delhi govt. officials

NEW DELHI
The Centre on Sunday suspended two Delhi government officials and served show-cause notice to two others for dereliction of duty as they "failed to ensure public health and safety during the lockdown restrictions to combat COVID-19".

NEWS ▶ PAGE 9

Delhi reports 23 new COVID-19 cases

NEW DELHI
The Capital on Sunday reported 23 fresh COVID-19 cases, the single largest jump since the outbreak started. There are now a total of 72 cases in the city out of which 64 are active. There have been two deaths due to the virus so far. "Of the 23 new cases, 13 have travel history from abroad and four have come into contact with people who were affected," an official told *The Hindu*.

CITY ▶ PAGE 3

Beds and blankets for 18,478 in the Capital

NEW DELHI
The 21-day lockdown may have deprived Rambhai, a daily wage labourer, of an income but not a bed and blanket. The Haryana resident works in Delhi, and for nearly a year, has been sleeping in one of the "porta cabins", a blue prefabricated hall that houses nearly 75 people. The Delhi government's 223 shelters have the capacity to house 18,478 people.

NEWS ▶ PAGE 9

Gallery launches virtual tour of collection

NEW DELHI
Iconic paintings by Amrita Sher-Gil, M.F. Husain, Jamini Roy and Raja Ravi Varma were among the artworks on display in a virtual tour by the National Gallery of Modern Art as it commemorated its 66th foundation day on Sunday amid the COVID-19 lockdown.

CITY ▶ PAGE 3

As inter-State buses dwindle, migrants are stuck with nowhere to go

Hours of waiting at Zero Point on Yamuna Expressway turns into despair

JATIN ANAND
GREATER NOIDA

Hundreds of people remained suspended between hope and despair at Zero Point on the Yamuna Expressway on Sunday as desperate migrant workers – forced by a sudden and indefinite loss of employment due to the nationwide lockdown – tried to return home to villages in Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Haryana.

On Sunday, however, only a handful of the several hundred waiting people were fortunate enough to get on a vehicle, most climbing onto the already packed roofs of private buses or squeezing into overflowing minivans.

Many had no choice but to wait endlessly.

Given the near hopeless situation, some decided to



Obstacle course: Sunil Kumar Gupta and friend Anand Kumar waiting for a bus on the Yamuna Expressway. ■ JATIN ANAND

return to the rented accommodations they had walked several kilometres and hours, to leave.

"I left my rented accom-

modation at Alpha I with my brother around 8 a.m. We made several stops on the way, making enquiries, waiting for a bus – any bus – to

go back home to Allahabad (Prayagraj)," said Sunil Kumar Gupta, who runs a *paan* shop, adding that he had walked for about an hour to reach Zero Point.

In the four-hour wait that

COVID-19

followed, Mr. Gupta and his sibling, Anil, like many others, took turns to rush towards every bus to enquire about its destination. As the crowds surged, the police deployed at the spot herded them into groups depending on their destinations – Agra, Aligarh and Lucknow.

Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal made repeated appeals to the workers not to leave as they could become victims of COVID-19.

"Our family back home heard about the announcement; we also saw how others were leaving. We were already preparing to travel when we got a call from the family to come back; we thought we would try our luck," a despondent Mr. Gupta said.

Fewer Uttar Pradesh government-run buses seemed to be in operation on Sunday.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

Migrant workers to be stopped, quarantined at borders: Centre

Provide shelters, enforce 14-day isolation, Home Ministry order tells States, UTs



Scrambling home: Migrant workers boarding a truck to Palwal, Haryana, on the Kondli-Manesar-Palwal Expressway. ■ ASHOK KUMAR

DEVESHWAR K. PANDEY
NEW DELHI

col, the order added.

In another statement, the Centre said the States and UTs had been asked to strictly enforce the 21-day lockdown by prohibiting movement of people across cities and highways. Directions have been given to seal the district and State borders and allow only the movement of goods.

Adequate arrangements for food and shelter of the poor and needy, including migrant labourers, should also be made at the place of their work, for which the use of the State Disaster Response Fund has already been authorised.

"Sufficient funds are available with States in this head," said the statement.

Essentials exempted

In a separate letter to the Chief Secretaries of all States, Union Home Secretary Ajay Bhalla said the transportation of all goods, without distinction of essential and non-essential, has been allowed. He clarified that groceries include hygiene products such as hand washes, soaps, disinfectants, apart from battery cells, chargers and other items of daily use.

The entire milk supply and newspaper delivery

chains have also been allowed, he said.

In order to mitigate the economic hardship of migrants, the Ministry told the State and UT governments to ensure that all employers, including industrialists and shop owners, pay wages without deduction at workplaces, on the due date and for the period their commercial establishments remain closed during the lockdown.

Landlords have been directed not to demand one month's rent from workers, including migrant workers.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

MORE REPORTS ▶ PAGES 5, 8, 9, 10

I apologise for tough steps: Modi

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

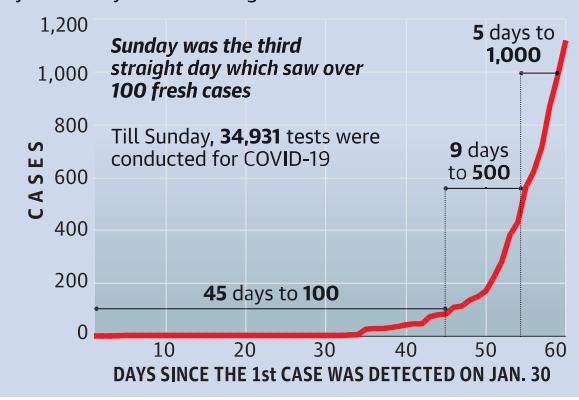
Five days into the 21-day lockdown, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday reached out to citizens with an "apology for tough decisions" in the fight against the novel coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2) outbreak. He also warned that those violating the lockdown were "playing with their own lives".

In his latest monthly radio broadcast, *Mann Ki Baat*, Mr. Modi said: "I would like to apologise ... and my conscience tells me that you will forgive me.."

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

Alarming spike

A total of 132 COVID-19 cases were detected on Sunday, with the overall count reaching 1,119. India touched the 1,000 mark just five days after crossing 500



FIGURES FROM UNION HEALTH MINISTRY AND STATES | 9 P.M.

Cases surge; ICMR denies community transmission

Kerala, Maharashtra cross 200 cases

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

India on Sunday reported 106 new cases of COVID-19, bringing the overall case load to 979.

"There have been six deaths in the past 24 hours," said Joint Secretary in the Union Health Ministry Lav Agrawal at a briefing.

"We have identified certain emerging hotspots and [will] investigate, on a war footing, what action can be taken there," he added. However, none of the officials at the briefing specified the hotspots or the number of cases at these locations.

The Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) said testing for new cases has been stepped up to 30% of the nation's capacity.

Head of Epidemiology and Communicable Diseases at ICMR, Raman Gangakhedkar, said there was no estimate yet of whether the nationwide lockdown – now

into its fifth day – had managed to check community transmission. "If we all observe the lockdown strictly then there's a chance that we will soon reach the peak number of cases," Dr. Gangakhedkar added. The ICMR continues to maintain that there are no instances of community transmission.

Reports from State health authorities put the death toll from COVID-19 at 29, with 1,121 positive cases. Maharashtra reported two fatalities, while J&K and Delhi reported one each on Sunday. Maharashtra and Kerala continued to have the most cases at 203 and 202 respectively. Kerala reported 20 new cases, while 1.41 lakh people are under observation, State Health Minister K.K. Shailaja said.

The Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) said testing for new cases has been stepped up to 30% of the nation's capacity.

Head of Epidemiology and Communicable Diseases at ICMR, Raman Gangakhedkar, said there was no estimate yet of whether the nationwide lockdown – now

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

Rahul calls for a 'nuanced approach'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Sunday urged Prime Minister Narendra Modi to adopt a more "nuanced approach" to the fight against COVID-19 as a complete lockdown could result in a "catastrophic" loss of life.

In a letter to the PM, he said the rush of youth back to villages would endanger the lives of the elderly population. He said the government should take such an approach "that takes the complex realities of our people into consideration".

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

After rough night, many leave Jaipur

Rajasthan govt. arranges transport for stranded workers

MOHAMMED IQBAL
JAIPUR

After a night-long ordeal, migrant workers leaving for their native places were on Sunday provided buses till the inter-State borders of Rajasthan, reducing their agony of walking long distances on foot.

Thousands of jobless labourers from the city's industrial areas, including Sita-pura, Vishwakarma, Mansarovar, Malviya Nagar and Bagru, waited through the night at four pick-up points after being told that transport arrangements were being made for them. The labourers spent the night on roads without food and water.

"A police van made an announcement in our area yesterday that those willing to travel by bus could reach Dugrapura, but there was no arrangement. Then we were told to come to this pick-up



Buses and waiting areas being sanitised in Jaipur on Sunday. ■ ROHIT JAIN PARAS

point," Irshad Ali, 24, belonging to Bihar's Supaul district, told *The Hindu* at Transport Nagar from where the buses left for the Uttar Pradesh border.

Mr. Ali and 20 other labourers were laid off by the cloth factory owner when the unit stopped operations since the lockdown started. Mahendra Singh, another labourer, said he and his colleagues had no money to pay rent or buy rations. "It is a matter of survival for us. We can fight the disease if we re-

Store staff held for denying entry to Nagas

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
SRINAGAR

Two students from Nagaland were denied entry into the grocery store of a popular retail chain here on Saturday. This sparked outrage on social media following which the police arrested four staff members on Sunday.

Yokai Johny Konyak and Ali Meren stood in the queue outside the store on Saturday evening to buy food items. But they were denied entry on the grounds that they were not "Indians". In an Instagram post, one of the students said they told the staff that they had no COVID-19 symptoms and even produced their Aadhaar cards. "...but still they said we don't accept foreigners," said the student.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

Women warriors join battle against virus

Fashion designers in J&K volunteer to tide over shortage of masks, protective gear



Helping hands: Sadia Mufti stitching masks for health workers in Srinagar on Sunday. ■ NISSAR AHMAD

equipment, 3,000 triple-layered masks are supplied on a daily basis to the District Disaster Management Authority, Srinagar," said a volunteer of the NGO.

Ehsaa International and J&K Skill Development Mission Society have pooled manpower and trained certified professionals to develop health safety gears from a locally procured non-woven polypropylene material.

In the HMT area, on the outskirts of Srinagar, Tawheeda Akhter, an entrepreneur, works late at night. "I have assembled a few of my trainees and started making masks, gowns and shoe-covers. We keep sewing them till late at night as many people may need them in coming days," said Ms. Akhter.

have volunteered across the Valley to help in the mass production of triple-layered masks.

Scores of women tailors

been approved," Ms. Mufti told *The Hindu*.

Her personal protective equipment is different from the routine supply. "It has a boot and a hood, which covers the face except the eyes, in one piece. The stitch is in such a way that it is easy for medics to put it on."

Scores of women tailors

CM YK



Large number of migrant workers waiting to board a bus from Anand Vihar bus depot; workers at Mahatma Gandhi Marg near Dhaula Kuan walking towards their hometown, in New Delhi on Sunday. ■ R.V. MOORTHY, SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR



Staring at financial instability

The 21-day lockdown has left several pockets empty with little to survive. Here are voices from those struggling to make ends meet

'Clampdown is nothing short of a 'calamity' for me'

Aruna Mandal,
At-home parlour service provider

With the country going into a lockdown to control the pandemic, city-dwellers, who depend on a daily source of income, are among the worst hit.

For Govindpuri resident Aruna Mandal (31), a beautician offering at-home parlour services, a three week clampdown was nothing short of a "calamity."

The sole breadwinner of the family, Mandal said: "It has been a week since I stopped visiting my clients' houses. For people like me, how can there be any work from home? Prime Minister Narendra Modi had announced the other day that

the lockdown will be for 21 days and some are saying that it might get extended. The entire situation is very distressing. What do I do?"

The 31-year-old added: "I came to Delhi after my marriage and then I took up a beautician course so that I could earn myself and not depend on anyone. My husband has erratic work and so the income is not regular. I even took a loan and bought a flat recently and had plans to shift by April. Now all the plans are gone. The moneylenders are asking for their money back. I have no idea how I will arrange for the money if I am out of work for three weeks."

Even though the income was "not fixed, it was at least regular and assured," she rued.

"Usually, my days would start around 8 a.m. and I would come back home around 10 p.m. While there were days when I would earn around ₹3,000, at times it was only ₹1,000. At least there was a flow of income to the family. Now we are at a loss with no clue as to how to go forward," the mother of a 12-year-old said.

Shinjini Ghosh

Shinjini Ghosh



Migrants throng KMP Expressway looking for means to go home

Policemen on e-way, NH-48 flagging down vehicles to arrange for their travel

ASHOK KUMAR
MANESAR

Families of thousands of migrant workers, including women and children of all ages, who have been walking long distances along the Delhi-Jaipur Highway carrying suitcases, bags and sacks on their heads, thronged the Kundli-Manesar-Palwal (KMP) Expressway at Pachgaon here on Sunday.

They have been desperately looking for means to return home in adjoining States after they were turned away by the police on Delhi-Gurugram border.

Stranded at Pachgaon, Chandra Bhan Yadav, a worker at a paints company in Gurugram's Khandsa, said that he, along with his family members, including his wife and an eight-year-old girl, was walking towards Anand Vihar bus stand in Delhi to catch a bus to Kanpur, but the police turned him away at the Delhi-Gurugram border.

He said that he had exhausted all his savings and did not have enough to afford even two square meals a day for his family. "I cannot afford to even pay the rent this month. I have no choice but to return home," said Yadav, carrying



Migrant workers along with their family members walking down national highway. ■ PTI

his daughter on the back. He said he was prepared to walk all the way to Kanpur.

Dotting around a 60-km stretch from Delhi-Gurugram border to Pachgaon, the families of the workers, walking in hordes, had a similar stories to narrate. "We have no knowledge about the night shelters opened by the district administration. It is any way, better to go back home than to stay at night shelters," said daily-wage worker Ashish Mishra. He was part of a group of nine, including a woman and a three-year-old child, which sat under a tree at Jharsa Chowk. He claimed that they too were turned away by the police at Delhi-Gurugram border.

He said that he had exhausted all his savings and did not have enough to afford even two square meals a day for his family. "I cannot afford to even pay the rent this month. I have no choice but to return home," said Yadav, carrying

lowed to cross over to the other side of the toll plaza on the KMP Expressway at Pachgaon.

COVID-19

Ajay, a resident of Kakrola, said the neighbouring villages had been running community kitchen for the families of stranded workers and also ferrying them to the toll plaza on the KMP Expressway, around 2 km away. "We provide them food, tea, milk and biscuits. The people have been thronging the KMP Expressway for the past two days," said Mr. Ajay. The district administration teams were also involved in providing food to the workers.

Police teams on the KMP Expressway had been flagging down the trucks and personal vehicles to arrange for the travel of the workers till Palwal.

Meanwhile, the district administration converted 19 community centres across the city into "relief centres", in addition to the night shelters, to prevent the exodus. As many as 23 volunteer teams were involved in providing food, water and medical support to the workers.

Cab driver finds it difficult to sustain family of five

Mohammad Ahmed,
Driver with a cab-service provider

Apart from posing serious health threats, the COVID-19 outbreak also had adverse financial effects, specially after countrywide restrictions were announced.

Mohammad Ahmed, who is a driver with a leading cab service provider, now spends his days staring out of his balcony, in a bid to assess the financial impact caused in his life.

"Since the Prime Minister's announcement, business is completely down and income nil. The cab services have been discontinued till fur-

ther orders. So at this point, we have no clarity on when it will be resumed and more importantly [we] have no idea how we will survive for the next three weeks," said Ahmed.

With three children, Ahmed has a family of five to sustain.

"As of now we have bought basic grains and pulses. There is not really much that we can stock up. Where is the money for that?" he asked.

While adding that monthly instalments against loans he had taken are due, the 35-year-old said, "The worry of how to sustain is making me so anxious. I still have EMIs to pay for the

loan I took to buy the car. The only thing happening these days is the steady depletion of the bank accounts. Even from the company we have not heard a word on whether we will get any compensation for this period."

"I started driving the cab three years ago. Earlier I used to work in the construction industry. Currently, it simply looks like hassles are about to increase with no solution in the near future. We can't step out; there is no way to earn anything and a constant threat to the health. Our miseries are simply unending it seems," he said.

Shinjini Ghosh

cerned about the spread of the pandemic. "When I sleep at night, I hope I don't wake up in the morning...I have lived a full life. I have seen a lot, done a lot...I never thought I would see such a time as well. But if it gets me, that's also okay," he said.

"I have been trying to spend time in some way or the other like feeding the birds and watching the television," said Kumar who had also managed to procure cigarettes despite the lockdown. "We make some arrangements for this," he said.

Sitting on the porch of his store, he said: "Day and night we see people walking with bags asking for directions to the bus terminal...it is really sad." Kumar believes that more time should have been given to prepare for the lockdown.

Sidharth Ravi

We are borrowing money to manage a meal a day'

Ramesh Kumar,
Runs tyre repair shop

Fifty seven-year-old Ramesh Kumar has been without work since the people's curfew on March 22. "I only had ₹1,000 with me when the restrictions were announced...how am I supposed to get anything done with that?" asked Kumar, who lives with two children and his brother's family.

With alcohol stores shut, Kumar, who runs a tyre repair shop near the Nehru Enclave metro station, said that he is saving some money. But ensuring that food and ration are available is a task. "We are making do with whatever we can, borrowing money from people here and there to eat a meal in a day," he said, sitting outside his closed shop, along with a few others who has stores nearby.

Stating that no help in any form was

received from authorities, Kumar said, "No one came to ask even about water." Without a source of income he is not sure how long his family would be able to survive. But he wasn't too con-

cerned about the spread of the pandemic. "When I sleep at night, I hope I don't wake up in the morning...I have lived a full life. I have seen a lot, done a lot...I never thought I would see such a time as well. But if it gets me, that's also okay," he said.

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Sidharth Ravi

It is a bad idea to leave city now: restaurant worker

Ram Pal,
Worker at a restaurant

Nineteen-year-old Ram Pal from Gonda in Uttar Pradesh has decided to stay put in Delhi at least for the time being. The owner of the restaurant he works at has suspended wages but is providing food to the workers.

"It [providing food] is better than nothing...what pay will we get when we are not working at all?" he said.

Many of his friends had left the city out of fear. Also, they were out of work and running out of money. But Ram thinks that it is a bad idea to leave the Capital. "Some people who left yesterday [Saturday] and that too on some expensive bus tickets have only reached Lucknow till now...that's only half way home," he explained.

"I have been trying to spend time in some way or the other like feeding the birds and watching the television," said Kumar who had also managed to procure cigarettes despite the lockdown. "We make some arrangements for this," he said.

Sitting on the porch of his store, he said: "Day and night we see people walking with bags asking for directions to the bus terminal...it is really sad." Kumar believes that more time should have been given to prepare for the lockdown.

"They are all now in the middle of nowhere without food or water..at least here there is a roof over our heads and some food," he said. "Now there is another friend who says he wants to go home but we are telling him to stay put," he added.



Besides this, Ram is also concerned about transmitting the virus to the people in his village. "What if I take it [virus] to my village and give it to people there...if I fall sick here at least I can stay in the room, there might be some facility," he added.

While he doesn't mind staying on for a little while, he isn't sure how long he would be able to sustain." If this is just for twenty days or may be a month, I can stay on for sure...but if it goes beyond that I will have to leave," he said, insisting that he had to be with his family who are already quite tensed.

"I don't want to stay in Delhi for too long anyway," said Ram, who was collecting money to eventually return home and fix up his house. However, he believes that the restaurant will start functioning soon.

Sidharth Ravi

Increase picket deployment, police chief tells officers

Do extensive patrolling to stop migrants'

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

Amid exodus of migrant workers from the national capital to their respective hometowns, the Delhi Police Commissioner on Sunday instructed police personnel to stop migrants from moving out of the city by enhancing picket deployment and stopping movement of buses, officials said.

This comes a day after thousands of migrant workers, who have been longing to go home, thronged Anand Vihar bus terminal on the Delhi-UP border.

Police personnel have been instructed to enhance deployment of pickets on all

the roads leading to Delhi, including metro tracks and railways tracks.

Many people were seen trying to walk on the railway tracks at Anand Vihar to reach their houses in U.P.

All the district DCPs, ACPs and SHOs have been instructed to do extensive patrolling in their respective areas and deploy maximum vehicles for patrolling. The officers have also been asked to announce that government will pay them full wages and also spread awareness among them about the threat of spread of COVID-19 and warn them that strict action will be taken if they are seen on roads.

People come forward to help authorities

ASHOK KUMAR
GURUGRAM

Over 60 people have registered as volunteers with the district administration to help authorities implement lockdown provisions in Gurugram in the wake of spread of COVID-19. Around 300 volunteers registered with the Red Cross Society and Civil Defence are also lending a hand.

District Development and Panchayat Officer Narend

Kumar said that volunteers registered with the administration were part of a task force formed for distribution of ration to slum dwellers.

Some of the volunteers are enforcing social distancing norms at grocery and pharmacy shops while others are part of teams spreading awareness on how to prevent COVID-19 infection.

Civil Defence volunteer V.N. Tiwari said they were also assisting the police at various barricaded checkpoints.

Delhi police block road at Sarai Kale Khan

Move gets migrants workers stranded

SOIBAM ROCKY SINGH
NEW DELHI

A large number of out-of-job migrant workers, who were marching towards Anand Vihar bus terminal on Sunday, were stopped by the Delhi police at Sarai Kale Khan here and sent back to their respective houses in Delhi in specially arranged buses.

The Delhi police also made arrangement for meals and water for the migrant workers before sending them in batches to their location in charter buses. Due to the nationwide shutdown of non-essential services imposed to contain the spread of COVID-19 pandemic, migrant workers, most of whom work as daily wagers to support their families, have stopped getting work.

Special CP R.S. Krishna, who was at the spot over-

seeing the arrangements, assured the migrant workers that they did not have to go back home on foot as special buses are being arranged for them.

The Delhi police also made arrangement for meals and water for the migrant workers before sending them in batches to their location in charter buses. Due to the nationwide shutdown of non-essential services imposed to contain the spread of COVID-19 pandemic, migrant workers, most of whom work as daily wagers to support their families, have stopped getting work.

IN BRIEF

Bus owner, driver held during picket checking
NEW DELHI

A bus owner and his three drivers were arrested during a picket checking at Dhaula Kuan Flyover on Sunday for carrying passengers violating guidelines, the police said. The bus owner has been identified as Om Prakash (47), a resident of Ashok Nagar, and his drivers as Ashok Kumar (48), Subhash Chand (37) and Ram Shankar (45) they said.

	Timings
	DELHI
MONDAY, MAR. 30	
	RISE 06:14 SET 18:38
	RISE 09:52 SET 23:58
TUESDAY, MAR. 31	
	RISE 06:12 SET 18:39
	RISE 10:37 SET 00:00
WEDNESDAY, APR. 01	
	RISE 06:11 SET 18:39
	RISE 11:29 SET 00:55

Delhi Weather	max	min
Delhi City	30	18
Safdarjung	30	18
Palam	31	18

Delhi Pali Today
28°C A dry and warm day with partly cloudy sky to prevail. Night will be pleasant and dry.

Delhi Pali Tomorrow
28°C A dry and warm day with partly cloudy sky to prevail. Night will be pleasant and dry.

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THE HINDU
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Air Quality of Delhi-NCR			
Delhi	62	Gurugram	62
Ghaziabad	48	Faridabad	83
Noida	58	Greater Noida	88
Good	■ Satisfactory	■ Moderate	
0-50	51-100	101-200	
Poor	■ Very Poor	■ Severe	
201-300	301-400	>400	
Air Quality Index at 4 p.m. yesterday (Average of past 24 hours) Source: CPCB			

IN BRIEF



Fire breaks out at furniture shop

NEW DELHI
A fire broke out at a furniture shop in southeast Delhi's Shaheen Bagh area on Sunday night, a Delhi Fire Service official said. The fire started in the shop at around 8.46 p.m. Four fire tenders were pressed into service, Delhi Fire Service director Atul Garg said. Mr. Garg added that the fire is under control. No injuries have been reported.

Civic bodies to contribute to COVID-19 relief fund

NEW DELHI
One day's salaries of staff of the South and East Delhi municipal corporations will be contributed towards relief funds to fight the COVID-19 pandemic, the civic bodies said. South Delhi Mayor Sunita Kangra said that one day's salaries of all employees apart from sanitation workers and contractual staff, amounting to ₹3.5 crore would be transferred equally to the PM Relief Fund and the SDMC's Corona fund. The EDMC commissioner, Dilraj Kaur also approved of a similar move.

SDMC carries out intensive sanitation drive

NEW DELHI
The South Delhi Municipal Corporation (SDMC) carried out sanitisation of nearly 4,200 public places, among efforts to help contain the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic and the effects of the lockdown. Apart from this, various houses quarantined under its jurisdiction were disinfected with sodium hypochlorite. The civic body also distributed about 70,000 packets of food in its four zones, it said.

6 killed, several injured in road accident

GURUGRAM
Six persons, including a woman and a one-year-old child, were killed and as many were injured when a speeding truck ploughed into two stationary autorickshaws and some people of Kundli-Manesar-Palwal Expressway at Bilaspur here in the early hours of Sunday. The deceased and the injured were waiting for a mode of transport so that they could return to their home towns in Uttar Pradesh due to the ongoing lockdown. The accused truck driver has been arrested, said the police.

Do not leave Delhi, Kejriwal appeals to migrant workers

Chief Minister says govt. has made necessary arrangements for food and shelter

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Sunday appealed to migrant workers trying to return to their villages to remain in Delhi and assured them that his government has made all necessary arrangements for their food and shelter.

"We have emptied classrooms and put mattresses on the floor and will even provide accommodation at stadiums if the need arises. But now, despite several appeals, these classrooms are lying empty," he said, adding that "stay where you are" is the mantra of the lockdown and that we would fail as a country if we do not follow it.

Risking lives

He told migrant workers that so far, COVID-19 has not spread to the villages and warned them that if they head home, they would not only put their lives at risk but also of their family members.

"Yesterday [Saturday] there were large crowds at Anand Vihar Bus depot...even if one or two persons in that crowd had the virus, all those present there would be in danger. We asked people that there were three schools nearby where they could take shelter but they were adamant to leave the city," Mr. Kejriwal added.



Migrant workers on their way to board a bus during a complete lockdown against the spread of COVID-19 outbreak at Anand Vihar in the city, on Sunday. ■ R.V. MOORTHY

He said the government has made arrangements to provide free food to four lakh people daily as well as distribute 50% extra ration for free to ensure that nobody is hungry. He also appealed to people who are financially well-to-do to ensure that others do not stay hungry.

'Rise above politics'
He requested landlords not to charge money from their tenants if they were unable to pay rent.

"This is the time for humanity. Our entire life we spend earning money and

We have emptied classrooms and put mattresses on the floor and will even provide accommodation at stadiums if the need arises. But, despite several appeals, these classrooms are lying empty

ARVIND KEJRIWAL
Chief Minister

fame but none of this will matter when we die. What will matter is what we have done for others. We must all help each other," Mr. Kejriwal said.

He added that it was not the time to indulge in politics but for all parties to work together for people before the country reaches a situation like the one in Italy or the U.S. where thousands of COVID-19 cases have been reported.

The Chief Minister concluded his press conference by saying that there are 18 chapters in Bhagavad Gita and there are 18 days of the lockdown left. He asked people to spend half an hour reading a chapter daily and said he was doing the same at home.

Govt's free food facility not found in 2 schools

Several migrant workers in the city remain unaware of the initiative

NIKHIL M BABU
NEW DELHI

Even two days after Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal announced that the government had started distributing free food at 325 government-run schools to those affected by the lockdown, *The Hindu* found no such initiative in place at two of the three such schools it visited.

Also, several migrant workers remain unaware of the initiative.

Govt. to update list

Notably, these two schools were on the list that was posted in a tweet on Saturday by the Chief Minister's Office (CMO). On being asked about the issue, a Delhi government official said: "The list is being fine-tuned according to the needs and we will update the list shortly."

Around a dozen migrants said they did not get any food from any government-run facilities and were unaware of the locations. Kamlesh, a migrant worker, who was not allowed by the police to go to his village in Uttar Pradesh on Sunday, said: "If I knew about getting food here, then



People take refuge in a night shelter in the Capital on Sunday. ■ SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

why would we go?"

At the two schools, lines and circles were drawn on the floor for social distancing during distribution. At the SDMC-run primary school in RK Puram's Sector 3, an official said: "The lines were drawn on the floor around three days back, but the food never arrived."

At the SDMC-run primary school in RK Puram Sector 12, the gate was locked and officials said they might get food from Monday.

Anjali Bhardwaj, co-con-

The government should make announcements about the free food and their locations in the slums and on the roads. They should also paste posters everywhere

ANJALI BHARDWAJ
Co-convenor of National Campaign for Peoples' Right to Information

vener of National Campaign for Peoples' Right to Information, said information should be put out in the most accessible way to the poor.

"It is a humanitarian crisis and it is a matter of life and death. The government can't deal with it like business as usual and put out information just via television and social media. During elections, the political parties go out and campaign in different ways. The government should make announcements about the free food and their locations in the slums and on the roads. They should also paste posters everywhere," Ms. Bhardwaj said.

With the lockdown in place due to the COVID-19 outbreak, the restaurant industry has been battling for survival as the fixed operating costs are high. "We appeal to all citizens to donate grocery items and ration at their nearest gurdwaras to feed around one lakh migrant labourers, street children, homeless people and daily-wage earners everyday in coordination with the Delhi government," said DSGMC president Manjinder Singh Sirsa.

Sikh body asks residents to donate food items

NEW DELHI

The Delhi Sikh Gurdwara Management Committee on Sunday asked for donations to continue providing food to people affected by the lockdown put in place to contain the COVID-19 spread.

"We appeal to all citizens to donate grocery items and ration at their nearest gurdwaras to feed around one lakh migrant labourers, street children, homeless people and daily-wage earners everyday in coordination with the Delhi government," said DSGMC president Manjinder Singh Sirsa.

Fake UPI address found registered under 'PM Care Fund', FIR lodged

Delhi Police asks donors not to fall prey to online frauds

SAURABH TRIVEDI
NEW DELHI

The police on Sunday registered an FIR in a case where a fake Unified Payments Interface (UPI) address was found registered under the name of "PM Care Fund", said an officer.

An officer said they received an online complaint about a UPI address "Pmcare@sbi". The ID was created to receive donations and the matter was then raised with State Bank of India following which they blocked it immediately, he said, adding that the correct UPI ID is "PMCARES@sbi".

In response to the complaint raised on Twitter by a donor, SBI tweeted: "Thank you for notifying us about this Fraud UPI ID. We have immediately alerted our UPI

initiating any payment," said the officer. On Saturday, the police had asked the public to be aware of clicking on any unverified weblinks while searching for information related to COVID-19 on the Internet.

"We have cautioned people against opening suspicious emails and clicking on unverified links related to COVID-19 being circulated on social media platforms," said an officer. The fraudsters send emails related to the pandemic, claiming to be health authorities, with the aim of tricking victims into connecting to a specific webpage and to login with their real email address and password. Scammers then use their credentials to access information to steal money, the police added.

Gallery launches virtual tour of collection

Iconic paintings by famous artists

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The NGMA would try to

create more virtual tours on its website.

Scanned and uploaded
Some of the images of the permanent collection were already on the website but others were scanned and uploaded for the virtual tour, she said.

Famous works
The NGMA also curated a virtual exhibition last week of the works of Padma Shri awardee photographer Nemai Ghosh, who passed away on March 25.

As part of the Museums of India national portal, the exhibition titled "Nemai Ghosh: Light and Shadow" features photographs that were being planned at the film-making process of Satyajit Ray.

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Description

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20-04-2020 15.00 Hrs.

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VICE PRESIDENT (MARKETING)

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Innovating for Healthy Generations

Capital records 23 new cases, biggest jump in single day

Number of COVID-19 cases rises to 72 with 64 active cases

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

Twenty-three new COVID-19 cases were reported in Delhi on Sunday, taking the total number of cases to 72. There have been two deaths due to the disease so far here but none on Sunday.

This is the biggest single-day jump in the number of cases in the city, surpassing Saturday's count of nine.

Delhi has reported a total of 72 cases of COVID-19 and there are 64 active cases and five people have been discharged.

"Of the 23 cases, 13 have travel history from abroad and four have come into contact with people who were affected," an official

told *The Hindu*. The official did not

Five more test positive for virus in M.P.

STAFF REPORTER
BHOPAL

Four men in Indore and a girl in Ujjain tested positive for COVID-19 on Saturday, according to the Mahatma Gandhi Memorial Medical College, Indore.

With this, active cases in Madhya Pradesh have climbed to 38.

The men aged 40, 48, 21 and 38, who contracted the illness, are residents of Indore, while the case in Ujjain is of a 17-year-old girl. While all have a contact history, none has a travel history.

So far, the State has recorded 40 cases, including two who had succumbed to the illness, one each from Indore and Ujjain.

While Indore has registered 20 so far, Jabalpur has recorded eight, Ujjain five, Bhopal three, Shivpuri two and Gwalior two.

Mass exodus: Lal Kuan the new epicentre

There are orders from Delhi and Central govt that lockdown rules be followed strictly, says official

ANUJ KUMAR
GHAZIABAD

After facing a spate of migrant workers on Saturday night, Kaushambi Bus Depot wore a deserted look on Sunday as the Ghaziabad district administration shifted the buses to Lal Kuan on the outskirts of the city. Across the road, Delhi's Anand Vihar, which was functional for a while in the morning, suddenly suspended services around noon, forcing hundreds of passengers waiting outside to vacate and reach Lal Kuan.

K.D. Dahiya, Special Commissioner, Transport, told *The Hindu*: "If we continue like this, it would be a mockery of the lockdown. There are orders from the Delhi and the Central governments that the rules of the lockdown should be followed in letter and spirit. We are sending 296 buses of the Delhi government to Lal Kuan to sup-



Migrant workers waiting to board buses at Lal Kuan in Ghaziabad on Sunday. ■ ANUJ KUMAR

port the U.P. government."

The action meant that people who were swarming the Delhi-Ghaziabad border got distributed. The bridge between Anand Vihar and Kaushambi was closed, forcing people to take long detours to reach Lal Kuan, which incidentally is not a designated bus depot. On a busy day, it is just an intersection where buses going to Ali-

garh, Etah, Kanpur, Lucknow and beyond slow down to fill the vacant seats.

"Last night, at one point in time there were around one lakh people around Kaushambi," said Neeraj Jadaun, Superintendent of Police (Rural), who was pressed into service to maintain order. "We thought it would be better to distribute them. By morning, the rush subsided."

Food, fruits and water bottles, which were missing all these days, were available for

R.K. Tripathi, Assistant Regional Manager, Uttar Pradesh State Roadways Transport Corporation, said, "My guess is 70% to 75% of people boarded the bus last night. We hope we would finish the process today from Lal Kuan."

On National Highway-51, the good old G.T. Road, one could see a steady stream of people walking down to Lal Kuan.

Workers from Nepal

There were Nepali workers from Loni patiently waiting for a bus to Sonauli on Nepal border. There were adventurous ones, who mounted a milk tanker to reach neighbouring Meerut. Policemen were not as rigid as they were when this walk home started on the day of the 'janata curfew'.

When one told her that the PM had apologised to people like her and that she would not have to pay the rent. "Sirf Kehne Ki baat hai (It is just a statement). The landlord wouldn't listen...."

free along the way. Kawin, a hawker in Loni, said: "Had this supply reached home, we would not have been here. Four-five days are okay, this seems to be a long haul."

One could still see ration trucks brimming with migrant workers moving in the city.

At Lal Kuan, Roshni was washing the hands of her daughter, dressed in a sparkling dress, on the divider. Asked why was she taking the long ride to Farrukhabad with little children, Roshni nonchalantly remarked, "Man kar raha hai (My heart says so). My husband has no work. His supervisor said chhutti hai (holiday), so we are going home."

When one told her that the PM had apologised to people like her and that she would not have to pay the rent. "Sirf Kehne Ki baat hai (It is just a statement). The landlord wouldn't listen...."

Shelter homes in U.P. to control migration

Free food and lodging for workers

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GHAZIABAD

After the orders of the Union Home Ministry, the district authorities of Ghaziabad and Gautam Budh Nagar have decided to establish shelter homes to control the exodus of migrant workers.

"The Ghaziabad Development Authority has decided to convert its 18 community centres spread across the city into shelter homes where free lodging and food would be given. Arrangements are being made to get them ready by Monday morning," said Kanchan Verma, Vice-Chairperson, Ghaziabad Development Authority. Depending on the size, she told *The Hindu*, each of them could accommodate 50 to 100 people.

On the dangers of workers facing social stigma as the community centres are sit-

uated in residential colonies, she said, the GDA would make sure that the migrant workers didn't face any problem. "We are in a state of lockdown, nobody should have a problem. We would see to it that things remain smooth."

Besides, she said, GDA has five shelter homes where the workers could stay. Asked whether the response has come late, Ms Verma said it was an unprecedented situation. "We have already made arrangements for the construction labour working in Ghaziabad. The latest arrangement is for those who have come from other States."

Similarly, the Gautam Buddh Administration has established 28 shelter homes. The district administration is also identifying guest houses and schools to convert them into shelter homes.

Second COVID-19 death in Kashmir, 5 more test positive

Most of the positive cases have a travel history

PEERZADA ASHIQ
SRINAGAR

One person died and five tested positive for COVID-19 on Sunday in the Valley, taking the count of the infected to 38 in the Union Territory.

"Another patient from Srinagar died on Sunday morning. Besides, five more positive cases were confirmed in Kashmir, including two from Srinagar, two from Budgam and one from Baramulla," said J&K spokesman Rohit Kansal.

With most of the positive cases having a travel history, Mr. Kansal said the contact tracing teams were reporting that despite many appeals people were still hiding travel histories. "A couple which tested positive in Srinagar on

Saturday hid their international travel history. This is criminal," said Mr. Kansal.

Meanwhile, eight members of a family including three minors, were quarantined on Sunday after coming in close contact with a relative from Bandipora who was diagnosed with COVID-19 on Saturday.

Community spread' The 52-year-old man, who was reported dead in Srinagar's Chest Disease Hospital on Sunday, hailed from Tangmarg in Baramulla district and his family said the patient had no travel history.

"This may be the first case to have contracted the infection from community exposure. The deceased had no

Meanwhile, the J&K government spokesman said it is taking a number of steps to combat the pandemic. "Our teams have been consistently and aggressively trying to trace out the contacts and test them. Testing in J&K is highest in the country with nearly 10% of surveillance cases being tested," the spokesman said.

Innocent times



Children play on a deserted street during lockdown in Kolkata on Sunday. ■ PTI

Howrah station braces for another batch of passengers

The West Bengal govt. has arranged seven buses to shift majority of people to their destinations

SUVIJIT BAGCHI
KOLKATA

The open space outside the Howrah railway station is spic and span on Friday morning.

Only a few cars of government officials are seen parked near the station and the police are in a relaxed mood. The crowd and the chaos witnessed two days ago, with hundreds of stranded passengers, disappeared. A calm descended on the biggest train passengers' hub in east India.

Majority of stranded pas-

sengers were shifted to their destinations through buses over the last two days.

Police Inspector in-charge of Howrah station, Sukanta Karmakar, is a happy man. "The State government arranged for seven buses," he said.

One set of three buses carried 240 to north Bengal, Assam, Tripura, while the others carried about 140 to Asansol, Jharkhand and Bihar. The packed buses may have a risk of virus spread, but "under the circumstances the options were limited,"

"The sad part is the railways did nothing; it was almost entirely arranged by the State government. I assume, the buses will carry the passengers till the inter-State border. The neighbouring States will have to arrange for the drop to districts of Bihar or Assam," said Mr. Karmakar.

Tip of iceberg

But that was just the tip of the iceberg. More and more – mostly migrant workers from Bihar and Jharkhand –

are assembling in Howrah station, hoping that the government will arrange for buses to go back to home town. One such group of six reached the station on Saturday afternoon, replacing another group that came from Mangaluru. Friday's group of six men, originally from Jharkhand, came all the way walking from Batanagar in South 24 Paraganas district to Howrah station, a distance of 45 km.

"We thought [we] will get buses for Jharkhand," said Ramsahay Yadav, a construc-

tion site worker. He and his fellow workers are unsure after two days' walk on how to reach the destination. The man, who was rotting in the station, last week, has now been removed but an old woman is lying, half naked, and covered with flies.

While the portico and the shade, where the passengers were stranded, has been cleared, the area outside is filled with women who used to work in the eating joints outside. They all are now staying by the Hooghly river, opposite the Howrah station.

"They need to be carried out by Collectors and Municipal Commissioners," State Health Secretary Nikunj B. Dhal said in a letter.

Concern over missing persons

2,586 had returned to Odisha from abroad in past 14 days

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
BHUBANESWAR

The Odisha government on Sunday expressed concern that the district level surveillance teams have failed to contact a total of 2,856 persons who had returned to the State from abroad during the past 14 days.

The District Collectors and Municipal Commissioners have been asked to establish contact with these foreign returnees for prevention and control of the disease.

"They need to be contacted at the earliest to ensure their home quarantine. This

task has to be carried out by Collectors and Municipal Commissioners," State Health Secretary Nikunj B. Dhal said in a letter.

Emphasising on active surveillance of people who have returned from COVID-19 affected areas abroad, Mr. Dhal said that those persons could infect others unless home quarantined.

3 positive cases

On the other hand, the number of positive COVID-19 patients remained three in the State. The three patients were undergoing treatment

in two different government hospitals in Bhubaneswar.

Meanwhile, the wife and daughter of the third patient were tested negative for the virus infection. While the first two patients had returned from abroad, the third person had visited Delhi and Haryana and returned to Bhubaneswar by flight earlier this month.

The private hospital where the third patient was treated has been sanitised and advised to provide emergency continuum care such as dialysis, according to the Health Department.

Parents worried as Odisha govt. hands over children to kin

State administration has closed seasonal hostels

SATYASUNDAR BARIK
BHUBANESWAR

Migrant labourers from Odisha stranded in brick kilns and construction sites in other States are worried about their children as the government-run seasonal hostels, where they were put up, are closed prematurely following the COVID-19 alert.

About 5,000 children, aged below 14 years, have been handed over to distant relatives and community members in Balangir and Nuapada districts of Odisha while their parents are yet to return home.

Seasonal hostels were introduced in western Odisha districts of Balangir, Nuapada, Bargarh, Kalahandi and Subarnapur from where thousands of families migrate for seven months every year to work in brick kilns in Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Tamil Nadu and Karnataka.

Earlier, these labourers used to take their school-going children with them. As a result, they were losing valuable school hours as well as protein food.

COVID-19

In Balangir and Nuapada districts, 62 each seasonal hostels were opened this year. In view of COVID-19 scare, all government-run seasonal hostels have been closed since March 24. While the government claims that children have been handed over to their parents, experts believe not more than 20% of migrant labourers have returned.

"I don't know the whereabouts of my 12-year-old son Hem Singh who was in hostel at Nangalbod in Nuapada district. We cannot move from here... I am worried," Bhuj-

People pitch in to ease lockdown misery of others

Spirit of humanity is alive in the Northeast with all helping each other

RAHUL KARMAKAR
GUWAHATI

Zomawii Brashel is one of very few bakers in Mizoram who have not closed shop after the lockdown. The output of her Zomawii Bakery in Lunglei town has been scaled down, but the ovens have been churning out cakes and biscuits for inmates of the district jail, de-addiction centres and orphanages in the town and outlying areas.

The Lunglei district police have been helping her deliver the packages. "If the more fortunate among us do not help others during such times, who will?" she said.

About 3,000 workers from western Odisha districts are still in brick kilns near Chennai. Conservative estimate says the number would cross 20,000 if all four States are taken into account. According to Balangir district administration, all children were released after consultation with local guardians. How can I take rent from pe-

ople who have not been able to sell anything? But I have told them to pass on the relief to other less privileged,

to the best of their capabilities for creating an aid chain," she told *The Hindu*.

Ms. Dada also hoped her gesture would help change the mindset of a section of people "who are calling our boys and girls coronavirus" at a time when the "spirit of humanity should reign".

In the adjoining Sonitpur district of Assam, farmer Ganga Kakati has pledged 20 bighas of his farmland at Gohpur for a hospital to treat COVID-19 or other epi-

amounting to ₹5,000 each. Both teach in government schools at Kamalpur in Dhalai district.

"We sought deduction from the current month's pay due soon. But we transferred the amount as soon as Chief Minister Biplob Kumar Deb responded to our suggestion and provided a link for payment," Ms. Jui Deb said.

Bolin Bordoloi, former MLA and son of Assam's first Chief Minister Gopinath Bordoloi, said the outpouring of help underlined the seriousness of the pandemic although the Northeast has been relatively safe with two out of 39.2 million having tested COVID-19 positive.

"We now have to think of ways of streamlining the process of providing adequate supplies to the people. One way can be using the services of religious organisations and members of namghars (prayer halls) that are found in almost all localities," he said.



Zomawii Brashel packing cakes and biscuits in Mizoram's Lunglei district. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

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Everyone counts

The Centre must use the opportunity of the pause in NPR to redraft questions

The Centre's decision to postpone the first phase of the 2021 Census, earlier planned to start on April 1, was expected in view of the COVID-19 outbreak that has brought life to a standstill in India and across the world. The 21-day national lockdown called by Prime Minister Narendra Modi is until April 15, but the return of any semblance of normalcy in daily life will take many more weeks, if not months. India is still struggling to make sense of the extent and intensity of the pandemic and the accompanying and inevitable economic calamity. What is for certain is that all resources, public and private, will need to be mobilised, first for combating the malady and then for tending society and the economy back to its health and dynamism. The Census is a massive exercise, which involves mass contact and diversion of resources. According to the original schedule, the first phase, from April to September, would have included house listing and updating of the National Population Register, and the second phase, in February 2021, would have been population enumeration. The Centre has done well by putting off the first phase until further orders. State governments can now focus on the pressing task of combating the coronavirus.

The unexpected suspension of the Census operation also opens a fresh window, and an entirely new context, for reconciliation between the Centre and States on the exercise itself. If the NPR exercise, and the allied questions regarding citizenship rights had turned India into a cauldron of discord, the pandemic forced the collective attention of the country, nay the world, on the interconnectedness of modern life. Several State governments had made their opposition clear to the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019, and the additional questions in the NPR pro forma that many fear is a prelude to something more cynical and divisive that is based on some quaint ideas of nationhood. The Centre clarified that people could choose to not respond to these questions, but never bothered to address the underlying concerns. The pandemic is a reminder that the future of humanity is collective and cannot be fragmented. The Centre can turn this crisis into an opportunity to restore mutually respectful terms for relations with States and harmony among communities – both currently frayed. Unshakeable national unity is essential for the country to tide over the pandemic crisis. If India can come out of this more united and more resolute, the pains of the pandemic will fade sooner. The coronavirus is forcing the re-examination in many nations about national power. The Centre must use this sobering backdrop to analyse India's priorities as a country and revisit its idea of citizenship and plans for the NPR.

Political pardon

Freeing a soldier convicted for massacre dashes hopes for accountability in Sri Lanka

The grant of presidential pardon, on Thursday, to a Sri Lankan soldier on death row for murdering eight Tamil villagers has sparked justified outrage among those who have been demanding justice from the state for past crimes. Far from helping the cause of accountability for war-time atrocities, President Gotabaya Rajapaksa has gone the other way to nullify a rare instance of justice being ensured by Sri Lanka's judicial system. Not many army men have been brought to book for attacks on civilians; but, in what came to be known as the 'Mirusuvil massacre', military police had immediately detained the soldiers involved, thus denying them impunity. The victims included three boys aged five, 13 and 15. In December 2000, a group of internally displaced villagers had come to have a look at their war-ravaged homes at Mirusuvil in the Jaffna peninsula. They ran into some army men, who led them away blindfolded. Their bodies were later found in a sewer, with their throats slit. The only one who escaped later led the military police to the spot and turned a crucial witness. Five soldiers were indicted, and a special provision for having a trial before a bench of three high court judges was invoked. The plodding trial ended in 2015 with only one of them, Sunil Ratnayake, being found guilty. He was sentenced to death, but there is a moratorium on executions since 1976.

It hardly needs emphasis that the exercise of the power of pardon is an act of compassion, and not a tool for political or electoral messaging. However, President Gotabaya Rajapaksa has sent out a message to his vast body of supporters among the Sinhalese that he would not let 'war heroes' languish in prison, even if it means that the minority Tamils get a chilling message that substantive justice for war crimes will always elude them; and even when rendered, it could be undone with a stroke of the pen. There is also an electoral angle to the decision, as parliamentary polls were set for April 25, but have now been postponed in view of the global pandemic. The process of granting pardon may have been going on in the run-up to the polls. Sri Lanka's Constitution lays down a procedure that says the President must get a report from the trial judge, the Attorney General's advice on that, and a recommendation from the Minister for Justice before he can pardon a convict. However, there appears to be no rule that such advice or recommendation is binding. Apart from some domestic voices from the Tamil leadership and individual politicians, the UN Human Rights High Commissioner and rights watchdog bodies have questioned the release of the soldier, rightly calling it an affront to the victims. The pardon, granted at a time when the country's focus is on fighting COVID-19, is a serious setback to hopes that accountability could be brought about in Sri Lanka through domestic mechanisms.

The deep void in global leadership

There is as yet no comprehensive, concerted plan of action by world leaders to combat the pandemic



R. SESHASAYEE

The coronavirus's flight across the world at lightning speed, has exposed the total void in collective leadership at the global level. Three months into the catastrophic war declared by an invisible, almost invincible virus, that is rapidly gobbling up human lives, regardless of citizenship and race, and contemptuously ravaging economies across continents, there is as yet no comprehensive, concerted plan of action, orchestrated by global leaders, to combat this terror.

The G20 has just had a virtual meeting, we understand, at the prodding of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. It is encouraging to learn that the G20 leaders have agreed to inject \$5-trillion into the world economy to partially counter the devastating economic impact of the pandemic. This is indeed good news. But taking collective ownership to fight a global war against the virus will require a lot more than writing cheques.

Good war, bad enemy

World leaders are obviously overwhelmed with their own national challenges and do not appear inclined to view the pandemic as a common enemy against mankind, which it is. China delayed reporting the virus to the World Health Organization (WHO), and perhaps, in the process, contributed to the exacerbation of the spread of the virus across the globe. It was reported that the Trump administration did not even inform the European Union before it shut off flights from Europe. It must be acknowledged that the initiative taken by Mr. Modi in the early days to convene a meeting of South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation countries stands out in contrast to the pusillanimous leadership around the world.

There is no evidence that, at the global level, the pandemic has abated yet and would be brought under control soon. To imagine that nations would be able to tame the virus soon with massive shut-

downs might be just wishful thinking. National shutdowns and physical distancing have been a challenge not only in the United States and some European countries, it would be more so in populous countries such as India. At any rate, such lockouts come at enormous economic and social costs. As long as the virus is alive in some corner of the world, it would resume its travel across the world the moment international travel restrictions are relaxed. Is it realistic to imagine that international travel will remain suspended until the last virus alive on this planet is extinguished? Epidemiologists point out that unless herd immunity develops – which will take long and come at the cost of at least half the population being infected – the virus will remain alive and strike whenever there is a lowering of guard.

This millennium has already suffered three pandemics and COVID-19 will certainly not be the last.

This is a war. A good war against a bad enemy, and a common enemy, that respects no borders. If this global challenge is not a battle to be fought by a collective global leadership, nothing else is. And yet, the typical response by all affected nations, has been to impose 'National distancing' by closing borders. While this is no doubt, a most appropriate response, there is a much bigger and emergent need for leaders of nations to come together for collective global action.

Seeds of indifference

Two developments in the global polity in the last few years have contributed to the indifference towards collective global action.

One, the swing towards right-wing nationalism, as a guiding political ideology, in large swathes of the world, particularly in the U.S. This ideology posits 'global good' being in conflict with and inimical to national interests. The dramatic announcement by U.S. President Trump, in June 2017, that the U.S. will cease involvement from the Paris Accord on climate change, preparatory to full withdrawal after the mandatory period, on the ground that the accord will 'undermine U.S. economic interest' is a classic demonstration of narrow nationalism trumping global interests. There is no issue more global



than climate change, and yet the U.S. Administration chose to look at it from the prism of national, short-term economic interest.

Two, the atrophy of multilateral institutions. The United Nations was the outcome of the shared vision of the world leaders after World War II, that collective action is the only way forward to prevent the occurrence of another war. That institution has notoriously failed to live up to its expectations to maintain peace among nations in the nearly 80 years since its formation. Its affiliate organisations have, in several ways, failed to deliver on their lofty missions. In particular, WHO, which has as its objective 'to be the directing and coordinating authority among member countries in health emergencies', has proven to be too lethargic in reacting to pandemics in the past. Its responses to COVID-19, has come under the scanner, not merely for incompetence, but also for lack of intellectual integrity.

G20 offers hope

If the world leaders realise the relevance and critical importance of collective global action in the context of the present pandemic, it is not difficult to contrive an appropriate mechanism quickly to get into war. A nimble outfit, not burdened with bureaucracy, is required to manage a global crisis of the nature that we are confronted with, today. The G20, with co-operation of other affected countries, itself might serve the purpose for the present. What is important is for the global leaders to acknowledge what every foot soldier knows: winning a war would require the right strategy, rapid mobilisation of relevant resources and, most importantly, timely action.

In facing the present challenge, the following actions should come out of such a collective.

First, the collective should ensure that shortages of drugs, medical equipment and protective

gear do not come in the way of any nation's capacity to contain or fight the pandemic. It is very likely that some nations that have succeeded in bringing the pandemic under control, such as China, Japan or South Korea, might have the capability to step up production at short notice to meet the increasing demand from other countries which are behind the curve. This would typically involve urgent development of an information exchange on global production capacity, present and potential, demand and supply. This is not to mean that there should be centralised management, which is not only infeasible, but counterproductive, as the attendant bureaucracy will impede quick action. A common information exchange could restrain the richer countries from predatory contracting of global capacities.

Second, protocols might need to be put in place among participating countries to ensure seamless logistics for the supply chain for essential goods and services to function efficiently. This might be particularly necessary in the context of controls on international traffic and national shutdowns. There would need to be concomitant accord to eliminate all kinds of tariff and non-tariff barriers.

Information exchange is vital

Third, there needs to be instantaneous exchange of authenticated information on what clinical solutions have succeeded and what has not. A classic example is the issue relating to hydroxychloroquine, which is being used experimentally, bypassing the rigours of randomised clinical trials. While there is no substitute to classic clinical proof, the more field-level information is shared within the medical community, the better will be the success rates of such experimentation.

Fourth, this is a time to have cross-country collaboration on laboratory trials and clinical validation for vaccines and anti-viral drugs. It must be acknowledged that WHO has already moved on this issue, although, perhaps, belatedly. The world can ill-afford delays, as the pandemic is predicted to stage a comeback once the shutdowns are gradually relaxed. The best way to ensure speedy action.

First, the collective should ensure that shortages of drugs, medical equipment and protective

will only delay the outcomes. This attempt to collaborate might also bring in its wake an acceptable commercial solution that adequately incentivises private research, while ensuring benefits being available to the entire world at affordable costs. Such a framework might be necessary for sustained collaborations for future challenges.

Fifth, there is a need to facilitate easy movement of trained health professionals across the world to train others and augment resources wherever there are shortages. In other words, nations should come together to organise a global army to fight the pandemic, equipped with the best weapons and tools.

Food watch

Sixth, we must anticipate food shortages occurring sooner or later, in some part of the world, consequent to the national shutdowns. Ironically, while we might have saved lives from the assault of the novel coronavirus, we might run the risk of losing lives to starvation and malnutrition, somewhere in the world if we do not take adequate precautions. This requires not only coordinated global action; it would also turn out to be the test of global concern for mankind in general.

Eventually, there is no doubt that human talent will triumph over the microscopic virus. It may be some months before we declare our win. But the economic devastation, that would have been caused as a result will be no less than the aftermath of a world war. Economies of the world are inexorably intertwined. An orderly reconstruction of the global economy, which is equitable and inclusive, will eventually involve renegotiating terms of trade among key trading blocs, concerted action among central bankers to stabilise currencies, and a responsible way to regulate and manage global commodity markets.

Does India have the power to awaken the conscience of the Superpowers and catalyse collective global action? Remember, historically, it is always the weakling or the oppressed, who have caused transformational changes in the world order.

R. Seshasayee is a company director and corporate adviser

Looking beyond just diagnosis and quarantine

There is need in India for a rapid response research and development team to handle viral onslaughts



G. PADMANABAN

Apandemic is upon the world and coronavirus is not the last word. Ebola, Zika, Nipah, SARS, MERS, H1N1 and now COVID-19 – the viral onslaughts will continue. Mutations of known viruses will periodically cause havoc, whatever be the reasons. While the Zika virus is spread by *Aedes* mosquitoes, the main reason for these viral infections seems to be the proximity and contact with animals including wild animals, either as exotic food menu or the use of animal parts as aphrodisiacs. Bats seem to be another constant source of new viruses. Seafood has also been stated to be a cause for the Wuhan outbreak.

In India, given the population density and unsatisfactory hygiene conditions and awareness, citizens can face serious situation even though the disease may have originated elsewhere. Bacterial infections such as cholera, typhoid have drug and vaccine options. Some of the viruses listed above do not have a vaccine or drugs available as yet. In India the options are always limited to diagno-

sis as per World Health Organization protocols and seem to be the exclusive domain of the National Institute of Virology (NIV), Pune and its designated centres. I feel that it is important for India to be able to do much better in terms of therapeutic options, although prevention is the best option. But, there are always leakages as can be seen with COVID-19 cases in the developed countries. India does have the expertise to put a team together to respond much more than just diagnosis and quarantine.

On sequencing

What can be done? The first requirement is to sequence the genome of all the isolates from infected patients in India. COVID-19, for example, is an RNA virus. This would require conversion to DNA and then the sequence of the alphabets (ATGC) worked out. COVID-19 is less than 30kb (30,000) alphabets in size and can be sequenced in 24 hours in India. There was a suggestion in the article, "How is India containing COVID-19?" (FAQ page, *The Hindu*, March 8, 2020), that the virus in India is different from that in China on the basis of genome sequence made available by NIV, Pune.

The virus is evolving rapidly and the mutations seen in the virus isolates in the United States, for example, are different from



those in China. There was also a hint that this could also be due to sequencing error. It needs to be realised that the copying mechanism of RNA to DNA can make errors.

In any case, it is important to sequence the virus isolates in at least three different institutions in India to ensure that sequencing errors are eliminated. A knowledge of genome sequence is essential to design drugs and vaccines.

In the short and long term

A quick response is to evaluate repurposed drugs (a drug development strategy predicated on the reuse of existing licensed drugs for new medical indications) including natural products, for therapy. For example, in the case of COVID-19, anti-HIV drugs are being evaluated. Even hydroxychloroquine, an antimalarial, is suggested as an adjunct drug option, since it can make the acidic endosome compartment in which the virus replicates alkaline to pre-

vent the process. One other option is to try passive immunisation with plasma derived from convalescing patients, who have completely recovered. Yet another strategy is to clone B cells from such patients to make therapeutic antibodies. All these would require informed consent from patients and policy decisions.

A long-term approach could be to clone the genome, make recombinant antigens and then test for vaccine potential and new drug design. A phage library expressing all possible human antibodies (single chain) is available for screening. The virus, or its mimic, needs to be cultured for drug screening. All these approaches would eventually need clinical trials to be taken forward on fast-track with the cooperation of the office of the Drug Controller General of India.

Use the vast expertise

My estimate of a quick response is three months, and long term is 18 months. In my opinion the expert team should represent the following areas with institutions listed in parenthesis as examples: clinical virology (NIV, Pune); Translational Health Science and Technology Institute, Faridabad, Haryana); molecular virology (Regional Centre for Biotechnology, Faridabad); the Indian Institute of Science, Bengaluru); scale-up of vaccine production (Serum Institute of India, Pune); Gennova, Pune; Bharat Bio-

tech, Hyderabad); clinical trial and drugs (Sun Pharma, Ahmednagar, Maharashtra; Reddy Labs, Hyderabad); Drug Controller General of India); DNA/RNA sequencing expertise (National Institute of Biomedical Genomics, Kalyani; Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology, Hyderabad); Institute of Genomics and Integrative Biology, New Delhi).

I want to emphasise the point that the institutions listed in parenthesis are only examples and there are many others with overlapping expertise, that includes the private sector. Such an expert committee can be overseen by an independent expert committee comprising senior, experienced scientists and administrators. The committees should cut across the territorial integrity of government science and technology departments and include the private sector.

The bottom line is to make use of the expertise built in the country over the years to scientifically respond to such challenges in terms of therapeutic options that are at least as important as sending up satellites into space or landing a man on the moon.

Professor G. Padmanaban is a former Director of the Indian Institute of Science, Bengaluru; President, the National Academy of Sciences, India, and Chancellor, Central University of Tamil Nadu

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.

Time for change

Under these very testing circumstances it is easy to blame China for the global crisis we are currently facing. But let us be objective: it could happen anywhere. We must consider this global catastrophe as a wake-up call. We are all in a situation of complete uncertainty, perhaps, for the first time in our living memory. Thus, it would be unwise not to learn the important lessons

from this crisis. Some of them are already emerging: the Russian President sent humanitarian support to Italy, forgetting Europe-Russia tensions; Cuban doctors flew there to provide their assistance. India put aside party politics and has spoken in one voice when it came to imposing a lockdown. COVID-19 has united us; it has also shown our vulnerability as well as 'universal equality'. In any

case, life will hardly be the same when the pandemic subsides. There is bound to be a new lexicon entry: 'post-COVID-19'. We must identify the positive side of this crisis: as a global opportunity to rectify our previous wrongdoings, to become responsible global citizens, to critically assess our vulnerabilities, and to re-establish the lost ties with precious nature.

TATIANA BELOUSOVA,
Sonipat, Haryana

The pandemic fight
The media is abuzz with the news of political figures making donations to the anti-virus fund having us in awe of their "charitable mindset and munificence". One would like to know whether these are from their private funds and not from the Constituency Development Fund allocated to them. It is telling that not many have opened their hearts and loosened their purse strings to exhibit their concern and care. It is strange that film actors who fight on screen as good Samaritans are not doing much in this unprecedented crisis.

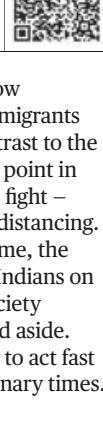
S. LAKSHMINARASIMHAN,
Coimbatore

■ The plight of lakhs of migrant workers shows up the half-prepared measures of State governments (Inside pages, 'At 'Zero Point', flight from hunger beats fight against virus', March 29).

Bus complexes now overflowing with migrants are a striking contrast to the most emphasised point in the anti-COVID-19 fight – namely, physical distancing. But at the same time, the woes of so many Indians on the margins of society cannot be brushed aside. The Centre needs to act fast in these extraordinary times.

V.S. SINDHURI,
Kakinada, Andhra Pradesh

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An inadequate lockdown package

The government must ensure that the spectre of SARS-CoV-2 is not replaced by the spectre of hunger



BRINDA KARAT



"A lockdown considered essential to fight SARS-CoV-2 cannot lead to a disproportionate burden on the poor." Migrant workers try to board a bus in Ghaziabad to return to their homes. ■ REUTERS

The Central government has asked States to seal borders to prevent lakhs of workers, who have been rendered jobless overnight with no guarantee of wages and shelter, from reaching their villages. The workers are to be herded into quarantine zones. These atrocious actions amount to a mass criminalisation of the labour force of India. The workers are paying for the callousness of the government in declaring a lockdown without even a day's notice.

The Home Ministry has also invoked Sections 51 to 60 of the Disaster Management Act, 2005, to imprison those who violate government instructions. However, it is not using the same law to transfer essential funds to the States in the front line of dealing with the COVID-19 crisis.

The sealing orders come after the Finance Minister's announcement of a "package of ₹1.7 lakh crore for the poor". If the workers really believed that the package was helpful, they would not have started their long march home.

Two welcome initiatives

There are two components of the Central government package that are welcome. One, households that are already entitled to receive foodgrains at subsidised rates from the public distribution system will be given an additional 5 kg free for the next three months. With the sharp rise in the prices of essential commodities, this measure will also bring down the prices of foodgrains. The government should follow this up with the inclusion of other essential commodities at subsidised rates through the PDS. Offering one kilo of pulses a month for an entire family, as has been done in the package, does not even rate as a charitable gesture. It is also too small an amount to have any impact on the rising prices of pulses.

The challenge will be to ensure that the free foodgrains reach the beneficiaries. For this all the conditionality should be waived. For example,

ple, lakhs of people, including migrant workers, do not have ration cards. They should not be denied free foodgrains; their presence in the village should be enough proof of their existence. Similarly, the thousands of migrant workers stranded in the cities should also have access to free foodgrains. Mechanisms have to be set up urgently.

Two, all beneficiaries of the PM Ujjwala Yojana will be given free LPG cylinders over a three-month period. Apart from monetary relief, this will especially help women who will find it difficult to step out of their homes to collect fuel. So far, for the last few years, the government has not given any benefits to the people in spite of the sharp reduction in global crude prices, the levying of higher duties on petroleum products, and the consequent windfall in government revenues. A free gas cylinder would be a tiny portion of this revenue. Nevertheless, it is welcome.

Problems in the package

The rest of the "package" can be described in many ways, the most polite of which would be to call it disappointingly inadequate. In fact, although claimed to be a package of ₹1.7 lakh crore, the actual additional funds allocated by the government for alleviating economic distress caused by measures to control the spread of SARS-CoV-2 are much smaller and mainly notional.

For crores of daily workers the reality is that if they stay home, their families can't eat. For this large sec-

tion of the population, what was required was an immediate cash transfer, through the PM Jan-Dhan Yojana or MNREGA accounts of a minimum of ₹5,000 for the three-week period of the lockdown. Instead, the government has decided to give a cash transfer of just ₹500 a month to women in Jan-Dhan accounts. This is around 53% of the 38 crore accounts.

The other cash transfer is equally meagre. The government has decided to give ₹1,000 to pension holders who are widows, disabled and senior citizens. As is known, these are not universal schemes. Only a small percentage of such citizens, about 3 crore people, get the pension. Taken together the cash transfers to the poor comes to under ₹35,000 crore.

These cash transfers are the lowest in the world. Every other country hit by the COVID-19 pandemic has done more for its poor and working people than the Indian government. It is a shame that a government that can write off bad loans, primarily to corporates, amounting to ₹2.4 lakh crore (in 2019) cannot even match that amount to save its poor from certain hunger and starvation. Whereas countries have guaranteed up to 70% to 80% of workers' wages to prevent lay-offs, the Indian government limits it to a subsidy on EPF. If workers are thrown out of employment, what good would this be?

The Finance Minister claimed that 5 crore families would benefit from a ₹20 increase in the daily wages for MNREGA workers. This is based on the assumption that all workers who

are registered get 100 days of work a year. The MGNREGA website itself contradicts the Minister's claims. The average workdays are just between 45 to 49 days a year, which means a less than ₹1,000 annual benefit from the measly wage increase. Moreover, there are a substantial amount of wage arrears that the Finance Minister was silent on. In the lockdown period, all MGNREGA work has stopped. Shockingly, the guidelines issued by the Home Ministry on March 24 do not consider agricultural work as an essential service. The Central government has to change its guidelines so that rural workers can demand work under MGNREGA.

The ₹2,000 for farmers is already a government scheme which was due in four months and has been accounted for in the Budget. It would be deceitful if this amount were to be included in the ₹1.7 lakh crore package, as seems to be the case. Also the District Mineral Fund, which is legally mandated to be used for tribal welfare in mining-affected districts, is now to be used by State governments for meeting COVID-19-related expenditure. It is illegal to divert funds meant for the most exploited of our society to fulfil the financial responsibilities of the Central government.

An avoidable tragedy

The government's refusal to take the people into confidence about the lockdown that had already been planned, as indicated by the Prime Minister in his second address on COVID-19, has led to immense avoidable distress. Thousands of workers remain stranded without food, shelter or money in cities. Countless have walked hundreds of kilometres, facing hostile police forces, just to get home. A lockdown which is considered essential to fight SARS-CoV-2 cannot lead to a disproportionate burden on the poor. The government must expand its package to ensure that the spectre of SARS-CoV-2 is not replaced by the spectre of hunger and suffering for the majority of Indians. At a time of crisis when India unites, the lockdown should not mean a lockdown of the rights of the working poor.

Brinda Karat is a member of the CPI(M) Polit Bureau and a former Rajya Sabha MP

FROM THE READERS' EDITOR

No laughing matter

The idea of a political cartoon is to provoke readers to think and act, and not to be divisive



A.S. PANNEERSELVAN

When daily reports and graphs in this newspaper are highlighting the hardships faced by different sectors and geographies due to COVID-19, we were hardly expecting a slip-up on a cartoon. But on March 26, some readers took serious exception to a cartoon by Deepak Harichandan. The attire given to the virus was seen as reinforcing stereotypes and perpetuating social prejudices. Readers reached out through e-mails and social media posts. There were arguments about interpretations of symbols and representations. How did the newspaper address the concerns of these readers? *The Hindu* modified the cartoon for its Internet edition with a note from the Editor.

Blurry lines

While it is easy to evaluate text, it is not so with images. There are vexatious ethical questions which do not have ready answers: do people have the right to free speech even if they hold offensive and hurtful opinions? What are the limits? Who draws the red lines, the frontiers of tolerance? While the lines for reportage and analysis are stringent, there is an element of fluidity when it comes to cartooning. Readers may wonder why we give more leeway to cartoons.

The U.S. Library of Congress listed five persuasive techniques used by cartoonists to effectively tell their story or critique: symbolism, exaggeration, labelling, analogy, and irony. I also remember Winston Churchill's praise for the cartoonist David Low and Jawaharlal Nehru's plea to Shankar (Keshav Shankar Pillai) following the cartoonists' pungent criticism of the leaders of the U.K. and India, respectively. "Low is the Charlie Chaplin of caricature, and tragedy and comedy are the same to him," wrote Churchill. When Shankar launched the magazine *Shankar's Weekly* in 1948, Nehru told him, "Don't spare me, Shankar. Hit, hit me hard."

The irony of cartooning was succinctly captured by one of the finest writers and cartoonists of independent India, O.V. Vijayan: "It is an utterable sadness which punctuates the reality that I am called upon to portray, and yet the dominant superstition of my profession demands that I raise a

laugh." Cartoonists are supposed to use humour to criticise authoritarianism, fearlessly question those in power, and provoke people to react against injustice. Right from the days of the first-known political cartoon, 'Join, or die', attributed to Benjamin Franklin and published in the *Pennsylvania Gazette* on May 9, 1754, cartoons have retained elements of grotesque and wanton distortions.

Modifying the cartoon

It is against this backdrop that we evaluated the complaints against the cartoon by Mr. Harichandan on COVID-19's attempt to hold planet Earth to ransom. When the focus of attention became the attire and not the message, the original purpose of the cartoon was lost. The Editor asked the cartoonist to modify the cartoon to remove specific symbolic associations. Online readers of the newspaper would have seen a modified version of the cartoon on the website, with a note from the Editor: "Some readers have objected to the cartoon published on March 26, 2020 as Islamophobic. Any link to Muslims in the attire of the virus was completely unintentional. The point of the cartoon was to show the world being taken hostage by the virus. However, we agree that the virus should have been shown as just a blob or a stick figure and we express our regret for the hurt or unhappiness caused. Accordingly, we are taking down this cartoon online and replacing it with one that has a neutral representation of the attire."

When the intention and meaning of the cartoon was explained in plain words and the cartoon was modified to have neutral representation, the newspaper faced a second round of attack, this time saying that it had succumbed to "unedifying self-censorship".

In a polarised environment, we need to understand the distinction between an act of course correction and self-censorship. Some decisions in newspapers are made instinctively. Flemming Rose, the Danish editor who published controversial cartoons, reflected on the nature of the trade in a 2016 interview to *The Atlantic*: "As a journalist, as an editor, you do a lot of things based on instincts. ... And when it all exploded I had to wind back the movie and find out why did I think this was the right thing to do."

The idea of a political cartoon is to provoke readers to think and act, and not to be divisive. Hence, the act of modifying the cartoon is a result of editorial judgement.

readerseditor@thehindu.co.in

From apathy to action

In dealing with the crisis, the Centre should not only learn from States but also act on its own

REETIKA KHERRA

ed temporary relief on loan recoveries, the Supreme Court stayed those orders in response to a challenge by the Union of India.

Response of the States

Though there is a glimmer of hope from State governments, they lack sufficient resources as they are still owed their GST refund by the Centre.

Kerala has been at the forefront of fighting the disease spread and planning for a lockdown. When Anganwadis and schools had to be shut down, Kerala initiated dry ration supplies to their homes. When other States also shut down schools and Anganwadis, the Supreme Court took suo motu notice of Kerala's actions. In response, the Central government issued an advisory to provide cooked meals or food security allowance.

Jharkhand opted for cash. During the lockdown, when people are being asked to stay home and supply chains are in danger of being disrupted, what sense does it make to give cash?

Some States are also learning from one another: community kitchens already exist in some States such as Tamil Nadu. Others like Kerala and Delhi have quickly scaled up. Other relief measures include advance payment of social security pensions, free PDS ration, food packets for those who are not covered by the PDS and free bus travel (Rajasthan).

One welcome announcement on March 26 was the doubling of PDS rations for the coming three months. Here too, Central inaction and class bias are evident. While a Personnel Ministry order says biometric attendance for Central government employees will be stopped, to reduce the risk of community transmission, no such order from the Food Ministry has come yet. Some States have already suspended biometric authentication for buying PDS ration. Biometric authentication has been a source of exclusion (example, when authentication failed) from the PDS. Suspending it will help further. The Centre should support the States' actions and learn from them. Before it is too late, the Centre itself must act by increasing resource allocation and setting up sector-specific committees to facilitate prompt responses.

Relief measures

Some existing programmes have been declared as new relief measures – for example, the payment of the first instalment of the PM Kisan Yojana money. The Finance Minister announced that MGNREGA workers would earn an additional ₹2,000. This assumes that work sites are open, and that the Central government will guarantee 100 days of work. In the last financial year, less than 7% of active job card holders got 100 days of work. The wage increase of ₹20/day was, in fact, part of an annual exercise which preceded the lockdown. Similarly, some States too are focusing only on optics. The U.P. Chief Minister announced that ₹556 crore of wages due to MGNREGA workers (from the previous financial year) will be paid immediately. Waggs that are already overdue are being projected as a new relief measure.

Oddly, the Centre has blocked attempts by others to ease the economic blow. When two High Courts grant



DATA POINT

Is a lockdown enough?

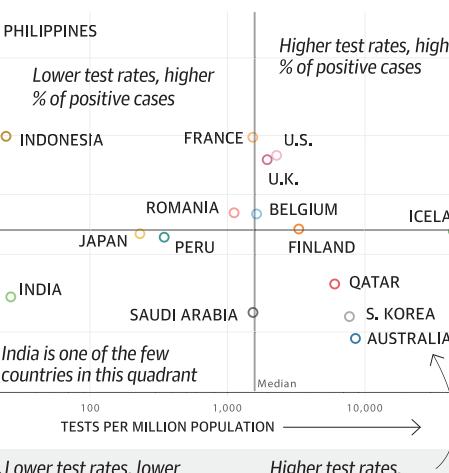
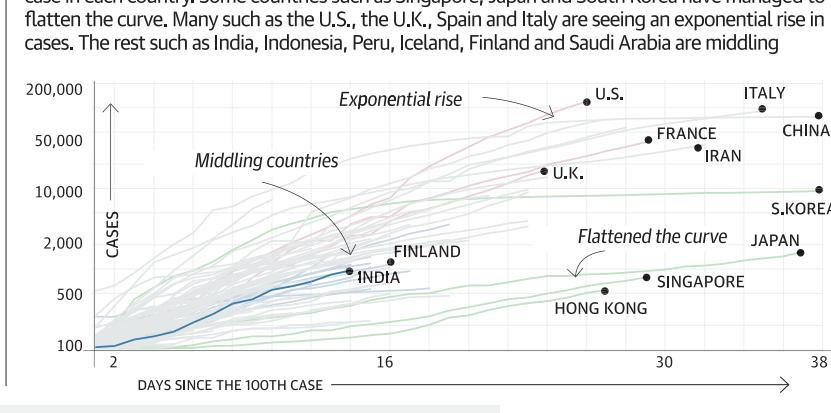
In India, the growth of COVID-19 cases has neither been exponential nor has it flattened out. The curve lies somewhere in the middle. But this picture is misleading as India has a poor testing rate. Despite the fact that India has among the lowest % of positive cases of those tested, the lockdown may not be enough. This is borne out in countries which imposed lockdowns but saw a surge in cases later.

By The Hindu Data Team

A UNIQUE POSITION:

When a sample of countries experiencing the three types of progression (exponential, middling and flattening) are compared for tests done per million population and % of positive cases among those tested, India is in a unique position. India has conducted a limited number of tests and at the same time, it also has a very low % of positive cases among those tested.

THE THREE CURVES: The graph shows the day-wise progression of COVID-19 cases since the 100th case in each country. Some countries such as Singapore, Japan and South Korea have managed to flatten the curve. Many such as the U.S., the U.K., Spain and Italy are seeing an exponential rise in cases. The rest such as India, Indonesia, Peru, Iceland, Finland and Saudi Arabia are middling.



IS A LOCKDOWN ENOUGH?

Countries such as S.Korea chose not to impose a lockdown but instead reduce the spread by ramping up testing rates early. Others who did not increase their testing rates early chose to impose a lockdown in order to contain the spread. While Belgium, like India, imposed a lockdown early, the infections continued to increase as testing rates increased.

Nation	Cases on lockdown day	Cases on Mar. 28
India	624	987
Belgium	1,243	10,836
France	6,633	38,105
U.K.	8,077	19,758
Italy	10,149	92,472

The Hindu

FROM THE ARCHIVES

FIFTY YEARS AGO MARCH 30, 1970

568 killed in quake in Turkey

Five hundred and sixty-eight people died in an earthquake in Turkey last night, it was officially announced here [Ankara] to-day [March 29]. Rescue authorities said the toll would probably be much higher as there were still many affected sites to be cleared. Injuries were over 2,000 and about a quarter of these were "very serious", they said. The main impact of the earthquake was felt in Kutahya province where it flattened the market town of Gediz killing over 350 people and injuring 300 more. The Provincial Governor, Mr. Ihsan Aras, feared the toll might be much higher, from 600 to 1,000. The news agency Anatolia reported 1,000 deaths. Over one hundred of those killed were in villages around Gediz. Thousands of people have been rendered homeless in the havoc. The quake area stretched from Kutahya, 25 miles east of Gediz, to Izmir on the Aegean Sea. Gediz was reported 80 per cent destroyed. The main power station collapsed, causing a short circuit leading to fires. Local authorities said the quake itself killed fewer people than the fires which raged through the town. Gediz is about 135 miles southeast of Istanbul in Western Anatolia. The 48-second tremor shook most of Turkey.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO MARCH 30, 1920.

Medical Schools.

FROM PAGE ONE

Migrant workers stuck with nowhere to go

A police official deployed at Zero Point during the two-day drive by the government to help stranded workers return home, said, "All those fortunate enough" to board them had done so till midnight on Saturday.

The likelihood of bus services being on offer on Monday was "highly unlikely" he said.

"Whoever was destined to go back home mostly went yesterday. From tomorrow, we will begin enforcing the lockdown again

using any means necessary," he added.

After four hours of having run after every passing bus, Mr. Gupta's roommate, Anand Kumar, was finally able to persuade him and Anil to return to their shared digs at around noon.

"We will go back, what else; there is no point in being stuck here with nothing on either side," Mr. Gupta said as he joined a growing number of disappointed workers returning to the city they had sought to leave.

Migrant workers to be quarantined at borders'

If any landlord is forcing labourers and students to vacate their premises, they will be liable for action under the Disaster Management Act, the order said. District magistrates and police officers concerned will be personally liable for implementing these orders and the lockdown measures announced by the government, the order added.

"In case of violation of

any of the above measures, the respective State or Union Territory government shall take necessary action under the Act," said the order.

The Cabinet Secretary and the Union Home Secretary are in constant touch with the State Chief Secretaries and the respective Director-Generals of Police via video conferencing to review the situation.

I apologise for tough steps, says Modi

"I have had to take some decisions that has created hardship for you, especially my poor brothers and sisters... They [the poor] must be thinking what kind of Prime Minister is this who has locked up all of us. I specifically ask for forgiveness from them. But looking at the world, this looks like the only option," the Prime Minister said.

Striking an optimistic note, Mr. Modi wrapped up

his 36-minute address by asserting that India would successfully defeat the challenge posed COVID-19 and hoped to put it behind by his next radio broadcast in April.

On those violating the lockdown rules, Mr. Modi said, "This is sad...Many people across the world did the same mistake. Those who are defying lockdown are playing with their own lives."

Rahul Gandhi calls for a 'nuanced approach'

"It is critical for us to understand that India's conditions are unique. We will be required to take different steps than other large countries who are following a total lockdown strategy. The number of poor people in India who are dependent on a daily income is simply too large for us to unilaterally shut down all economic activity. The consequences of a complete economic shutdown will disastrously amplify the death toll arising from the virus," Mr. Gandhi said in the letter released by the Congress party hours after the Prime Minister's *Mann Ki Baat*.

"Our priority must be to protect and isolate the elderly and vulnerable, and to clearly and strongly communicate to the young, the dangers of proximity to older people," he said.

"Millions of India's elderly live in villages. A complete lockdown and the resulting shut down of our economic engine will almost certainly ensure that millions of unemployed youth rush back to their villages, increasing the risk of infecting their parents and the elderly population living there. This will result in a catastrophic loss of life," Mr. Gandhi added.

Cases surge; ICMR denies community transmission

Since the lockdown was announced on March 24, India has added between 75-100 cases a day on average.

According to district-wise updated figures from the Union Health Ministry, Mumbai recorded the highest number of cases at 81, followed by Kasargod in Kerala with 78. Bangalore came

next with 26. The National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority has asked States to coordinate with manufacturers of gloves, hand sanitizers and masks to address shortages in these products.

The list mentions 35 manufacturers of gloves, 49 makers of sanitizers and 34 mask makers.

Store staff held for denying entry to Nagas

The video accompanying the post, which went viral on social media platforms, showed one of the students standing near the entrance, pleading with the staff members to allow them entry.

"Why are you discriminating. We too are Indians. We too are human beings. We too need grocery like you. We have Aadhaar cards. Why can't you accept us," he was heard telling the

store representative.

Tweeting the video, anthropologist and author Dolly Kikon said, "Meanwhile, in Karnataka, Naga migrants from Northeast India are not allowed to buy food. Shameful. Racism in India is an everyday affair."

The Mysuru police took note of the video on Sunday and arrested the manager and three staff members of More Megastore.

PMO working in teams to battle virus

10 more groups formed on Sunday for coordination

NISTULA HEBBAR

NEW DELHI

Inside the fight against COVID-19 in India, there is no "war room" for a disease that is best fought by maintaining physical distance.

Instead it is being fought by forming discrete groups of officials and Ministers who communicate remotely and whose linchpin at the Centre, apart from Prime Minister Narendra Modi, is his

COVID-19

Principal Secretary, P.K. Mishra, and Cabinet Secretary Rajiv Gauba.

Government sources told *The Hindu* that contrary to



Rajiv Gauba

the "war room" narrative, the PMO has been working in small teams (10 teams looking at various aspects of the crisis were set up additionally on Sunday). "P.K. Mishra, along with Health Minister Dr. Harsh Vardhan, Health Secretary Preeti Sudan and the Director-General of the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), Dr. Balram Bhagwati, take care of the medical aspects of the crisis

Modi interacts with 200 people daily

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi interacts with over 200 people daily to get first-hand information on India's fight against the COVID-19, the Prime Minister's Office said in a statement on Sunday.

It said his interactions included phone calls to the Governors, the Chief Ministers and the State Health Ministers.

It also pointed out that he reaches out to some of those infected with COVID-19 and those who have recovered from the

virus to keep an update on their progress.

Since January, Mr. Modi has held several rounds of meetings and discussions with people from various walks of life and officials.

The Prime Minister is also updated by a Group of Ministers.

via Mr. Mishra. While the minutiae is dealt with by his office, Mr. Modi also believes that the challenge needs to be fought with unity and a positive morale, which is why he held a series of video conferences with different stakeholders like media (print and TV), industrialists and radio jockeys. He has been calling up frontline warriors like nurses and doctors," said the source.

Priyanka seeks help for migrants

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi on Sunday wrote to telecom companies such as Vodafone, Airtel, Reliance Jio and BSNL to make phone calls and Internet data services free for the distressed migrant workers on 'humanitarian grounds'.

"I urge you to make the call facilities free in the relevant areas for the next one month to let them contact their families," Ms. Gandhi said in a letter to telecom companies and urged party workers to help out.

At the party's official press conference, senior spokesperson Abhishek Singhvi pointed out the lack of proper lockdown plan that had left many stranded.

275 from Iran taken to Jodhpur

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI

SpiceJet and IndiGo aircraft took 275 Indians evacuated from Iran to Jodhpur from Delhi on Sunday, Civil Aviation Minister Hardeep Singh Puri said.

"Operation Namaste! Efforts to safeguard Indian citizens against Covid-19 continue," Mr. Puri wrote on Twitter.

"The 275 Indians who were evacuated from Iran have been screened & shifted by IndiGo and SpiceJet aircraft to Army Wellness Centre at Jodhpur for quarantine," he said.

All 139 passengers on the IndiGo aircraft tested negative prior to the flight, the airline said.

SpiceJet pilot tests positive for COVID-19

DGCA suspends breathalyser checks as pilots' body raises fears of infection spread



The airline has asked all staff who came into contact with the pilot to undertake self-quarantine for 14 days. ■ V.V. KRISHNAN

international flight in March.

Following the SpiceJet announcement, a letter from the Indian Commercial Pilots Association (ICPA) to the DGCA said "continuing BA Tests in these circumstances is extremely dangerous" as

the machine for the test remains the same and droplets or aerosols of infected pilots may infect the healthy. Saturday's letter is the second from the ICPA, which had made a similar request on March 20.

The DGCA in its order temporarily suspending the requirement of pilots, cabin crew, Air Traffic Controllers and other personnel from undergoing the test for alcohol consumption, said all such personnel will have to give an undertaking that they have not consumed alcohol in the 12 hours before duty time.

In operation

While all commercial flights, domestic and international, are grounded until April 14 following a nationwide lockdown, several flights ferrying evacuees from different parts of the world as well as medical supplies are in operation.

SpiceJet said the pilot had

SC hearings on religious freedom lie in limbo

Only urgent cases are being heard

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The hearings before a nine-judge Supreme Court Bench on the ambit and scope of religious freedom practised by multiple faiths across the country lie in limbo due to the COVID-19 scare.

The Bench led by Chief Justice of India S.A. Bobde is hearing this reference on the question of religious freedom in connection with the Sabarimala case.

The apex court complex is completely shut down. Extremely urgent cases are being heard via videoconferencing.

However, none of the Constitution Bench cases, including the challenge to the abrogation of special status to Jammu and Kashmir

under Article 370, has been listed. The fate of the reference is also uncertain because the seniormost puisne judge on the Bench, Justice R. Banumathi, is set to retire in July.

The Bench has gone on to frame "larger issues" concerning essential practices of various religions.

It clubbed other pending cases on subjects such as female genital mutilation among Dawoodi Bohras to entry of Parsi women who married inter-faith and Muslim women into mosques and referred them to a larger Bench. It also asked the larger Bench to consider its ruling on the prohibition of entry to women of menstruating age into the Sabarimala temple.

India cuts back on Afghan missions

As COVID-19 adds to security threat, operations at Herat, Jalalabad suspended

SUHASINI HAIDAR

NEW DELHI

With a growing number of cases of SARS-CoV-2 infection from Iran and Pakistan and the worsening security situation, India has decided to suspend operations at its missions in the Afghanistan cities of Jalalabad and Herat, highly placed sources confirmed to *The Hindu*.

Diplomatic staff and personnel of the Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) are being pulled out.

On Sunday, all Indian personnel at the Consulate in Jalalabad, near the Pakistan border, were moved to Kabul, and are likely to return to India by special flights coming in to transport Afghan citizens back. Those at the Consulate in Herat near the Iranian border are likely

about Herat and Jalalabad in particular. Last week, Afghan Health Minister Ferozuddin Feroz had said there were predictions that as much as half the population would contract the virus at some point.

The move to pull out Indian personnel also follows a deep security assessment undertaken by the government on the situation in Afghanistan following the deadly attack by the Islamic State Khorasan Province (ISKP) on a gurdwara in Kabul on March 25, in which 25 people, including an Indian were gunned down.

A senior official said the government's view of the security situation and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic was that it cannot be "business as usual" for the

Indian missions.

"For Pakistan, Afghanistan has always been about strategic depth, and now the ISI is emboldened to do as it pleases," a senior official told *The Hindu*. He added that two-thirds of ISKP recruits are Orakzai tribe members, living on the Pakistan side of the Durand Line.

As a result, India's assessment is that the month-old U.S.-Taliban deal, which only stipulates that the Taliban will ensure no attacks on American forces and interests, will lead to an increase in attacks on Indian missions. New Delhi is re-strategising the impact on all Indian missions, installations and projects, sources said.

(With inputs from
Dinakar Peri
& Vijaita Singh)

Lenders ready with EMI holiday offer

Banks and other finance institutions will send texts, emails to their customers

MANOJ SAHA

MUMBAI

The Housing Development and Finance Corporation (HDFC), the country's largest mortgage lender, and some other lenders will reach out to customers and give them the option to skip equated monthly instalment (EMI) for the next three months as announced by the Reserve Bank of India on Friday.

The move will enable customers, particularly those who have opted for the electronic clearing service (ECS) facility, to opt for deferring payments for the next three months.

"We will give our customers an option to defer EMIs," Keki Mistry, vice-chairman and CEO, HDFC, told *The Hindu*.

HDFC will reach out to its customers via email and SMS, informing them to exercise their choice through a



Customers can now defer their payments.

link in their website. The customer will also have the option to continue with the EMIs.

Private sector lender Kotak Mahindra Bank has also communicated through social media that the bank is working on the issue and will inform the customers via email and SMS.

The other alternative for the borrower to defer EMIs is to instruct the bank from where the EMI is debited to

stop the ECS facility.

A borrower who has not opted for the ECS facility can simply avoid paying the instalment for three months.

On Friday, the RBI allowed all banks and financial institutions including non-banking finance companies to extend a three-month moratorium on the instalments falling due between March 1, 2020 and May 31, 2020 for all term loans.

Interest to accrue

The banking regulator has clarified that interest will continue to accrue on the outstanding portion of the term loans during the moratorium period.

"Customers need to understand that moratorium is not a waiver of any kind but just a facility provided to customers to tide over their temporary liquidity issue and once the moratorium period is over, they will need to repay the loan with accrued interest," said an official of a housing finance company.

The move is a part of several measures announced by the central bank to fight the economic impact caused by

EPF scheme members handed COVID-19 lifeline

Non-refundable advance made available

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The Union Labour and Employment Ministry said on Sunday that it had notified an amendment to the Employees' Provident Scheme (EPF) allowing members to withdraw non-refundable advance amounts in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.

As announced by Finance

Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on March 26, the Ministry notified the amendment on March 27,



DELHI-U.P. BORDER Workers and their children being given food while waiting to board a bus at Anand Vihar on the Delhi-Uttar Pradesh border on Sunday; a group of labourers walking in Jaipur; people waiting to get food provided by the Railway Protection Force at the Patna Junction; and migrant workers from Delhi leaving in a crowded vehicle for Uttar Pradesh. ■ R.V. MOORTHY, ROHIT JAIN PARAS & RANJEET KUMAR



Urban shelters to provide 3 meals a day

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Shelters for the urban homeless would provide three meals a day to those living in and around the premises to help people cope with the lockdown imposed owing to the COVID-19 pandemic, Union Housing and Urban Affairs Ministry officials said.

Ministry secretary Durga Shanker Mishra said on Saturday that three meals a day would be provided to around one lakh people living in and around 1,500 such shelters. He said an expenditure of up to ₹100 per person per day could be incurred from the Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana-National Urban Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NULM) and State missions for giving food to the homeless under the DAY-NULM shelters.

"All States have been advised that newly added homeless/vulnerable persons be scanned for fever or other symptoms, before allowing them to stay in shelters," he tweeted.

In U.P., workers made to go round in circles

Sudden change of boarding stations leave them confused

OMAR RASHID
LUCKNOW
Migrant workers returning from Delhi and other cities of Uttar Pradesh continued to arrive in Lucknow on Sunday but for many, the journey home was not without struggle, confusion and stress due to change in boarding stations.

Many of them had to run from one bus station to another in search of transportation. The situation was stark at the Qaiserbagh bus



No connection: Workers resting in Lucknow on Sunday as they could not find a bus. They were later transported home by a supply truck. ■ OMAR RASHID

Sunday. "They are asking us to walk," said Ramesh Sharma, a carpenter who arrived from Delhi by bus via Kanpur. "We went to the Charbagh station, they sent us to Qaiserbagh and when we reached here, they asked us to walk," said Mr. Sharma outside the bus station around half past noon.

For reasons known to the administration, the arriving migrants were not given advance notice about their

boarding places due to which many of them turned up at Qaiserbagh from where buses to east Uttar Pradesh usually start. Mr. Sharma got a bus to Gonda after walking several kilometres to the polytechnic intersection.

Virender Kumar, a wallpaper maker, arrived in Lucknow along with 11 associates after a tedious journey from the Anand Vihar terminus in Delhi. After boarding a roadways bus in Delhi, Mr.

Kumar was dropped near Hathras from where he boarded a truck.

"The bus conductor not only charged us ₹300 instead of ₹155 but also made us sit on the roof of the vehicle. It was cold at night," Mr. Kumar said.

After walking for another 15-20 minutes, the group found a truck which dropped them at a nondescript location, from where they had to hike 35-40 km in the night to

reach the highway and board another truck towards the outskirts of Lucknow. "We were packed in the truck like cattle fodder," recounted Mr. Kumar who arrived at Qaiserbagh station after paying another ₹3,000 to an SUV as fare.

"Policemen said that we are coming here to spread the coronavirus. Go away from here, go that way, they told us," Mr. Kumar said.

The group found a bus towards home but only after walking another 45 minutes.

An official of the Uttar Pradesh State Road Transport Corporation said the police stationed outside the Qaiserbagh and Charbagh bus stations were told to redirect the incoming migrants towards boarding points near Alambagh and Gomti Nahar on the outskirts.

The change in boarding places was made overnight by the administration after instructions from the government but it was known only in the morning, the official said. After around 8-10 buses plied from Charbagh all buses were re-directed from the two new points thereafter.

"These people must have arrived late but we had placed a person there at 8-9 a.m. to announce the change. Police at the outpost were also told to direct them to Nahariya in Alambagh and Kamta near Gomti Nagar," said the official, adding that so far around 1,500-1,600 buses had plied across Uttar Pradesh to transport the migrants.

CM inspects toll plaza
Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath inspected the toll plaza at Lucknow-Agra Expressway and interacted with migrant workers coming in.

He instructed officials to prepare a list of migrants coming into Uttar Pradesh from other States and identify those people who had arrived in the last three days, carry out their medical inspection and put suspect cases under home quarantine.

Those migrants coming through buses will be screened and if found suspected, these cases will be isolated in hospitals, said Amit Mohan Prasad, Principal Secretary, Health.

IN BRIEF



Kovind, Venkaiah to donate a month's salary

NEW DELHI President Ram Nath Kovind on Sunday pledged to donate his one month's salary to the PM-CARES fund set up to fight the COVID-19 crisis.

"Following his example, Rashtrapati Bhavan

employees are also making voluntary contributions to the fund," Rashtrapati Bhavan tweeted. Thanking the President, PM Narendra Modi tweeted: "Rashtrapati Ji is leading the way and inspiring the nation." Vice-President and Rajya Sabha Chairman Venkaiah Naidu also donated a month's salary to the fund. He also requested RS members to follow suit.

Stop migrants in border districts, says Orissa HC

Bhubaneswar Taking exception to the movement of large numbers of migrant workers, the Orissa High Court on Sunday directed the administration to stop them at the border districts by providing them with shelter and food. In the event of shortage of space, district authorities should take over closed college and school premises, the court said. Justice Sanju Panda, Acting Chief Justice of Orissa HC, and Justice B. Rath said such large-scale movement may aid the spread of COVID-19. The High Court also felt that providing vehicles to so many people would be an uphill task.

Defence Ministry staff to contribute a day's salary

NEW DELHI Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Sunday approved a proposal for contribution of one-day salary by employees of the Ministry of Defence to the PM-CARES Fund to fight COVID-19. "It is estimated that around ₹500 crore will be collectively provided by the Ministry of Defence to the fund from various wings,

including the Army, the Navy, the Air Force, the Defence Public Sector Undertakings and others," the Ministry said in a statement. The contribution is voluntary, it said, and those desirous of opting out will be exempted.

450 CAPF doctor-recruits to join duty immediately

NEW DELHI Over 450 doctors recruited recently as medical officers in the Central Armed Police Forces (CAPFs) have been asked to join duty "immediately" as the forces are ramping up their healthcare set-up to combat COVID-19. Retired medical officers have been "alerted" and modalities are being worked on to hire doctors on contract to man the forces' country-wide

hospitals and quarantine centres with a combined strength of more than 7,200 beds, ITBP Director General Surjeet Singh Deswal said on Sunday. PTI

U.S. Air Force cancels Red Flag exercise

NEW DELHI The U.S. Air Force has cancelled Phase-I of its flagship multilateral air exercise, Red Flag, scheduled in Alaska from April 30. The Indian Air Force (IAF) was to take part in the exercise with its Sukhoi Su-30 fighter jets, defence sources said. "We got communication that Red Flag Alaska 20-1, scheduled from April 30 to May 15, has been cancelled due to COVID-19," a defence source said. The U.S. Pacific Air Fleet said on its website that the exercise was cancelled owing to the travel restrictions imposed by the U.S. Department of Defence.

Centre suspends two Delhi govt. officers

Serves show-cause notices to 2 others

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Central government on Sunday suspended two Delhi government officers and served show-cause notices to two others for dereliction of duty as they "failed to ensure public health and safety during the lockdown restrictions to combat COVID-19". Three of them are senior Indian Administrative Service officers and the fourth one is from Delhi, Andaman and Nicobar Islands Service.

Dereliction of duty
The National Executive Committee formed under the Disaster Management Act, 2005, found that the "officers, who were responsible to ensure strict compliance" with the instructions issued regarding containment of spread of COVID-19, "have prima facie failed to do so". These officers have failed

Bihar villagers hand over city returnees to police

They are being taken away for medical tests

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI/PATNA

Many of the thousands of jobless workers, marching from their workplaces to their native villages in States like Bihar and Uttar Pradesh hundreds of kilometres away amid the COVID-19 lockdown, are not being welcomed back home.

On March 25, the day lockdown was announced, the Centre for the first time invoked the provisions of the National Disaster Management Act, 2005, to prepare national plans and uniform management to combat COVID-19 as health and law and order are State subjects.

The suspended officers are Renu Sharma, Additional Chief Secretary, Transport Department, and Rajeev Verma, Principal Secretary, Finance. Those served notice are Satya Gopal, Additional Chief Secretary, Home and Land Buildings Departments, and Ajay Kumar Arora, SDM Seelampur.



Spreading caution: Residents of Kankarbagh spraying disinfectants in Patna on Sunday ■ RANJEET KUMAR

In many places in Bihar and elsewhere, those returning back home from even neighbouring countries such as Nepal and Bhutan were reported to the police, who, in turn, handed them over to medical authorities for tests. Some villages in Bihar have gone into lockdown, denying entry to people even from neighbouring areas.

"Four of my co-villagers working in Nepal returned home two days ago. But villagers informed the police about them following which they swooped on the village with ambulances and handed them over to the medical team," a villager told PTI over phone from Alawalpur village near Patna.

In a similar case, nine people returning to their village

Jamalpur, near Alawalpur, from Mumbai were handed over to the police and medical authorities, said Luv Singh of Jamalpur village.

"Yes, it's true. Initially over 15 people coming from outside the State were reported to us by villagers and we handed them over to medical teams," said Inspector Kumar.

Despite COVID-19, Braille press busy with work

Efforts are on to provide Class XI textbooks

STAFF REPORTER
BERHAMPUR

While COVID-19 has hit education around the world, Odisha's only Braille printing press in Berhampur is busy in its efforts to provide Braille textbooks to visually challenged Class XI students in the coming academic year.

Printing of Braille textbooks for +2 or higher secondary course has been taken up for the first time in the State. It was, till now, only printing textbooks up to Class X. Braille textbooks are not available for visually impaired higher secondary students in Odisha.

So, the Red Cross Computerised Braille Braille Press in Berhampur decided to start printing textbooks for Class XI in 2020 and to add up Braille books for XII the next year.

Most visually impaired

students in Odisha, after passing Class X, prefer admission to the Arts stream for higher secondary education. These students had to depend on others to read out textbooks to them, and on Braille notes made by their seniors. "There were requests from different parts of the State for Braille textbooks of Arts stream. So, the Braille press decided to print books of Class XI Arts course first," said manager Prakash Narayan Rath.

Despite the lockdown, data entry work for these textbooks is continuing. Mr. Rath and a Braille data entry operator, Chimayee Rath, are now busy transcribing the +2 first year or Class XI textbooks into Braille format on computers. "We plan to provide textbooks of Odia, English, political science, economics and history subjects" said Mr. Rath.

Gond tribals in Panna survive on roti and salt

Sudden lockdown has torn apart families in the region

SIDHARTH YADAV
BHOPAL

For the third Sunday in a row, Pritireshwar Adivasi waited in vain for his mother's return from Bamitha village, where she is stranded without transport after the lockdown.

The 16-year-old boy's responsibility, at a time when the COVID-19 outbreak is shattering families, fraying relations and racking the poor, is immense. To help his infirm grandmother and seven-year-old sister tide over hunger, only a meal of wheat rotis with salt is what he can manage. The threat of novel coronavirus comes later.

'Torn us apart'
"Mother used to come over every weekend, bringing us vegetables and oil. But the lockdown has torn us apart; hunger may kill us before



The Gonds are making do with the PDS wheat and rice. ■ SIDHARTH YADAV

With shops shuttered and weekly markets wound up, the two-month advance disbursement of 4 kg of wheat and 1 kg each of rice and salt distributed to every BPL (Below

Beds and blankets for 18,478 in Delhi

Though fewer people are let into shelters now, there is a surge after lockdowns

JACOB KOSHY
NEW DELHI

The 21-day lockdown may have deprived Rambhai, a daily wage labourer, of an income but not a bed and blanket. The Haryana resident works in Delhi, and for nearly a year, has been sleeping in one of the "porta cabins", a blue prefabricated hall that houses nearly 75 people.

Among the shelters managed by the Delhi government are 115 such cabins. Each has a common television; mattresses and blankets are made available. Other than the cabins, there are 89 buildings and 19 tents that constitute the city's 223 shelters. Together, they have the capacity to house 18,478 of the national capital's homeless people.

'Fewer allowed'
"In the past few days since the lockdown, fewer people are being allowed because we have been asked to keep the mattresses at a greater



Finding sanctuary: Labourers and migrants share space at a night shelter in Nigambodh Ghat in Delhi. ■ JACOB KOSHY

distance from each other," said Mr. Rambhai, who had just finished lunch.

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Saturday announced that the government had made arrangements to feed at least four lakh poor people beginning Sunday, and free meals were being given at night shelters. It was also part of the government's attempt to dissuade people from travelling and possibly spreading CO-

VID-19. Because of the lockdown drying up jobs and the savings of many daily wagers, many of them decided to walk to their villages in Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Madhya Pradesh. With buses and trains stalled, many thousands are stuck in the city.

A total of 588 government schools have also been modified into centres where the homeless and poor can be fed, the Delhi CM said.

According to records from

the Delhi Urban Shelter Improvement Board, occupancy has risen in the t shelters.

On March 22, night occupancy in the shelters was 7,671 and this increased to 9,806 on March 25 – the first night of the lockdown – and as of the latest report on Sunday, occupancy rose to 10,784.

"Generally, night shelters witness low occupancy during summers," said Rajiv Bansal, who is involved in the management of the shelter at Nigambodh Ghat. "But due to the lockdown, we are seeing an upsurge compared with what is normal for this time of the year."

Food is delivered in a truck and served by a few policemen and social workers. It is mostly a large serving of khichdi, and occasionally the menu changes to puris and a bowl of vegetables. With physical distancing norms in effect, residents are expected to line up inside chalk circles.

Spain reports record daily toll of 838

Number of deaths rise for third consecutive day; in the U.S., Trump rules out lockdown in New York

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

MADRID

Spain reported a national daily record of 838 COVID-19 deaths on Sunday in a fresh warning to the world that long-term lockdowns may be needed to halt the deadly march of a disease that has claimed more than 31,000 lives. A deluge of patients are overwhelming hospitals in Europe and the United States, now the focal points of a pandemic that is upending the global economy in unprecedented ways.

COVID-19

In the U.S., an about-face by President Donald Trump on quarantining New York highlighted the panic and confusion unfurling across many parts of the world trying to contain the virus. In Spain, where the 24-hour death toll rose for the third consecutive day, lockdown measures have been tightened as officials cling to hope that slowing growth rates mean they are nearing the peak of the crisis.

Shortage of medical gear
COVID-19's relentless spread has infected nearly every sphere of life, from wiping out millions of jobs to postponing elections and putting a pause on the world's sporting scene. It has also spurred a worldwide scramble for medical gear as exhausted doctors and nurses in some of the world's wealthiest cities struggle to dole out limited stocks of face masks and life-saving respirators.

In Britain, deaths have now topped 1,000 as Prime Minister Boris Johnson — who tested positive for the virus last week — warned that dark days were on the horizon. "We know things



French nurses taking care of four patients infected with COVID-19 in a train at Nancy train station. The patients were being transferred to the western part of France. ■ AFP

Outbreak could claim up to 200,000 U.S. lives'

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

WASHINGTON

A senior U.S. scientist issued a cautious prediction on Sunday that COVID-19 could claim 1,00,000 to 2,00,000 lives in the United States. Dr. Anthony Fauci, who leads research into infectious diseases at the National Institutes of Health, told CNN that models predicting a million or more deaths were "almost certainly off the chart."

"It's not impossible, but very, very unlikely."

He offered a rough estimate of 1,00,000 to 2,00,000 deaths and "millions of cases."

But Dr. Fauci, a leading member of President Donald Trump's COVID-19 task force, quickly added, "I

don't want to be held to that... It's such a moving target that you can so easily be wrong and mislead people."

Asked about the persistent shortage of tests for the COVID-19 disease, he struck a slightly more optimistic tone, saying, "If you compare a couple of weeks ago to where we are right now, we have an amazingly larger number of tests than we had."

Asked how soon the wider availability of testing might allow a lifting of travel and work restrictions, Dr. Fauci said, "It's going to be a matter of weeks. It's not going to be tomorrow and it's certainly not going to be next week. It's going to be a little bit more than that."

France carries out evacuation

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

NANCY

France evacuated 36 more COVID-19 patients from the hard-hit east to western areas on Sunday, hoping to free up intensive care units as hospitals brace for even more serious cases in the coming days. Two high-speed trains carried patients from Mulhouse and Nancy toward hospitals along France's western coast, where the outbreak has been limited so far. France has already evacuated dozens over the past week from the east, hoping to stay ahead of a crisis that Prime Minister Edouard Philippe warned would only worsen over the next two weeks.

South Africans exit quarantine

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

JOHANNESBURG

President Cyril Ramaphosa on Sunday oversaw the release of dozens of South Africans who had been in quarantine since returning from Wuhan in China earlier this month. Mr. Ramaphosa went to a remote resort in the northern Limpopo province to free the 114 South Africans who had been isolated since March 14 when they were evacuated from China. The group, who had been working and studying in Wuhan, were all free of the virus on their return, but still quarantined.

Beijing sees rise in imported cases as normalcy returns to Wuhan

Many of them involve Chinese returning from other nations

REUTERS

WUHAN

A growing number of imported COVID-19 cases in China, where the epidemic originated in December, risked fanning a second wave of infections when domestic transmissions had "basically been stopped", a senior health official said on Sunday.

China, where the disease first emerged in the central city of Wuhan, had an accumulated total of 693 cases entering from overseas, which meant "the possibility of a new round of infections remains relatively big", Mi Feng, spokesman for the National Health Commission (NHC), said.

Nearly a quarter of those came from arrivals in Beijing. "Beijing, the capital, still bears the brunt of the risks," said Xu Hejian, spokesman for the Beijing government, told reporters.

"There's no reason to lay back and relax yet. It's not a time when we can say everything is going well." Most of those imported cases have involved Chinese returning home from abroad.

A total of 3,300 people have now died in mainland China, with a reported 81,439 infections.

China was widely accused of a delayed response when suspected cases first emerged in December. But the world's most populous country has since won praise from the World Health Organization for its efforts to lock down affected areas and isolate patients.

313 imported cases

In the last seven days, China has reported 313 imported cases of COVID-19 but only six confirmed cases of domestic transmission, NHC's data showed.



A medical worker taking a swab sample from a person tested for the virus on Sunday. ■ AFP

on Sunday, with the exception of Wuhan, which will open to domestic flights on April 8. Flights from Hubei to Beijing remain suspended.

A train arrived in Wuhan on Saturday for the first time since the city was placed in lockdown two months ago.

Restrictions have also been eased on people looking to return to the capital, although the procedure still appears much more vigorous as it's done on an application approval basis.

7,000 return to Beijing

More than 7,000 have returned to Beijing from Hubei by charted trains or private cars, Mao Jun, a Beijing government official, said on Sunday.

On a cold and rainy Sunday, Wuhan streets and metro trains were still largely empty. The Hubei government said on its official WeChat account that a number of malls in Wuhan, as well as the Chu River and Han Street shopping belt, would be allowed to resume operations on Monday.

'Worried' German State Finance Minister kills self

He was tense about COVID-19 fallout

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

BERLIN

Thomas Schaefer, the Finance Minister of Germany's Hesse State, has committed suicide apparently after becoming "deeply worried" over how to cope with the economic fallout from the virus, State Premier Volker Bouffier said on Sunday. Mr. Schaefer, 54, was found dead near a railway track on Saturday. The Wiesbaden prosecution's office said they believe he died by suicide.

"We are in shock, we are in disbelief and above all we are immensely sad," Mr. Bouffier said in a recorded statement.

Hesse is home to Germany's financial capital Frankfurt, where major lenders like Deutsche Bank and Commerzbank have their

headquarters. The European Central Bank is also located in Frankfurt.

A visibly shaken Mr. Bouffier recalled that Mr. Schaefer, who was Hesse's finance chief for 10 years, had been working "day and night" to help companies and workers deal with the economic impact of the pandemic. "Today we have to assume that he was deeply worried," said Mr. Bouffier, a close ally of Chancellor Angela Merkel. "It's precisely during this difficult time that we would have needed someone like him." Popular and well-respected, Mr. Schaefer had long been touted as a possible successor to Mr. Bouffier. Like Mr. Bouffier, Mr. Schaefer belonged to Ms. Merkel's centre-right CDU party.

Maliens vote amid virus, security fears

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

BAMAKO

Maliens voted in a long-delayed parliamentary election on Sunday, barely a day after the country recorded its first COVID-19 death and with the leading Opposition figure kidnapped and believed to be in the hands of jihadists.

There were security fears about the vote to elect new MPs to the 147-seat National Assembly even before the war-torn West African country recorded its first virus infection on Wednesday.

The novel coronavirus, however, has opened up an entirely different problem: the life-endangering consequences of supposed cures, misleading claims, snake-oil sales pitches and conspiracy theories about the outbreak.

So far, AFP has debunked almost 200 rumours and myths about the virus, but experts say stronger action from tech companies is needed to stop misinformation and the scale at which it can be spread online.



"There's still a disconnect between what people think is true and what people are willing to share," Professor David Rand, a specialist in brain and cognitive sciences at the MIT Sloan School of Management, said, explaining how a user's bias toward content he or she thinks will be liked or shared typically dominates decision-making

when online. Part of the reason is that social media algorithms are geared to appeal to someone's habits and interests: the emphasis is on likability, not accuracy.

Changing that would require Facebook, Twitter and other such companies to alter what people see on screen. Prompts urging users to consider the accuracy

of content they are spreading on social networks are needed, said Mr. Rand, co-author of a study on COVID-19 misinformation that was published earlier this month.

'Remedy' kills 300

What is undoubtedly is that misinformation about the pandemic has been deadly. Although U.S., French and other scientists are working to expedite effective treatments, false reports have appeared in numerous countries.

In Iran, a fake remedy of ingesting methanol has reportedly led to 300 deaths, and left many more sick.

Dr. Jason McKnight, assistant clinical professor in the Department of Primary Care and Population Health at Texas A&M University, said the sharing of false information has an impact beyond

the immediate risk of the virus itself. "I have seen posts related to 'treatments' that are not proven, techniques to prevent exposure and infection that are either not proven and/or filled with a lot of misleading information, and instruction for individuals to stock up on supplies and food," he said.

Dr. McKnight highlighted two types of danger posed by inaccurate information on the virus: that it "could incite fear or panic," and "the potential for individuals to do harmful things in hope of 'curing the illness' or 'preventing the illness.'

The COVID-19 misinformation study mirrored past tests for political fake news, notably in that reminders about accuracy would be a simple way to improve choices about what people share.

Saudi Arabia intercepts missiles in attack claimed by Yemen's Houthis

Shrapnel fall on capital Riyadh, border city of Jazan

REUTERS

Riyadh

Saudi Arabia said its air defences intercepted two ballistic missiles on Saturday night in an attack that Yemen's Iran-aligned Houthi group on Sunday said it had launched towards the capital Riyadh and southern areas near the Yemeni border.

The attacks come days after Yemen's warring parties had welcomed a UN call for an immediate truce on Thursday to fight the COVID-19 outbreak. "Two civilians were slightly injured due to the falling of the intercepted missile's debris as it exploded in mid-air over residential districts," in Riyadh, the Saudi state news agency (SPA) reported, citing a Saudi civil defence spokesman, Lt. Colonel Turki al-Malki.



A Patriot missile battery at al-Kharj, Saudi Arabia. ■ AFP

Yemen's Houthis battling the Saudi-led coalition have launched hundreds of missiles and drones across the border, mostly at nearby military and civilian targets but also at Riyadh.

The last attempted strike on the capital was in June 2018.

Saudi Arabia blamed Iran for a September 2019 drone and missile attack on two oil installations that initially halved Saudi oil output, even after the Houthis claimed responsibility. Tehran denies involvement.

A military spokesman for Yemen's Houthis on Sunday said the group's forces had launched rockets and drones at "sensitive" sites in the Saudi capital Riyadh and at economic and military sites in Jazan, Najran and Asir, near the Yemeni border.

N. Korea fires 2 short-range missiles

Pyongyang has launched nine projectiles in four rounds this month

REUTERS

SEOUL

North Korea fired what appeared to be two short-range ballistic missiles into the ocean off its east coast on Sunday, the latest in a flurry of launches that South Korea decried as "inappropriate" amid the global COVID-19 pandemic.

Two "short-range projectiles" were launched from the coastal Wonsan area, and flew 230 km at a maximum altitude of 30 km, South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff reported. "In a situation where the entire world is experiencing difficulties due to COVID-19, this kind of military act by North Korea is very inappropriate and we call for an immediate halt," South Korea's JCS said in a statement, according to Yonhap news agency.

Japan's Ministry of Defense said they appeared to be ballistic missiles, and they did not land in Japanese territory or its exclusive economic zone. They would be the eighth and ninth missiles launched in four rounds of tests this month as North Korean troops conduct military drills, usually personally overseen by Kim Jong-un.

According to a tally by Shea Cotton, senior researcher at the James Martin Center for Nonproliferation Studies. "Coming this early in the year, the only time we've seen tests this frequently were in 2016 and 2017, both of which were huge years for North Korea's missile program," he said on Twitter.

All of the missiles fired so far this year have been small,



North Korean leader Kim Jong-un inspecting a military drill at an undisclosed location earlier this month. ■ AP

short-range weapons, such as the KN-24 fired during the last launch on March 21.

'Strategic weapon'

But Mr. Kim has warned that North Korea is developing a new "strategic weapon" to be unveiled this year, with analysts speculating that it could be a new long-range ballistic missile, or a submarine capable of launching such missiles.

This month's military drills have been conducted despite a border lockdown and quarantine measures imposed in North Korea in an effort to prevent an outbreak of COVID-19.

In the past, North Korea has typically conducted military drills, including tests of its ballistic missiles, in March as the wintry weather turns warmer. For the previous two years, however, it had avoided such springtime launches amid denuclearisation talks with the U.S.

ELSEWHERE



Rouhani warns Iran on prolonged restrictions

TEHRAN
President Hassan Rouhani warned on Sunday that "the new way of life" in Iran was likely to be prolonged, as its declared death toll from COVID-19 rose to 2,640. "We must prepare to live with this virus until a treatment or vaccine is discovered, which has not yet happened to date," he said. ■ AFP

Trudeau's wife recovers from COVID-19

MONTREAL
Sophie Gregoire-Trudeau, the wife of Canada's Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, has recovered from COVID-19, she said on Saturday. She had tested positive for the virus on March 12 after returning from Britain, with her husband subsequently going into self-quarantine as a precautionary measure.

ASK US



VIDYA BALA

Q. I am 43. I am shifting from a corporate job to the education field. I want to invest about ₹28 lakh of my PF money in a security that will provide me with a regular income (on a quarterly basis).

Can you advise me on the right option to invest in? I need the least risky one.

LAKSHMI

A. Since you have stated that you need the least risky option, you can look at a combination of bank deposits and post office schemes. Split the deposit with 2-3 banks and make sure you are with at least one systemically important bank (SBI, HDFC Bank, ICICI Bank). You can consider Post Office National Savings Time Deposit. This will ensure that you do not compromise on safety. However, it needs to be said that it is not very tax efficient. If you are in the 20% tax bracket or less, then this is just about ok. Else, this will generate post-tax returns of less than 5%. But that is the price one pays for safety.

If you are in the highest tax bracket and are game for some risk, then you can invest a small amount in liquid mutual funds and do a systematic withdrawal plan. This will be more tax efficient but comes with uncertainty of returns (no guarantee) and marginally higher risk than deposits.

Q. I am 32 years old and would like to invest over a period of 25 years to save for my retirement. My goal is to achieve a minimum corpus of ₹8 crore after 25 years. I can invest in SIP at ₹30,000 a month. Please let me know about safe investments. My adviser told me to invest in three different funds, but I prefer your advice. I fear all my investments can go bust if markets collapse after 20 or 25 years. So, please let me know how to proceed.

PATRICK OLIVERA

A. Safety and high returns do not go together. If you are unwilling to take some risks, then only deposits will fit your requirement. But, they won't get you to where you want unless you have a very high saving rate. For example, let us assume over this period, your average return on deposits is 6%. For you to get to ₹8 crore in 25 years, you will need to step up your monthly savings by ₹10,000 every year. That is ₹30,000 a month in the first year, ₹40,000 in the second year and so on. That will be an average of 10% increase over these 25 years but with significant hikes in early years (since a ₹10,000 per month increase amounts to a 33% jump in savings and then a 25% and so on, given the low base). This is not easy if you have EMI commitments. Use PF, post office schemes and bank deposits, without fear of market collapse. But this is not without risk. We had 10-12% interest in the 90s but have steadily declined since. In another 20-25 years, as we become a developed economy, rates can further fall.

The other route is to have an asset-allocated approach to investing, with equity and debt. For example, start with a 50% allocation for post office time deposits, PF, NSC and bank recurring deposits. For the equity part, consider a simple equity index fund and a multi-cap fund. This will ensure, as a portfolio, you are not too hurt by hits such as the present one caused by the COVID-19 pandemic since your debt component will protect you. But here again, you need to step up your monthly investments by at least ₹5,000 every year to make sure you reach your target. As you get comfortable with mutual funds, make it 60% in equity funds and add a mid-cap fund later. The present market fall provides opportunities to enter. But, think long term. Markets can fall from here in the next few months. Test waters now to see if you can handle the volatility. If you do, you know you will survive equity investing. Else, go back to the first option.

(The author is co-founder, Primeinvestor.in)

Readers can send in queries on personal finance and investing to moneywise@thehindu.co.in. Our experts who write on personal finance will answer these queries. Moneywise will not give specific recommendations for investment in a particular mutual fund scheme, share or fixed deposit.

INVESTING IN DEBT MFs

Here's how you make it TAX EFFICIENT

Investing in the growth option of a debt MF and timing it well can minimise your tax outgo

JOYDEEP SEN

In the article of March 9, 2020 (<https://www.thehindu.com/business/Economy/some-ideas-to-make-your-mf-investments-tax-efficient/article3101110.ece>), we discussed about tax efficiency in equity mutual funds. Now, we will discuss about debt mutual funds (MFs), also known as fixed income MFs.

There are two options in a fund viz. a dividend option where the MF pays dividend to you and the growth option, where there is no payout but the gains remain in the NAV and you can redeem the investment at that NAV when you want. Tax efficiency is better in the growth option, which we will discuss here.

In the dividend option, as mentioned in the Union Budget, dividends are taxable in your hands from April 1, 2020 instead of the earlier system of the MF deducting a dividend distribution tax (DDT) on your behalf and paying the government.

If you are in a lower tax slab, say 5% or 20%, the dividend option is tax efficient but most investors are in the 30% tax bracket.

In the growth option, to get the benefit of a lower tax rate, you have to hold the MF for three years.

This is technically called long-term capital gains (LTCG) tax. Upon holding your debt MF units for three years, you become eligible for this levy.

Short-term gains

If you hold it for less than three years, it is short-term capital gains (STCG) taxed at your slab rate. Here again, you are better off if you are at a lower tax slab, but assuming you are in the 30% bracket, it is

not very tax efficient. In the LTCG, there is a defined tax rate of 20% on the gains. But there is the benefit of 'indexation' by virtue of which the effective tax rate comes down significantly.

The way indexation works is like this – the tax authorities declare an index number, called cost inflation index (CII), every year. As per this, your purchase cost is 'indexed up', hence, the taxable component of the gains comes down significantly.

Now, let's see how in-

dexation works. Let us say you invested in a debt mutual fund growth option on August 27, 2016 (or any date in financial year 2016-17) at ₹100 and redeemed it on August 27, 2019 (or any date thereafter to complete three years of holding) at ₹121. The CII for financial year 2016-17 as declared by the government is 264 and the CII for financial year 2019-20 is 289. Hence, your purchase cost gets indexed up, for tax purposes, to ₹100 x 289/264 = ₹109.47. Your taxable LTCG is ₹121 - ₹109.47 = ₹11.53. Tax at 20% (ignoring surcharge and cess for simplicity) will be ₹11.53 x 20% = ₹2.31. Thus, the effective tax rate, as a percentage of your gains, is ₹2.31 / ₹21 = 11%.

Now, let's extend this method. You invested in a debt mutual fund on March 27, 2016 at ₹100 and redeemed it at ₹121 on April 12, 2019. Here, you get the indexation for one more financial year. The CII for 2015-16 was 254,

that for 2019-20 was 289 and your indexed purchase cost is ₹100 x 289/254 = ₹113.77. Your taxable component is ₹121 - ₹113.77 = ₹7.23. The tax at 20% (ignoring surcharge and cess) is ₹7.23 X 20% = ₹1.45. The effective tax rate, as a percentage of your long term capital gains, is ₹1.45 / ₹21 = 6.9%.

The data on CII is available through Google. To ensure you are referring at correct numbers, you may cross-check with the numbers mentioned above e.g. 289 for 2019-20. The CII for a financial year is announced sometime around August to October of the year, with reference to CPI inflation of the previous year.

To summarise, you reduce your tax in debt MFs by viz. holding the fund in growth option and for at least three years. If you invest in March and redeem in April after approximately three years, it's even better.

You may use debt MFs after retirement, called the distribution phase of life, through a systematic withdrawal plan (SWP). That is, you would place your retirement kitty in debt MFs and do SWPs to

withdraw as per your requirements every month.

To generate tax efficiency in SWP, you have to start the SWP three years after retirement. For tax purposes, to match against the exit, the NAV of your earliest investment will be considered. This is known as First In First Out (FIFO) i.e. every exit will be matched with the earliest entry in that fund.

Another point to be noted, in the context of availing indexation benefit in debt MFs, is that there is a notion among some people that the benefit of indexation is available by investing in Fixed Maturity Plans (FMPs) in March, which will mature after approximately three years in April. While this is correct and gives you the benefit of indexation across four financial years, this is true for all debt funds viz. short duration fund, long duration fund, etc.

You will invest as per your preference, but for comparison purposes, FMPs are not liquid. There is no redemption with the AMC in FMPs and though listed at the exchange, there is no liquidity. If you invest in open-ended funds i.e. the usual short duration fund or banking and PSU fund, in case you require your money, you can redeem with the AMC.

(The author is founder, wiseinvestor.in)

COVER NOTE: COVID-19

Policies for pandemics

While existing policies must cover virus, insurers have unveiled specific products

K NITYA KALYANI

The world is cowering under the COVID19 threat. Let's take a look at the insurance cover available for those who get infected.

The first question that comes to mind is: will my hospitalisation policy pay for a COVID-19-related hospitalisation and treatment?

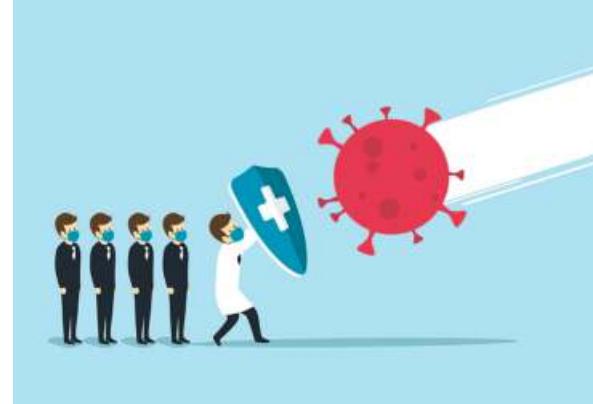
The answer seems clear, up to a point. Existing policies should cover hospitalisation unless specifically excluded or if epidemics and pandemics are excluded. Read your policy document for clarity. If neither is the case, we can conclude that coverage is available.

(In the case of other covers like property and liability, insurance companies do suspend cover under a force majeure clause which means natural and man-made disasters, including pandemics.)

New products

The reason is a high number of claims can devastate the insurance industry. Should this happen, the role of the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI) to direct and persuade the industry would be much looked forward to. As for health policies, IRDAI has issued a circular that new products cannot exclude pandemics.

Given that cover is available,



In case of life insurance, death due to COVID-19 would be payable as per terms and conditions. • GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCK

ble, the next question is, what will be covered. Hospitalisation expenses as well as 30 days pre-hospitalisation and 60 days post-hospitalisation expenses are standard covers on these policies.

COVID-19 test costs should be covered as should quarantine period medical expenses that are admissible. All claims will follow the policy scope and terms.

As it stands, new policies will exclude hospitalisation claims in the first 30 days except in cases where there was unbroken coverage in the preceding four years with no related claims in that period.

As for life insurance policies, death due to COVID-19 would be payable within the overall terms and conditions

of the policy.

Coming back to health policies, there are new COVID-19-specific policies launched by some insurance companies, notably Star Health Insurance Company Ltd. and GoDigit. These are timely, if a bit restricted in coverage.

Star Health's policy is a one-year benefit policy with sum insured options of ₹21,000 and ₹42,000. It pays a lumpsum on hospitalisation and diagnosis of the COVID-19 infection. It does not provide coverage for hospitalisation expenses as such, but then the hospitalisation costs are being borne by the government.

The annual policy has a waiting period of 16 days from the commencement of

cover, that takes care of the incubation period of the virus. Should the insured travel outside India during the policy period, no claim payment will be made.

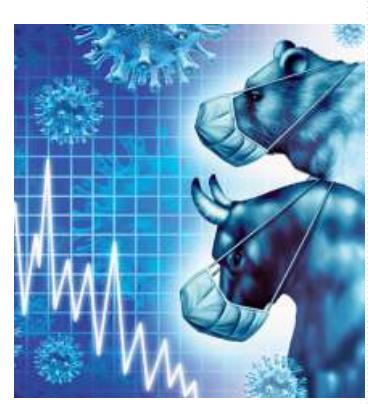
GoDigit offers a benefit policy for ₹25,000 SI (sum insured) with conditions that the insured or his close family should not have travelled to specified countries after December 1, 2019. Those insured, who had displayed symptoms of COVID-19 in the six weeks preceding the policy, will also not be eligible for a claim.

DBS Bank India has tied-up with Bharti AXA General Insurance Company Limited to roll out a complimentary insurance plan for its customers covering all medical conditions, including COVID-19. The 30-day cover will pay ₹5,000 a day for up to 10 days of hospitalisation.

ICICI Lombard General Insurance Company Limited's COVID-19 Protection Cover is also a benefit policy that pays the sum insured when the insured is declared COVID-19 positive.

Edelweiss General Insurance Company Limited has a COVID-19 policy that will be extended to those quarantined in specified government facilities.

(The writer is a business journalist specialising in insurance & corporate history)



account for pricing of options contracts, which are one of the most popular derivative instruments.

How is VIX index behaving currently?

■ In the current calendar year, the India VIX index has jumped fivefold, from around 12 levels to the current 67 levels, which clearly hints that the market perceives that volatility will only increase in the coming days.

Incidentally, the index is currently trading at record highs and on some days in the recent past, saw a surge of more than 20% in a single day.

The trend has been similar in CBOE VIX as well, having surged from below 15 levels in February to the current 67. It touched a high of 82 on March 16.

Interestingly, given the nature of the index, it is also known as 'fear gauge' or 'fear index'.

BLACKBOARD: INDIA VIX

A measure of volatility via prism of markets

ASHISH RUKHAIYAR

What is India VIX?

■ India VIX is an index that serves as a measure of market expectation of volatility in the near term. Simply put, while volatility signifies the rate and magnitude of change in the stock price or index value, the movement in the VIX index reflects the overall market volatility expectations over the next 30 days. So, a spike in the VIX value means the market is expecting higher volatility in the near future.

Why do we have a VIX index?

■ India VIX index is not the first of its kind in the world.

The VIX index was first created by the Chicago Board Options Exchange (CBOE) and introduced in 1993 based on the prices of S&P 500 index.

Since then, it has become a globally-recognised gauge of volatility in the U.S. equity markets. The India VIX was launched with a similar intent in 2010 and is based on the computation methodology of CBOE though amended to align with the Indian markets.

While derivatives contracts were also launched on India VIX, those never really registered any significant volume.

Incidentally, the VIX value is among the important parameters that are taken into

LOOSE CHANGE

RAVIKANTH



"Either his website got hacked, or our advisor has given up on the market for the time being!"

Bank fixed deposit rates

Bank Name	Highest Slab	1-year tenure	3-year tenure	5-year tenure	Interest Rates (%)
SMALL FINANCE BANKS					
Suryoday Small Finance Bank	9.00	8.25	8.50	9.00	
Fincare Small Finance Bank	9.00	7.50	8.50	8.00	
Utkarsh Small Finance Bank	9.00	8.20	8.00	8.35	
North East Small Finance Bank	8.50	8.00	7.50	6.75	
Jana Small Finance Bank	8.25	8.00	7.75	8.00	
Equitas Small Finance Bank	8.25	8.00	7.80	7.00	
Ujjivan Small Finance Bank	8.10	8.00	7.50	7.00	
ESAF Small Finance Bank	8.00	8.00	7.30	7.30	
AU Small Finance Bank	7.77	7.00	7.77	7.50	
Capital Small Finance Bank	7.30	6.90	6.90	6.80	
PRIVATE SECTOR BANKS					

Are you WofH?

SUNALINI MATHEW

If we were in the U.S., had 2,500 dollars to spare, and liked the meditation-meets-night-club sweat session that is SoulCycle, we'd be pre-ordering our bikes in candle-lit anticipation. But to be honest, we are more likely to do a bunch of floor exercises on our balconies, in lazy pyjamas, without anyone judging us.

Don't, says Radhika Gordhanas, an exercise psychologist and HR professional who currently works at Tata CLiQ. "Wear the workout gear you usually would, because it's a preparation to get you into your routine. Fill your bottle of water, follow the warm-up and cool-down." If you're in your pyjamas, you may get casual about these," she says.

Because working out from home is free and you can do it anytime, there's the danger of procrastinating and ending up never doing it. "It's best to keep it to the time you always do it at, because you don't want to be distracted by anything else," says Radhika. By switching on and off from a particular activity, you perform your best at both, rather than scattering yourself among many things.

If you're asking yourself why you can't just treat this period as an exercise holiday, especially if you're healthy, Prof Deepak Joshi, an orthopaedic surgeon at the Sports Injury Centre at Safdarjung Hospital, Delhi, takes away hope. "Remember what exercise does for children, adults, and the elderly is different," he says.

While children need an hour to an hour-and-a-half to stimulate growth, adults need about 40-45 minutes in order to keep the body fit. The elderly need frequent movement if they can't do the 40 minutes at one stretch, so they don't lose muscle strength or bone minerals. "Your body form is directly proportionate to function: muscles remodel according to how you use them," he says.

How to work out from home to stay healthy, with cities in lockdown mode

Derive a formula

It's a good idea to plan your routine either the night before or a week in advance, so that habit rather than choice, drives you to exercise. Dr. Deepak Chaudhary, who heads the Arthroscopy & Sports Medicine Centre at BLK, Delhi, suggests a combination of daily exercises.

WARM-UP: Jogging on the spot, skipping, a few burpees and a few *surya namaskars* can be used as a warm-up activity.

COOL-DOWN: Stretch, especially targeting the muscles that have been in focus through your workout. For instance, if you have been jogging on the spot, then stretch the quads, hamstring, calf, IT band and glutes for 20-30 seconds.



• GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCK

Build your own workout

Shiba Mehra, ACE-certified instructor and rehab specialist, who runs Spectrum Fitness that trains trainers, helps us piece together a workout. Use a series of 3-5 exercises; do 10-15 repetitions each, taking a water break after you complete one circuit. Continue until you do 20-30 minutes, if you're doing it at high intensity. You can choose to do a different one each day.

CARDIO: Jumping jacks, burpees, mountain climbers, high knees, skipping – you can do this in any order.

ARM STRENGTH: Fill two water bottles to use them as weights. Perform for two minutes each side planks (raising the free hand with the weight), bicep curls, squat jumps, shoulder presses, lunges – all with weights. Take a water break; repeat until you have completed 30-40 minutes.

FLEXIBILITY: Go from bottom to top, stretching the longest muscles first: calf, hamstring, quad, IT band, glute, back, chest, deltoid, rhomboid, traps, biceps and triceps.

A FULL-BODY WORKOUT: Perform planks, mountain climbers, burpees, push-ups, squats, lunges. Take a water break; repeat until you've completed 30-40 minutes.

USE YOUR FURNITURE

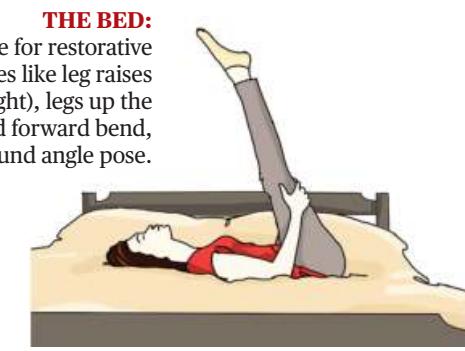
SHIBA HELPS US OPTIMISE WHAT'S AT HOME.



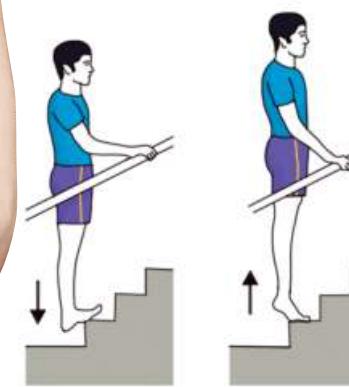
THE COUCH:

Suitable for ab crunches (1), tricep dips (2), reverse lunges (3), incline and decline push-ups, toe grabbing (without bending legs, sitting at the edge of the couch).

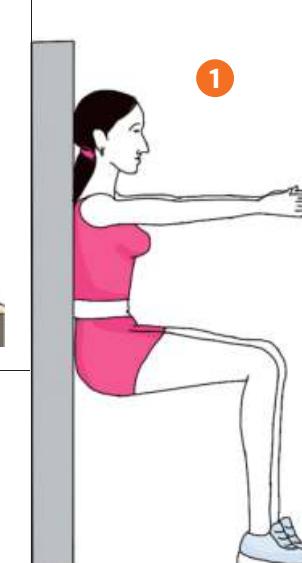
THE BED:
Suitable for restorative exercises like leg raises (pictured at right), legs up the wall, seated forward bend, reclining bound angle pose.



STAIRCASE:
Suitable for the step up, calf raises (pictured below), running up and walking down (make sure you walk down, or else you may get injured; alternate with walking up and walking down).



• ILLUSTRATIONS: SREEJITH R KUMAR



THE WALL:
Suitable for wall sits (1), wall plank (2), standing push-ups.

Score on yoga

Done on its own, the *surya namaskar* works as an exercise for the whole body, and can work to strengthen (if done slowly), build flexibility, endurance (if done repeatedly and gradually increased in number according to individual fitness levels), and cardio-vascular fitness (if poses are done in quick succession to get the heart rate up).

Take micro fitness breaks

By definition, a micro break is a burst of high-intensity activity for 2-10 minutes, depending on the time you have and your fitness level. "Set an alarm every hour, or else you will forget," says Shiba.

Pick any body weight exercise or simply do a series of stretches, especially the chest, back, neck, and glutes that are affected by prolonged screen time. "Tadasana is also a good pose," says Shiba, who advises people to hold stretches for between 12 and 20 seconds each, breathing through it all.

Do remember

Use a mat, the grass, a wooden floor, or mud to exercise, and not the cement floor.

Catch the morning sun on your balcony for 40 minutes while you exercise, to get your vitamin D exposure too.

Avoid exercises you're unfamiliar with, especially if you have a problem with balance, because you don't want to be in a situation where you need to go to the hospital.

Get other people to move

Whether it's elderly parents or screen-grabbed kids, exercising with them, while maintaining a distance of three feet, helps. This is important if someone has a medical condition that needs special attention: diabetes or hypertension, for instance. "People can walk for about 20 minutes just outside their houses, with recommended precautions," says Dr. K.K. Aggarwal, President, Heart Care Foundation of India.

He also suggests playing table tennis, which again keeps people at a distance while giving them a time to bond.

"Anyone who can walk 500 metres in six minutes can do any type of regular exercise, so walking up the steps is fine too," he says, adding that it's best to keep grandchildren apart from grandparents, as the former can have an asymptomatic infection that can affect the latter.

WHAT IS IT?

Cleaning, disinfecting, sterilising

SUSAN JOE PHILIP

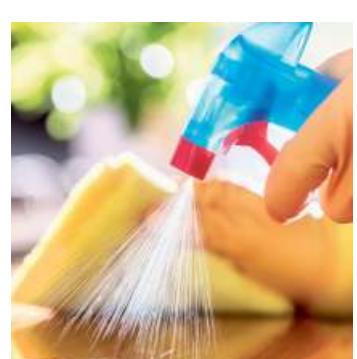
During the corona pandemic, much has been spoken about personal hygiene, with the words cleaning, disinfecting, and sterilising used interchangeably.

First, cleaning. Cleaning is the removal of any visible particle, ranging from dust to fallen food. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) describes it as, "The removal of foreign materials (soil and organic material) from objects and is normally accomplished using water with detergents or enzymatic products." This is also the first step to disinfection and sterilisation.

"It is enough to clean our houses as we always did, if there are no family members who are infected. But this process does not kill the bacteria or virus; it instead reduces its percentage on the surface," says Dr. Vinay D., Consultant and Head, Department of Infectious Diseases, Apollo Hospital, Bengaluru. "If there are any people who are infected with the coronavirus, we should disinfect the common areas and the surfaces touched by the person, to avoid its spread."

Disinfection helps us kill germs with the use of chemicals. "This can be done with bleach, chlorine or any alcohol-based product available in the market. But this process can still leave stink behind vegetative spores on the surface."

Some common areas that have to be disinfected are doorknobs, light switches, counter tops, tables, handles, taps, toilets, and electronic devices. "Check if the product says disinfectant in its label and make sure it has not passed its expiry date. Follow the manufacturer's instructions for its application. It is best to wear



• GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCK

Safe, but soft

With the incessant — but necessary — washing and sanitising of our hands these couple of months, make sure they don't get too dry

SWETA AKUNDI

Wash your hands. We can't stress that enough in the light of COVID-19. Doctors have recommended that you wash for 20 seconds with soap and water or use sanitisers with 70% alcohol, which is a known drying agent. It's not just a cosmetic feel-good factor. Trapping moisture in the skin is necessary to prevent cracks, which in turn can attract infection. Here's how to lock the moisture in, right after you wash.

Basic hand care

Almond oil, olive oil, coconut oil all work, says Chennai-based dermatologist Dr Deepika Lunawat. However, sesame seed oil is not suitable for sensitive skin, says Dr. Jaishree Sharad, founder of Mumbai-based Skininiti.

She also suggests the use of aloe vera. "Pluck aloe vera leaves and extract the

sap out of them to apply on your palms," she says. This is also the time when we are cooking more than usual. "Before cooking, first apply a few drops of ghee on your palms to prevent damage from acidic vegetables that we cut, like onions, potatoes, and tomatoes," she says.

Palm care routines

Soak hands in water for 15 minutes, and then apply 2-3 drops of coconut, olive, or almond oil. Wrap hands in baking

DON'T FORGET THE BACK

Shahnaz Husain reminds us that it is the back of the hands that is prone to early wrinkling, and shares her moisturising technique. Apply the cream on the back of the hand. Work down each finger, starting from the tip. Use tiny circular movements on the joints of the fingers. Massage the back of the hand, using strokes moving from the fingers towards the wrist. Massage the cream on the nails and the skin around the nails too.



In this column, we demystify the buzzwords in wellness

Sealing in the moisture,
so hands don't get cracked and infection-prone • GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCK

HANDY GUIDE

Shahnaz Husain gives us recipes for soft hands

DAILY: For very dry hands and nails, mix together one tablespoon almond oil, one tablespoon sesame seed oil, one teaspoon wheatgerm oil. Apply daily and massage it onto the skin.

DAILY IN THE EVENING: Add one teaspoon pure glycerine to 50 ml of rose water. Keep in an airtight bottle in the fridge. Apply on the hands and leave on for half an hour. Then, wash it off with plain water.

THREE A WEEK: Mix into a paste 2 tablespoons sunflower oil, 2 tablespoons lemon juice and 3 tablespoons coarse sugar. Apply and rub into hands. Wash off after 15 minutes.

gloves for 15 minutes and wash off with plain water, suggests Chennai-based dermatologist Dr. Renita Rajan.

For an overnight routine, she suggests applying a drop of your moisturiser, and wearing a pair of socks over your hands. If you can't do it all night, try it for an hour. This will increase absorption. Avoid this if you have sweaty palms, as it will increase irritation.

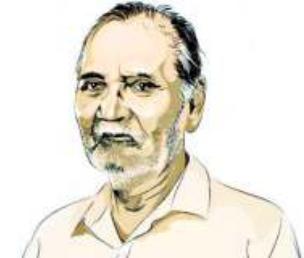
While you are watching a movie, run *malai* (top of the milk cream) on your palms for 10 minutes, and rinse under water, says Dr Sharad. "Milk cream is a good hydrating agent and rebuilds lost skin cells."

If the skin on your palms is scaling due to excessive dryness, or has developed cuts, apply turmeric as it is an antiseptic, and clean it with coconut or almond oil instead of washing it," she adds. Finally, keep yourself hydrated, Dr. Lunawat reminds us.

DOWN MEMORY LANE

Meet the royal ghost of Delhi

Spooky tales of the city, to keep you entertained through the long days and nights of the lockdown



R. V. SMITH



To past greatness Mystic lore says that those who died for a good cause, retained their youth in the other life

■ THE HINDU ARCHIVES

You might almost think you were back in Biblical times, confided a friend on a visit to the parks in the Jama Masjid area late at night some 20 years ago. At least he did, when he wandered into one of them. The roar of traffic had ceased at that time, and because of the mist, the electric lights were dim enough to lend an air of other-worldliness to the scene. Spread out on the grass and on the boundary walls of the parks were huge nets under which reclined groups of fishermen, while their meal was being cooked over a fire under a tree.

There was little that was modern in their manner of dress, and with their rough beards, they could very well have passed off as ordinary fisherfolk at the time of Christ, when Peter and the sons of Zebedee cast their nets into the Sea of Galilee.

Walking up to them, the friend found their talk interesting enough to make him loiter longer than he intended; much of the conversation was about the Jamuna. They spoke of the river fondly, as men who knew its every mood, the shallows and the deeps. There were apparently certain stretches which they avoided and it was about what happened on a

forbidden stretch that they were talking.

Phanne Khan, who was hardly 20 years old, and his equally young friends, had cast their net there that day. Soon they appeared to have made a good catch, for the net was heavy. But when they started pulling it out, it seemed as though they were pulling in the serpent who they believed lived in the deep.

The boat was about to capsize with Moosa Khan from another boat asked them to cut the net. They did that, and blood flowed on the water.

It was hard to believe, but looking at their earnest faces in the darkness, the friend did not feel like doubting their story. By the time the tale ended the nets had been mended and the meal was ready. The friend's appetite for stories was however, not satisfied.

So on another dark night, he made his way to the shrine of Bhure Shah, which stands in the shadow of the Red Fort, and joined a motley group in a discussion of things ancient and

long since forgotten.

The sweet aroma of agarbatti, a flickering hurricane lantern, and weird shadows all contrived to push the senses into a willing suspension of reality. The conversation for the most part bordered on the supernatural and the uncanny and everybody had his share of yarns – the jinns who buy sweetsmeats every night, the headless Englishman who haunts an unfrequented road, the banshee who wails under the stars, Sayid Baba who dispenses strange gifts to his devotees, and the ghosts of little children who seduce passers-by and beg to be carried.

A chink in the ghostly narration gave an opportunity to ask what the royal ghosts of Delhi were like? A silence fell over the assembly and the friend was almost in despair for having broached the subject, when, to his great relief, a bearded man named a whole posse of royal personages who visited their one-time abodes to convince themselves that "all was well".

Every Thursday night, he assured, a ghostly procession led by the last king, Bahadurshah Zafar, and his beautiful consort, went round the fort.

The friends asked what the emperor and empress looked like. There was an embarrassing silence which was broken again by the bearded intermediary. According to mystic lore, all those who died for a good cause retained their youth in the other life, he pointed out, and the two Mughals were no exceptions.

The emperor was a little above middle height, with broad shoulders, usually long arms, and rather short legs. The empress was tall like the letter Alif, as graceful as a cypress tree, with long raven-coloured hair. She had a narrow waist and short feet fitted in sandals adorned with pearls, which glittered in the moonlight.

He always wore loose pyjamas and she was invariably spotted in a long gold-laced ghara, with a golden cummerbund, which reached almost to the ground, and rustled in the breeze. The narrations continued until a police whistle reminded the friend that it was time to go.

The writer is a veteran chronicler of Delhi

POOCH CAFE



HAGAR THE HORRIBLE



TIGER



WUMO



PEARLS BEFORE SWINE



#PreBuyLocal can be everybody's mantra

With the lockdown, it's businesses in the informal sector that are suffering the most, but by extending credit, we can help out

#prebuylocal



SUNALINI MATHEW

"So in the blink of an eye, s**t got real," read the No Nasties newsletter this week. It goes on to tell the reader of how the organic- and Fairtrade-certified clothing brand founded in 2011 is taking a hit, with B2B clients in the travel industry halting orders, their Goa store shut, and online sales dwindling. It tells us that though they're a small business with just six people, "We can continue to

Taking the cue, Apurva felt he had much to be grateful for himself. "I have a home, and no matter what, I'll have food on the table, between family and friends," he says. So despite the stress and anxiety of almost no business right now, he says he put things in perspective for himself. "There are those that don't have that kind of savings –

Look out for each other Pay online so small businesses get the benefit of immediate cash ■ NO NASTIES AND SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

pay salaries and meet expenses for a few months." Unfortunately, it's "the vegetable guy at the corner, the friendly waiter at my favourite restaurant, our Ayurvedic massage guy and his 2 little kids" who are the worst off.

The solution? #PreBuyLocal, an initiative that founder Apurva Kothari heard of first from Toronto-based FreshBooks, a cloud invoicing and accounting solution for small businesses.

The concept involves an extension of credit: paying people before they deliver the goods or services – like paying your local vegetable vendor or personal trainer in the gym a few thousand rupees for future purchases.

Apurva felt he had much to be grateful for himself. "I have a home, and no matter what, I'll have food on the table, between family and friends," he says. So despite the stress and anxiety of almost no business right now, he says he put things in perspective for himself. "There are those that don't have that kind of savings –

they must be so petrified." He has prepaid his masseur who has two children to support and cannot go back to his home state of Kerala.

So if you have a favourite local brand that may not be able to pay employees, offer help for future goods or services.

Torani, for instance, has put out an appeal to help its almost-two-year-old brand, so it can pay its embroiderers, tailors, finishers, and even its *chaiwala*. You could also consider booking clothes or accessories to be delivered once business resumes (pay by card so they receive the money rather than doing a COD), or even asking your favourite restaurant if you can preorder a meal to be redeemed later, much like a gift card works.

Last Forest that connects communities with customers, has sent out an email to its subscribers, detailing the process of buying a gift card.

Sonica Sarna, who works with 40 artisan communities to produce Global Organic Textile Standard (GOTS) certified textiles for

international markets, says she supports the No Nasties initiative on Instagram. "My business model involves extending a 50% advance to the artisans anyway, otherwise they won't be able to deliver, so this is a natural extension," she says, adding that many don't have savings.

As sustainable clothing brand Upasana in Auroville, which was also inspired by No Nasties to put out the #PreBuyLocal message, said across a few Instagram posts: it's also about understanding collective healing, community and connection.

If you have a favourite local brand that may not be able to pay employees, offer help for future goods or services

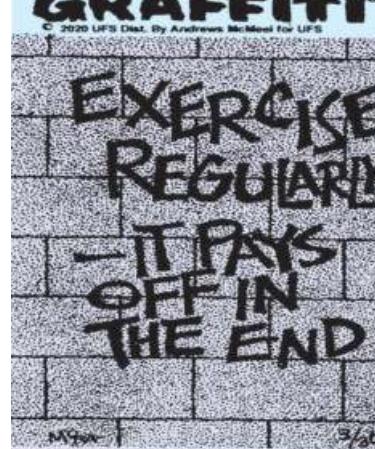
PEANUTS



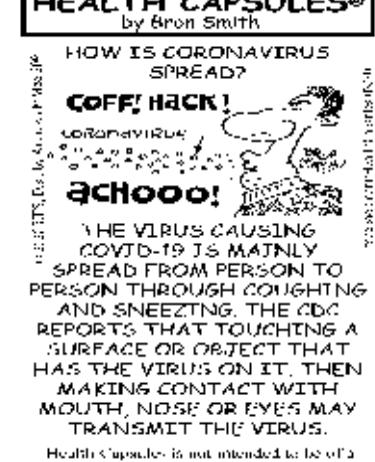
CALVIN AND HOBBES



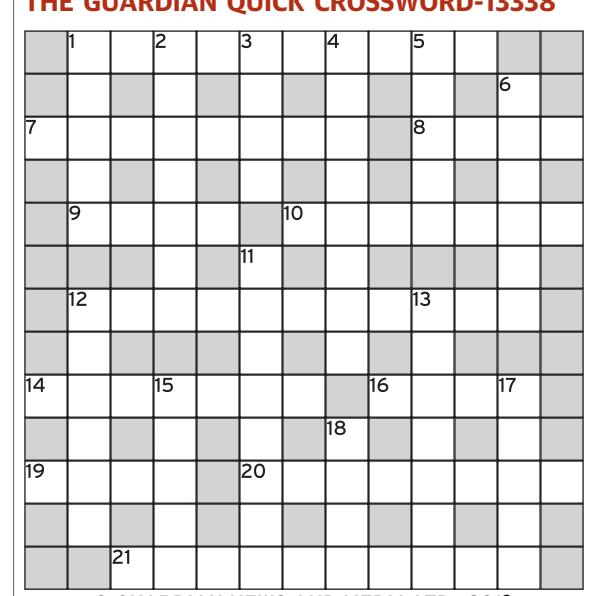
GRAFFITI



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THE GUARDIAN QUICK CROSSWORD-13338



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

- option (4,4)
12 Bony structure at the base of the spine (6)
13 Currently away from work (2,5)
15 Adherent of an eastern religion (5)
17 Dried or smoked pig meat (5)
18 Source – germ (4)

The solution will appear on March 31, 2020.

Solution No. 13337

- Across
1 \$ (6,4)
7 Bright reddish-brown colour (5,3)
8 Top (4)
9 Key point (4)
10 District frequented by vagrants and addicts in America (4,3)
12 Done as a formality only (11)
14 Rugby position (3,4)
15 Cry like a child (4)
16 Serious crime (6)
19 King of the jungle? (4)
■ Down
20 Pirate's facial attire (8)
21 Cranky oldster (10)
1 Architectural style of Ancient Greece (5)
2 Hard glossy coating (7)
3 Well ventilated (4)
4 Assistant to a more dominant person (informal) (8)
5 £1k (5)
6 Serious crime (6)
11 Bright headlight (4)



ANDREW

Cricket last thing on my mind at the moment, says Shastri

Advocates cultivating fighting spirit to overcome any adversity

VIJAY LOKAPALLY
NEW DELHI

"Stay indoors people. Crucial phase this. Only thing flying around the world like a tracer bullet is this bloody Corona (COVID-19). Stay in before the bugger gets you #IndiaFightsCorona." A tweet typical of the man!

Speaking to *The Hindu* from his home in Mumbai, India cricket coach Ravi Shastri said, "there is total gloom at the moment. The thing (virus) is flying everywhere. It would be foolish to talk about cricket in these times. It should be the last thing on your mind at the moment. Safety of the people is most important. Whatever precautions have to be taken should get priority, as said in no uncertain terms by the Prime Minister. We need to understand the gravity of the situation."

Known for his positive approach in cricket, Shastri said, "You have to be pretty

C The phase between 1982 and 1983, when I got a hundred in Pakistan (Karachi, 1983), and then on to 1992, I did literally everything

aggressive in your thinking that you can do the job. Failure should be the last thing on your mind. Don't think of failure, think instead 'I'm going to do it!' That's the mindset that allows you to do what you want to do, what you can do."

He recalled some challenging moments from his career to drive home the point. "The phase between 1982 and 1983, when I got a hundred in Pakistan (Karachi, 1983), and then on to 1992, I did literally everything. Went from No. 10 to No. 1 in the batting line-up. Batted in the top three. Got wickets. Tasted success at the 1983 World Cup, 1985 WCC, 1985

Rothmans Cup, Asia Cup. All because I remained positive. Playing with SMG (Gavaskar) and Jimmy (Mohinder Amarnath), I was like a sponge. Absorbing what I saw and heard. Keeping ears and eyes wide open," Shastri said.

Fighting fire

Shastri, who was never ever struck on the head during his career, also remembered some frightening spells. "The spell in Antigua (in 1983). Dilip (Vengsarkar) and Malcolm (Marshall) were

having a few exchanges just before the second new ball, towards the end of the day's play. Marshall was spitting fire. He hit Dilip on the helmet. I remember the helmet rolling almost to wicketkeeper Jeff Dujon. Marshall got him hooking. I was the non-striker. Marshall gave it everything," recalled Shastri.

On India's recent loss in New Zealand, Shastri was candid. "It was a cycle (of so much cricket). It was decided four years ago. We left India in May for the World Cup last year and finished in March this year. Most of the boys were home for just 15 days during those 10 months. There was so much that we went through. You could see towards the end – injuries, mental fatigue, but they hung in despite missing some key players. It was hard but the guys bit the bullet and soldiered on."

Expanding the mind

Catching up on lots of things at home now, Shastri counselled, "It's a good opportunity to expand your mindset. Read a lot, try different things. Basically, slow down the pace of your life. I have not had a break for 40 years. During this fight against the virus, I am not going to be negative. I know India as a nation will beat it. We have to be together in supporting the government," he said.



Catching up: Having been on the road for long, Ravi Shastri says now is a good opportunity to expand the mindset and slow down the pace of life. ■ GETTY IMAGES

Laxman's 281 among Chappell's all-time great knocks against spin

Says Doug Walters battered the tweakers into submission

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

MELBOURNE
Former Australia captain Ian Chappell has picked his two all-time favourite innings against high-quality spin bowling and one of those is V.S. Laxman's iconic 281 at the Eden Gardens in 2001.

Thanks to Laxman and Rahul Dravid (180), India went on to win the game against Australia after following-on.

"The absence of any cricket gives me an opportunity to reflect on an aspect of the game I enjoy: watching a batsman utilise good footwork to combat top-class spin bowling. Two innings stand out: one played by India's V.S. Laxman, the other by Doug Walters of Australia," Chappell wrote in a column for *ESPNcricinfo*.

In awe

Laxman and Dravid shared a marathon 376-run stand to engineer an unforgettable victory for India. Chappell was simply in awe of Laxman's batting as the wristy



Defining innings: Laxman consistently hit the ball along the ground in the Eden Gardens Test of 2001 against Australia and that was the clue to his success, says Chappell.

■ FILE PHOTO: V.V. KRISHNAN

Indian toyed with the likes of Shane Warne.

"Laxman's incredible 281 at Calcutta in 2001 is the best I've seen against top-class leg-spin. At the conclusion of that exhilarating series, I asked Shane Warne how he

thought he bowled.

"I don't think I bowled that badly," he replied. "You didn't," I responded.

"If Laxman comes three paces out of his crease and hits an unbelievable on-drive against the spin and you then

flight the next delivery a little higher and shorter to invite another drive and instead he quickly goes onto the back foot and pulls it, that's not bad bowling. That's good footwork.

"Laxman regularly did



Laxman's incredible 281 at Calcutta in 2001 is the best I've seen against top-class leg-spin

this during his 452-ball stay, in which he hit 44 boundaries. Therein lies a clue to Laxman's success: he consistently hit the ball along the ground," said Chappell, also praising Laxman's temperament.

C Walters was the best player of off-spin bowling I have seen; he didn't just survive against the very best, he occasionally battered them into submission

Talking about fellow Australian Walters, Chappell called him the best player against spin.

Quick runs

"Walters scored a Test century in a session three times. There are no complete records regarding this feat but I suspect only Sir Donald Bradman did it more often.

"Walters was the best player of off-spin bowling I have seen; he didn't just survive against the very best, he occasionally battered them into submission. He scored a sublime hundred on a Madras minefield in 1969, facing the off-spin wizardry of Erappalli Prasanna, clubbing 14 fours and two sixes in the process," said Chappell.

Signs suggest summer dates for 2021 Olympics

ASSOCIATED PRESS
TOKYO

Tokyo Olympic organisers seem to be leaning away from starting the rescheduled games in the spring of 2021. More and more the signs point toward the summer of 2021.

Organising committee president Yoshiro Mori suggested there would be no major change from 2020.

The games are meant to be in summer, so we should be thinking of a time between June and September, Japanese news agency Kyodo reported Mori saying on Saturday.

International Olympic Committee president Thomas Bach, after the postponement was announced in Switzerland on Tuesday, left open the possibility of spring dates.

Mori suggested some decisions could be made as early as this week when the

organising committee's executive board meets.

Any final decision will be made between local organisers and the IOC, and hundreds of sponsors, sports federations and broadcasters.

Athletes have been left in limbo by the postponement. Many have been forced to stop training because of the spreading coronavirus. Even those who can train have no idea about how to schedule training to reach peak fitness at the right time.

Enormous cost

Mori and organising committee CEO Toshiro Mutō have both said the added cost of rescheduling will be enormous. Early estimates put those costs at between \$2-3 billion with the several levels of Japanese governments likely to foot most of the bills.

The day you wish it was, and isn't

When the IPL didn't start and Dhoni didn't take strike



Missing out: Fans were not able to watch a scene akin to this on Sunday because of the coronavirus pandemic affecting the scheduled start of the IPL. ■ FILE PHOTO: R. RAGU

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI
In an ideal world, crowds in Mumbai would have been the last year with CSK's 'Dad's Army', with a lot of players like Suresh Raina, Harbhajan Singh, Shane Watson unlikely to feature in yellow next year.

This was probably Dhoni's chance to get back into the groove and show the world why Rishabh Pant and K.L. Rahul can still be asked to wait for one more global tournament.

If the IPL doesn't happen, and the World T20 is held this year (subject to normalcy), will we see Dhoni in India blues again? His fans may not like it, but the likes of Sunil Gavaskar, Virender Sehwag and Kapil Dev believe he won't – not without reason.

You will miss Virat Kohli's agony and ecstasy with Royal Challengers Bangalore.

The capacity crowd at Eden Gardens would have screamed its lungs out. Some for the players, and

COVID-AID

Asian Para Games champion Sharad Kumar gives ₹1 lakh

NEW DELHI

Double Asian Para Games high jump champion Sharad Kumar has donated ₹1 lakh to the PM CARES Fund for the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic. Kumar won a gold in the high jump T42 category in the 2014 Asian Para Games before climbing the top of the podium again in 2018 in Jakarta, Indonesia in T42/

KSCA and HCA also chip in with contributions
BENGALURU
The Karnataka State Cricket Association (KSCA) has contributed ₹50 lakh each to the Prime Minister's Citizen Assistance and Relief in Emergency Situations (CARES) Fund and the Karnataka Chief Minister Relief Fund COVID-19, the KSCA announced on Sunday.

"The outbreak of the coronavirus is first and foremost a public health emergency, and the KSCA is firm to support and assist in this regard," said KSCA treasurer Vinay Mruthyunjaya. The Hyderabad Cricket Association is also contributing ₹50 lakh to the Prime Minister's fund. "With the world going through a tough time because of the virus, we feel it is our minimum responsibility to chip in our own little way for the Fund. The amount will be directly deducted from the BCCI annual subsidy," said HCA secretary R. Vijayanand.

Ajinkya Rahane pledges ₹10 lakh

MUMBAI

India's Test team vice-captain Ajinkya Rahane has donated ₹10 lakh to the Maharashtra Chief Minister's Relief Fund for the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic.

Teenaged cricketer Richa Ghosh donates ₹1 lakh
KOLKATA
Sixteen-year-old all-rounder Richa Ghosh, who represented India in the women's T20 World Cup, has donated ₹1 lakh to the Bengal Chief Minister's relief fund for the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic. PTI

COVID-19 IMPACT

CA defers announcement of contract list

MELBOURNE

The announcement of Cricket Australia's players contract list has been deferred by at least a month. According to a report in *Sydney Morning Herald*, CA had "planned to bring forward the announcement of contracts from May to April this year, in a bid to provide more certainty to the states given the flow-on effect." PTI



63 category. He is also a 2017 IPC World Championships silver medallist.

Juventus, Ronaldo agree to forgo €90m in wages

ROME

Cristiano Ronaldo and his Juventus teammates along with coach Maurizio Sarri have agreed to forgo €90 million in wages to help the club during the coronavirus crisis.



Heather Knight joins NHS as a volunteer

LONDON

England women's cricket team captain Heather Knight has joined the National Health Service (NHS) as volunteer to help the healthcare system fight the pandemic in the United Kingdom. The 29-year-old will help in transporting medicines and spreading awareness about the pandemic.

"My brother and his partner are doctors. I signed up to

the NHS' volunteer scheme as I have a lot of free time on my hands and I want to help as much as I can," Knight wrote in her column for BBC. AFP



Squash great Azam Khan dies of coronavirus
KARACHI
Pakistani squash great Azam Khan, 95, died of coronavirus at London's Ealing Hospital on Saturday, his family has said. Azam, younger brother of the legendary Hashim Khan, won the British Open title successively between 1959 and 1961. PTI

ICC lauds Joginder Sharma

NEW DELHI

The International Cricket Council (ICC) has hailed India's cricketer-turned cop Joginder Sharma for doing his bit in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic. Joginder is a DSP in Haryana Police. "In his post-cricket career as a policeman, India's Joginder Sharma is among those doing their bit amid a global health crisis," the ICC tweeted along with Joginder's photos as a cricketer and cop. PTI



The 36-year-old played four ODIs and as many T20s between 2004 and 2007. He



joined the police service after retirement from the game. PTI

Using break to sharpen skills: Vihari

Hopes that county cricket and Australia tour aren't affected

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI
Confined to his home due to the nationwide lockdown, India cricketer Hanuma Vihari says he will use the time to "sharpen" his skills for the Australian tour, scheduled towards the end of the year.

"I am going to use this time to focus on my fitness, sharpen my skills for county cricket as well as for the Australia tour in late 2020," Vihari, who was part of India's last tour of New Zealand, was quoted as saying by 'ESPNcricinfo'.

Though there is a lot of uncertainty over when sport will resume, the middle-order batsman said he has his "fingers crossed".

Fingers crossed

"Mentally, I am trying hard to keep myself positive and busy. My challenge is: there

C Mentally, I am trying hard to keep myself positive and busy

is no cricket for the next three to four months.

"I do have a summer to look forward to, having signed up with a team in the English County Championship, where my contract starts from late August. Fingers crossed about that."

Vihari added that this forced break will ensure he is home for his first marriage anniversary, which might not have been the case otherwise, thanks to a busy cricket calendar.

"One good thing that will come out of this break is: I will be able to celebrate my first wedding anniversary with my wife on May 19."

"In normal circumstances I might have been busy with cricket. So at least one per-

son is not complaining too much!"

2005 Ashes

With nothing much to do at home, he said he has been repeatedly watching clippings of the 2005 Ashes.

"A few days into this enforced break because of the pandemic, I have begun to realise all the implications: I cannot go out, meet friends or do anything, pretty much. But that is the need of the hour – you have to isolate yourself and make sure things settle down."

"I know boredom will set in easily, but I have a solution for that: watching the 2005 Ashes on video. It is my favourite. I have lost count of how many times I have watched it. Also, I have been planning on taking up yoga. It's something I have thought of doing for a year, in fact."



Silver lining: Hanuma Vihari is planning to take up yoga and keep himself in shape during this extended break. ■ AFP

Virus outbreak stalls Yashasvi's dreams

The teenager had started preparing for his maiden IPL with Rajasthan Royals

WRIDDHAAYAN BHATTACHARYYA CHENNAI

Yashasvi Jaiswal is used to hardships. He lived in a tent, did odd jobs and even sold *pani puri* for a living.

The 21-day lockdown in India due to the Coronavirus pandemic may not be as tough as the thought of not playing the Indian Premier League.

The teenager had a splendid ICC U-19 World Cup in South Africa and he had started preparing for his maiden IPL for Rajasthan Royals but the COVID-19 outbreak stands in front of his dreams.

Safety is important

Hailing from Mumbai, which has recorded five deaths so far due to the virus, it may take a long time for Jaiswal – bought by Royals for ₹2.40



Yashasvi Jaiswal.
■ FILE PHOTO: SUDHAKARA JAIN

crore – to hit the nets. "This is the situation now and I have to deal with it. IPL would be ideal for me, but as of now it is important to remain safe. I want to improve my game in these times."

"I am very motivated. Cricket is my dream and I will keep pursuing it till the

day I can. In life, you won't get what you should get every time," Jaiswal told *Sportstar*.

Warm welcome at Royals

The closest that the left-hander could get to the cash-rich league was the Royals' camp in Nagpur earlier this month. "It was a great feeling to be in the camp. The Royals' family really gave me a warm welcome. It was great to meet Zubin Bharucha [Head of Cricket] at Royals."

"I had good practice sessions. IPL is all about playing in different conditions and on different wickets. Zubin Sir told me a lot of things," said Jaiswal, the leading run-scorer (400 runs) at the U-19 World Cup.

However, he is not complacent. Life hasn't changed much post the showpiece

event. "I got a good start in U-19, but now I have to keep working to do even better so that I can play at the highest level."

"I am doing whatever I can do at home. I am doing my fitness drills and I am trying to remain spirited by constantly talking to my coach, Jwala Singh."

"Now I have time to play with my little sister, which is a great thing," he added.

As of now, Jaiswal's worry lies in buying essentials.

"It is really difficult for all of us to get food essentials. Nobody wants to take the risk because anyone can catch the virus."

IPL is doubtful but Jaiswal's intent is clear.

He has already started visualising the Jasprit Bumrah yorkers, tackling them in his head.

Olympic flame to be kept in Tokyo

IANS TOKYO

The Olympic flame will be displayed in Fukushima for a month before being kept in Tokyo, local reports said on Sunday.

On display

Japanese broadcaster NHK said that the flame, which arrived in Japan from Athens on March 20, will be on display in J-Village, Fukushima from April, according to a report in the Xinhua news agency.

"The show will be managed carefully to avoid coronavirus spread," the report said.

"It would be suspended should there be a big crowd."



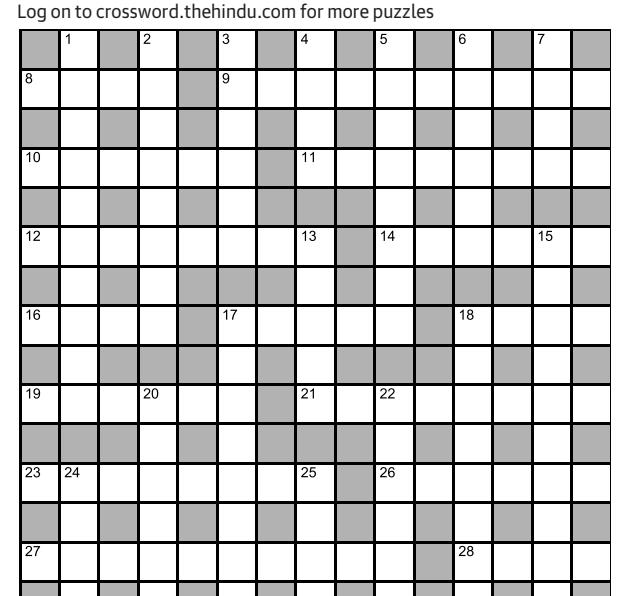
The Olympic flame in Fukushima. ■ AP

The flame will be brought back to Tokyo, but Tokyo 2020 organisers

have not decided where to keep it before the torch relay starts next year.

THE HINDU CROSSWORD 12896

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ACROSS

- 8 Honey changes direction for getting agreement (4)
- 9 The police flew by Queen's chopper (10)
- 10 Quarrel and put sub in reverse (4-2)
- 11 Unqualified sailors receive circular letter with instrument (8)

(set by Incognito)

- 12 Idol loft renovated and saturated with light (8)
- 14 Old boy gets egg first for musician (6)
- 16 Cast changed for parts of play (4)
- 17 Scare several army-men to some extent (5)
- 18 Utter, "Father takes final glance" (4)
- 19 Green prune diced around one (6)
- 21 Slap Rosa violently for getting umbrellas (8)
- 23 "Rescue assistance? He's being chased by leaders of Labour Party/Left in England" (8)
- 26 Chinese city produces lustrous material (6)
- 27 Assassin following father at home gets aspirin? (10)
- 28 Light meal for engineer having sex appeal (4)
- 1 About the barman... He's an American party man (10)
- 2 Chinese force caricatures army units (8)
- 18 Sketch of French author (8)
- 20 Threaten Devil and quit (6)
- 22 Group of people get money for sprinters (6)
- 24 Tail-less animal's dash (4)
- 25 Creatures found in Lake Elsinore (4)

SUDOKU

3	8				7		9	
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	5				7	6		
3	8					1		
2	7	6						
9	5				1	2		

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★★★

Solution to puzzle 12895

Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

J	M	A	P	D	R	V
D	I	V	E	B	L	N
L	A	O	T	S	M	D
C	L	A	O	T	S	M
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G	E	R	L			
K	I	N	D	R	P	I
R	E	T	A	I	F	L
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FAITH

Mahabali keeps his word

When Lord Mahavishnu took the Vamana avatara and asked Mahabali for land as daana, Mahabali's guru Sukracharya saw through the Lord's disguise. The Lord wanted land to be measured with three steps of His feet. But Sukracharya could guess that there was trouble ahead for Mahabali. As a guru, it was his duty to warn the king. Kambaran in his Ramayana records the warnings of Sukracharya in a beautiful verse.

Sukracharya tells Mahabali not to trust Vamana. He may be short, but He was the One who kept the universe in His stomach during the deluge, says Sukracharya. He warns Mahabali that if he gives what Vamana wants, he will eventually be left with nothing. If Mahabali were to abide by Sukracharya's advice, he would have to break his promise to Vamana, and he would be guilty of lying. The Sastras suggest that a lie is justified under certain circumstances, elaborated M.A. Venkatakrishnan, in a discourse. If a man's life is in danger, it is all right to tell a lie to save himself. If a man's earnings are under threat, he can tell a lie to save his property. If the life of a devotee of the Lord is in danger, he can tell a lie. Sukracharya knew that Mahabali would lose everything he possessed, if he heeded Vamana's request. So, to break his word would be a permissible lie.

As against all this, however, the Sastras also say it is a sin to stop a man from giving to another. If a man stops another's daana, his entire family will suffer without food. Mahabali pointed this out to Sukracharya and picked up the vessel of water, for the daana would be complete only with the pouring of water. Sukracharya took the form of a bee and blocked the spout of the vessel. The Lord pricked one of his eyes with a blade of grass.

Smith's leadership ban ends

The master batsman is free to be Australia skipper again

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE SYDNEY

A two-year leadership ban slapped on Steve Smith after the ball-tampering scandal in South Africa ended on Sunday, leaving the master batsman free to skipper Australia again.

The 30-year-old captained the team until he was suspended for 12 months over a brazen attempt to alter the ball with sandpaper during a Test in Cape Town in 2018.

Part of his punishment included a further year-long exile from any leadership role, which has now expired. Co-conspirator and former vice-captain David Warner was banned from any leadership role for life.



Steve Smith. ■ AP

intent on playing on.

Coach Justin Langer last year praised Paine's leadership as "brilliant", and said Smith may not want the "burden" of captaincy on top of batting pressures.

Aaron Finch is the skipper of the T20 and ODI teams.

Focus on staying fit

Smith told Channel Nine television he was focused only on trying to stay physically and mentally fit during the coronavirus shutdown of Australian cricket.

He was supposed to be preparing for a big-money payday at IPL, but the tournament has already been delayed until April 15 in response to the pandemic.

With India in a three-week lockdown in a bid to contain a spread of the virus, Smith admitted IPL-13 appeared unlikely to go ahead.

may not be easy. After he withdrew, FIDE invited Maxime Vachier-Lagrave of France.

If Radjabov were to be included in the field, he would have to play all eight participants and only after that the second half of this round-robin tournament could be conducted," Mumbai-based Grandmaster Pravin Thipsay told *The Hindu*.

"I don't think FIDE could be blamed entirely for the situation."

"Things weren't this bad when the tournament started. Nevertheless, I feel FIDE should compensate Radjabov financially."

The Azerbaijan national team, comprising five GMs, has also come out in support of Radjabov through an open letter to FIDE, demanding that he be reinstated in the World championship qualifying cycle.

providing her parents with water and snacks as well as inspirational music.

Allin said he planned to organise a "bigger, global and more inclusive run next" where people who are under lockdown but keen to stretch their legs can join for a few kilometres or more.

"This is about giving people something else to think about," Allin told AFP.

Air quality improves in over 90 cities

Lockdown has reduced vehicular traffic across the country, leading to a drop in PM2.5, NO_x levels

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI
With a nationwide lockdown in place, over 90 cities, including Delhi, recorded minimal air pollution in the last few days.

Welcoming the reduction in pollution, environmentalists urged the government to treat it as a "wake-up call" and stop its "obsession" with "development" at the cost of the environment.

India is currently under the biggest lockdown with around 130 crore people asked to stay home in view of the COVID-19 outbreak.

The government has urged people to avoid unnecessary travel, significantly reducing the traffic movement across the country.

According to the Centre-run System of Air Quality and Weather Forecasting and Research (SAFAR), the measures against COVID-19 have led to a drop in PM2.5



Breathing well: NO_x pollution levels have dropped by 38% in Mumbai. ■ PTI

(fine particulate pollutant) by 30% in Delhi and by 15% in Ahmedabad and Pune, respectively.

The level of Nitrogen Oxide (NO_x) pollution, which can increase the risk of respiratory conditions, has also reduced. NO_x pollution is mainly caused due to a high motor vehicle traffic. In Pune, NO_x pollution has reduced by 43%, in Mumbai,

by 38% and in Ahmedabad, by 50%.

Gufran Beig, a scientist at SAFAR, said generally in March, pollution is in the "moderate" category (Air Quality Index range: 100-200) while currently, it is in the "satisfactory" (AQI 50-100) or "good" (AQI 0-50) category. "It is the lockdown impact. Local factors like shutting down of industries

and construction and traffic have contributed in improving the air quality. Rain is also helping, but the curbs on local emissions are playing a significant role," he said.

Under the "good" category, pollution is considered to be at the lowest and the air is believed to be the healthiest to breathe.

COVID-19

According to the data of the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB), the air quality in the national capital is presently in the "good" category. In Kanpur, which has high pollution levels, it is in the "satisfactory" category.

Moreover, 92 other cities with CPCB monitoring centres have recorded minimal air pollution, with the air quality in the range of "good" to "satisfactory".

As many as 39 cities have

recorded "good" air quality and 51 cities have recorded "satisfactory" air quality in the last few days, the CPCB data showed.

An AQI between 0-50 is considered good, 51-100 satisfactory, 101-200 moderate, 201-300 poor, 301-400 very poor and 401-500 severe.

Environmentalists believe that the reduced pollution levels should act as a wake-up call for the government.

Jyoti Pande Lavakare, co-founder, Care for Air NGO, said the low AQI and the blue skies proved beyond doubt that a lot of the polluted air was "anthropomorphic, that is, man-made".

"Slowing down the economy to such a degree is not the ideal way to bring down air pollution, but it proves that it can be done.

We can achieve the same outcome by doing this mindfully, using technology and low-emission alternatives," she said.

Arjun Dev: a legendary historian passes away

He co-wrote some of the extremely popular NCERT books

ADITYA MUKHERJEE
MRIDULA MUKHERJEE

Professor Arjun Dev, the legendary educationist and historian, a kind, gentle and generous but extremely brave man, passed away today morning at a hospital near his home in Noida. Born on November 12, 1938 in Lehal, West Punjab (now in Pakistan), he did his schooling in Ambala and then studied at Kirori Mal College, Delhi University. He is survived by his wife Indira Arjun Dev with whom he shared every aspect of his professional life.



1938 - 2020

would replace the ones that had continued from colonial times with their colonial and communal bias.

Environmentalists believe that the reduced pollution levels should act as a wake-up call for the government.

Within the NCERT, the Bharatiya Janata Party, beginning with the Vajpayee government in 1999-2004, made massive efforts to replace the textbooks written by the country's most renowned scholars with texts by unknown scholars toeing the Hindutva line. Prof. Arjun spearheaded the determined struggle against these efforts but, alas, could not stop them in the end. The New York Times of October 18, 2002, quoted Prof. Arjun Dev's criticism of this "assault on history" which would promote a "version of the past [which] is crucial to their political...ideology of Hindu supremacy. They will go to any lengths to achieve this, even put forth a fake invented past."

After retiring from the NCERT, Prof. Arjun took up another major enterprise, the Towards Freedom Project of the Indian Council of Historical Research. It was a project conceived as a re-

joinder to the British government-inspired *Transfer of Power Volumes* which documented the history of the last ten years of colonial rule in India in a manner that did scant justice to our great national liberation struggle. Started under the General Editorship of Prof. Sarvepalli Gopal, the first two volumes came out in 1997 and were published by the Oxford University Press. With the coming to power of the Vajpayee government, two volumes in the press were withdrawn and the project stalled. The project could be restarted only in 2005, and Prof. Arjun was the indefatigable coordinator of the project with Sabyasachi Bhattacharya as the General Editor.

Heart and soul

Prof. Arjun put his heart and soul into the project, and a large number of volumes were published, covering the period right up to 1947. Unfortunately, the second volume covering the year 1941, edited by Prof. Arjun Dev himself and the third volume, covering the year 1947, edited by Prof. Sucheta Mahajan, have yet not seen the light of day, even though they were sent to press several years ago. Prof. Arjun told an online publication, on August 27, 2017, "After the publication of the first two volumes, the BJP had realised that the documents related to the role of the Sangh Parivar will not do it any good. Many of these documents expose its nationalist pretensions and show the communal role played by the Sangh during the nationalist movement."

(The authors retired as Professors of History at JNU)

How COVID-19 testing kit was born in India

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

MUMBAI

Virologist Minal Dakhave Bhosale led from the front to create India's first coronavirus testing kit even when she was in the last stage of her pregnancy.

Ms. Bhosale's efforts paid off with her team delivering the testing kit in a record time of six weeks.

Ms. Bhosale gave birth to a baby girl just a day before submitting the kit to the authorities for evaluation.

"It was like giving birth to two babies," Ms. Bhosale told PTI over the phone.

"There were complications in the pregnancy while work on the test kit was on. The baby was delivered through cesarean," she said.

Ms. Bhosale said she felt that it was the right time to serve the people to help them in combating the coronavirus threat.

"I had been working for five years in this field and if I don't work in emergency situations when my services are needed the most, then what is the use?" she said.

Though Ms. Bhosale was not able to visit the office due to the pregnancy, she was guiding a team of 10 persons working on the project at Mylab Discovery in Pune.

Company's co-founder Shrikant Patole said just like drug discovery, test kits too go through a lot of quality checks to improve the precision.

He credited Ms. Bhosale for the success of the project.

Elephant gifted to U.S. in 1961 euthanised

71-year-old Ambika served as an 'Ambassador for her species' in Washington zoo

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

WASHINGTON

Ambika, a 72-year-old elephant which was gifted to the U.S. in 1961 on behalf of children of India, was "humanely euthanised" by veterinarians at a national zoo in Washington, officials said on Saturday.

Estimated to be the third oldest Asian elephant in the North American population, Ambika was euthanised at the Smithsonian National Zoo.

"Ambika truly was a giant among our conservation community," said Steven Monfort, John and Adrienne Mars Director, Smithsonian's National Zoo.

Born in India around 1948, Ambika was captured



Gentle giant: A file photo of Ambika strolling in the Smithsonian zoo in Washington. ■ NATIONALZOO.SI.EDU

Composer Penderecki dies at 86

ASSOCIATED PRESS

WARSAW

Krzysztof Penderecki, an award-winning conductor and one of the world's most popular contemporary classical music composers, whose works have featured in Hollywood films like *The Shining* and *Shutter Island*, died on Sunday. He was 86.

In a statement, the Ludwig van Beethoven Association said Mr. Penderecki had a "long and serious illness."

Mr. Penderecki was best known for his monumental compositions for orchestra and choir, like *St. Luke Passion* and *Seven Gates of Jerusalem*, though his range was much wider.

Salman to help 25,000 workers in film industry

Daily wage earners to be beneficiaries

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

MUMBAI

Actor Salman Khan has pledged to financially support 25,000 daily wage workers from the film industry in the wake of the national lockdown, according to Federation of Western Indian Cine Employees (FWICE).

The daily wage workers across different avenues are badly hit by the 21-day lockdown.

According to FWICE president B N Tiwari, Salman via his Being Human Foundation reached out to their organisation. "Salman's Being Human Foundation has come forward to help daily wage workers. They called



us three days ago. We have about 5 lakh workers, out of which 25,000 are in dire need of financial help. Being Human Foundation said they will take care of these workers on their own. They have asked for account details of these 25,000 workers," Mr. Tiwari said.

Himalayan Ibex a distinct species

They are divergent from Siberian Ibex, reveals a genetic study

SHIV SAHAY SINGH

KOLKATA

A recent study by scientists of the Zoological Survey of India (ZSI) has proved that Himalayan Ibex, distributed in the trans-Himalayan ranges of Jammu and Kashmir, Ladakh and Himachal Pradesh, is a distinct species from the Siberian Ibex.

The paper, 'Genetic evidence for allopatric speciation of the Siberian Ibex (*Capra sibirica*) in India,' has recently been published in *Endangered Species Research*, an international peer-reviewed journal.

Siberian Ibex is a species of wild goat and is distributed in diverse habitats, ranging from cold deserts, rocky outcrops, steep terrain, highland flats and mountain ridges to low mountains and foothills.

From Mongolia, its distribution extends towards Altai, Hangai, Gobi-Altai, the Huruk mountain ranges as well as Sayan Mountains



Himalayan Ibex in Lahul and Spiti, Himachal Pradesh.

near Russia and scattered populations in the small mountains of Trans-Altaïobi.

In Asia, Ibex is distributed in the Montane habitats, ranging in elevations from 500 m to 6,700 m in countries like India, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Mongolia, Pakistan, Southern Siberia and China. In India, the Ibex is distributed mainly in the trans-Himalayan ranges of the Union Territories of Ladakh and Jammu and Kashmir and Himachal Pradesh.

The genetic analysis conducted with the inclusion of the sequences available from all across the distribution up to the river Sutlej.

To unravel the complexity in species recognition of Indian Ibex, the researchers, under a project funded through the National Mission on Himalayan Studies implemented by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, undertook field surveys and collected faecal samples from Lahul and Spiti, Himachal Pradesh.

"The results of the genetic analysis surprisingly revealed that I-T clade (referred to as Siberian Ibex) was estimated to have diverged from Alpine Ibex during the Pleistocene epoch (2.4 million years ago) than the Siberian Ibex during the Miocene-Pliocene boundary (6.6 million years ago)," Mukesh Thakur, the lead author of the paper, said.

ranges in Central Asia, Tajikistan, Altai Mountains, Mongolia and Russia provided first evidence to claim that Himalayan Ibex is genetically different from all other ranges of Siberian Ibex. The samples collected from India clustered with the sequences from Tajikistan in a phylogenetic analysis, which were adequately different from the other two clades: KZ clade of Tajikistan (which broadly represents one of the clusters in the phylogeny) and AMR clade of Altai Mountains, Mongolia and Russia.

"The results of the genetic analysis surprisingly revealed that I-T clade (referred to as Siberian Ibex) was estimated to have diverged from Alpine Ibex during the Pleistocene epoch (2.4 million years ago) than the Siberian Ibex during the Miocene-Pliocene boundary (6.6 million years ago)," Mukesh Thakur, the lead author of the paper, said.

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