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DELHI
CITY EDITION
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Chhattisgarh CM Bhupesh Baghel blames Centre for crisis
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Set up ₹1 lakh cr. corpus for MSMEs, Jairam Ramesh tells govt.
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Industrial output grows 4.5% in Feb.; may plunge drastically in March
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British Prime Minister Boris Johnson's health improving
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NEARBY

3 deaths, 51 new cases reported in the Capital

NEW DELHI

Three deaths due to COVID-19 and 51 new cases were reported in Delhi on Thursday, pushing the toll to 12 and the total number of patients to 720, stated a daily health bulletin of the Delhi government. A total of 2,664 people are in different quarantine facilities, while around 18,500 people are home-quarantined.

CITY ▸ PAGE 3

Arrivals at Azadpur Mandi drop over 50%

NEW DELHI

The COVID-19 lockdown caused a 53% drop in the volume of major fruits and vegetables arriving at the Azadpur Mandi, according to an analysis of the market's arrivals data. Even for kitchen staples such as onions, potatoes and tomatoes, volumes are down over 40%. The Azadpur Mandi is Asia's biggest vegetable market and handles almost 50 lakh tonnes of produce every year.

CITY ▸ PAGE 3

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No significant rate of increase in COVID-19 positive cases: ICMR

Nationwide deaths at 169; Maharashtra toll climbs to 97 with 1,142 active cases

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) on Thursday said the country has maintained a steady rate of COVID-19 positive cases – 3% to 5% over the past month and half – and has registered no significant increase in this trend so far.

The country currently has 5,865 confirmed cases and 169 deaths. This includes 591 new cases and 20 deaths in the last 24 hours, Joint Secretary in the Union Health Ministry Lav Agrawal said at the daily press briefing. He added that 473 people had recovered and been discharged so far.

COVID-19

The ICMR noted that 1,44,910 samples from 1,30,792 individuals had been tested as on April 9. Of these, 5,734 samples tested positive till date. "Positivity rate ranges between 3%-5% with no major increase. On Wednesday, we tested 13,143 samples," said ICMR official Manoj Murhekar.

Plasma therapy

Dr. Murhekar added that the Council was in the final stages of drawing up a protocol for trial on convalescent plasma therapy, for which approvals have to be taken.

"In this therapy, plasma from a COVID-19 recovered patient is transfused into an infected severely ill patient so that the specific antibodies in the blood of the recovered patient can help fight the infection. This is done for very ill patients on ventilators and has given good results in some studies abroad," he said.

The nationwide death toll touched 205 on Thursday, State Health Departments reported. The number of active cases was 5,815. Maharashtra continued to report the maximum number of deaths, at 97, as well as active cases at 1,142. Tamil Nadu reported 799 active cases, with 96 new cases, while Delhi has 683 active cases with more three deaths since Wednesday.

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

Testing tales | Kerala has recorded relatively fewer confirmed cases despite a high testing rate for COVID-19, while Delhi leads all States/UTs. While Jharkhand and West Bengal have among the lowest testing rates, Maharashtra leads in total cases

CONFIRMED CASE COUNT IS AS OF 9 P.M. ON THURSDAY.

Study points to community transmission

There was evidence for community transmission from as early as March 22, as per a study authored by several ICMR scientists – including its head Balram Bhargava – and made public late Thursday. Of the 102 COVID-19 positive patients with severe respiratory illness, 40 did not report any history of contact or international travel, it says. ▸ PAGE 10

Ahmedabad adopts South Korean model

The Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation has adopted the South Korean model of aggressive testing to ascertain the scale of the pandemic. "On April 4, the number of samples tested from the city were 57 while on April 8, we tested 840 samples," Municipal Commissioner Vijay Nehra said. So far, 141 cases have been reported from Ahmedabad. ▸ PAGE 9

Odisha becomes first State to extend lockdown till April 30

Saving lives is topmost priority now, says CM Naveen Patnaik

PRAFULLA DAS
BHUBANESWAR

Odisha on Thursday extended the lockdown till April 30. Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik made the announcement after a Cabinet meeting held through videoconferencing.

He said one had to decide between protecting the lives of the people and economic activity at this crucial juncture, and the Cabinet decided that saving lives was the topmost priority now.

In a video message, Mr. Patnaik announced that the State would recommend to the Central government to extend the national lockdown up to April 30. "We will also request the Centre not to start airline and railway services till April 30." Educational institutions in the State would remain closed till June 17, he noted.

Help for those stranded

As regards the people from Odisha who are stranded in various parts of the country, Mr. Patnaik said his government's intervention for their well-being would be through the State governments concerned. "We will take care of all the people who are stranded in Odisha."

Activities related to agriculture, animal husbandry and MGNREGS would be facilitated during the lockdown period, he said. Food security was a major priority of the government. "There will not be any problem in transport of goods."

The government was leaving no stone unturned in scaling up testing and treatment facilities. "We propose to do one lakh rapid tests in the State in the earliest possible time," he said.

He thanked doctors from all over the country who had offered their services for the telemedicine helpline launched on Wednesday.

Reaching the people: Vendors selling vegetables from a bus stop in Bhubaneswar on Thursday. ▪ BISWARANJAN ROUT

'Final decision on April 11'

Punjab Chief Minister Amarinder Singh said a final decision on extending the lockdown would be taken on April 11 by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in consultation with all CMs. "My understanding is that stringent restrictions would need to be continued for some more time." ▸ PAGE 10

Paper doubted lockdown

A few scientists of the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), in a study in February, questioned the efficacy of a lockdown, saying that it could lead to "long-lasting adverse health outcomes". Instead, they favoured "civil society-led self-quarantine and self-monitoring". ▸ PAGE 8

₹15,000 crore sanctioned to States

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Centre on Thursday announced that ₹15,000 crore has been sanctioned to States under the India COVID-19 Emergency Response and Health System Preparedness Package.

The 100% Centrally-funded scheme will be utilised for immediate COVID-19 Emergency Response (₹7,774 crore) and rest for medium-term support (1-4 years). This is to be provided under a mission mode approach.

Announcing this, the Union Health Ministry noted that the key objectives of the package include mounting emergency response to slow and limit COVID-19 through the development of diagnostics and dedicated treatment facilities.

CONTINUED ON ▸ PAGE 8

2 cardiac patients test positive at premier Delhi hospital

Six healthcare staff, one doctor and five nurses quarantined

NIKHIL M BABU
NEW DELHI

Two persons, admitted to the East Block of Max Hospital, Saket with cardiac problems and later shifted to Max Smart Super Speciality Hospital after the former was turned into a dedicated COVID-19 treatment facility, tested positive for the virus on Thursday.

"Two patients admitted to Max Hospital, Saket, for cardiac problems have tested positive for COVID-19 this morning [Thursday]. The patients, who were admitted at Max Smart hospital, have been moved back to Max Hospital, Saket, East Block, which is a dedicated COVID-19 facility. The contact tracing for these two persons has started and we propose to test the primary contacts immediately. All those presently identified as 'in contact' have been quarantined, awaiting their test results, which are expected by Friday," a hospital spokesperson said. The functioning of both the hospitals, which are on the same road separated by an empty plot, has not been affected as the two persons were kept in isolation, the spokesperson said.

Patients not related

The two patients are unrelated and were admitted 10 days ago at the East Block of the hospital. They were then moved to Max Smart hospital. "There is no chance that they would have contracted the virus from COVID-19-positive patients at the East Block, as such patients were kept in isolation wards," the hospital spokesperson told *The Hindu*.

Six healthcare staff, one doctor and five nurses have been quarantined as of Thursday afternoon after the two patients tested positive.

According to hospital officials, the two patients were tested before they were moved to Max Smart hospital as a precautionary measure. "They did not have any symptoms at that time. Since their results were awaited, both of them were kept in isolation at Max Smart hospital," the hospital spokesperson said. Max Smart has sent samples of more people for COVID-19 testing and the results are awaited.

Delhi Health Minister Satyendar Jain and Secretary of Department of Health and Family Welfare Padmini Singla did not respond to multiple calls and messages seeking comment.

Every inch matters

Safe arena: The Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation has converted the National Sports Club of India's indoor stadium into a 500-bed quarantine facility in view of the COVID-19 crisis. ▪ VIVEK BENDRE

Kejriwal launches 'Operation SHIELD' against COVID-19

Sealing, quarantining, doorstep delivery in containment zones

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Delhi government will carry out 'Operation SHIELD' at 21 locations identified as containment zones in the Capital, Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal announced here on Thursday.

'Operation SHIELD', which includes sealing, identifying and quarantining people in containment zones, doorstep delivery of essential items and door-to-door checking of people in those areas, will be undertaken by the Delhi government, he said.

"We have begun Operation SHIELD... S for sealing of the immediate area after geographical marking, H for home quarantine of all in the area, I for isolation and tracing of people who have been first and second contacts, E for essential supplies, which involves doorstep delivery of essential items to the people, L for local sanitisation and disinfection of those areas, and D for door-to-door checking so that people having symptoms of COVID-19 are isolated and testing can be done after taking samples," he said.

Arvind Kejriwal

Mr. Kejriwal also spoke about the need to wear masks before stepping out of homes. "This has been advised based on recent observations and news from across the world where authorities are advising everyone, and not just people infected with coronavirus, to wear masks to protect themselves," he said. "We have issued orders that everyone stepping out of their homes in Delhi should wear masks. If you do not have a mask, you can use a clean cloth or a handkerchief to cover your nose and mouth," he said.

CONTINUED ON ▸ PAGE 8

Lockdown robs Mumbai's dabbawalas of lunch

As thousands switch to working from home, the iconic deliverymen have lost their livelihood

GAUTAM S. MENGLE
MUMBAI

Less than a month ago, they ensured that home-cooked food reached thousands everyday on the dot across this bustling megapolis. Yet, today the iconic *dabbawalas* of Mumbai are staring at starvation as the 21-day nationwide lockdown has left them without a livelihood.

On March 19, the *dabbawalas*, who have been an integral part of the city's history for more than a century, had announced that they would be suspending services in light of the coronavirus crisis. Less than a week later, Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced the complete lockdown.

With almost all workplaces switching to work-from-home, there is now no demand for their services.

"We are facing an unprecedented situation for the first time in the 130 years that we have been operational. If we have no customers, we have no earnings. Our stomachs depend on the stomachs of our customers," said Ulhas Muke, president of the Nutan Mumbai Tiffin Box Suppliers Trust.

Depending on how far a tiffin box had to be delivered, a *dabbawala* could earn between ₹13,000 to ₹15,000 a month.

"This amount, along with whatever our spouses could earn, had to suffice for all expenses, including house rent, children's education and other expenditure, including emergencies," Vinod Shete, spokesperson of the Trust said.

"A lot of us hail from Pune and nearby areas; about half of us managed to return just before the lockdown. The rest are stuck in Mumbai, unable to arrange for two meals a day," he added.

The *dabbawalas*' predicament is exacerbated by the fact that many of their wives, who worked as cooks or domestic help, have also been laid off due to the need for minimal outside contact and social distancing with the virus outbreak.

The *dabbawalas* have now approached charitable trusts and institutions they once visited as guest lecturers to speak about supply chain management, for help. On Thursday, they also sent out a WhatsApp SOS. "There are 5,000 of us and we have always enjoyed a wonderful relationship with this city. We are not expecting much but every small effort counts in times of crisis and this city always takes care of its own," Mr. Shete said.

Hard times: Dabbawalas at work in south Mumbai before the lockdown was announced. ▪ VIVEK BENDRE

Timings
DELHI

FRIDAY, APR. 10		
RISE	06:01	SET 18:45
RISE	21:25	SET 07:44
SATURDAY, APR. 11		
RISE	06:00	SET 18:45
RISE	22:31	SET 08:28
SUNDAY, APR. 12		
RISE	05:59	SET 18:46
RISE	23:35	SET 09:18

Delhi Weather	max	min
Delhi City	33	17
Safdarjang	33	17
Palam	34	17

Delhi Palam Today
35ºC A dry and warm weather with partly cloudy to prevail. Night will be pleasant.

Delhi Palam Tomorrow
36ºC A dry and warm weather with partly cloudy to prevail. Night will be pleasant.

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THE HINDU
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Man held for 'molesting' two Safdarjung doctors

He accused the duo of not maintaining social distancing

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

A man was arrested for allegedly attacking two women doctors from Safdarjung Hospital after he accused them for not maintaining social distancing in south Delhi's Hauz Khas market on Wednesday, the police said.

Atul Thakur, Deputy Commissioner of Police (South) said a complaint was received at Hauz Khas police station regarding the incident after which they had registered an FIR in the case.

In her complaint, the 29-year-old woman said the incident took place when she along with her sister had gone to the market to buy fruits near Gulmohar Enclave.

The accused, who was at the stall, suddenly started making comments at the duo on social distancing.

The women then told the 42-year-old accused that they know the importance of social distancing as they are doctors but the accused threatened them that he will get registered a case against the duo for spreading COVID-19.

The man accused the women of spreading COVID-19, said police. ▪ FILE PHOTO

Man turns aggressive

During the argument, the man, an interior decorator, became aggressive and attacked the women and also touched them inappropriately. Following this, he left the market. The victims were then medically examined, the police added.

A detailed investigation has been ordered into the case, the police said. Mr. Thakur said an FIR under sections of molestation and causing hurt has been registered and the accused has been sent to judicial custody.

Doctors seek action against assaulters

In letter to Union Home Minister, they demand formation of quick response team

BINDU SHAJAN PERAPPADAN
NEW DELHI

The Federation of Resident Doctors' Association (FORDA) India on Thursday wrote to Union Home Minister Amit Shah, seeking his intervention to halt the rise in the number of assaults on doctors across the country amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

The letter comes after reports of repeated assaults on medical staff from across the country, the most recent being the attack on two women doctors from Safdarjung Hospitalon Wednesday night. The doctors are now demanding that a quick response team should be formed to respond to such incidents in residential areas. The group also demanded that such "inhumane acts of violence" should be made a non-bailable offence.

The letter comes after repeated assaults on medical staff from across the country were reported. ▪ FILE PHOTO

Tough time

"...The medical staff is in the first line of our battle against the virus. We are dealing with patients directly. We are battling this out, staying away from our families, working with rationed personal protection equipment and gearing up to an expected surge in cases. At this time, if we are attacked for working in the hospitals, the staff will have a tough time," said Safdarjung Resident Doctors' Association (RDA) president Manish.

"All medical staff are under tremendous mental and physical strain but the public should remember that they are trained to handle a pandemic situation...," he added.

AIIMS RDA has been demanding better allocation of PPEs.

It said, "The government should not expect medical staff to go into battle with their hands tied at the back. We are with the government in this time of need but safety of all should be made a priority."

Meanwhile, the FORDA, in its letter said even policemen were assaulting doctors and that the accused should be given immediate punishment. "We have an incident from AIIMS Bhopal where two resident doctors were assaulted by policemen even after showing their ID cards... These are not isolated incidents, rather parts of the long chain of violence against doctors..."

Stating that Central Protection Act for Doctors, as demanded earlier, is the need of the hour, the FORDA has now said this will work well for protection of the whole medical fraternity. "The medical fraternity stands together in the national response against COVID-9. Doctors and other healthcare professionals are putting in their best efforts in this fight. However, some unfortunate incidents of violence against frontline warriors are being regularly reported from across the country even in these testing times. We had reported about such incidents are taking place in various States of the nation earlier in our letter as well," FORDA wrote.

A member of RDA said: "Acts of violence against medical staff demotivates us as a community..."

Government app will track quarantined individuals

'Containment Survey App' in the works

JATIN ANAND
NEW DELHI

The Delhi government has developed the 'Home Quarantine App' to monitor the real-time location of quarantined individuals and is in the process of developing the 'Containment Survey App' to keep an eye on those residing in over two dozen COVID-19hostspots or containment zones across the Capital.

The objective of both apps, whose development is being supervised by Delhi Chief Secretary Vijay Dev, is to ensure that residents of such zones do not travel beyond their boundaries, risking the possible community spread of the virus.

"While downloading the Home Quarantine App, which is currently in operation at such locations which fall under the jurisdiction of the South revenue district and will be extended across the city in the days to come, is voluntary at the moment, using it may be made mandatory if and when the need to do so arises," said a government official. In cases of the home quarantined, the official stated if their phones aren't with them for some reason, random phone calls to family members and neighbours in addition to selfies, if required, will be asked for by the government to ascertain their location within the designated zones.

"Modalities related to the 'Containment Survey App', which will rely on neighbours to provide information on those residing in the vicinity of their homes in such zones and vice versa, are being finalised. This too will be operationalised soon," the official also said.

The government said teams with adequate protection as per latest Ministry of Health and Family Welfare guidelines will be sent to each of the houses to check for flu-like symptoms along with those with travel history or history of attending community events.

The location tracking of a particular user will start the moment these apps are downloaded and, if a person quarantined travels 50-100 metres beyond a pre-set position, an alarm will be sent to the authorities on a dashboard which is divided into sub-divisions.

Govt. to provide accommodation for Lok Nayak Hospital nurses

60 rooms acquired in Gujarat Samaj Sadan in Civil Lines

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The Delhi government on Thursday said it will provide accommodation for nurses of Lok Nayak Hospital on COVID-19 duty at Gujarat Samaj Sadan in Civil Lines, said officials.

On Thursday, *The Hindu* had published a story on the lack of facilities for Lok Nayak Hospital nurses on COVID-19 duty. CPI (M) politburo member Brinda Karat said she had earlier spoken to Delhi Health Minister Satyendar Jain after she got a distress call from the nurses on lack of facilities and also sent a letter to him on the issue.

"We had acquired 60 rooms in Gujarat Samaj Sadan. Now, it is the prerogative of the Medical Superintendent of the hospital on how to allot these rooms to the nurses," an official said.

On March 30, Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal had announced that the government had arranged 100 individual rooms in The Lalit, a five-star hotel, for the doctors who are treating in COVID-19 wards.

On March 30, CM Arvind Kejriwal had said 100 individual rooms have been arranged in a five-star hotel for doctors.

However, this facility was not available for nurses, who had to instead share rooms and bathrooms with multiple people and were afraid of the "risk" of getting infected by the virus.

'Lack of facilities'

Also, though Delhi has a 14-day work and 14-day quarantine plan for health workers and medical professionals, who are on novel COVID-19 duty, multiple nurses said they quarantined themselves at their houses due to the "lack" of facilities in the hospital premises. "They [nurses] are put in a hall with beds, no privacy, not even a curtain in between the beds – like an open dormitory. Those in quarantine and those on duty share the same space. This is a serious health hazard and a disaster in the making. Those in quarantine must have fully isolated facilities. This hall has just two toilets and no separate bathing space," Ms. Karat had said in a letter to the Health Minister.

The nurses' association of Lok Nayak Hospital had also sent multiple emails to the Chief Minister and Union Health Minister, requesting to provide better facilities.

'Tablighi Jamaat members didn't misbehave during evacuation'

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

A medical officer with the Delhi government, who was part of the evacuation of people from the Nizamuddin Markaz and is currently deployed at a quarantine facility, said that she did not face any incidents of misbehaviour from the suspects.

Speaking on condition of anonymity, the officer said that while there have been many reports over the alleged misbehaviour by members of the Tablighi Jamaat, there had been no such thing during the evacuation, she said. "Everything went off smoothly and the members were evacuated in lots of 30-34," the medical officer said. "We faced no issues," she added.

"Presently, I am at a quarantine centre and there has been no misbehaviour on the part of the suspects. We have to interact with many of these suspects and also those who are developing symptoms," she said.

Keep themselves busy

The inmates keep themselves busy, read namaz, eat meals thrice a day and mostly maintain social distancing. While they are meant to stay put in their rooms and remain isolated, the officer said they end up interacting during meals.

Unaware of crisis

More than causing the spread of the virus willfully, they seem naive or unaware of what is happening across the world, she said. Even now, they don't seem to have any sense of anxiety about the spread of the virus, she added. The officer, however, stressed that her experience was not a comment on the possible experience of anyone else in other areas.

'Drop Tablighi Jamaat from COVID-19 bulletins'

DMC cites Health Ministry's advisory

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

In a letter to the Delhi Health Department on Thursday, the Delhi Minorities Commission (DMC) on Thursday asked it to drop the mention of "Tablighi Jamaat" from its COVID-19 bulletins.

DMC chairman says

"Your bulletins of COVID-19 victims have a column for 'Markaz Masjid'. Such thoughtless classification has been turned into a handle to attack Muslims," said DMC chairman Zafarul Islam Khan. He added that the World Health Organization has taken cognisance of "this phenomenon unique to India".

'Don't politicise issue'

The statement reads: "WHO Emergency Programme Director Mike Ryan said on 6 April, 2020 'Countries should not profile novel COVID-19 cases in terms of religion or any other criteria.' Two days later, he asked governments not to politicise the issue and stop profiling people on religious basis."

Mr. Khan said the Union Health Ministry also said in its advisory on April 8 that "Despite all precautions, if anybody catches the infection, it is not their fault. In a situation of distress, the patient and the family need support and cooperation."

"Further, the advisory requested citizens to 'never spread names or identity of those affected or under quarantine or their locality on the social media'," the letter stated.

Air Quality of Delhi-NCR

Delhi	86	Gurugram	96
Ghaziabad	86	Faridabad	99
Noida	92	Greater Noida	80

Good 0-50 | Satisfactory 51-100 | Moderate 101-200 | Poor 201-300 | Very Poor 301-400 | Severe >400

Air Quality Index at 4 p.m. yesterday (Average of past 24 hours) | Source: CPCB

IN BRIEF

Disinfection drive carried out at nine virus hotspots

NEW DELHI

Special sanitisation drives were held at nine COVID-19 hotspots sealed by the Delhi government, falling in the South Delhi Municipal Corporation's (SDMC) jurisdiction, the civic body said on Thursday. Around 50 kg disinfectant has been sprayed in total, the SDMC said. At Nizamuddin, special disinfection drives are being carried out regularly with a dedicated squad of 11 sanitation workers.

North civic body wellness helpline gets 5,000 calls

NEW DELHI

The wellness helpline started by the North Delhi Municipal Corporation's AYUSH department during the lockdown period has received up nearly 5,000 calls, the civic body said on Thursday. The Ayush department has also been engaged in reaching out to children and parents in collaboration with schools to "enhance immunity" through Ayurveda.

Cong. chief visits rasoi run by party in city

NEW DELHI

Delhi Congress chief Chaudhary Anil Kumar on Thursday visited several "Congress ke rasoi", which was being run in all the 14 districts in the Capital, and distributed food and raw materials to the needy. Mr. Kumar said, "Congress workers have been providing cooked food to the poor daily by following the guidelines of the lockdown. Arvind Kejriwal's statements show that from March 23 to April 2, people who did not possess ration cards were not given ration..."

DMRC begins welfare measures for Metro Phase-IV labourers

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

In the wake of the COVID-19 outbreak, the Delhi Metro Rail Corporation has undertaken several welfare measures for labourers who were engaged in the Metro Phase-IV project in the Capital.

Around 3,500 workers who were engaged by various contractors across the city, are being provided health check-ups and food, said a DMRC official.

"They are staying in camps close to their respective project sites which are made on stretches during the construction phase," he said.

3 arrested for attacking workers in Manesar

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GURUGRAM

Three persons have been arrested for allegedly attacking the workers inside a chawl at Aliyar village in Manesar. One of the workers had sustained serious head injuries in the attack.

The police said the accused, Ravi, Narender and Sudhir, were volunteers with a committee constituted by the village Panchayat for distribution of food, to create awareness and keep a vigil on those roaming outside purposelessly. The police said the workers had heckled them while they were trying to reason with a vegetable shop owner to open the shop only during designated hours. The workers had misbehaved with them earlier as well and it led to an altercation between the two groups. One of the workers, Krishna Kumar, was pushed and he sustained head injuries, the police said.

Raj Kishor, an eyewitness, said that the armed men rushed inside their chawl threatening to beat them up, causing panic among the workers who locked themselves up inside their rooms. "The accused managed to break the doors of two rooms and beat up the workers," said Raj, a Bellsonica employee.

District Health and Family Welfare Society O/o Civil Surgeon, Charkhi Dadri
Walk in Interview

No. NHM/CKD/2020/8695 **Dated: 08.04.2020**

Eligible candidates may appear in this office of Civil Surgeon, Charkhi Dadri for the below mentioned post under National Health Mission. Post is purely on contract basis for the period given below and likely to be extendable further on performance basis and adminstrative approval. Application form may be submitted from 9 AM to 12:30 pm in Room No. 146 with one set of self-attested documents of all Qualifications, Residence proof, issued by competent authority.

Fee: 200/- per application

Sr. No.	Name of Post	No	Contract Period	Qualification eligibility	Age Limit	Honorarium	Date of Written / Interview
1	Public Health Manager	1 (Gen)	90 days Only	• MD in CHA/Hospital Management/ Community Medicine • Master/Diploma/Degree in CHA/ Hospital Management/ Community Medicine • MBA in Health Management • Master in Public Health	18-42	80000/-	13 April 2020
2	Biologist	1 (Gen)	90 days Only	• Retired as Biologist from the Government Service	Exempted	60000/-	13 April 2020
3	Health Inspector	1 (Gen)	90 days Only	• Retired as Health Inspector form the Government Services	Exempted	40000/-	13 April 2020
4	Microbiologist	1 (Gen)	90 days Only	• MD in Microbiologist	18-42	80000/-	13 April 2020
5	Ayurvedic Medical Officer - Male	1 (Gen)	2020-21	• (i) A degree in Ayurveda System of Medicines from any university/ Institution recognized by the Government. • (ii) Registered with Board of Ayurveda and Unani System of medicine in Haryana • (iii) Hindi/Sanskrit upto Matric.	18-42	18750/-	13 April 2020
6	Block Asha Coordinator	1 (Gen)	2020-21	**Essential Qualification/Requirements -** (i) Bachelor degree in arts having optional subject of Sociology/Psychology/Rural Development (ii) At least 1 year post-qualification experience in community mobilization or related field activities in health sector. (iii) Hindi/Sanskrit upto Matric. **Desirable Qualfication -** (i) Work experience in empowerment of health volunteers or in NGO health projects or in involvement of PRIs in developmental programmes (ii) Sensitivity and experience of working on issues related to community mobilization and coordination in health programmes at the grassroots set-up (iii) Working knowledge of Computer programme and commonly used packages like MS Word, Excel.	18-42	7580/-	13 April 2020

Important Instruction:

1. Candidates are advised to regularly visit for further updates at the official website
2. No TA/DA will be paid for coming for interview.
3. Written test (English Medium) may be conducted for screening for the candidates and only shortlisted candidate will be given computer proficiency test and further called for interview.
4. This office has the right to cancel the interview or entire selection process at any stage.
5. Selection criteria will be based as per NHM norms and Local area weighted and marks for NHM experience will be given.
6. Reservation policy is also applicaple as per Haryana Govt. rules.
7. Candidates must bring their own complete original documents, one set of self-atttested documents of all Qualfication, Residence proof, and cast certificate issued by competent authority with two passport size photographs.
8. Application received without fees will not be accepted in any circumstances. (No any late fees provision)
9. Application form can be downloaded from the official website **www.nrhmharyana.gov.in**

Chairman Civil Surgeon
D.H.F.W.S., Charkhi Dadri

EAST CENTRAL RAILWAY

Addendum and corrigendum slip No. 01 of e-Tender Notice No. 89, of 2019-20 (Open)-Engg/DDU.

1) e-Tender No. 81 of e-tender Notice No. 89 of 2019-20 (Open)-Engg./DDU, which are scheduled to be Closed on 09.04.2020 and have been extended on 20.04.2020 due to COVID-19 reasons.
2) Other terms and condition shall remain unchanged.

Divisional Railway Manager,
East Cenral Railway, DDU
PR/024/DDU/ENGG./C/20-21/20

EAST CENTRAL RAILWAY

CORRIGENDUM

Addendum and corrigendum slip No. 01 of e-Tender Notice No. 91 of 2019-20 (Open)-EnggIDDU.

(1) e-Tender No. 82, 83 & 84 of e-tender Notice No. 91 of 2019-20 (Open)-Engg./DDU, which are scheduled to be Closed on 13.04.2020 and have been extended on 20.04.2020 due to COVID-19 reasons.
(2) Other terms and condition shall remain unchanged.

Divisional Railway Manager,DDU.
PR/0026/DDU/Engg./C/20-21/20

TRIPURA RENEWABLE ENERGY DEVELOPMENT AGENCY
(Department of Power, Government of Tripura)
Vigyan Bhawan, Pandit Nehru Complex, Gorkhabasti, Agartala, Tripura
PNIT No.F. 6(158)/TREDA/NCES/20/3920 Date 09/04/2020

NOTICE INVITING e-TENDER

On behalf of Tripura Renewable Energy Development Agency, Joint Director, TREDA invites e-tenders for the work of supply, erection, testing and commissioning of Battery Bank of existing Solar PV Power Plants on turn-key basis including Warranty / Guarantee and Annual Maintenance Contract for 5 (five) years in Tripura vide DNIe-T No. F.6(158)/TREDA/NCES/20/3919, dated 09/04/2020.

The tender papers may be downloaded from e-procurement portal **http://tripuratenders.gov.in** and the deadline for submission of online e-bid is **24/04/2020 upto 3:30 PM.**

(D S DAS)
Joint Director

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HC to function during summer vacation

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court (HC) on Thursday decided to cancel its summer vacation and function through the month of June to make up for loss of court's working hours due to the lockdown imposed to contain the spread of COVID-19 pandemic.

The HC and its subordinate district courts in the Capital had suspended its functioning following the imposition of 21-day lockdown in March. However, the HC and the district court are hearing "extremely urgent matters" through videoconferencing. To make up for the loss of working hours and "to ensure restoration of normalcy in the functioning of the courts at the earliest," a Full Court of the HC headed by Chief Justice D.N. Patel resolved that courts will continue to function even during the entire vacation in June.

There is negligible fresh filing of cases, lesser disposal and escalation in arrears, resulting in extreme hardship to litigants, the Full Court resolution said.

3 deaths and 51 new COVID-19 cases reported in the Capital

Total number of deaths in city rises to 12, number of cases stands at 720

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

Three deaths due to COVID-19 and 51 new cases were reported in Delhi on Thursday, taking the total number of deaths to 12 and cases to 720, stated a daily health bulletin of the Delhi government.

Out of the total 720 cases reported so far, 682 people are still at hospitals and 25 have been discharged.

A total of 2,664 people were in different quarantine facilities, while around 18,500 people were home-quarantined, according to the government.

Meanwhile, Bengali Market, Sadar Bazar, and a slum in south Moti Bagh were added on Thursday to an earlier list of 20 containment zones. Also, following directions of New Delhi District Magistrate, the New Delhi Municipal Council has carried out a disinfection drive on sealed areas of Bengali Market, Babar Road, and adjoining lanes, residential complexes and parks.

Three people had tested positive in the area for COVID-19.

On Thursday, the Delhi government removed G.B. Pant Hospital from a list of dedicated COVID-19 hospitals, as other patients, who have been receiving treatment at the hospital, were facing difficulties. Instead of using G.B. Pant Hospital for COVID-19 treatment, Lok Nayak Hospital will increase its capacity by 500 beds, a Delhi government order said. The OPD service at Maharaja Agrasen Hospital has been shut after at least eight cases of COVID-19 were reported at the hospital.

On March 10, a woman was admitted at the hospital and then referred to Sir Ganga Ram Hospital, where she was tested positive for COVID-19. Later six employees of Maharaja Agrasen Hospital were also tested positive for COVID-19, the police said. Later, another patient who was admitted in Maharaja Agrasen Hospital was tested positive and she died on April 4.

The police said that the family of the deceased had not informed anyone that she had tested positive for COVID-19 and that several people attended the cremation. Later, the deceased's son also tested positive for COVID-19.

The Delhi police on Thursday registered an FIR against the management of Maharaja Agrasen Hospital for alleged negligence in informing the matter to local authorities and handing the body in violation of government guidelines.

Out of 114 quarantined healthcare workers of Sir Ganga Ram Hospital, two have tested positive so far.

(with inputs from Hemani Bhandari)

HELPLINE NUMBERS

COMMON HELPLINE — **+91-11-23978046**
DELHI — **011-22307145**
GHAZIABAD — **0120 4186453**
NOIDA — **8076623612/6396776904**
GURUGRAM — **108/ 0124-2322412/ 9911519296/ 7015523417/ 9654231756**

Nine places declared 'containment zone'

Movement of residents to be restricted

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GURUGRAM

Nine places, including Nirvana Country and Palam Vihar, were declared as containment zone by the district administration on Thursday in view of multiple COVID-19 cases having been reported here. The orders come more than two to three weeks after the cases were first reported in many of these areas.

Besides Nirvana Country and Palam Vihar, the areas declared as containment zone are Sector 9, Emar Palm Gardens (Sector-83), Laburnum Society, Sector 39, Fazilpur Jharsa, Pataudi Ward No. 11 and Sohna's Rajpur village.

Deputy Commissioner Amit Khatri said all requisite preventive steps were already taken for these areas after the COVID-19 cases were detected, but the orders were declared now.

As per the orders, the movement of the inhabitants of the containment zones will be absolutely restricted and the entire area sealed by the deployment of police force and setting up of check-points.

Items of daily need, including vegetables and groceries, will be delivered at the doorstep without the delivery personnel making any physical contact with the household members. The supply of power and drinking water will be ensured by the district administration.

Besides, the health care staff will conduct door-to-door survey for thermal screening of each and every person. All of them will work under the directions of the Civil Surgeon.

As per State government health bulletin, Gurugram has 23 active COVID-19 cases. However, a total of 32 cases have been reported so far. Nine persons have been discharged. Haryana has a total of 136 active COVID-19 cases at

3 new cases in Gautam Buddha Nagar

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GHAZIABAD

Gautam Buddha Nagar registered three new cases of COVID-19 on Thursday, taking the tally to 63. Of these, 12 have been totally cured, an official release said.

The new cases have been reported in Noida's Sector 50, Sector 93 A and Sector P 12 of Greater Noida, a health official said. The release also stated that 1,168 samples have been collected in the district, which emerged as a hotspot in U.P. and 809 people are under surveillance.

After reports of inconvenience to residents from different hotspots sealed on Wednesday emerged, DM Suhas L.Y. tweeted, "We are trying to minimise your inconvenience by ensuring all emergency and essential services. The decision of lockdown has only been taken keeping in mind the health and welfare of all residents. Let us do our individual duty for the collective good."

IN BRIEF

BJP distributes food to over 15 lakh people

NEW DELHI
The BJP State unit, under its '#feedtheneedy campaign', has distributed food packets and essential raw material to 15,88,721 needy people in the Capital, the party claimed in a statement here on Thursday.

LoP wants to meet CM to discuss issues over PDS

NEW DELHI
Leader of Opposition in the Delhi Legislative Assembly, Ramvir Singh Bidhuri, on Thursday wrote to Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal seeking a meeting to discuss alleged issues with the Public Distribution System in the Capital. Due to lack of ration cards and alleged issues with the system of its distribution, Mr. Bidhuri claimed, those without ration cards, who were promised rations, were "wandering the streets" in the midst of the ongoing Novel Coronavirus pandemic.

Arrivals at Azadpur Mandi drop over 50% due to lockdown

New APMC measures likely to further affect fruit and vegetable volumes in the Capital

PRISCILLA JEBARAJ
NEW DELHI

The COVID-19 lockdown caused a 53% drop in the volume of major fruits and vegetables arriving at the Azadpur Mandi, according to analysis of the market's arrivals data. Even for kitchen staples such as onions, potatoes and tomatoes, volumes are down over 40%, while other vegetables and fruits have been further affected.

The Azadpur Mandi is Asia's biggest fruit and vegetable market, spread over almost 44 acres in north-west Delhi. It is home to almost 1,400 shops and handles almost 50 lakh tonnes of produce every year.

An analysis of data from the mandi's Agricultural Produce Marketing Committee shows that arrivals plunged immediately after the lockdown. Considering six major commodities – onion, potato, tomato, carrots, apples and oranges – only 2,343 tonnes arrived at the mandi on March 25, the first day of the lockdown. The previous day had seen arrival of more than 4,411 tonnes.

Despite the government's decision to keep the mandi and to exempt agricultural activity and transport from lockdown restrictions, arrivals remained low for the next two weeks, hovering around the 2,000-tonne mark on most days and dropping to 1,083 tonnes on March 30.

For the first week of the lockdown, from March 25 to 30, arrivals of these six commodities dropped 53.27% in comparison to the same period in the previous year. Fruit trade was the most badly hit, with the volume of arriving apples from the northern States crashing more than 83% in comparison to the previous year. Onion and potato arrivals were over 40% lower than the previous year. Tomatoes were about a third of the volume which arrived in the previous year.

On Wednesday, responding to concerns about crowding and a failure to practice social distancing at the mandi, the APMC reportedly told traders that they would only be allowed to bring in one truck each per day. The APMC also decided to allow trade in alternate auction sheds only. These moves are meant to prevent the mandi from becoming another hotspot of COVID-19 infections, but are also likely to further reduce the volumes of fruits and vegetables arriving at the mandi.

(With inputs from The Hindu Data team)

Dropping out of the market

The volume of fruits and vegetables that arrived at Delhi's Azadpur wholesale market in the first week that followed the nation-wide lockdown (between March 25 and March 30, 2020) dropped by 53.27% compared to the same period in 2019. Only arrivals of apples, oranges, potato, carrot, onion and tomato have been considered for this analysis

Compared to previous years
The table shows the % change in the arrival volume of various commodities compared to 2019 and 2017 in the March 25 to March 30 period

Commodity	Change from 2019	Change from 2017
Apple	-83.48%	-68.88%
Orange	-61.03%	-81.53%
Potato	-44.36%	-49.19%
Carrot	-79.18%	-82.82%
Onion	-40.57%	-63.27%
Tomato	-32.79%	-44.15%
Overall	-53.27%	-60.98%

Compared to previous months
The chart shows the arrival volume (in tonnes) in four time periods - Dec. 24 to Jan. 8, Jan. 24 to Feb. 8, Feb. 24 to Mar. 8 and Mar. 24 to Apr. 8. A consistent drop in arrivals can be observed after the first time period, with the post-lockdown period (Mar. 24 to Apr. 8) recording the highest fall

Finish DNA test of riot victim's body, FSL told

A woman had claimed the body

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court (HC) has directed the Forensic Sciences Laboratory here to complete the DNA test of a charred body, which was found following the north-east Delhi riots and communicate its results to a woman who has claimed to be the deceased's daughter.

Justice Vibhu Bakhru ordered that the DNA test must be completed and the result communicated to the woman, Gulshan, who had moved a petition, not later than April 18.

The HC's direction came after Ms. Gulshan, in her plea, claimed that her father was a victim of a violence that had erupted on February 23 in north-east Delhi.

She stated that her father was allegedly shot and burnt. The plea said she has identified the charred body of her father, but a DNA test had to be done to confirm the identity of the remains of her father. She said the test has not been conducted as yet.

Delhi government Standing Counsel Naushad Ahmed submitted that priority is accorded to the victims of the recent violence. "The DNA matching of the body identified by the petitioner would be done by April 16 as the same is already under way," Mr. Ahmed said.

The HC had in many such cases related to the Delhi riots ordered the authorities to conduct the DNA testing of the victims on priority.

FIR against shop owner

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

A day after District Magistrate asked Delhi Police to take action against owner of the Bengali Pastry Shop in Bengali Market, an FIR has been registered in connection with the incident. .

"During house-to-house surveillance, 35 employees of the shop were found living in unhygienic conditions," said Additional DCP (New Delhi) Deepak Yadav.

TO ADVERTISE
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THE HINDU
India's National Newspaper

Quick sealing has left residents gasping

Locals bemoan lack of planning

HEMANI BHANDARI
NEW DELHI

The main gate of Pocket J&K in Dilshad Garden resembles a fortress. The area is sealed, has more barricades than the usual two, there is an overwhelming presence of police and civil defence officials. Moreover, residents can't exit and visitors are prohibited entry. It is one of the 21 hotspots in the city that was sealed on Wednesday night.

The area became a hotspot after a mohalla clinic doctor, his wife and daughter were tested positive, but have recovered and returned home. But the blanket sealing has left the resident clueless and panicky. Though Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia and Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal had promised door-step delivery of essential commodities, arrangements have yet to be in place.

Around 10 p.m. on Wednesday night, as soon as the sealing was announced, residents rushed to the Mother Dairy outlet and grocery store. "We know this is for our safety but if the government wanted to seal the area, they should have first thought about the arrangements and informed the public in detail [as] who to contact for essential needs. It doesn't seem practical," said Pinky Arora, a housewife.

As the regular vegetable vendor did not turn up, she had difficulty in procuring vegetables. "By the time I realised he wasn't going to be allowed, vegetables at the Safal store and with the cart vendor outside the gate were over," she said.

Rush for vegetables

Residents claimed that only one vendor was allowed in the locality. People have been queuing up near his cart since 7 a.m. and the queue ended at around 1 a.m. after the vegetables got over. Rahul, the vendor, said that he managed to get vegetables from Sahibabad Mandi, where he went at 2 a.m.

Ruchika Dhir, meanwhile, was worried about diaper supply for her ailing father. "I have the stock for a week but I don't know how we'll manage for the next week if we are not allowed to go out. I have asked a friend from Laxmi Nagar to buy and drop at the gate if the need arises," she said.

Entry denied

Residents also alleged that banks around the area - for a few hours in the morning - denied entry for customers from the sealed areas of Dilshad Garden and Seemapuri.

Resident Welfare Association president D.K. Bhandari said that District Magistrate and Sub Divisional Magistrate along with police had visited the colony on Thursday to take stock of the situation and also hinted that the sealing might be extended till April 21. "The Mother Dairy, grocery store, and Safal store will be opened for a few hours every day as of now. The issue about the bank was also flagged in front of the SDM and it will be solved," he said.

A guard's concern: going door-to-door for money

Adding to the worry of getting infected, some residents tried to shoo him away

HEMANI BHANDARI
NEW DELHI

The last two days were scary for 62-year-old Raj Kumar Singh, who works as a security guard in the sealed Pocket J&K in Dilshad Garden. Singh, a native of Bihar's Madhubani and resident of Seemapuri, has been collecting money for him and his seven colleagues from 800-odd households in the colony for years. But on Tuesday, it was different.

"I have to ring their doorbell, interact with them and take bank notes from them. Who knows who is infected and who is not," he said.

A few residents try to shoo him away. "*Ek parivar ne bol diya ki ye sab chal raha hai aur tum paise lene aa gaye... jao yahan se... hum chhote log hain... hum ye sab seh lete hain* [A family said that virus is spreading and I have come to ask for money. We are poor people, we deal with this]," he recounted.

For a 12-hour daily shift, he gets paid ₹8,500 a month. For the extra ₹500, he goes around the colony. "Of the 800 houses, some are empty and many don't even pay. I am able to collect about ₹65,000 only [for the entire team of eight]," he said, adding that he was pressed for money, as his sons Anil and Sunil, who work at a retail cloth store and a factory, are out of work because of the lockdown.

From the RWA, he didn't get a conclusive answer till late Wednesday. RWA president D.K. Bhandari said that Singh was told not to go for collection on Wednesday evening and he along with others will be paid after money is withdrawn from the bank. "I had asked the residents on the group to pay the amount at the gate but people didn't respond. Going forward, we will come up with an idea for collection," he said. By the time Singh's shift ended, he was a happy man with ₹8,500 in his hand.

Raj Kumar Singh, who works as a security guard in the sealed Pocket J&K in Dilshad Garden. • HEMANI BHANDARI

राजस्थान आवासन मण्डल

क्रमांक : अति.मु.अ.प्र./रा.आ.मं./2020-21/05 दिनांक : 07.04.2020

निविदा सूचना संख्या : 01/2020–21

1. मानसरोवर योजना जयपुर वी.टी. रोड़ स्थित वाणिज्यिक भूपट्टी ''बी'' में सिटी पार्क की चारदीवारी निर्माण एंव लोहे की रैलिंग लगाने का कार्य।
2. मानसरोवर योजना जयपुर के सैक्टर 14-ई स्थित आर.एच.बी., आतिश मार्केट में ओवरहैड गेन्ट्री लगाने व साईनेज इत्यादि का कार्य।

राजस्थान आवासन मण्डल की मानसरोवर योजना, जयपुर में विभिन्न कार्यो की बिड के लिये उपयुक्त श्रेणी के राजस्थान आवासन मण्डल में एवं अन्य विभागों में ''एए'' व ''ए'' श्रेणी के पंजीकृत संवेदकों से निर्धारित प्रपत्र में ऑनलाईन ई-प्रोक्योरमेन्ट प्रक्रिया से बिड आमंत्रित की जाती है।

निविदा की कुल लागत	रू. 130.80 लाख (2 कार्य)
ऑनलाईन बिड मिलने की दिनांक : क्र.सं. 1 व 2	दिनांक 16.04.2020 से 27.04.2020 सायं 6.00 बजे तक
ऑनलाईन बिड एवं निर्धारित प्रपत्र जमा करने की दिनांक : क्रं.सं. 1 व 2	दिनांक 16.04.2020 से 27.04.2020 सायं 6.00 बजे तक
निविदा अनुसार डिमाण्ड ड्राफ्ट व अन्य मूल प्रपत्र भौतिक रूप से कार्यालय में जमा कराने की दिनांक : क्रं.सं. 1 व 2	दिनांक 28.04.2020 सायं 6.00 बजे तक
ऑनलाईन बिड खोलने की दिनांक : क्रं.सं. 1 व 2	दिनांक 30.04.2020 प्रातः 11.00 बजे
SPPP UBN NUBMER	RHB2021WSOB00013, RHB2021WSOB00012

क्र.सं. 1 व 2 तक के कार्यो की बिड एकल बिड पद्वति से आमंत्रित की जाकर आवासीय अभियन्ता ई-प्रोक जयपुर के कार्यालय में उपरोक्तानुसार खोली जायेगी। अन्य विभागों में ''एए'' श्रेणी के पंजीकृत संवेदक 1.50 करोड़ से अधिक के समस्त कार्यो की बिड में ही भाग ले सकेंगे। निविदा से सबंधित समस्त विवरण एवं शर्ते वेबसाईट www.urban.rajasthan.gov.in/rhb, https://eproc.rajasthan.gov.in एवं sppp.rajasthan.gov.in पर देखी जा सकती है।

अतिरिक्त मुख्य अभियन्ता-प्रथम
फोन नं. 0141-2741950

Samwad/C/0008/2020-21

UNIVERSITY OF HYDERABAD
(A Central University established by an Act of Parliament)
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ADMISSION ANNOUNCEMENT 2020-21

University of Hyderabad, an Institution of Eminence, ranked 4th among Universities and 11th under overall category in the NIRF rankings 2019, listed in Category- I of UGC (Categorization of Universities for grant of graded autonomy) Regulations 2018, with NAAC grading of 3.72 out of 4.00, invites bright, aspiring students committed to excellence to apply for admission to various 5 Year Integrated P.G., P.G., M.Tech., M.Phil. Courses and Ph.D. programmes through an All-India entrance examination.

Candidates are required to apply online through University website: http://acad.uohyd.ac.in.

IMPORTANT DATES

Online Application start date	03-04-2020
Last date for submitting the Online Application	03-05-2020
Downloading of Hall Tickets from	27-05-2020
Dates of Entrance Examinations	02-06-2020 to 06-06-2020

Important Information: Hall Tickets, information to short-listed candidates for interview and selected/ waitlisted candidates will only be notified in website. It is the responsibility of the candidates to check the University website for downloading the Hall Tickets, results and the relevant formats required for admission. For further details including courses offered, eligibility criteria, prescribed fee, reservation policy please refer to the website http://acad.uohyd.ac.in or http://www.uohyd.ac.in

10-04-2020 Sd/- Devesh Nigam, Controller of Examinations

SOUTH DELHI MUNICIPAL CORPORATION
EXECUTIVE ENGINEER (PROJECT-I) /WEST ZONE
2nd Floor, Old Zonal Office Building, Vishal Enclave, Rajouri Garden, New Delhi-110027

NOTICE INVITING TENDER

No.: D/EE (Pr.)-I/WZ/2020-21/04 Dated : 08.04.2020

South Delhi Municipal Corporation (SDMC) invites Open Tenders under Two Bid System from the eligible applicants/reputed contractors/firms/companies who fulfill qualification criteria for the work as per details given below:

Name of Work :- HIRING OF MANPOWER SERVICES (UN-SKILLED) TO WORK AS SAFAI KARAMCHARI FOR TOILET/URINAL/CTC BLOCKS UNDER THE JURISDICTION OF SOUTH DELHI MUNICIPAL CORPORATION. Approximate Cost of Work : Rs. 5492.00 lacs, **Earnest Money :** Rs. 65.00 Lacs (Rupees Sixty Five Lacs only), **Head of Account :** XL-III-D-IV, **Time of Completion :** Thirty Six Months, **Tender Document on Sale & downloading from SDMC Website :** From 13/04/2020 to 30/04/2020 (Between 10:00 AM to 5:00 PM on all working days from 13/04/2020 to 29/04/2020). On 30/04/2020 from 10:00AM to 2:00 PM, **Cost of Tender Document :** Rs. 5,000/- (Non-refundable) in the form of Demand Draft/ Pay Order in favour of "Commissioner, South Delhi Municipal Corporation" payable at New Delhi. Tender Document may be purchased from the office of Executive Engineer (Project-I)/ West Zone at address as stated above and may also be downloaded from the official website of SDMC, i.e. **www.tenderwizard.com/SOUTHDMCETENDER** (tender portal) & **http://mcdonline.gov.in/** on or before 14:00 Hrs. of 30/04/2020.

R.O. No. 03/DPI/South/2020-21 Ex. Engineer (Pr-1)/WZ

Doctors to get double pay in Haryana

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHANDIGARH

Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal on Thursday announced to double the salary of doctors, nurses, paramedical and all other staff working in COVID-19 hospitals.

According to an official statement, the Chief Minister, said that all the arrangements of providing PPE kits, medicines and ventilators are satisfactory in all the government hospitals and medical colleges in the State.

"All the necessary arrangements for the treatment of COVID-19 patients such as masks, PPE kits, medicines, ventilators etc. will be made by the State Government for medical colleges whether they are under Central or State Government, Private or Government aided," said the statement.

Puri turns into a ghost town

The loudest sound to be heard is from the waves crashing on the beach

SATYASUNDAR BARIK
PURI

Silhouetted fishermen disappearing into the deep sea in canoes and catamarans long before dawn; hundreds of visitors preparing to dive into the waves; servitors at the 12th century Shree Jagannath Temple preparing for intricate rituals – all of these make Puri a tourist haven on India's eastern coast. But with the lockdown in place for the COVID-19 pandemic, the constantly bustling 17 sq. km. pilgrim hub has turned into ghost town.

Trains have stopped pulling into Puri and there's barely any traffic on the NH16, which used to have thousands of tourist vehicles racing over it every day. Now, policemen man barricades and emergency vehicles whiz past occasionally, while hardly anyone is to be seen on the 65-km-long drive from the capital city of Bhubaneswar to Puri.

The beach road in Puri on Thursday. ▪ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Puri paints the picture of a beautiful temple town without devotees. T

he 3 km-long Grand Road leading to the Jagannath Temple is dotted with temporary fences. Without a valid COVID-19 pass, devotees cannot have a glimpse of the recently revamped temple complex. The crowds of people shopping at hundreds of craft shops and other outlets flanking the Grand Road are absent.

'Not only Puri'

"This never-seen phenomenon is not associated only with Puri – it prevails the world over. We hope for an early return to normalcy so that devotees throng the town again," said Balwant Singh, Puri's District Collector.

"The Jagannath Rath Yatra, scheduled for the month of June, is going on as per plan. The contours of this year's Rath Yatra have not been discussed by the temple administration. As things will evolve, the chief administrator of the Shree Jagannath Temple Administration will take a call," said Mr. Singh.

Meanwhile, not a single person can be seen enjoying the vast blue waters of the Bay of Bengal at the famous beach.

"I had never witnessed such silence on this beach in my life," said A. Bhagwan, a lifeguard, describing it as a silence that was becoming frightening.

Now, the loudest sound to be heard is from the waves crashing on the beach.

Bhopal police thrash two AIIMS doctors returning from duty

Showing ID cards, appeals to let them go went unheard

SIDHARTH YADAV
BHOPAL

"We are doctors, don't beat us," cried two junior resident doctors of AIIMS, Bhopal, as the police thrashed them with batons while they returned home after performing emergency duties.

Doctors like you are spreading the coronavirus. Do doctors roam around like this in the first place? You are a disgrace to the country! - two policemen, patrolling the Bag Sevania area, hurled the remarks at them.

The identity cards around their necks, the hospital's stickers on their scooter were ignored. Their appeals - "we are doctors, let us go", went unheard. Around 6.30 p.m. on Wednesday, one of the policemen stopped their vehicle, smashed the milk packets they carried on the road, and landed batons on them. The woman, 27, received injuries on one foot, whereas the man, 31, who had raised one arm to protect against a blow from top, suffered soft tissue swelling with contused abrasions on the arm, which had to be wrapped in a PoP cast later.

"More than the physical trauma, it is more of a mental one," she said. "At a time when doctors are risking their lives for others, this is what they get in return. Sometimes, the common man hits us, but the police, who are supposed to save us, did it this time. Who do we trust?" she asked.

At a time when COVID-19 cases are spiralling in Bhopal, which has reported 75 fresh cases in the past five days, different hospital departments are teaming up to cater to a steady stream of incoming patients. Even students of the Forensic Medicine and Toxicology Department, including the two doctors, are posted in isolation wards to take up COVID-19 duties on rotation.

As the two doctors didn't wear facemasks, the policemen told them they were a threat to society. "Such derogatory remarks, without knowing anything. Don't they see it when we wear PPE kits while on duty? And they are teaching us to wear masks? They were so aggressive that we felt they would kill us," she said. "If doctors stop working after such situations, imagine what would happen to healthcare at this point."

Back on duty

Her parents back in West Bengal, who're already tensed about the COVID-19 duty, asked her to go on a day's leave on Thursday to get back her peace of mind. As did her professors, as she had suffered injuries. But gathering herself together the next day on Thursday, she reported for duty. "It was getting unnerving for me using the social media sitting at home. I had to return to work," she said.

Like each time, the students were confident showing their IDs would give them pass through the lockdown. "If such an incident could happen right outside my college, it could happen to me somewhere else too," she said. "Everyone is scared now. If they say doctors can't step outside when the COVID-19 spread is picking up, should I ask them why policemen are roaming outside too?"

Shocked and scared

The harrowing incident has left doctors at the AIIMS both shocked and scared. One of her batchmates, who is on the isolation ward's night duty roster the next week, is tensed about travelling to hospital, 9 km away from home, now. "I will totally not step out of the car when they ask for my ID. Will it even be safe to travel alone in the first place?" she asked.

During a pandemic like this, everyone, especially lawmakers, should keep their calm, she added. "Also, compared to the COVID-19, a lathicharge seems less of a threat. And I picked this profession by choice, and it comes with great responsibility. We have to work," she said.

Bhopal South Superintendent of Police Sai Krishna Thota said, "We have initiated a departmental inquiry against the policemen, with one constable being line-attached. There was a market operating illegally near the spot, so they were returning after removing that, when the incident took place.

Meanwhile, the AIIMS Resident Doctors' Association condemned the incident and informed *The Hindu* the police had assured them tht strict action would be taken against the policemen within 24 hours of the incident. The hospital administration, however, hasn't pressed charges.

Schools in Rajasthan not to charge fee during curbs

CM Gehlot orders promotion of students, arrangement for online classes in schools and colleges

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
JAIPUR

The private schools in Rajasthan will not charge any dues or advance fee for three months from the students during the lockdown enforced to contain the spread of COVID-19. Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot said here on Thursday that the names of students would not be struck off from the school rolls on account of non-payment of fee.

Volunteers pack food for the poor in Ajmer on Thursday. ▪ PTI

Mr. Gehlot also gave instructions for promoting the students of all classes, except X and XII, to the next grade based on the assessments and periodic tests conducted so far. Arrangement would be made for online lectures and e-learning in schools and colleges to ensure continuity of studies, he said.

Mr. Gehlot announced the decisions at a video conferencing held here to review the situation in educational institutions during the lockdown. It was also decided that the colleges and technical institutes could announce summer vacations from April 15, but there would no vacations in schools.

The State government made it mandatory to wear face masks in all urban areas and agricultural mandis in an effort to check the spread of COVID-19 pandemic. Mr. Gehlot asked those kept in home quarantine to strictly follow the protocols and appealed to the public at large to extend full cooperation to the health personnel working hard to save the lives of people.

Meanwhile, a 76-year-old man, who was symptomatic and was identified during the house-to-house survey in Jodhpur, died on Thursday. With 74 more COVID-19 positive cases detected in 10 districts, including 39 in Jaipur, the tally in the State increased to 463.

Charting a Common Minimum Relief Programme in times of pandemic

The govt. should publish and execute a road map that provides forward guidance and economic clarity, especially to those at the margins

RANDEEP SINGH SURJEWALA

This week, India shall enter the last declared days of the lockdown and start preparations for the resumption, in some form or the other of daily life, that is expected to follow. Unfortunately, the economic pandemic that is likely to succeed COVID-19 threatens to be as large in scale if not larger than the public health crisis that we continue to battle.

It is, therefore, imperative that the government publishes and executes a road map that provides forward guidance and economic clarity to the middle class, medium and small-scale enterprises and above all, to those at the very margins of society.

While States will come up with varying measures for support and relief, the Centre must lead this effort to ensure uniformity, optimisation and coordination amongst States of varying economic capability. The Congress Party has given multiple suggestions to the government vis-a-vis course correction and guiding measures to take on COVID-19 and the economic crisis that looms on the horizon. In this piece, we elaborate on them in the hope of providing the government with a ready reckoner for those at risk. Let us examine these categories and what are the areas of concern that the government needs to address in what we may call, a Common Minimum Relief Programme.

Economic upheaval

First, daily wage earners, labourers and migrant workers are at the greatest risk of economic and social insecurity. They face widespread economic upheaval and geographic displacement. The sheer importance of a social security net in helping them tide over this predicted period of unemployment and privation cannot be overstated. Last week, eight National Trade Unions wrote to the Minister for Labour and Employment urging timely action to prevent the inevitable loss of employment and livelihood. Among several other pertinent concerns, they also asked for protections against evictions. Most importantly, they asked for members of the unorganised sector (be they registered or unregistered) to be covered by a robust cash and food distribution system. This concern is extremely legitimate and urgent given that over 80% of the population is currently employed in the unorganised sector. There should be a uniform mechanism for the dispersal of both income support as well as essential items such as rice, wheat, millets, medicines, water and anything else that these families will require.

Daily wagers and migrant workers are at the greatest risk of economic and social insecurity. ▪ ARUNANGSU ROY CHOWDHURY

Farmers left in the lurch

Second, farmers are in dire need of immediate support. Having faced the wrath of unseasonal and inclement weather, the wheat and other Rabi crops are ready for harvesting. But due to the lockdown, the ensuing unavailability of seasonal labour and lack of clarity on procuring arrangements, agencies and prices, the farmer is left in the lurch. Given the vital role agriculture plays both in the economy and in ensuring staples for every single citizen, the resulting crisis is likely to have a widespread negative impact on food security nationwide. Furthermore, and to ensure the problem doesn't become cyclical, the government needs to make immediate arrangements for ensuring the availability of fertilisers, pesticides, other inputs (including access to lines of credit) for the planting of the next kharif crop as well.

COMMENT

Third, supply chain disruptions for fast moving consumer goods due to unavailability of labour, difficulty in transporting goods across borders during the lockdown is leading to a shortage of foodstuffs and other essential items. This in turn is leading to massive hoarding, black marketing and runaway inflation. This needs to be addressed head on instead of in an ad-hoc manner if mass panic is to be avoided post the lockdown.

Fourth, Medium and Small-Scale Enterprises need a clear buffer strategy for survival. There are currently close to 4.25 crore registered MSMEs which contribute 29% to India's GDP (or nearly 61 lakh crores) and these have been hit hardest by the COVID-19 crisis imperilling, in turn, the livelihood of crores. Unlike their large-scale corporate counterparts, they cannot survive beyond a period of two or three months at the most. There is no alternative to a meaningful strategy. The government must lay out an action plan, including a financial package, to fortify this sector or risk see it perish.

Protect middle class

Fifth, the middle class is facing growing vulnerability and needs to be protected. We are staring at an inevitable economic crisis and middle class (as a percentage of the population) is likely to be diminished in size unless immediate action is taken. Companies and employers are cuttings salaries and even declaring layoffs to cope with this time. This is aggravated by unjustifiably high petrol, diesel and gas prices. The twin strategy of increased EMI's (as a result of deferment) and the lowered interest rates on all small savings schemes (as also by the SBI) hitting at the hard earned savings of the elderly, pensioners, professionals and women, have had the exact opposite of a desired impact. To wit, they have reduced the value of savings while simultaneously increasing debt obligations. A long-term plan for economic revival is needed if the middle class is to emerge stronger on the other side of this crisis.

Two suggestions come to mind as obvious solutions: Nyay, the Minimum Income Guarantee Programme was devised for times exactly like these. It will give much needed security – both financial and mental – to those who have no other sources of income due to the lockdown. The Central government must devise and implement this scheme, at least as a temporary measure. The other measure is to strengthen our manufacture and production policies by an extensive financial package with an impetus to and focus on local manufacturing. Every crisis offers opportunities. We have a chance to redraw our manufacturing strategies to reduce dependence on foreign manufacturing, create new jobs and boost exports.

Let us learn from the experiences that we have accrued over the past 20 days and get ahead of the curve on these issues. India has the expertise and the talent to take on and emerge stronger from this challenge.

All we need now, is political will.

(The author is the AICC Media and Communications In-Charge and also an Advocate)

Manipur Dy. CM stripped of portfolios

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GUWAHATI/IMPHAL

Manipur Deputy Chief Minister Yumnam Joykumar has been stripped of all his portfolios after four ministers of his party, National People's Party (NPP) was asked to resign from the BJP-led coalition government.

A notification issued by the State's Chief Secretary J. Suresh Babu on Thursday made Mr. Joykumar, a former Director-General of Police, Manipur's first Deputy CM without a portfolio. It said Mr. Joykumar's portfolios, including that of Forest, Environment and Climate Change, have been reallocated to the Chief Minister.

Earlier in the day, the BJP had asked the NPP ministers to resign because of "irresponsible and derogatory" remarks Mr. Joykumar allegedly made about the Chief Minister. The Deputy CM had reportedly referred to Mr. Biren as a "mentally-deranged person" when a group of women met him to complain about not receiving rice rationed due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

PSU with chloroquine capacity idles much of it

BCPL MD says company can produce HCQ if asked to do so by the Centre

SHIV SAHAY SINGH
KOLKATA

At a time when the export of hydroxychloroquine, an anti malarial drug that is also being used in the treatment of COVID-19, is a subject of debate, the country's only public sector undertaking that makes an allied antimalarial drug – chloroquine phosphate – is waiting for orders for producing more of the drug.

The Bengal Chemicals & Pharmaceuticals Ltd. (BCPL) manufactures chloroquine phosphate and is the only PSU that produces the antimalarial drug in the country, said Managing Director P. M. Chandraiah. He added that the company "is capable of manufacture of hydroxychloroquine" if the government asks it to do so.

The headquarters of BCPL in central Kolkata ▪

"We have the necessary infrastructure. If asked, we can manufacture hydroxychloroquine. It is only a different formulation," Mr. Chandraiah told *The Hindu*.

As far as production of chloroquine phosphate was concerned, the BCPL usually produces three to four lakh tablets annually. "Considering the raw material we have, we can manufacture about 10 lakh tablets in a week's time," he said. The BCPL authorities confirmed that there had been no increase in orders for anti-malarial drugs after the outbreak of COVID-19.

Among the other medicines, BCPL – founded by chemist and entrepreneur Acharya Prafulla Chandra Roy in 1901 – produces the antibiotic azithromycin, which is in high demand due to the outbreak of the viral infection.

Mr. Chandraiah said the annual production of azithromycin at the company was of the value of ₹4 crore. "We can easily scale up our production of azithromycin to a value of ₹10 crore," he added. Some studies suggest that a combination of hydroxychloroquine and azithromycin could bring down the viral load in COVID-19 patients.

Safety first: Migrant labourers involved in building a special hospital for COVID-19 patients maintaining physical distance during lunch time in Hyderabad on Thursday; ASHA workers collecting details from a woman as part of a door-to-door survey to contain the virus in Vijayawada; workers sanitising a market in Bengaluru; and a Maundy Thursday mass without devotees at the St. Joseph's Cathedral in Thiruvananthapuram. ▪ NAGARA GOPAL, K.V.S. GIRI, SUDHAKARA JAIN & S. MAHINSHA

IN BRIEF

Hegde gives communal colour to COVID-19

BENGALURU

BJP MP for Uttara Kannada and former Union Minister Anant Kumar Hegde has published on his Facebook page a communally charged article against Tablighi Jamaat followers and the community in general in relation to COVID-19. The article accuses Tablighi Jamaat of involvement in "various terrorist acts" across the world over the last three decades and alleges a conspiracy by the group to spread COVID-19 in India.

Wild elephant rescued from farm well in A.P.

CHITTOOR

A wild elephant which fell into a farm well at Gandhi Nagar village near the Koundinya Wildlife Sanctuary in Andhra Pradesh was rescued after a three-hour operation on Thursday. A herd of five elephants was on the move in Gangavaram mandal since a couple of weeks, raiding crops. On Wednesday night, when the the herd entered a field, an adult elephant slipped into the abandoned well. On information from the residents, senior forest officials from Palamaner and Chittoor rushed to the spot and rescued the elephant.

COVID-19 claims 3 lives in south

Patients succumb to the disease in Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and Telangana

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
HUBBALLI/VIJAYAWADA/HYDERABAD/THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

COVID-19 claimed the lives of an 80-year-old woman in Gadag, Karnataka, a 45-year-old man in Guntur (A.P) and an unidentified individual in Telangana, while Kerala expressed cautious optimism that it would be able to keep disease transmission under control on Thursday.

The Karnataka patient had no travel history or traceable contact. It was also the first positive case in Gadag district, and the sixth death in the State. There were 16 new cases on Thursday, taking its total to 197.

The fatality in Andhra Pradesh was from Narsaraopet in Guntur district. The State reported 15 more positive cases from four districts, and a cumulative death toll of six. There were 364 cases as of Thursday evening.

Telangana registered 18 coronavirus positive cases during the day. The individual who succumbed was under treatment, an official statement said. The State's casualties stood at 12.

Five cases in Karnataka were from Bengaluru, three each from Bagalkot and Belagavi, two from Mysuru, and one each from Chickballapur, Dharwad, and Mandya.

On the Gadag death, Deputy Commissioner M.G. Hiremath said that the woman was admitted to a government facility on April 4 with severe respiratory problems and tested positive for COVID-19 on April 6. She had with no history of travel outside and was staying with her sister at Rangiwad. She had taken part in a family function.

After she tested positive, all her contacts, including seven from Goa who attended the function were tested.

Throat swabs of 35 primary contacts and seven medical staff who were attending to the patient tested negative. "Yesterday we traced 11 other primary contacts from the family function, including two from Goa, and have sent the swabs," the DC said.

Foreigners recover

Exactly a 100 days after the first COVID-19 case was reported in Kerala and a total of 357 cases later, the State government expressed cautious optimism that it could keep disease transmission under control with lockdown norms and protocols like social distancing and universal wearing of masks.

The Chief Minister, Pinarayi Vijayan, said that the State had won praise from foreign tourists –eight of them, including those well into their 70s and 80s– who had tested positive for COVID-19 and who had been nursed back to good health.

Brian Neil from UK had been quite serious and required special treatment, which proved efficacious.

On Thursday, 12 new positive cases were reported in Kerala, taking the total to 357, while 258 are under treatment in hospitals.

The Narsaraopet (A.P.) patient who died had no history of travel and was a tuberculosis patient

In Telangana, the total number of cases touched 471 on Thursday with 18 new coronavirus positive cases.

Health Minister Eatala Rajender said 385 out of the 471 cases pertained to people who attended the meeting at Nizamuddin and their close contacts.

The TS government would put in place telemedicine facility from Friday, enabling people to take medical advice from home.

Tough fight

Kerala is taking several measures to contain the pandemic, including this tunnel that sprays disinfectant

Cleaning drive: People passing through a sanitiser tunnel set up at a vegetable market in Palakkad on Thursday. ▪ K. K. MUSTAFAH

COVID-19

State	Total number of cases	Active cases	Number of those cured	Deaths
Andhra Pradesh	363	347	10	6
Karnataka	197	161	30	6
Kerala	357	258	97	2
Tamil Nadu	834	799	27	8
Telangana	471	414	45	12

'Without curbs, virus cases can hit lakhs'

KSDMA for strict post-lockdown steps

TIKI RAJWI
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

The Kerala State Disaster Management Authority (KSDMA) has recommended active intervention, including stringent screening at State borders, long-term physical distancing strategies and effective quarantining, to forestall an unmanageable spike in COVID-19 cases in post-lockdown Kerala.

If there is no intervention whatsoever when the lockdown is lifted on April 14, hospitalisation in the State can peak in the range of 4.8 lakh to 8.2 lakh cases between June-end and July-end this year, according to the statistical models created by an eight-member KSDMA team. The possible scenarios were presented before Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan on Thursday.

In a scenario where break-the-chain measures, physical distancing or quarantining are wholly absent, symptomatic cases can peak at 48 lakh cases, hospitalisation at 4.8 lakh, and ICU admissions at 36,000 by July-end if the infection is in the 'low spread' category.

If the infection spreads at a medium pace, by the beginning of July symptomatic cases can peak at 65 lakh, hospitalisations at 6.5 lakh, and ICU cases at 49,000. Given a worst-case scenario where the spread is severe, the State can have a situation on hand by June-end with 82 lakh symptomatic cases, 8.2 lakh hospitalisations, and 62,000 ICU admissions.

The total hospital bed capacity of 1,30,550 and ICU capacity of 8,693 in the State have been factored in to arrive at conclusions.

In a no-intervention, 'low spread' situation, hospitals will reach their tipping point by June-end this year, and by the second week of June in a 'medium spread' projection. On the other hand, given a severe spread of the infection, hospitals will reach the tipping point by as early as May-end.

The KSDMA modelling suggests four ways to counter this: stringent screening at State borders, active break-the-chain measures such as use of masks, long-term physical distancing strategies and contact tracing, and quarantining.

And what if the intervention combines all these measures? In such a scenario, symptomatic cases, hospitalisation, and ICU admissions will peak at 20,000, 2,000, and 200 respectively by April 2021 in a medium-spread scenario.

Beware of cyber fraud, say police

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MYSURU

The COVID-19 scare may have confined people to their homes, but there is no stopping cyber fraudsters from continuing their efforts to dupe gullible bank customers.

The fraudsters are not only seeking contribution in the name of the Prime Minister and the Chief Minister relief funds by providing bogus QR codes and account numbers, but also seeking sensitive details from the public for postponing their EMIs against existing loans.

The police said that anonymous fraudsters were calling up people and seeking contribution to the relief funds. "They even suggest that payments can be made through digital wallets and then send the account numbers or QR codes to be scanned. The account numbers they send belong to the fraudsters, who will withdraw the money," said Aradhya, CID inspector in Mysuru, who has been handling cybercrime and economic offence cases.

A number of fake bank account numbers are also shared through WhatsApp. The fraudsters send account numbers and IFSC codes required for digital transfers.

Kerala gets nod for trial of plasma therapy

ICMR approval of clinical protocol may help critically ill COVID-19 patients

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

With Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan making it clear that the State would explore all available treatment options for COVID-19, the State has gone a step ahead and won the Indian Council of Medical Research's approval to explore the feasibility of administering convalescent plasma transfusion on critically ill patients.

"Convalescent plasma therapy is not new and has been used by doctors to treat critically ill patients during earlier epidemics like H1N1, SARS and Ebola. The expert committee which is guiding the State's containment and mitigation strategies against COVID-19 had recommended exploring the plasma therapy following the report in JAMA of a pilot study done by doctors in China," a member of the State-appointed expert committee said.

It may be noted that plasma from the blood of previously infected yet healthy individuals had been transferred to five critically ill patients in China and their condition had steadily improved and were subsequently discharged from hospitals.

The proposal submitted to the ICMR says that the Transfusion Medicine Department of Sree Chitra Tirunal Institute for Medical Sciences and Technology would help the State Health Department in exploring the feasibility of plasma therapy for COVID-19 treatment.

"Getting the clinical protocol for administering plasma therapy cleared by the ICMR is just part of our preparedness," he added.

Promising treatment

What is convalescent plasma?

Convalescent plasma therapy involves transfusing certain components from the blood of people who have recovered from a virus attack into people who are very sick with the virus or people who are at high risk of getting the virus.

How does it work

- As people fight the virus, they produce antibodies that attack it. Those antibodies, proteins that are secreted by immune cells known as B lymphocytes, are found in plasma or the liquid part of blood that helps the blood to clot and supports immunity.
- Once a person recovers, that person has developed antibodies that will stay in their blood waiting to fight the same virus. Those antibodies, when injected into another person with the disease, recognise the virus as something to attack.
- In the case of coronavirus disease, scientists say antibodies attack the spikes on the outside of the virus, blocking the virus from penetrating human cells.

Two Manipur students refused entry into store

Manager, two security guards booked

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD

The Rachakonda police on Thursday booked a store manager and two security guards of a Star Market outlet here for racial profiling and refusing entry to two students from Manipur.

"We used to go to this shop regularly but yesterday, they stopped us, calling us foreigners. Even after we showed our Aadhaar cards, they didn't relent. One gentleman asked where we are from but did not help," says Angam Weapon. The incident occurred on Wednesday. A video of the incident went viral, drawing the attention of IT Minister K.T. Rama Rao and top officials.

On Thursday, Principal Secretary Arvind Kumar wrote on Twitter: "It's unfortunate & our apologies! Collector RR district has informed that an FIR is registered against the manager of this outlet and that the accused are in custody. Also request people to come out in support of our brothers & sisters from NE at this point."

Studying engineering

Mr. Weapon said, "We are pursuing engineering here. We never faced this kind of harassment before. We went to buy groceries when this incident happened. My friend is very upset...,"

The police booked a case under Sections 153-A (Promotion of disharmony, enmity or feelings of hatred or ill-will between different religious, racial, language or regional groups), 188 (disobedience of order promulgated by a public servant) and 341 (wrongful restraint) of the IPC.

WEATHER WATCH

RAINFALL, TEMPERATURE & AIR QUALITY IN SELECT METROS YESTERDAY

TEMPERATURE DATA: IMD, POLLUTION DATA: CPCB, MAP: INSAT/IMD (TAKEN AT 19.00 HRS)

Forecast for Friday: Thuderstorm with lightning and gust likely at isolated places over West Bengal, Sikkim, Telangana, Odisha, Chhattisgarh, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Kerala and Tamil Nadu.

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	0.4	36.6	24.3
Ahmedabad	-	38.6	24.3
Aizawl	-	33.8	15.4
Allahabad	-	39.8	20.3
Bengaluru	-	33.7	21.0
Bhopal	-	-	19.8
Bhubaneswar	-	36.8	21.0
Chandigarh	-	32.0	15.2
Chennai	-	34.1	28.5
Coimbatore	-	36.0	24.4
Dehradun	-	30.2	14.1
Gangtok	0.2	19.5	11.8
Goa	-	34.8	23.8
Guwahati	0.3	35.5	20.0
Hubballi	-	36.0	21.0
Hyderabad	-	38.0	23.2
Imphal	-	31.2	12.9
Jaipur	-	35.7	20.8
Kochi	-	32.4	25.4
Kohima	1.4	24.2	12.5
Kolkata	-	35.4	25.2
Kozhikode	-	36.4	26.4
Kurnool	1.7	40.1	23.8
Lucknow	-	35.9	19.4
Madurai	2.9	39.2	25.5
Mangaluru	-	35.6	25.3
Mumbai	-	32.6	22.6
Mysuru	-	33.9	21.3
New Delhi	-	33.0	16.6
Patna	-	37.4	21.8
Port Blair	-	31.8	26.1
Puducherry	-	34.0	28.2
Pune	-	37.3	15.9
Raipur	-	38.5	24.0
Ranchi	-	34.8	16.9
Shillong	4.6	24.5	19.5
Shimla	0.5	20.8	10.0
Srinagar	-	18.8	4.7
Thiruvananthapuram	5.6	34.6	24.2
Tiruchi	-	40.6	25.8
Vijayawada	-	33.0	23.8
Visakhapatnam	1.7	32.0	26.0

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)

Pollutants in the air you are breathing — **Yesterday**

CITIES	SO_2	NO_2	CO	PM2.5	PM10	CODE
Ahmedabad	23	.19	17	51	86	■
Bengaluru	13	.10	58	43	44	■
Chennai	09	.15	25	13	-	■
Delhi	29	.21	17	130	.105	■
Hyderabad	12	.48	18	57	67	■
Kolkata	15	.19	27	36	31	■
Lucknow	06	.21	55	168	-	■
Mumbai	05	.11	05	64	.115	■
Pune	33	.27	48	60	40	■
Visakhapatnam	08	.38	06	30	47	■

In observation made at 7.00 p.m., Nandesari, Gujarat recorded an overall air quality index (AQI) score of 197 indicating an unhealthy level of pollution. In contrast, Chandigarh, Haryana, recorded a healthy AQI score of 26.

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

SO_2: Sulphur Dioxide. Short-term exposure can harm the respiratory system, making breathing difficult. It can affect visibility by reacting with other air particles to form haze and stain culturally important objects such as statues and monuments.

NO_2: Nitrogen Dioxide. Aggravates respiratory illness, causes haze to form by reacting with other air particles, causes acid rain, pollutes coastal waters.

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

PM2.5 & PM10: Particulate matter pollution can cause irritation of the eyes, nose and throat, coughing, chest tightness and shortness of breath, reduced lung function, irregular heartbeat, asthma attacks, heart attacks and premature death in people with heart or lung disease

With Ranga Shankara now online, the show goes on

Theatre space in Bengaluru reinvents itself; actors perform monologues for the camera and share it over Internet

STAFF REPORTER
BENGALURU

Theatre has been facing an existential crisis in times of social distancing following the COVID-19 pandemic. In Bengaluru, the theatre space, Ranga Shankara, has reinvented itself and is trying to reach out to the theatre community and its audience, online.

As part of the initiative, more than 20 actors, directors, playwrights and thespians from language theatres across the country have performed monologues from their favourite theatre texts for the camera and shared it online.

These include performances by Shabana Azmi, Sihi Kahi Chandru, Mandya Ramesh, Mukhyamantri Chandru and B. Jayashree, while actor Umashree has performed a play after several years. This campaign is also part of the 15th anniversary celebrations of Ranga Shankara. Those who couldn't record a video have still participated with an audio recording.

'Encouraging response'

"With the lockdown, our lifeline to the audience was cut off. At Ranga Shankara, we never celebrated World Theatre Day, as we argued we do it every day. But this year was different. As a community space, we realised we had a role to play to keep theatre alive. What we could do now was only work with monologues as all of us are locked up at home. The response we got from the community has been very encouraging," said Arundhati Nag, founder of Rangashanakara, who has performed a monologue from Girish Karnad's play *Anju Mallige*, her first Kannada production.

A file photo of Ranga Shankara in Bengaluru. ▪ MURALI KUMAR. K

Live-streaming of plays has become the norm abroad, but remains untapped here. Has COVID-19 forced the theatre community in the country to explore the video as a medium? "We at Ranga Shankara have tried recording plays for archival purposes, but have failed to do great work like at NCPA, Mumbai. I feel a play in video is reductionist as it doesn't give that wholesome experience," Ms. Nag said.

Umashree, who started with theatre and went on to become a noted film actor, said the experience of recording the monologue was strange. "I enacted a theatre text to the camera," she said, but added that after years before the camera she was accustomed to it.

'Human element'

Filmmaker B. Suresha had a different take. "Even at Ranga Shankara, we have tried to live-stream plays when we got Shakespeare's Globe Theatre. But only a handful of people watched it online. Theatre requires that human element," he said.

In time of need

Irrespective of whether India bowed to U.S. pressure, it is unlikely to run out of the drug

After imposing a blanket ban on the export of anti-malaria drug hydroxychloroquine on April 4, without exemptions on humanitarian or other grounds, India reversed the policy two days later. The decision to reverse the ban was made public hours after U.S. President Donald Trump warned of "retaliation" if India withheld supplies of the drug for which orders had already been placed. Given the circumstances, it would be difficult to believe that the decision to lift the restriction was taken independent of U.S. pressure. But the pandemic has seen several countries displaying solidarity and cooperation providing essential supplies to others even while tackling the novel coronavirus in their own backyards. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's message to Mr. Trump that "India shall do everything possible to help humanity's fight against COVID-19" should, therefore, be seen in that light. Lauded as the pharmacy of the global south, India's decision to export the drug on humanitarian grounds to neighbouring countries and others that have been badly hit by the pandemic is welcome. Till recently India relied solely on other countries for test supplies and may look to others for essential materials if the situation worsens. Also, India may have much to gain from the U.S. in the future by this diplomatic act of supplying the drug at a crucial time. The sudden demand for hydroxychloroquine across the world arose after Mr. Trump championed it as treatment for COVID-19 patients. The drug became much sought-after in India after the Indian Council of Medical Research approved its use as prophylaxis for novel coronavirus by certain categories of people on March 23. Two days later, the drug was placed in the restricted category for export and included in schedule H1 on March 26 to prevent its sale over the counter, thereby preventing self-medication and hoarding. This was also to ensure its availability to people with rheumatoid arthritis and other conditions.

India has a production capacity of 200 million hydroxychloroquine tablets of 200 mg strength each month and three well-established pharmaceutical companies make the drug. While the capacity is sufficient to meet the current demand, the companies are confident of ramping up production if the need arises. In all likelihood, in the short term, India might not run out of hydroxychloroquine as the national taskforce for COVID-19 had relied on weak, anecdotal evidence to make the recommendation. Though the U.S. Food and Drug Administration issued an emergency use authorisation for the drug to treat COVID-19 patients, on April 7, the Atlanta-based Centers for Disease Control and Prevention revised its position saying there is no drug available to prevent or treat COVID-19. Clearly, more research work is needed to establish the efficacy of the drug.

Victory in defeat

Despite a favourable opinion of his agenda, Bernie Sanders could not overcome Joe Biden

Bernie Sanders' withdrawal from the race for the presidential nominee from the Democratic Party at this juncture comes as no surprise. Ever since the Democratic Party field narrowed down to just two, with former Vice-President Joe Biden being endorsed as the overwhelming favourite of the party establishment, Mr. Sanders found the going tough. After his strong victory in the South Carolina primary, Mr. Biden emerged as the first among equals among the moderates and consolidated support for himself after the rest of the field was winnowed due to dropouts by other candidates. In direct contests after his triumph in the Nevada caucuses, Mr. Sanders did not fare too well and Mr. Biden emerged as the presumptive nominee. With the COVID-19 pandemic relegating the Democratic contest between the two septuagenarians to a lower priority among American voters, the path to a nomination soon became non-existent for Mr. Sanders. Without a large enthusiastic voter turnout, his chances of staging a comeback grew even weaker, forcing him to withdraw.

Mr. Sanders ran on a social democratic ticket, promising a universal and single-payer healthcare, free college education and a "green new deal" to tackle climate change. A lifelong independent before he entered the Democratic primaries in 2016, Mr. Sanders' earlier campaign had also ended in defeat, but he managed to bring his progressive positions to the centre of the Democratic Party debates, buoyed by support especially among the youth and the white working class. By 2020, after progressives won a significant number of Congressional seats, most presidential candidates in the party adopted sections of his programme such as increasing the statutory minimum wage for workers and expanding social welfare. But his unapologetic embrace of the term "democratic socialist" to describe himself in a country that fought a half-a-century-long Cold War for the triumph of capitalism, his crusade against the wealthy and for campaign financing regulations among other systemic changes did not endear him to the Democratic establishment. Mr. Sanders' emphasis on economic justice as key to overcome the social inequality in a racially divided U.S. did not have as many takers among African American voters who preferred Mr. Biden's "safer" candidacy due to his identification with Barack Obama's presidency in which he served as Vice-President. Mr. Sanders will be remembered for bringing to the forefront ideas of social welfare, collective action, and liberal internationalism that had been relegated by the neoliberal/neoconservative duopoly that had firmly established itself in the U.S. since the 1980s. He might have lost the battle, but the war for a progressive America will now be waged by activists inspired by his legacy.

A time for extraordinary action

An unprecedented scale of state investment is required to lift up the Indian economy

TEJAL KANITKAR & T. JAYARAMAN

Even before the full impact of COVID-19 on the health of Indians is clear, the economic impact of the measures required to deal with the pandemic are already posing grave problems. The Indian economy was in dire straits even before COVID-19 reached our shores. Specifically, the lockdown and other movement restrictions, backed by scientific and political consensus on their inevitability, have directly led to a dramatic slowdown in economic activity across the board. What is their impact on the Indian economy? This question calls for an urgent answer.

Methodology

We provide an initial, quantitative response, using a methodology that is based on the technique of input-output (IO) models, first elaborated by the economist Wassily Leontief. Such models provide detailed sector-wise information of output and consumption in different sectors of the economy and their inter-linkages, along with the sum total of wages, profits, savings, and expenditures in each sector and by each section of final consumers (households, government, etc.). Crucially, it pays attention to intermediate consumption, namely consumption by some sectors of the output of other sectors (as well as consumption within their own sector).

The key advantage of such a model is that it allows the calculation of the impact of any change in any sector in both direct and indirect terms, which has made this model somewhat ubiquitous in the computation of the economic impact of disasters. This also renders it well-suited to estimating the economic consequences of COVID-19. Regrettably, the last officially published IO table for India was for the year 2007-2008. In our estimates, we use the IO tables for India published by the World Input-Output Database for the year 2014 that updates the IO tables for individual countries using time series of national income statistics.

To calculate the impact of the lockdown, we proceed by constructing four different scenarios of the number of workdays lost in different sectors. Assuming that the estimated annual output is distributed uniformly across the year, it is possible to calculate the daily output and therefore the daily output loss. The direct and indirect impacts of the lockdown are then estimated using IO multipliers which are assumed to be constant. We then calculate the percentage decline in the national gross domestic product (GDP) of 2019-2020 that this impact amounts to.

Impact on various sectors

Our model (see table) shows that the loss of GDP ranges from ₹17 lakh crore (7% of GDP) in the most conservative scenario, where the average number of output days lost is only 13, to ₹73 lakh crore (33% of GDP) in the most impactful scenario, where the number of days of lost output averages 67. In intermediate scenarios of 27 and 47 days of lost output, the GDP decline is ₹29 lakh crore (13% of GDP) and ₹51 lakh crore (23% of GDP), respectively. We emphasise again that the number of days of lost output noted here is only an average across all sectors, and that we do input in the calculation of different numbers for each sector, based roughly on the available information in the public domain and exercising some judgment. Further details can be accessed at https://bit.ly/2UXK5WR). These, of course, need more accurate representation, an exercise that can undoubtedly be best carried out by national statistical institutions and their State-level counterparts. These estimates also accord well with other estimates, such as those of the OECD that suggest a 20% loss to GDP for India.

Scenario	Average number of working days lost	Loss of GDP (₹ lakh crore)	Loss of GDP (%)
1	13	15	7%
2	27	29	13%
3	47	51	23%
4	67	73	33%

Even assuming that sectors will have varying lockdown periods, all sectors face serious losses due to their interdependence. If we take the scenario where a prolonged lockdown happens, averaging about 47 days across sectors, we find that the mining sector faces the largest drop of 42% in value added despite that sector itself being shut down for, say, 35 days as we have assumed, which is less than the economy-wide average. The electricity sector sees a 29% fall in value added, even though it faces no shut down per se. Losses are expected across all sectors in terms of both wage compensation and availability of working capital.

The linear character of our estimates, intrinsic to IO analysis, does not allow incorporation of feedback effects and assumes that output commences where it left off without further constraints. We have attempted to correct for this by using varying number of days of output loss across sectors, but this is quite possibly inadequate to capture the continuing economic impact. We are faced today with the unique situation where both supply and demand have collapsed in several sectors. In some sectors such as agriculture, the impact may manifest in delayed fashion, if the anti-COVID-19 measures, or the pandemic itself, affects agricultural operations in the next kharif season, even if, as reports suggest, much of this year's rabi has been successfully harvested. Given the database we are using and the initial character of our analyses we have also not explicitly accounted for possible shortfalls in exports due to lack of demand elsewhere in the world, as well as the unavailability of intermediate imported goods that are crucial for the Indian economy. Nor are we able to adequately separate the impact on the informal sector, that is partially aggregated with the formal sector in the database that we are using and partially unaccounted for due to lack of data. Dealing with the travails of the informal sector will require separate sector-wise considerations.

But the most striking feature of even this simple calculation is the all-round pervasive impact on the economy of the anti-COVID-19 measures that we are currently undertaking and that are likely to continue in modified form for a short period. Measures such as debt relief, postponement of revenue and tax collections, immediate relief in cash and kind to the poor, and revamping and scaling up public distribution are all undoubtedly necessary but far from sufficient. Our numbers suggest that the resort to huge stimulus packages that developed countries have already started putting in place is by no means mistaken.

The way forward

India needs a similar strategy. As Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan pointed out, extraordinary times need extraordinary action. We need to compensate and pump cash into the hands of not only wage workers in the formal and informal sectors, and also into the livelihood activities of the informal sector, but businesses too need to be primed with handouts in the case of small and medium enterprises, and with a variety of concessions even in the case of larger businesses. It is critical to preserve the productive capacities of the Indian economy across the board. The annual budget of the current year, already passed, clearly cannot cope with such a massive effort and needs to be revisited by suitable parliamentary measures.

Redistributing expenditure, seeking to keep the fiscal deficit "under control" as it were, through measures such as cutting back on government salaries, are unlikely to be helpful. Apart from sending the wrong signal to private sector employers, who have so far been exhorted to maintain salaries and wages during the lockdown, it is quite likely to lead to further reduction in demand since the government is the biggest employer in the country.

Finally, one must note that the current crisis is not a transformatory moment for the Indian economy, even if the scale of the impact and recovery process will undoubtedly push the economy in new directions. But "greening" the economy or more radical transformative measures are not particularly relevant in its current state. What is needed is ensuring the key role of the state to lift up an economy that is in danger of being brought to its knees, and to restore some semblance of its normal rhythm, by an unprecedented scale of state investment.

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A double whammy for India-Gulf economic ties

It is going to be a challenge to manage the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic as well as the oil shock

MAHESH SACHDEV

The Gulf region is at the epicentre of a perfect storm: apart from the COVID-19 pandemic, it also has an oil price meltdown. Although this double jeopardy still has some distance to go before stabilising, given India's vital relations with the eight Gulf countries, the situation's impact on bilateral economic ties needs to be anticipated and managed.

Oil prices in a tailspin

The region, especially Iran, has been mauled by COVID-19, and the figures are yet to peak. The pandemic has put nearly a third of the world's population under some form of lockdown curbing the consumption of hydrocarbons, the mainstay of Gulf economies. A Goldman Sachs report published on March 30 estimated that COVID-19 had lowered the world crude consumption by 28 million bpd. The consequent oil glut began depressing the price. The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries and other crude producers (OPEC+), however, failed to reach a production-curtailing strategy as Saudi Arabia and Russia, the cartel's two biggest producers, held different views. As a result, OPEC+ unravelled with each producer chasing a higher share in a collapsing market. Consequently, the oil prices went for a tailspin having fallen by 55% during March to an 18-year low on March 30. Though the market has recovered since and a wider production-sharing compromise is in the works, the general outlook remains bleak.

In a rare joint statement on March 16, the heads of OPEC and the International Energy Agency (IEA) warned that developing countries' oil and gas revenues will decline by 50% to 85% in 2020 with potentially far-reaching economic and social consequences. The economic outlook for the Gulf has indeed deteriorated, with Saudi Arabia's fiscal deficit expected to cross 8% in 2020. The global economy is expected to have a recession induced by COVID-19 this year. Even if it limps back to growth in 2021, the process may be slow and less energy-intensive: national self-reliance on strategic goods such as pharmaceuticals may deter their trade, and the tourism and hospitality sectors, the core of Dubai's economy, may take much longer to resuscitate. The pandemic has already made this year's Hajj and Dubai Expo doubtful.

REUTERS

India's economic ties with the Gulf states have two dominant verticals: the economic symbiosis and India's expatriate community. Bilateral economic ties are strong: the India-Gulf trade stood around $162 billion in 2018-19, being nearly a fifth of India's global trade. It was dominated by import of crude oil and natural gas worth nearly $75 billion, meeting nearly 65% of India's total requirements. Some of these countries have large Indian investments and some have planned large investments in India. Second, the number of Indian expatriates in the Gulf states is about nine million, and they remitted nearly $40 billion back home. Both these intertwined pillars of India-Gulf ties have been affected by the recent maelstrom roiling the shared region.

India being the world's third largest importer of crude, a sharp and prolonged decline in oil prices helps its current account. However, this is not an unmitigated blessing. The Gulf's lower oil revenues also presage decreased bilateral trade and investments as well as expatriates' remittances – all of them adding to India's current financial stress.

Impact on expatriates

Oil is a cyclic commodity and the Gulf producers have long evolved a pattern to handle its periodic lows. They tend to tighten their belts and dip into their reserves. They also transfer the burden on to the last person in line, viz. the Asian expatriate. The fresh recruitment stops, salaries are either lowered or stalled, taxes raised and localisation drives launched. The net result is that a large number of expatriates return to their homes. This time there is an added complication of the pandemic, to which the Asian expatriates living in densely populated camps are particularly vulnerable. In case the pandemic worsens in the lower Gulf, panic-stricken, wage-deprived Indians may prefer to come back. This would create an exodus of epic proportions, the nearest example being the evacuation of over 1,50,000 Indians from Kuwait in 1990-91, albeit for political reasons, an event that upended India's economy. Apart from creating a logistical nightmare of transporting millions of expatriates back, they would need to be resettled and re-employed.

While hoping that the Gulf states are able to contain the pandemic and the oil shock, India needs to make some contingency plans in consultation with the individual countries. It should do whatever it takes to enhance their capacity to handle COVID-19 cases among the Indian expatriates. India's missions there also need to monitor the situation and try to avoid panic among its nationals.

In the longer run, it is quite clear that we need to find new drivers for the India-Gulf synergy. This search could begin with cooperation in healthcare and gradually extend outward towards pharmaceutical research and production, petrochemical complexes, building infrastructure in India and in third countries, agriculture, education and skilling as well as the economic activities in bilateral free zones created along our Arabian Sea coast eventually leading to an India-Gulf Cooperation Council Free Trade Area. Only then would we have sufficiently diversified the India-Gulf economic ties to protect them from such shocks.

Mahesh Sachdev, a former Ambassador, is President, Eco-Diplomacy & Strategies, New Delhi

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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A calibrated exit

While the COVID-19 pandemic poses a huge health risk, an extension of the lockdown would prove costly. Since economic activities have come to a grinding halt, every section of the society, particularly the poor, have had to suffer immeasurable hardships. Prolonging the lockdown would only deepen the crisis. A calibrated exit, as recommended by an expert committee, should be considered. While districts reporting a high number of cases can remain shut, those reporting low infection numbers can be opened up with strict riders. That said, as there is no indication of the COVID-19 menace disappearing in the near future, people need to internalise new norms. Physical distancing and maintaining hygiene need to become part of everyday life.

N. SADHASIVA REDDY,
Bengaluru

Right to health

Instead of being a basic right, over time healthcare has become a privilege of the affluent. The G7 countries, leaders of the capitalist order, need to reflect and ensure a more equitable distribution of wealth. India has to prioritise revival of public sector units in the pharmaceutical industry, instead of depending on China for ingredients. We should strengthen government healthcare institutions and stop corporatisation of hospitals. It is time to put people at the centre of the growth narrative.

A.G. RAJMOHAN,
Anantapur, Andhra Pradesh

Suspending MPLADS

While a cut in the emoluments of MPs was on the cards, the government's decision to suspend funds for MPLADS appears to have been taken in haste and will severely impact developmental and infrastructure work in the MPs' constituencies (Editorial "For better use," April 9). With the lockdown having affected a huge segment of the population, the funds for MPLADS could have been utilised to ameliorate the suffering of those whose incomes have dried up. The government would do well to reconsider its decision or at least restrict the time of suspension of the scheme to one year instead of two.

C.V. ARAVIND,
Bengaluru

Empower the States

The COVID-19 pandemic has clearly exposed the perils of over-centralisation of powers at the Centre (Editorial page, "Needed, greater decentralisation of power," April 9). The States would have responded with better welfare measures to benefit the poor and would have made adequate provision of personal protection equipment for doctors and healthcare workers, if they had financial autonomy to raise the necessary funds. The time has come for some radical reforms to decentralise powers and fully empower the States in most matters, except defence and foreign affairs.

KOSARAJU CHANDRAMOULI,
Hyderabad

No one can have any grievance with the considered views of the writer, but this is an unprecedented situation. If different States adopt different methods of varying intensity, we won't overcome this crisis. Preventive measures must be uniform across the country. The Central government's decisions cannot be faulted. Once it is appreciated that we have little choice in combating this invisible monster, we will not see the Constitution as being disregarded.

V. LAKSHMANAN,
Tirupur

CORRECTIONS & CLARIFICATIONS: >>In the Oped page article titled "Ten questions posed by the virus" (April 8, 2020) all references to *26/11* should be corrected to *9/11*.

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Will COVID-19 affect the course of globalisation?

PARLEY

Import substitution, which had once become a bad word, may be back in currency

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on free trade is yet to be completely understood. **Biswajit Dhar** *and* **Nagesh Kumar** spoke to **Vikas Dhoot** *on whether the epidemic would spell an end to open markets as we know it. Edited excerpts:*

Biswajit Dhar *is a Professor at the Centre for Economic Studies and Planning, JNU*

Nagesh Kumar *is a director at the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP)*

With several countries and regions locked down, will there be a redrawing of geographical boundaries?

Biswajit Dhar (BD): I think we are going towards a new normal now. Much of what we saw in terms of global integration of trade and finance would suffer in the short run. If you recall, when the world was hit by economic recession in 2008, trade dipped by almost 10% in 2009 when there was a 3% decline in global GDP. That's roughly the relation between trade and growth. When there's a boom, trade grows much faster than GDP. The World Trade Organization (WTO) has now estimated that in a worst-case scenario, global trade could dip as much as 32%, indicating the kind of dislocation they expect in large economies. It's going to be a very different ball game – the first thing that will happen is countries will try to build themselves up. In India, for instance, we can see the disruption that is taking place – almost 50% of our trade is directly linked with the micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) sector as even large players have sub-contracted to the smaller producers. So it is anyone's guess what the impact is going to be on trade because of the disruption in production. Going forward, most economies, with the exception of China, are going to see a very different kind of dynamic as they will try to build up from where they would be in a few months' time and then think in terms of how to integrate themselves again with other countries. My expectation is that this will be a whole new normal that we haven't seen – after the first round of global integration that we saw in the first decade of the 20th century.

How could this impact Asia Pacific as a region and India in particular?

Nagesh Kumar (NK): UNESCAP has released its annual Economic and Social Survey on Wednesday – what we are finding of course, is that the COVID-19 crisis is a challenge never seen before and it is going to be a bigger shock for the world economy than the global financial crisis which was only driven by a demand shock. This entails a demand and supply shock and it is still unfolding. It is now clear that many economies are going to shrink – developed countries as well as many in the Asia Pacific region that are highly dependent on tourism and commodities trading will also shrink. Commodity prices are at their lowest in the last 10 years. For India, however, there is a slight silver lining because of low oil and commodity prices as we are net importers and, also, since the government is not allowing a full pass-through of the lower global prices, it means that there is some fiscal space through commodity price reduction. Still, the disruption in work, especially in MSMEs that are the backbone of manufacturing, trading and services, is very serious. This is a very large shock to the world economy and many things will change after we come out of it.

We have seen over the last couple of months a significant slowdown in trade flows in advanced economies and a sharper fall in developing countries. Do you consider this a passing phase or is COVID-19 set to reverse the trend of globalisation as we know it?

NK: The process of globalisation was already in retreat and last year, the term 'slowbalisation' was being used. World trade had never really recovered since the global financial crisis – from a 10% growth, it had been hovering around 1%-2%. Add to that the trade wars and the WTO talks process coming to a grinding halt. Now, with this pandemic, there is another recognition of the vulnerability that global economic interdependence creates. So some countries are facing difficulties in getting medical supplies, some find their manufacturing can't run as value chains are linked with China. Countries will reconfigure their economies to look at import substitution with a greater clarity now, as the perils and pitfalls of overdependence on foreign supplies become clear. Import substitution, that had become a bad word, may be back in currency.

GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCKPHOTO

Mr. Dhar, you mentioned that China might have a slightly different experience...

BD: Over the past week, news has been filtering through that China's manufacturing sector is back, with Wuhan coming back into action. Other countries will remain in a lockdown phase for at least another two months. Nobody is yet talking of the flattening of the curve, and after that happens, it will take some more time for normalcy. So, if the Chinese get this sort of a lead in getting their act together, they are going to consolidate their position in the global economy further. It's very interesting if you look at the two major events that took place in the last 20 years – the 9/11 attacks (which coincided with China joining the WTO) and the 2008-09 global recession. After each of these episodes, China came out stronger and acted with alacrity, did all the pump-priming to stimulate the economy and enhance their global heft... You don't have to go too far to see how India got dependent on China after 2008. So this will be the phase that President Xi Jinping's dream of being the leader of the globalised world could really come true. You don't know how badly it was impacted by the virus. China doesn't really figure in the top of countries that have announced stimulus packages. But we know for sure they will do it – and this factor will determine the response of other countries. Countries are going to be extremely wary of the superpower that China will become and would like to disengage. I have absolutely no doubt that India will disengage. Stimulus packages – be it in the U.S., France, Germany – have an overwhelming emphasis on small businesses, which really were at the heart of their post-war industrialisation strategy, and you will see industrial policy whose flip side will be import substitution. So, globalisation will be defined in a very different way.

> **If governments have to do the heavy-lifting in dealing with this crisis, then they want full force of their sovereign powers**
>
> BISWAJIT DHAR, Professor, JNU

Could this dampen movement of labour across countries?

BD: Once you talk of import substitution, you focus more on your domestic skills. The movement of personnel will follow the formula of economic needs, so the U.S. may keep importing skilled personnel from India. But, the kind of unemployment that you will see will require a huge effort on the part of every country to get their workforce to where they were before the crisis. We never got back to a pre-2008 high-growth phase. But even to go back to the pre-COVID period, countries will require a huge effort.

NK: The first priority of every government would be to create jobs for its own people. In a high unemployment scenario, hiring expats won't be in favour. In any case, there had been rising protectionism on this front already.

Do you feel that the social fabric in places that are now open to immigrants could come under stress?

NK: We have gone into the impact on social structure and have emphasised the need for governments to push for universal healthcare and social protection. Our experience from the financial crisis is that economies that paid greater attention to social protection were able to recover very quickly. This crisis has exposed the gaps in the health sector and social protection and the stimulus packages should focus on closing these gaps which will also help in achieving sustainable development goals. The first priority will be to create jobs for those rendered jobless. But I think in certain sectors that are highly skill-intensive, and countries are dependent on outsiders for those skills, that will continue.

How do you see the role of WTO evolving in such a situation? It has already been struggling...

BD: There are worse days ahead for the WTO. Trade rules have worked best when the global economy is booming and isn't facing a crisis. The last time serious discussions took place at WTO was in 2008, before the complete repercussions of the crisis hit home, and it was all downhill after that. It's only going to get worse, because if countries need to bring their domestic industries back, they would need space for policy flexibility. And WTO will be redundant there – for instance, on the issue of subsidies for small industries, no country will like the WTO to be telling them what to do or what not to do. The agricultural subsidies issue is going to be junked – on 31st March, India notified the WTO that it has crossed the 10% limit in rice subsidies as a good citizen. But do you think, going forward, the government of India can be restrained from giving more subsidies for rice or other sectors vital for food security? If the WTO rules are junked, then it's a free-for-all situation. That's the problem. Then you go back to the situation of the 1930s when it was just brute economic strength that will determine things, like the law of the jungle. Unfortunately, the impact on global governance systems hasn't been understood yet. I was greatly disappointed with the G20 leaders' and trade ministers' statements. They should have reflected on global rules being in further jeopardy. If they have to work out flexibilities within the WTO framework, they should do it collectively.

Shall there be a rethink on existing multilateral and bilateral pacts?

BD: Countries cede a part of their sovereignty while getting into these trade agreements. In the last quarter of the twentieth century, we saw one driver of governance – market forces-oriented. But now, in major economies, governments have taken centre stage and depending on how long the pandemic drags on, the government will remain in the driver's seat and markets will take a backseat. If governments have to do the heavy-lifting, then they want full force of their sovereign powers. So I would think the project of globalisation is going to settle at a new normal and it will be a very different WTO and trade governance framework, with different kinds of regional and bilateral engagements. India, of course, has already become a reluctant player and had, in a way, started disengaging. Other countries were more tightly knit together through pacts like the ASEAN. The European Union is already in tatters and it will be important to see the role of the European Commission and the European Central Bank in getting a decent stimulus in addition to what individual governments have done. NAFTA is already being rewritten. So going forward, much of the churning is going to get bigger in regional formations. If in three months, we don't get back on track, then I think there will be a substantial rewriting of the rules.

Finding a scapegoat in WHO

President Trump is blaming the global health body for the failures of his own administration

R. PRASAD

After blaming the Democrats for investing a 'hoax' in the form of coronavirus, and pointing fingers at China by calling the SARS-CoV-2 virus a 'China virus,' U.S. President Donald Trump has found a new scapegoat – the World Health Organization (WHO). Mr. Trump has, of late, blamed the global health body for the failures of his own administration in containing the spread of COVID-19.

Mr. Trump tweeted on April 7: "The WHO really blew it. For some reason, funded largely by the United States, yet very China-centric. We will be giving that a good look. Fortunately I rejected their advice on keeping our borders open to China early on. Why did they give us such a faulty recommendation?." And, during a briefing, he threatened to withhold funding to the WHO, accusing it of not being aggressive enough in containing the spread.

There is no doubt that concerted efforts by China in downplaying the magnitude and severity of the outbreak in Wuhan city for over a month, starting mid-December 2019, led to the spread of the virus within and outside China. The cover-up continued even after it alerted the WHO on December 31. Contrary to claims made by China, human-to-human transmission had been occurring since mid-December 2019; Beijing confirmed it only on January 20. By the time Wuhan and other cities were shut down on January 23, locking in over 50 million people, about five million had already fanned out from Wuhan to the rest of China and outside, thus carrying the virus thousands of km away from the epicentre. Thailand and Japan reported their first cases in mid-January, and the U.S. on January 20.

Downplaying the outbreak

However, two days later, President Trump brushed aside any concerns about the spread saying, "We have it totally under control. It's one person coming in from China, and we have it under control." On January 25, Mr. Trump even commended China, telling that Beijing was "working very hard to contain the coronavirus and the United States greatly appreciates their efforts and transparency". He kept downplaying the risk in January and February despite being cautioned by intelligence agencies and even as the U.S. closed its borders in early-February to all foreign visitors who had recently been in China. Even on March 15, he continued to maintain that the U.S. has "tremendous control over" the virus when the number of cases was 3,000.

One may fault the WHO for not calling it a public health emergency of international concern (PHEIC) during its first meeting on January 22-23, and for the delay in calling the outbreak a pandemic. But since the last week of January, the global body has been urging all member states to contain the spread through aggressive testing, contact tracing and quarantining.

Mr. Trump has also taken credit for rejecting WHO's advice on keeping borders open to China. However, the truth is that shutting down borders goes against the grain of the International Health Regulations, which were adopted by the 58th World Health Assembly in May 2005. The Regulations, binding on all member states, provide norms for public health response to international spread of a disease while also "avoiding unnecessary interference with international traffic and trade." The WHO, be it in announcing H1N1 as a pandemic in 2009 or declaring Ebola and Zika as PHEIC, has always maintained that there should be no travel or trade restrictions on communities or countries. Its recommendation was no different when it called COVID-19 a public health emergency.

To be frank, the WHO had failed to persuade China to be more transparent, especially till January 20, when it maintained radio silence on critical information such as the number of cases, deaths, spread of the virus and human-to-human transmission. But the WHO is only an advisory and not a regulatory body and it would be naïve to fault it for China or any other country not being transparent.

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NOTEBOOK

Curating news for children during pandemic

Students remain a category not adequately acknowledged in this scenario

KRITHIKA REDDY T

"I invite you to a picnic in our living room. Dress code: casual, but face mask compulsory. Number of guests: 1. What to get: hand sanitiser, storybooks and your own snack." When this handwritten invite was dropped at my doorstep, I was surprised by the inventiveness of my neighbour's 12-year-old daughter. While the tween comes up with her own ways to beat boredom, most children find themselves stuck in hours of emptiness as the world battles a virus.

Lockdown restrictions, academic schedules gone awry and, above all, the miserable feeling of being socially adrift... COVID-19 is upending the lives of children. When schools were shut abruptly in March, we, at *The Hindu In School*, received mails and calls from anxious parents and principals asking us what our "plans" were for children during this unexpected break. Closure of schools meant suspension of the school edition. But the recurring thought that children remain a category not adequately acknowledged in today's unprecedented scenario set us off on a round of deliberations. Within hours, our design and page plan for a daily newsletter for children were ready. All this, as we navigated the uncharted path of working from home. Instead of being seated in a newsroom, shouting out instructions and suggestions to each other, we found ourselves scattered in homes across Chennai – that too with varying speeds of Internet connectivity.

But for all of us, the joy of presenting news and curating content for children overrides the hassle of working in isolation. The newsletter features a 30-minute activity sheet to keep children engaged. The response has encouraged us to bring out a two-page e-paper. But presenting news in times of a pandemic is a huge challenge. Local, national, international, environment or sports news... everything is impacted by COVID-19. To help them comprehend the situation, separate fact from factoid, and allay their fears, we decided to carry explainers.

Beating tedium

"I'm fed up of hearing 'I'm bored'," complained a parent. With children being involved in a structured learning environment for the best part of a year, it is in times like these when parents are clueless about how to engage a child. Small, creative tasks followed by some words of encouragement and appreciation can go a long way in helping children overcome the monotony. A simple journal writing exercise with creative prompts in our e-paper has set off children on imaginative journeys. Responses for the topic "Wow! I won a trip to space!" published on April 8 are filling our inbox. A student from Hyderabad called his experience "indescribable", while another from a school in Chennai imagined himself planet-hopping and crash-landing on, well, demoted icy Pluto!

My teenage son shows me an Instagram post by his friend that reads, "Everything's wrong about this summer" with a picture of Chennai's sudden balmy weather. How much Netflix party and Houseparty can children confined to homes engage in? This is a time to take a look at comprehensive online resources that focus on news literacy and creative activities that work as tedium-free education tools. They fill up some hours and help you turn a lockdown into a meaningful staycation.

The Hindu.

FROM THE ARCHIVES

FIFTY YEARS AGO APRIL 10, 1970

Mystery Death Traced to Virus

Doctors have unmasked the "mystery death" that claimed 11 young lives and turned Mannavanoor village in Kodaikanal taluk into a land of gloom. They say that a "virus fever" had attacked the children of the village for the past one week, and are confident the disease could be brought under control The District Collector, Mr. H. B. N. Shetty. who returned from a visit to the village where the tragedy occurred said there was one more death to-day (April 9) bringing the death toll to eleven children and one adult. Twenty-five children are suffering from this virus fever and they have been segregated. The panchayat office has been turned into a ward for the children. One of the children was rushed to the Kodaikanal Hospital where it is making progress. Doctors have said that the patients will recover in about seven days. A team of doctors was rushed to Mannavanoor to-day to attend on the children. The entire village is being immunised. Mr. Shetty said he was keeping touch with the doctors in the village and has alerted the Government Erskine Hospital to rush medical assistance if and when necessary. Eleven children and an adult died during the course of last week preceded by an attack of fever and convulsion.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO APRIL 10, 1920

Drunkenness and crime.

How far drunkenness can be successfully pleaded as a defence to a charge of murder was elaborately argued before the House of Lords the other day and the principle of Law established in the reversal of the judgment of the Court of Criminal Appeal by the House of Lords is of more than passing interest. Arthur Beard, a mill-worker of Cheshire, outraged and killed a girl of thirteen. He was tried on a charge of murder before Mr. Justice Ballhache and it was argued on behalf of the accused that he was so drunk that his crime should be pronounced 'man-slaughter' and not murder. Upon this issue Mr. Justice Ballhache directed the jury that they could only return a verdict of man-slaughter upon proof that the accused did not know what he was doing or he did not know what he was doing was wrong. No such proof being offered, the jury returned a verdict of guilty of murder. The case was taken to the Court of Criminal Appeal which, disagreeing with the summing up of Mr. Justice Ballhache, held that he should have put to the jury the further question whether the prisoner was so drunk that he was incapable of knowing what he was doing was dangerous.

FROM PAGE ONE

No significant rate of increase, says ICMR

The Health Ministry added that two of its labs have started whole genome sequencing of the COVID-19 virus.

Mr. Agarwal said there was no need to panic over the availability of COVID-19 personal protective equipment (PPE), but stressed these should be used rationally.

"Twenty companies are manufacturing PPE in India and orders for 1.7 crore PPE have already been placed with them. There is no reason to believe any rumours regarding PPE. Our guidelines state when, where and who should use the PPEs," he said.

"It (PPE) should be used as per requirement. We can use four N95 masks within a day, or use just one within a day. While the central government is augmenting supplies to the States, we are also requesting people to use them rationally," he said. He added that orders for 49,000 ventilators have been placed and their supply was underway. Mr. Agarwal said 10 teams of COVID-19 specialists have been sent to nine States including – Bihar, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Gujarat – to over see preparedness and ensure maximum containment of cases.

"Indian Railways has produced about six lakh reusable face masks and over 4,000 litres of hand sanitiser; it has also converted 3,250 coaches into COVID-19 isolation units with beds. Total 5,000 coaches are to be converted," Mr. Agarwal said.

Punya Srivastav, joint secretary, Home Ministry said State governments are extending support through shelters and food camps for those stranded by the lockdown.

₹15,000 cr. sanctioned to States to fight COVID-19

"We also expect States to use this money for centralised procurement of essential medical equipment and drugs required for treatment of infected patients, strengthen and build health systems to support prevention and preparedness for future disease outbreaks, setting up of laboratories and bolster surveillance activities, bio-security preparedness, pandemic research and proactively engage communities and conduct risk communication activities," Joint Secreatry in the Health Ministry Lav Agarwal said.

A release issued by the Ministry added that it was authorised to re-appropriate resources among components of the package and among the various implementation agencies – the National Health Mission, Central Procurement, Railways, Dept of Health Research/ICMR, National Centre for Disease Control – as per the evolving situation.

"We have now rapidly increased our health sector response with the rise in number of COVID-19 cases. As on date, a total of 223 labs comprising a network of 157 government and 66 private laboratories are conducting rigorous screening process. Also we has already disbursed ₹4113 crore to all the States and UTs for dealing with the emergency COVID response," the release added.

" The allotment will allow for rapidly ramping up the number of corona testing facilities, buying Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), isolation beds, ICU beds, ventilators and other essential equipment. The major share of the expenditure will be used for mounting robust emergency response, strengthening pandemic research, community engagement and risk communication and implementation, management, capacity building, monitoring and evaluation component," he added.

Kejriwal launches 'Operation SHIELD'

The Chief Minister said the Delhi government will take strict action against people misbehaving with healthcare professionals, after an incident came to light where two female doctors were mistreated at Gautam Nagar area in Hauz Khas.

"Two female doctors from Safdarjung Hospital were mistreated yesterday [Wednesday] by the locals near their residence out of a belief that they were endangering others and spreading coronavirus in the area. Instances like these will not be tolerated. These doctors and nurses are saving our lives, they are treating our people for coronavirus," Mr. Kejriwal said.

J&K tightens lockdown in wildlife zones

Move aimed at protecting large cats

PEERZADA ASHIQ
SRINAGAR

The J&K wildlife department on Thursday decided to implement a tightened lockdown in the peripheries of wildlife zones and zoos in the Valley to prevent any transmission of SARS-CoV-2 from humans to animals, especially the wild cats.

"People living close to forested and wildlife areas should refrain from moving into these areas to avoid human-wildlife interface to prevent the possibility of transmission of this infection," Rashid Naqash, Regional Wildlife Warden, Kashmir, told *The Hindu*.

"The move is made after an increased frequency of COVID-19 cases reported in Jammu and Kashmir, and the report of a tiger housed in Bronx Zoo, New York, contracting the virus," he added.

Of the 15 major types of big cats, Kashmir is home to a number of species of lion, tiger, and leopard, including the snow leopard. The lockdown has already helped in their movement to lower areas of the wildlife zones

"Mammals like leopards, big cats and primates face potential threat of spread of the infection and also transmission from humans to wild animals. People living in the fringes of forest and wildlife areas still venture into these areas for collection of firewood, morels (wild mushrooms) and other minor forest produce," said Mr. Naqash.

Umar Nazir, Veterinarian, Department of Wildlife Protection, Srinagar, said there was a need for extra precaution because the SARS-CoV-2 mutates fast and it would be difficult to know the trajectory of mutation once it travels from humans to animals.

Study flagged lockdown impact

ICMR paper said the measure could lead to 'long-lasting adverse health outcomes'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Multiple scientists of the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), currently coordinating the fight against COVID-19, co-authored a research study in February that questioned the effectiveness of a lockdown.

The study, *The 2019 novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic: A review of the current evidence*, appears online in the Indian Journal for Medical Research, which is affiliated to the ICMR. It described lockdown as a "drastic public health measure" that could lead to "long-lasting adverse health outcomes."

The review paper recommended against "coercive top-down quarantine approaches, which are driven by the authorities" and pitches for "community and civil-society led self-quarantine and self-monitoring that could emerge as more sustainable and implementable strategies in a protracted pandemic like COVID."

The piece, however, was written before February 29, when India was yet to announce the suspension of new visas, compulsory screening of all international passengers and the eventual lockdown from March 25. Though India had recorded its first cases on January 30, a steady, discernible escalation of confirmed new cases had begun only from March 3.

Multiple complications: The research paper also appeared to cast a doubt on travel bans. ▪ AFP

The study has as its lead author Pranab Chatterjee of the Translational Global Health Policy Research Cell, which is an interdisciplinary unit set up with the ICMR and the World Health Organisation (WHO). Other authors are Nivedita Gupta and Raman Gangakhedkar–the latter being the ICMR spokesperson at the Health Ministry's daily briefings–of the Epidemiology Division at the ICMR; Bhabatosh Das of the Translational Health Science and Technology Institute, Faridabad; Nazia Nagi of the Department of Microbiology at the Maulana Azad Medical College and Sayantan Banerjee of the WHO.

The review paper also didn't appear to be a votary of travel bans. "The medium and long-term impact of such travel bans remain to be seen but modelling studies suggest that in the short-term, these are unlikely to have meaningful impact on global transmission of SARS-CoV-2, unless sustained 90% travel restrictions are implemented in combination with more than 50% reduction in local transmission. Such bans may only provide a symbolic shield unless the ongoing outbreak is staunched. Ethical concerns of imposing such travel bans have also been questioned," it said.

Citations from studies

For their view on bans, the paper cited evidence from a study in the *Lancet* and another paper, which was still being reviewed, at the time it was written. Their assertions also appeared to rest heavily on the experience of measures in Wuhan, China.

Scientists say the effectiveness of the lockdown in curtailing the spread of the disease would be apparent only two-three weeks after, given the average incubation period of the virus. Since the lockdown was announced, cases rose 10-fold to around 5,700 on Wednesday.

MSMEs need huge package: Jairam

They are in distress, says Cong. leader

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Jairam Ramesh

Warning that the COVID-19 lockdown has thrown MSMEs – Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises – into deep distress, Congress leader Jairam Ramesh has urged the Centre to set up a ₹1 lakh crore corpus fund as part of a relief package for the sector.

In a letter to MSME Minister Nitin Gadkari on Thursday, Mr. Ramesh called for tax sops and other measures to ensure liquidity, preventing mass unemployment, deferring payment of dues and pausing litigation against MSMEs, apart from post-lockdown steps to improve consumer sentiment and investment appetite.

The Rajya Sabha MP noted that there were over 6.3 crore MSMEs in the country, which account for almost half of all exports and a third of the national GDP. They employed 11 crore people, and were struggling to pay wages, given the shutdown of many businesses, the sharp depression in demand and a massive cash crunch. With the vast majority of MSMEs not obligated to have PF accounts for their workers, the measures announced by the Finance Minister to support organised sector workers would not give them any relief, he said.

To ensure liquidity, Mr. Ramesh suggested loan restructuring options, and a 6-month moratorium on payment of dues.

Tax payments could also be deferred for six months, while property taxes and other local body taxes could be waived for three months.

Uddhav recommended for MLC post

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI

The Maharashtra Cabinet held a special meeting, led by Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar, on Thursday to recommend to Maharashtra Governor Bhagat Singh Koshyari to appoint Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray as MLC to one of the vacant posts in the State Council.

Minority Affairs Minister Nawab Malik said that no council election could be held for other vacant MLC seats due to the COVID-19 epidemic. "There are two vacant MLC posts which the Governor appoints, and the Cabinet requested Mr. Thackeray be appointed as the MLC," he said.

Mr. Thackeray is not a member of any House of State legislature and as per the Constitution he needs to be a member of either Assembly or Council within six months of taking oath. He took the oath on November 28 and has time till May 28.

Outfit with LeT link under scanner

5 terrorists, alleged to be its members, were gunned down in Kupwara on April 5

DEVESH K. PANDEY
NEW DELHI

A newly floated outfit, the Resistance Front, has come under the scanner of enforcement agencies for its suspected links with the banned Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT). Its five alleged terrorists were gunned down by security forces in an encounter in Jammu and Kashmir's Kupwara on April 5.

"We have reason to believe that the outfit is a front for the LeT. It has been launched to evade the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) scrutiny and avoid further sanctions. The FATF is to review Pakistan's performance in acting against terror funding at its meeting in Beijing to be held from June 21 to 26," said an official of the Enforcement Directorate.

Big threat: Theose killed in encounter are suspected to have infiltrated the Indian territory only days before. ▪ NISSAR AHMAD

The agencies are trying to unearth the channel of funding to the new outfit, which is also called JK Fighters, to identify all those involved.

Three of those killed in the encounter were from Kashmir, identified as Sajad Ahmad, Aadil Hussain and Umar Nazir. It is suspected that they crossed over to the other side in 2018 and infiltrated the Indian territory days before the encounter.

On March 23, the J&K police arrested four alleged members of the same outfit and seized weapons from them. They were identified by the police as Shafqat Ali, Ahtesham Farooq, Nisar Ahmad and Musaib Hasan.

Investigations revealed that they were allegedly receiving instructions from a Pakistan-based handler through a mobile app. The accused had also been told to recruit locals.

"Attempts are being made to project that Pakistan-based elements are not involved in any terror activity in Kashmir. However, recent encounters have revealed that regular infiltration attempts are being made," the official said.

Pak. Army shoots down Indian quadcopter

'It intruded 600 m into our territory'

MEHMAL SARFRAZ
LAHORE

The Pakistan Army on Thursday claimed to have shot down an Indian quadcopter for violating the country's airspace.

According to a press release issued by the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) in Pakistan, "The Indian quadcopter intruded 600m inside Pakistan's territory for conducting surveillance."

The release said this "blatant act was aggressively responded to by Pakistan Army troops" that shot down the quadcopter.

"Such unwarranted acts by the Indian Army are a clear violation of the established norms and the existing air agreement between the two countries and reflect the Indian Army's consistent disregard for the Ceasefire Understanding of 2003," the ISPR press release added.

India rejects claim

Rejecting the Pakistan Army's claims, Army sources denied any quadcopter having flown from the Indian side.

The veracity of the picture of the quadcopter and its impact on snow when it was shot down had to be verified, a source in the Army said.

(With inputs from Dinakar Peri)

Swiss flight to evacuate citizens and Europeans

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Switzerland's airline Swiss on Thursday launched a special flight from Zurich to Mumbai and New Delhi to repatriate its citizens and European nationals.

The flight is being operated on behalf of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA), the airline said.

An empty Airbus A330 plane arrived in Mumbai on Thursday morning and is scheduled to reach Delhi shortly after midnight. The flight from Delhi to Zurich is scheduled to leave 90 minutes later.

Earlier, the Lufthansa Airlines – which along with Swiss, Austrian Airline and Eurowings is part of the Lufthansa group – also operated nine flights to Frankfurt to help European citizens return home.

SC tells Centre to reply to plea for 4G in J&K

Doctors, patients and public unable to access latest information, says petition

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Thursday sought a response from the government on a petition to restore mobile Internet data services in Jammu and Kashmir to 4G speed as doctors, patients and the general public are unable to access the latest information, guidelines, advisories, daily updates and restrictions about COVID-19.

A Bench, led by Justice N.V. Ramana, via video conferencing, issued formal notice to the government and sought a response in a week.

The petition, filed by Foundation for Media Professionals through its president and journalist Paranjoy Guna Thakurta and represented by advocate Shadan Farasat, said the "citizens in Jammu and Kashmir should not be deprived of facilities that are already available to Indians across the country, i.e., effective and speedy internet, an indispensable tool in the struggle against COVID-19".

The plea said, "The restriction in respect of mobile internet speeds effectively amounts to a targeted rollback of such rights in respects of the residents of Jammu & Kashmir."

It pointed out that Internet in Jammu and Kashmir had been restricted for over seven months following the abrogation of the special status of the Kashmiri people under Article 370 in August 2019.

It specifically challenged an Internet restricting government order of March 26.

Toll rises to three in Dharavi

STAFF REPORTER
MUMBAI

A 70-year-old woman from Kalyanwadi in Dharavi died of COVID-19 at the KEM Hospital on Thursday morning, taking the death toll in the area to three. Dharavi also reported three new cases in the evening, increasing the tally to 17.

The woman's immediate contacts are being traced, while Kalyanwadi has been declared a containment zone. Among the new cases, two men, a 58-year-old and a 30-year-old, are residents of Mukund Nagar, which has already reported two cases. However, they have no link to the earlier cases. The other new patient is a 55-year-old man from Dr. Baliga Nagar, which reported the first COVID-19 case in Dharavi.

The Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation, which has not yet identified the index patients in the two recent deaths, has decided to screen residents of Dharavi showing symptoms of COVID-19. "I have demanded health check-ups for every resident with rapid testing," Dharavi MLA and Education Minister Varsha Gaikwad said.

Virus surges in Maharashtra

Bulk of new cases were reported from Mumbai

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
PUNE

Maharashtra recorded a new high of more than 25 deaths and 200 cases over a 24-hour span as the cumulative death toll shot to 97 and the total number of positive cases on Thursday stood at 1,364, the highest in the country, said health officials.

Nearly 50% of the country's deaths due to COVID-19 have been reported from Maharashtra.

Among the 25 new deaths 84% had high-risk co-morbidities like diabetes, asthma and hypertension, said officials while 125 persons have recovered and have been discharged so far.

New deaths

Nine new deaths were reported from Mumbai taking the city's death toll to 54, while health authorities in Pune district reported 14 deaths since Wednesday taking the district's death toll to 24.

Malegaon in Nashik and Ratnagiri in the Konkan reported their first deaths.

Malegaon also reported five positive cases, all said to have participated in the Tablighi Jamaat conclave in Delhi last month. The bulk of the 229 new cases were from Mumbai, where more than 160 persons tested positive on Thursday.

Health authorities struggled to rein in the spread of the contagion in Maximum City as the tally soared to 876 cases.

Pune registered 12 more cases, taking the district's tally to 210, while three more cases were reported from Aurangabad. Fresh cases were reported from Kolhapur, where the number of positive cases has risen to five, while eight new cases were reported from Akola, and other cases from Buldhana, Aurangabad and Yavatmal districts.

Kolhapur's latest patient, a youth from from Shahuwadi is believed to have been part of the Jamaat conclave.

Sangli exception

One silver lining was that Sangli district in western Maharashtra, where 24 members of a single family from Islampur tehsil had tested positive, has not yet shown any surge, while 14 of the 26 people have recovered and been discharged.

"We had 26 people from the same cluster who were infected with the virus of whom 24 were of the same family. However, with an effective containment strategy and the sealing-off of Islampur tehsil [the origin of these case], the number has not increased so far. We have already discharged 14 people and the remaining cases have tested negative following their 14-day incubation period test. The results of their repeat samples are now awaited," said Sangli Collector Abhijeet Chaudhari.

History helps: Jatpura gate, the entrance of Chandrapur city, has been converted into a sanitisation tunnel. ▪S. SUDERSHAN

Amid a pandemic, a salute to selfless service on streets

Conservancy staff of Tirunelveli Corporation lauded by police

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
TIRUNELVELI

Celebrations have not been part of conservancy worker M. Lakshmi's routine at the Tirunelveli Corporation.

Even during events such as Independence Day, Ms. Lakshmi and her colleagues always had to finish their work of sprucing up the VOC Stadium in Palayamkottai ahead of the actual celebrations and leave. Before leaving the stadium, their supervisor would tell them to return once the celebrations were over.

The workers would watch from a distance as the Collector hoisted the national flag and received the guard of honour from smart uniformed policemen with gleaming arms, and come back to clean up the premises again.

But on Thursday, when the police accorded a guard of honour to the conservancy workers of the Tirunelveli Corporation for their selfless work amid the ongoing COVID-19 outbreak and nationwide lockdown, it was an emotional moment for Ms. Lakshmi.

Everyday heroes: Police according a guard of honour to sanitary workers in Tirunelveli, T.N. ▪SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

The honour was given to all of them in recognition of their selfless service – the brave cleaning operation she and her colleagues are carrying out across the city when others remain indoors amid the COVID-19 threat.

"Since we felt that the conservancy workers' job should not go unnoticed, the police decided to honour them in recognition of their work for the well-being of others, as instructed by City Police Commissioner Deepak M. Damor," said S. Saravanan, Deputy Commissioner of Police (Law and Order), Tirunelveli City.

As City Health Officer of Tirunelveli Corporation Sathish led the conservancy workforcewith their protective face masks, the police presented the honour in the presence of Corporation Commissioner G. Kannan and Assistant Collector (Training) Sivaguru Prabhakaran at the Corporation's administrative office.

IN BRIEF

ESIC hospitals dedicated to COVID-19 response

NEW DELHI

Eight hospitals of the Employees' State Insurance Corporation (ESIC) with a total of 1,042 isolation beds across the country have been declared COVID-19 dedicated hospitals, ESIC said on Thursday. The ESIC hospitals in Ankleshwar and Vapi in Gujarat, Gurugram in Haryana, Udaipur in Rajasthan, Jammu in J&K, Baddi in Himachal Pradesh, Adityapur in Jharkhand and Joka in West Bengal had been turned into dedicated COVID-19 hospitals.

Orissa HC partially lifts ban on vehicle use

CUTTACK

The Orissa High Court has directed the State government to bring out a composite plan on availability of essential commodities locally so that people during the lockdown period can walk the distance to procure the commodities. "Until such a mechanism is in place during which medicines, vegetables and grocery items are available within walking distance for all, there should not be a complete ban of movement of two-wheelers in the State," the court said.

₹35 lakh award for Manipur medical staff

IMPHAL

Manipur Chief Minister N. Biren Singh on Thursday announced a reward of ₹35 lakh in appreciation of the selfless service of the doctors, nurses and other paramedics of the J.N. Institute of Medical Sciences, Imphal, who treated Manipur's first COVID-19 patient. The 23-year-old girl, who was studying in London, has been completely cured and would be discharged after a few more days of observation.

Doctor dies of COVID-19 in Madhya Pradesh

BHOPAL

A 62-year-old doctor from Indore in Madhya Pradesh died of COVID-19 on Thursday while undergoing treatment at a hospital, taking the toll owing to the illness to 23 in the city. "We received the news this morning that one of our doctor friends has also died," confirmed Pravin Jadia, Indore Chief Medical and Health Officer. The doctor, a general physician, had tested positive for the disease on Wednesday. According to the death summary, he didn't have a contact or a travel history, and had complained of fever, shortness of breath for two days.

NSA invoked against four for attacking policeman

Stones pelted at the official in Indore

STAFF REPORTER
BHOPAL

The Indore police have invoked the National Security Act against four persons who allegedly attacked a policeman while he was on lockdown enforcement duty on Tuesday.

"We have arrested six of the accused and the law has been invoked against four," said Vivek Sharma, Inspector General of Police, Indore Zone.

The constable had told the accused, who were in a vehicle, that they cannot pass through Chandan Nagar in view of the lockdown on Tuesday, but they got out and started throwing stones at him, said Mr. Sharma. "As he was alone at that point, he had to flee and call for reinforcements, which arrived immediately and arrested them," he added.

Last week, the city's police had invoked the Act against four persons for instigating residents of a locality to pelt two doctors who were tracing contacts of a patient suffering from COVID-19 with stones.

Siwan in Bihar emerges as a COVID-19 hotspot

20 of the 51 positive cases in the State are from this district; many patients have travel history to Gulf

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
PATNA

Siwan district has emerged as a COVID-19 hotspot in Bihar, with 20 of the 51 positive case in the State coming from this district alone.

Many of Siwan's positive cases have travel history to Gulf countries, and the villages they come from have been sealed by the district administration.

On Thursday, 10 of the 12 COVID-19 positive cases detected in Bihar were from Siwan district – nine from the same family and most of them women. "They all came into contact with a person who had a travel history to Oman and whose sample had earlier tested positive," said the State's Principal Health Secretary Sanjay Kumar. Many of the district's positive cases are from Raghunathpur, Barharia, Darauli and Hasanpur blocks. A large number of residents from these areas bordering the neighbouring district of Gopalganj go to Gulf countries every year to work as masons, constructions labourers and unskilled workers.

Long wait: Account holders of the Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana in a queue in Patna on Thursday. ▪RANJEET KUMAR

"The borders of villages from which the highest number of COVID-19 positive cases have come have been sealed and there is strict monitoring by district officials... it's a curfew-like situation there," Bihar's Director-General of Police (DGP) Gupteshwar Pandey told presspersons in Patna.

The district administration has sent samples of over 90 people from the affected areas for test in Patna.

"Local people have been asked to cooperate with officials and come forward to test," State Health Minister Mangal Pandey, who is himself from Siwan, said. Bihar has, so far, reported 51 COVID-19 cases. While its 'patient zero' from Munger district has died, 16 patients have recovered from the disease.

Meanwhile, the State's Disaster Management Department has said that strict action would be taken both against migrants who go missing from quarantine centres and the officials in charge of the centres.

Ahmedabad adopts South Korean model

Intensive surveillance, aggressive testing will ensure detection of cases: officials

STAFF REPORTER
AHMEDABAD

As COVID-19 cases surge, Ahmedabad is battling to contain the spread of the pandemic with intensive surveillance and aggressive testing to detect the maximum number of cases of infected people, and isolate them to curtail further spread of the disease and break the chain of transmission.

So far, 141 cases have been reported from Ahmedabad, with 58 reported on Thursday morning alone. Six persons have succumbed to their infection in the city. "Intensive surveillance and aggressive testing – these two approaches will ensure we detect as many cases as possible. One case proactively detected can mean up to ten lives saved, assuming one positive undetected person can infect around 400 people and considering about 3% mortality rate," Municipal Commissioner Vijay Nehra said on Thursday.

Viral strategy: Fire personnel spraying disinfectant at Teen Darwaza in Ahmedabad. ▪VIJAY SONEJI

The Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation (AMC) has now adopted the South Korean model of enhanced testing to ascertain the scale of the epidemic in the city of 6.5 million people.

"On 4th April, the number of samples tested from the city were 57 while after four days on 8th April, we tested 840 samples," Mr. Nehra said. He posted details of samples tested on his Twitter handle.

Along with aggressive testing, the civic body has hardened social distancing measures by strictly regulating goings and comings in the entire walled city area, from where the maximum number of cases have emerged.

The Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation (AMC) has identified 14 clusters or hotspots where intensive surveillance, mass testing and contact tracing of infected persons will be carried out with enhanced focus.

U.P. to seal hotspots in other districts

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
LUCKNOW

After sealing over 100 hotspots in 15 COVID-19 most-affected districts till April 14, Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Thursday asked officials to enforce similar measures in other districts as well even if they reported just one positive case.

Meanwhile, the number of positive cases in Uttar Pradesh reached 410 across 40 districts, said Amit Mohan Prasad, Principal Health Secretary.

In a videoconference meeting with district and health officials, Mr. Adityanath said hotspots should be sealed in all those districts that report positive cases. He expressed concern saying the virus had spread to 40 out of the 75 districts in just a month.

"Even if a single case is found in a district, identify the hotspot and seal the areas around it through barricades," Mr. Adityanath said.

While all movement within these areas would be prohibited, only medical and sanitation teams, along with those ensuring door-step delivery of essential items like milk, vegetables and other food will be allowed to operate.

No laxity

Mr. Adityanath directed officials to strictly enforce the total lockdown in the affected areas and warned them against laxity.

Pointing out that some districts were yet to conduct tests or collect samples, he asked officials to open sampling centres in all districts.

Doctor shifts to hotel after 'car quarantine'

He was worried his wife, daughter could contract COVID-19 from him

SIDHARTH YADAV
BHOPAL

After living in his car for weeks outside his home, Sachin Nayak moved into a hotel in Bhopal on Tuesday after his hospital made the arrangements.

The doctor was worried that his wife and three-year-old daughter could contract COVID-19 from him.

As cases spiralled in Bhopal, he slept in the car across the road and spoke on the phone with his family. He read, too, if time permitted, or took a stroll on the road.

After returning from duty at the government-run J.P. Hospital each day, he would plonk himself on a mattress spread over the reclined back seat. Soaps, laptops, chargers, clothes, tooth brush, towel were all inside the car.

One day at a time: An image of Dr. Sachin Nayak. As cases spiralled in Bhopal, he slept in his car. ▪SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

"It was a compulsion... I didn't have a choice," Dr. Nayak from the Anaesthesia Department at the hospital told *The Hindu*.

The hospital first tended to incoming patients, which overwhelmed its resources, and then made arrangements for doctors as other city-based hospitals eased its initial load. After performing duty in isolation wards for a few days, doctors are required to quarantine themselves to rule out the possibility of infecting patients and family members.

"Of course, you can't go back home after working in such a hazardous environment. Therefore it's better to be away," chuckles Dr. Nayak.

CM's praise

The doctor even earned the praise of Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan, who said he saluted such "warriors". He wrote on Twitter: "I and the whole of Madhya Pradesh greet warriors like you who are fighting the war against corona. If we all continue with such resolve, we will be able to win this great war more quickly. Sachin ji, salute your spirit."

ALL INDIA COUNCIL FOR TECHNICAL EDUCATION
(A STATUTORY BODY OF GOVERNMENT OF INDIA)
Nelson Mandela Marg, Vasant Kunj, New Delhi-110 070
Ph. No.: 011-29581000 Website: www.aicte-india.org

ONLINE APPLICATION IS INVITED FOR THE FOLLOWING POSITION ON DEPUTATION BASIS

Sl. No.	Name of the post	Pay Scale as per 6th CPC	Pay Matrix Level as per 7th CPC	No. of Posts (may vary)
1	Advisor-II/ Group 'A'	PB-4, Rs.37,400-67,000 GP Rs. 8,900	13-A	01

All other details such as Eligibility Criteria, Qualifications, Experience, Procedure for online submission and General Terms and Conditions of appointment will be available at AICTE's website (https://www.aicte-india.org/bulletins/advertisements) from 13.04.2020. Interested candidates may apply online for the above post on or before 05.05.2020 by uploading the requisite supporting documents. The Council reserves the right to increase or decrease the number of vacancies depending on continuation or otherwise of officers on deputation from parent department or to cancel the advertisement without assigning any reason thereto.

Advt. No. Admn.(Estt.)/04(01)/2020 Member Secretary

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TENDER

Name of Work : DESIGN, SUPPLY, INSTALLATION, TESTING AND COMMISSIONING OF INTELLIGENT TRANSPORTATION MANAGEMENT SYSTEM FOR KOCHI WATER METRO PROJECT

E Tender ID: 2020_KMRL_353069_1
Last Date of Submission : 15.05.2020

Tender documents can be downloaded from www.etenders.kerala.gov.in / www.kochimetro.org
Further corrigendum & addendum will be published only on websites

VIJAYAWADA MUNICIPAL CORPORATION (VMC)

'e' Procurement Notice No.CE-22/VMC/AE/2019-20, Dt. 09-04-2020

Name of work : Construction of Retaining walls, Approaches on both sides of RUB (Railway Under Bridge) and Electrification works like street lighting for RUB at Madhura Nagar. (EPC System with Reverse Tendering process) (2nd Call) (Estimate amount Rs. 17.42 Crores).

Contact : S.E (P), VMC, Vijayawada - 99639 95283

Further details can be seen @ 'e' procurement market place @ www.apeprocurement.gov.in

Download of bid documents starts from : 13-04-2020 from 03.30 P.M.

Last date / time for receipt of tenders : 27-04-2020 up to 4.00 P.M.

Sd/- XXXXX
CHIEF ENGINEER

IN BRIEF

Sanitation app upgraded

NEW DELHI

Sanitation app 'Swachhata-MoHUA' has been updated to include features such as reporting of suspected cases of COVID-19 and lockdown violations, a statement from the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA) said on Thursday. The app's primary use was to report sanitation-related grievances but nine features have been added to support citizens, it said. At a videoconference, MoHUA Secretary Durga Shanker Mishra announced the features.

AIUDF MLA's bail petition rejected

GUWAHATI

The District and Sessions Court in central Assam's Nagaon has rejected the bail peal of All India United Democratic Front (AIUDF) lawmaker Aminul Islam, arrested on Tuesday for sedition. The court also prescribed quarantine for him in jail. Mr. Islam was arrested under various Sections of the Indian Penal Code, including sedition, for making objectionable remarks over the COVID-19 pandemic.

Tea gardens to open in West Bengal

KOLKATA

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Thursday gave a nod to open tea gardens in the State but urged the planters to observe social distancing while plucking leaves. "People in the tea gardens usually maintain distance. But I will ask only 15% of workers to work at one time. Social distancing should be strictly maintained," Ms. Banerjee said at a meeting called at the State Secretariat in Kolkata where representatives of different industries were present.

Study points to community transmission

40% of patients with severe respiratory illness lacked travel history, suggest ICMR scientists

JACOB KOSHY
NEW DELHI

There was evidence of community transmission – or instances of COVID-19 in patients who had no established contact with someone who had picked up the disease from abroad – from as early as March 22, suggests a research study in the *Indian Journal of Medical Research*, authored by several ICMR scientists, including its head Balram Bhargava, and made public late on Thursday.

On March 24, Prime Minister Narendra Modi imposed a nationwide lockdown for three weeks. The ICMR's official position continues to be that there is no evidence for community transmission. With the case load increasing on an average of 500 per day for nearly a week, the Health Ministry and the States have stepped up surveillance and testing at hotspots and announced indefinite extensions of the 21-day lockdown.

The ICMR's testing strategy has been to check those who showed symptoms of the disease – cough, fever and laboured breathing – in those with international travel history, their contacts and health-workers tending to those with Severe Acute Respiratory Illness (SARI-a syndrome of COVID-19).

To check whether there was a wider prevalence of COVID-19, it began to randomly test samples of hospitalised SARI patients from February 15, and from March 20, all patients who exhibited the syndrome.

"When the COVID testing strategy was expanded to include all SARI patients (from March 21), a total of 4,946 samples yielded 102 (2.1%) cases. The positivity increased from zero during the initial weeks to 2.6% in the 14th week," the report notes. A total of 102 of these cases were from samples gleaned from March 22 to April 2. "Of the 102 COVID-19 positive SARI patients, 40 (39.2%) did not report any history of contact or international travel," the study underlines. Only two of the samples from February 15 to March 20 later turned positive.

Details of the States from which these cases were emerging also point to why certain districts are under increased surveillance. In 15 States, more than 1% of SARI patients were COVID-19 positive. About a third of the COVID-19 positive SARI cases did not have any history of contact with laboratory-confirmed cases or international travel, and such cases were reported from 36 districts in 15 States. These districts need to be prioritised to target COVID-19 containment activities, the study underlines. 2.3% of those SARI patients who tested positive were male, and positivity among women was only 0.8%.

The 50-59 age group was most likely to test positive for the infection.

A majority of the SARI patients were tested from Gujarat (792), Tamil Nadu (577), Maharashtra (533) and Kerala (503). These are also the States with the highest prevalence overall of COVID cases. "Tracking the spread of COVID-19 is critical to inform response activities, including testing, containment and mitigation measures. The current SARI testing strategy will complement and strengthen the routine COVID-19 surveillance activities," the study added.

Rising prevalence

The percentage of patients hospitalised with Severe Acute Respiratory Illness (SARI) who tested positive for COVID-19 went from zero in the initial weeks to **2.6%** in the 14th week, after the ICMR began testing their samples

Week	No. of SARI patients tested	No. of COVID-19 positive (%)
8-9 (February 15 - 29)	217	0 (0.0)
10-11 (March 1 - 14)	642	0 (0.0)
12 (March 15 - 21)	106	2 (1.9)
13 (March 22 - 28)	2,877	48 (1.7)
14 (March 29 - April 2)	2,069	54 (2.6)
Total	**5,911**	**104 (1.8)**

Safe passage: Perishable farm commodities take the rail route due to obstacles in road transport. ▪PTI

50 trains to carry perishable goods

States asked to begin intervention

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Fruit and vegetable farmers have been among the hardest hit by the lockdown imposed to contain the spread of COVID-19, facing major losses due to obstacles in harvesting and marketing their perishable produce.

The Centre has now directed all the States and Union Territories to implement the Market Intervention Scheme to ensure good prices for perishable crops.

It has also begun a train service to transport perishable agricultural and horticultural commodities to markets due to the obstacles in road transport. On Thursday, 50 trains were deployed for this purpose, an Agriculture Ministry statement said.

This was among the major issues raised by the State Agriculture Ministers at a videoconference with Union Minister Narendra Singh Tomar on Wednesday.

The Market Intervention Scheme is meant to protect the growers of perishable commodities from making distress sales, especially at times when prices fall below the cost of production. The scheme can be invoked by a State which is willing to bear half the losses of procurement, with the remainder being borne by the Centre, whenever there is a 10% fall in ruling market prices in comparison to the previous normal year.

The Agriculture Ministry also took steps to aid pulses and oilseeds farmers, most of whom are in dry-land areas. Farmers have been complaining that market prices for toor and urad dal, chickpeas and soyabean have been far below the minimum support prices.

The Centre has extended the procurement window for its Price Support Scheme, under which the National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation of India Ltd. (NAFED) and other agencies procure pulses and oilseeds, up to 90 days from the date of commencement of the scheme in each State. It has also hiked the daily procurement limit from 25 quintals to 40 quintals per farmer for the rabi season.

The limit ensures that all farmers get an equal chance to sell their produce. But transport restrictions make it difficult for farmers to repeatedly bring their produce for procurement, leading to this relaxation.

Indian seafarer dies of COVID-19 in Florida

He was taken from ship to hospital

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI

Even as 17,000 Indian seafarers wait for a policy to be finalised for their return, a Mumbai family has lost a 48-year-old earning member, Andrew Fernandes.

A Kalina resident, Mr. Fernandes, working as an assistant security officer on cruiseliner Costa Favolosa, died of COVID-19 in Miami, Florida on April 5. He is survived by wife Maria and two sets of twins, boys studying in classes I and girls in class V. On March 29, Mr. Fernandes was medically disembarked and transferred through a tender boat to Larkin Community Hospital in Miami, Florida.

Mr. Fernandes's family and friends said his condition worsened and the doctors had to sedate him and put him on ventilator support after he contracted pneumonia and lung infection.

The shipping company in an email to Ms. Adelaide said they did all that was possible to assist in transferring her brother to another hospital but could not accelerate the process as there were no beds available due to COVID-19. Reports said 400 Indians are stuck off the Miami coast.

News channels seek time to pay Prasar Bharati carriage fee

They cite rising costs and falling advertisement revenues

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Amidst the ongoing lockdown, the News Broadcasters Association (NBA), an association of 77 news channels in India, has sought delayed payment of the carriage fee for slots on the DD Free Dish from the Information and Broadcasting Ministry .

The DD Free Dish reaches 30 million households, who get 80 channels without paying any monthly subscription fee to cable TV providers. DD Free Dish has slots for 80 channels, out of which 26 slots are reserved for Doordarshan-run channels and the remaining 54 slots are open for bidding by private channels.

In a recent letter, NBA President Rajat Sharma wrote to the Union Minister for Information and Broadcasting Prakash Javadekar that against the backdrop of the coronavirus pandemic and lockdown, news broadcasters were facing a financial crisis as operation costs have shot up while advertising release orders are being cancelled. "Advertising inventory bookings are lower than 50% even for the top-rated news channels – advertising is a single source of earning for news broadcasters and this will lead to a serious cash flow problem," Mr. Sharma wrote.

The payment for slots on carriage fee was due on March 31 and the NBA sought it to be deferred until July. According to sources, the NBA and Prasar Bharati are working out an alternative model which, sources said, would require the channels to pay an interest of 5.7% per annum. This has left the broadcasters miffed.

INTERVIEW | AMARINDER SINGH

'PM will take a call on lockdown'

Bid to give a communal touch will damage efforts to fight COVID-19: Punjab CM

AMIT BARUAH

Amarinder Singh, *Punjab Chief Minister, said a "final decision" to extend the lockdown beyond April 14, Prime Minister Narendra Modu had stated, would be taken on April 11 in consultation with the Chief Ministers. According to him, any bid to give a "communal touch" to the spread of COVID-19 from the Tablighi Jamaat centre in New Delhi would be "highly damaging" to the efforts to fight the pandemic. Excerpts from an email interview:*

Do you favour continuing the current stringent lockdown after it ends at the midnight of April 14?

■ It all depends on how things stand at that time, but there is a general sense among various Chief Ministers that, given the current graph of the virus, the lockdown may need to be extended. The Prime Minister has said a final decision will be taken on April 11, in consultation with the Chief Ministers. My understanding is that stringent restrictions would need to be continued for some more time, in whatever form.

If not, what are the other kinds of curbs that can be put in place by Punjab and other States to deal with the pandemic?

■ Well, as I said, some restrictions would need to be put in place if we decide against extension of the curfew/lockdown. Apart from creating containment zones in the hotspots and sealing them, we need to ensure that strict social distancing is strictly implemented, which means not everyone can go to their offices/businesses/shops at the same time. We may need to open some more industries, but that would also depend on the safety protocols and the situation, as we go forward. In any case, COVID-19 is unlikely to disappear overnight, so whenever things improve the restrictions will have to be lifted in a staggered manner to ensure there is no overcrowding, safe distance continues to be maintained, people wear masks when going out.

There's little doubt that the Tablighi centre in Nizamuddim added to the spread of the novel coronavirus in Delhi. But Hindutva elements are trying to give it a communal colour. What's your view on this?

■ We are all facing an unprecedented crisis, which governments around the world are coming together to tackle. To give the matter a communal touch at this critical time is not only irresponsible but also highly damaging to our efforts to combat the pandemic. Of course, what happened in Nizamuddin was a disastrous and total failure of the Delhi government. Let us not divert ourselves from the main task – of fighting the virus and overcoming it – by making it a communal affair.

Are you satisfied with the quantum of assistance being provided to the States by the Centre?

■ Not at all. The Central government needs to understand that everything, from medical assistance to the people to setting up of necessary facilities and ensuring equipment, as well as managing the lockdown/curfew, has to be done by the States on the ground. That needs a huge amount of resources, which the States do not have. In Punjab, for instance, we have not even received our pending GST arrears, despite our repeated requests and despite the fact that we have no other source of income right now, given that VAT and taxes have all dried up. The Centre has to pitch in. What they have given us so far is nowhere close to what we need. We have only received ₹296 crore against the MGNREGA account, ₹632 crore towards the Finance Commission grant.

Stringent restrictions will need to be continued for some more time, in whatever form

On account of disaster relief, we have received a meagre ₹225 crore. How do we manage with this? The GST sum pending with the Centre is ₹6,752.83 crore, which is the bulk amount pending with them. We need that urgently and we need a special economic package to tide over the immediate crisis and then to revive economy/industry in the post-COVID-19 scenario.

Have you been able to provide personal protection gear to doctors and hospitals on COVID-19 duty?

■ Yes, we have provided protective gear at all government hospitals. We had purchased 15,000 PPE kits, and 14,000 have been distributed. We have ordered another 2 lakh kits to prepare for bigger exigencies. Of the 80,000 N95 masks, 60,000 have been distributed, while of the 42 lakh triple-layer masks purchased, 40 lakh have been distributed.

We have ordered another 2 lakh N95 and 55 lakh triple-layer masks. Not just the doctors, we want to ensure that all our front-line warriors, including police personnel and sanitation workers, are fully protected.

Delhi has gone in for random testing. Will Punjab follow suit?

■ Definitely. Now that the ICMR has given permission for rapid testing, we will be starting that in a couple of days, as soon as we start getting the first set of kits from the Centre.

We have ordered nearly 10 lakh such kits, and we expect the first bunch in the next two days. We will be focussing on the hotspots first and then maybe expand to other areas. As of now, hotspots have been seen in certain pockets of SBS Nagar, Hoshiarpur, Jalandhar, Pathankot and Mansa districts, along with two areas of SAS Nagar.

Punjab has a large number of people living abroad. Have you been able to do contact-tracing of all those people who have come from abroad?

■ Approximately 95,000 persons were screened at international airports and land checkposts in the State before curfew. Self-declaration forms of all passengers were filled and all were examined. All passengers were home-quarantined, while five symptomatic persons were traced during screening and were admitted to isolation wards of hospitals. Subsequently, the Government of India shared a list of around 55,000 passengers with us – these were people who had arrived since January 2020. The passengers were home-quarantined, and posters have been pasted outside these houses and they are being tracked by the police. We have appealed to all passengers who have come to Punjab to self-report.

The facts about furry friends and COVID-19

'No clear evidence of human-to-animal transmission'

NARAYAN LAKSHMAN
CHENNAI

While the WHO has initiated a study into the possibility of the novel coronavirus infection spreading from humans to domestic animals after a four-year-old female Malayan tiger at the Bronx Zoo became the first of its kind to test positive for the virus, some veterinarians have argued that there is so far no clear evidence of human-to-animal reverse transmissions.

At the Bronx zoo, a total of four tigers and three African lions were also said to have developed a dry cough, a typical symptom of COVID-19 patients. Further, a study published this week on the website of the journal *Science*, found that ferrets could also potentially become infected with SARS-CoV2, the virus that causes the COVID-19 disease. The study, however added that dogs, chickens, pigs and ducks are not likely to get infected.

Juliet Decaestecker, an India-based veterinarian from Belgium, and author of the book *Healthy Dog, Happy You*, said, "Despite the number of global cases of COVID-19 surpassing the one million mark... we have only seen examples of two dogs and one cat in Hong Kong, and a tiger in New York, that had positive results of tests for infection."

Speaking to *The Hindu*, Dr. Decaestecker said PCR testing conducted in these cases only concludes that virus material is present – a case of passive contamination – but that does not necessarily imply an ongoing infection in the animal that could be further transmitted. To be sure that there is an infection in the animal, antibodies testing must be performed.

Purrfect pal: For many, pets provide companionship and fun during the long days of lockdown. ▪PTI

The presence of the coronavirus in case of the Bronx zoo tiger, Nadia, was said to be due to the animal's exposure via contact with a zoo employee who was actively shedding the virus.

At the broader, species level, "We can find virus fragments in the stomach or aerial pathways in dogs, but this could also be the virus... of the sick owner in close contact with the dog," Dr. Decaestecker noted.

Different viruses

In fact, domestic animals including dogs naturally carry other coronaviruses in their gastro-intestinal, respiratory tract, which are different from the novel coronavirus behind COVID-19, she said.

Even if a companion animal presents respiratory or gastro-intestinal signs they should not be routinely tested for COVID-19 at this time, lest it exacerbates the scarcity of testing kits for humans, Dr. Decaestecker said.

Instead, the animal's owner should first consult with the veterinarian via phone to determine whether an in-clinic examination is needed. Where appropriate, testing for infectious diseases that commonly cause companion animal illness should be conducted.

If a new, concerning illness is observed that cannot be otherwise explained, and the companion animal has had close contact with a person with confirmed or suspected COVID-19 infection, the vet should contact the state public health veterinarian or designated health official to discuss whether or not there is a need to test that animal for COVID-19, Dr. Decaestecker said.

She said that in many cases there would be no reason to remove pets from homes even if COVID-19 has been identified in members of the household, unless there is risk that the pet itself is not able to be cared for appropriately.

"During this pandemic emergency, pets and people each need the support of the other and veterinarians are there to support the good health of both," Dr. Decaestecker pointed out.

BEL, AIIMS develop remote monitor

The system seeks to reduce the risk of exposure to COVID-19 for health workers

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
BENGALURU

A remote patient health monitoring system that can be installed at homes or hospitals promises to spare healthcare workers the risk of exposure to COVID-19, while attending to persons undergoing isolation either for suspected infection or as precautionary quarantine.

Jointly developed by Bharat Electronics Ltd. and the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), Rishikesh, the system reduces the need for scarce personal protective gear. "The solution aims to significantly reduce the risk of exposure to infection for healthcare workers," BEL said in a statement on Thursday. "It is also expected to reduce the increasing demand of PPE [personal protective equipment] and logistics," the public sector company added.

Monitors inside hospitals can be used for the most serious cases of infection.

The device has non-invasive sensors to measure the main parameters of a person who may be a COVID-19 patient: temperature, pulse rate, SPO2 or saturated oxygen level, and respiration rate.

BEL said it developed a proof of concept model of the system based on inputs given by AIIMS - Rishikesh. The public enterprise used its expertise in network centric and IoT (Internet of things) systems.

A mobile app and Web browser have been developed. People who show symptoms of infection get enrolled with AIIMS - Rishikesh.

"Patient health parameters, along with patient location, are uploaded to a centralised command & control centre on cloud using either the patient's mobile phone or integral GSM SIM card," BEL said. "The use of cloud will facilitate seamless scaling of the database of COVID-19 suspects/patients," it added. When the monitored parameters exceed preset thresholds, the software would send out alerts to the medical officers.

Tata Sky, Airtel to air channels on education

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

With schools remaining shut, the government has coaxed two leading DTH providers – Tata Sky and Airtel – to air the educational channels Swayam Prabha it runs.

The channels were earlier available only on Doordarshan-DTH, Dish TV and Jio TV App. "The learners can continue their education and learning even sitting at home in this difficult situation arisen due to unfortunate outbreak of COVID-19," HRD Minister Ramesh Pokhriyal said.

Goa denies entry to liner with Indian crew

Ship will go to Mumbai, says Minister

ADITYA ANAND
MUMBAI

The Goa government on Thursday refused berthing permission to a cruise liner with 500 Indian crew members on board citing guidelines of the Union Ministry of Home Affairs.

The State government held a meeting after the cruise liner with the Indian crew members turned up off its coast.

Following the meeting, Goa's Ports minister Michael Lobo said that the ship would now sail to Mumbai where the crew would be quarantined at the port. There were 100 Goan seafarers on board and the government would send buses to bring them back to the State, Mr. Lobo added.

"The cruise ship with 100 Goan crew members, which is anchored off Goa coast, will be sent to Mumbai where they will be off loaded and quarantined for 14 days. Once in Goa they will be quarantined for another 14 or 21 days and tested for COVID-19," Mr. Lobo said.

Mumbai Port Trust officials, however, said that permissions were yet to be received with regard to allowing the vessel to berth at the port and letting its crew disembark, the checks they would need to undergo and for the quarantining within the port premises.

"There is a proposal and that is about it," said a senior port official, who spoke on condition of anonymity. "Verifications are on and no permissions have been granted," the official added.

Goa Chief Minister Pramod Sawant said that the Captain of Ports had received a message about the vessel on Thursday. "We are following protocols of the Ministry of Home Affairs in regard to this issue," he said.

Russian rescued from cave

Lifeguard on Goan beach spotted the man in distress

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI

Lifeguards rescued a Russian national from a rapidly flooding coastal cave at Keri in north Goa on Thursday.

Officials said lifeguard Girish Talkar of Drishti Marine stationed at the Keri beach area spotted the man in a small narrow cave along the shoreline during a routine patrol.

The Russian, later identified as Valenti, was in obvious distress as the cave was flooding quickly due to the high tide. He also appeared to be physically challenged and was unable to walk.

Mr. Talkar immediately called for back-up. Meanwhile, ambulance and police patrol team were alerted.

Soon afterwards, lifeguards Dhako, Jayesh and Vikram joined Girish in the rescue operation. Valenti was evacuated on a spine board and brought to shore.

Timely move: The Russian was found in a rapidly flooding cave in north Goa on Thursday. ▪SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

His vitals were checked and he appeared to be normal.

He was shifted to the ambulance and transported to the Public Health Centre at Mapusa.

Contact was later established with Valenti's brother who lives in Russia. The Russian embassy was also informed. Many tourists have been stranded in Goa due to the lockdown to curb the spread of COVID-19.

'Gamosa' evolves from memento to mask in Assam

The ubiquitous decorative cotton towels are being repurposed as protective gear to fight the coronavirus

RAHUL KARMAKAR
GUWAHATI

The COVID-19 pandemic has made the ubiquitous *gamosa*, a decorative cotton towel, evolve from memento to mask.

For Pratibha Das, Mamani Malakar, Rebati Baishya and other members of the non-profit Hargila Army in Pacharia, a village 25 km northwest of Guwahati, sewing the *gamosa* masks is more than just keeping themselves engaged to beat the lockdown inactivity.

They have been designing the masks with motifs of the endangered *hargila* (greater adjutant stork), rhino and elephant to add a dash of wildlife conservation to the protection of human faces.

"We had ordered thousands of *gamosa*s to be made and sold by the women during the Rongali Bihu festival. Since lockdown has put paid to the Bihu celebrations, the women turned the towels into masks for use during the COVID-19 crisis," Purnima Devi Barman, stork conservationist and founder of the Hargila Army, told *The Hindu* on Thursday.

The Hargila Army women, however, were not the first to improvise. A Fine Arts student named Phanindra Pradhan had transformed the *gamosa* after pharmacies in his town of Gohpur ran out of masks.

Unique motifs: Members of a non-profit organisation have designed these masks from *gamosas*. ▪SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

"We wash the *gamosa*s in disinfectant before ironing and stitching them into masks that are sold at ₹50 apiece," Mr. Pradhan said, adding that he has been receiving regular orders.

Assam has traditionally had two types of *gamosas* – the *uka* or plain kind used to wipe sweat or dry the body after a bath, and the *phulam*, which is decorated with floral motifs to be gifted as a memento or during festivals such as Bihu.

Cultural identity

Cultural historians say the *gamosa* came to symbolise Assamese nationalism in 1916 when the Asom Chatra Sanmilan, a students' organisation was formed, followed by the Assam Sahitya Sabha, a literary body. Wearing the *phulam gamosa* around the neck became a standard for cultural identity.

"The Assamese way of life is woven in the *gamosa*, whether plain or decorative. From a cultural symbol, it became a political symbol before designers explored its potential as dress material such as distinctive shirts," said B.K. Goswami, a retired banker and writer.

The *gamosa*'s graph as a symbol of protest rose during the anti-foreigners Assam Agitation from 1979 to 1985.

The extremist United Liberation Front of Asom too used the towel with "revolutionary" motifs.

The *gamosa* staged a comeback as a political statement with the protests against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act from mid-December 2019. The protests have continued intermittently after the COVID-19 pandemic struck.

Impersonators pose as policemen and doctors

Eight arrested in Assam for cheating

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GUWAHATI

COVID-19 may not have hit Assam badly but has led to a rise in cases of impersonation for making a quick buck.

In the past two days, the police caught at least eight people across the State for impersonating the men in uniform and other government officials to extract money from trucks carrying essentials and shops in the rural areas that open on the sly.

On Wednesday, the police in eastern Assam's Jorhat district arrested three men who had taken fraudulence to another level - by posing as doctors assigned to disseminate awareness and test people for possible infection for a fee.

The trio had been operating for some days in villages around Jorhat town.

"We caught them from the Titabor area on the basis of public complaints. Apart from conning people by posing as doctors and showing them their photos with ambulances, they also tried to pass off as officials and seized gutkha packets to demand money from shops," Jorhat Superintendent of Police Mrinal Talukdar said.

Diganta Neog (25), Ujjwal Bora (24) and Biswajyoti Dutta (18) were produced before a court and sent to jail.

THE HINDU CROSSWORD 12906

Log on to crossword.thehindu.com for more puzzles

To play an interactive version of this crossword online, scan the QR code

ACROSS

1 Strong criticism on aidman (13)
10 Degradation for opposition; leader is sacked by Australia (9)
11 Bury within terminal's limits (5)
12 Relationship emerged naturally, engagement with leaders to start again (5)
13 Underlying layer at the top of the surface had later burst into pieces (9)
14 Order from princess; king to wear shoddy clothes (6)
16 Evidence is that, leaving vice leads to paradise (4)
19 Foodshop opening day – eighteenth, lavish inauguration (4)
20 Keep company with a saint; endless golden time (6)
25 Barbaric rule again? It's a pain (9)
26 Shirt and tie is a motif, perhaps (5)
27 Old counter of 19 is greased (5)
28 Not customised? It's costly, return by end of day. Unreasonable final price (9)
29 State getting support on budget to include an acquisition (13)

DOWN

2 Ballet dancer is terribly skinny, needs to take some juice and iodine (8)
3 Bird is second umpire at Perth ground to retire (5)
4 Most boring diets served across Romania (6)
5 Conferred a rank and honoured in the end (8)
6 Skye as seen in laptop (5,4)
7 Forbid wife to leave, father to leave, pay expenses (6)
8 Fought with ally to buy a posh car (6)
9 Preamble to verse about writing (5)
15 Former criminal moves ahead and joins English regiment to become king (9)
17 Drink's great, have pure shot; make it more exciting (6,2)
18 Even schoolboy gets a luxury watch in an American state (8)
21 Sometimes crosswords can be this, tough at the start on perimeter, in the end lack substance (6)
22 Mails land here. Waste bin? Nothing wrong (5)
23 Exercise? Sprain at the top (4-2)
24 Could be 18, almost fumbles on one and two (6)
26 Railway goes bankrupt. Central ministers involved in game in a private meeting (5)

(set by Afterdark)

SUDOKU

	5			6	2	7		
						1		2
7		9	3					
3				8				
	8		7		9		2	
				5				7
					6	2		8
2		6						
		3	4	2			9	

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DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★★

Solution to puzzle 12905

Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

1	2	3	6	8	4	5	7	9
6	8	7	9	5	2	3	4	1
9	4	5	3	1	7	8	6	2
5	1	8	7	4	3	2	9	6
3	6	2	1	9	5	4	8	7
7	9	4	2	6	8	1	3	5
4	5	1	8	7	6	9	2	3
2	7	9	4	3	1	6	5	8
8	3	6	5	2	9	7	1	4

FAITH

Glory follows suffering

The Red Cross is an expression of caring for soldiers wounded in a war field, and the Blood-wet Cross of Lord Jesus Christ on Good Friday is an expression of God's "agape" love for mankind battling their sinful nature that leads to eternal death. The Bible says that the "wages of sin is death" and also that "without shedding of blood there is no remission" (Hebrews 9:22), and mankind's redemption from this precondition is made possible by the sinless precious blood of Lord Jesus shed on Calvary's Cross. Christ died a painful death on the hill of Calvary, hanging on a rugged cross, pinned to it by three nails, his head pierced by a crown of thorns; and bleeding from head to toe.

But the Cross is not a symbol of shame but one of glory for anyone who accepts the salvation provided by the sacrificial death of the Son of God.

There was no sin in Jesus, declared Pontius Pilate the Governor; yet He was condemned due to the jealousy of the Chief Priests, but these events fit perfectly into God's eternal plan for mankind's redemption. Lord Jesus became triumphant over death, when he rose from the dead on the third day (celebrated as Easter), leaving the sealed sepulchre (guarded by Roman soldiers) empty.

The mystery and message of Good Friday and Easter will unfold in the life of anyone seeking the living and loving saviour with a childlike heart. The life of Mother Teresa, who saw God in the suffering masses, is an example. To carry one's cross daily is not easy, but the message from Good Friday and Easter is that there is glory awaiting anyone who would wear the crown of thorns on earth in a spirit of service.

T. Prabhakara Rao

World faces new 'Great Depression'

IMF anticipates the worst economic fallout since the 1930s; 17 million workers lose jobs in U.S.

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
WASHINGTON

World powers scrambled on Thursday to build a global response to the human tragedy and once-in-a-century economic collapse caused by the coronavirus epidemic, as death tolls in the U.S. and Europe soared higher.

In a locked-down New York, the UN Security Council was to meet on the pandemic for the first time. And, by video conference, EU Finance Ministers are wrangling over how to bail out their worst hit members Italy and Spain.

"We anticipate the worst economic fallout since the Great Depression," said IMF chief Kristalina Georgieva, warning that all but a handful of countries will see incomes fall and urging governments to provide "lifelines" to businesses and households alike.

The U.S. Federal Reserve tossed out just such a rescue to Americans, with chairman Jerome Powell announcing financing facilities of $2.3 trillion "to provide as much relief and stability as we can during this period of constrained economic activity".

He warned, however, that

COVID-19

the U.S. economy is moving "with alarming speed" towards "very high unemployment". Another 6.6 million U.S. workers filed for unemployment benefits last week, new data showed on Thursday, meaning that nearly 17 million workers have lost their jobs since mid-March.

On the spiritual front, Pope Francis was preparing to celebrate Maundy Thursday with The Mass of the Lord's Supper, but he was to be unable to perform the tradition of washing the feet of the faithful in case of infection.

Meanwhile, the number of worldwide cases of the novel coronavirus since it spread from China earlier this year topped 1.5 million, according to an AFP tally. More than 88,981 people have died.

Worst recession

Alongside the personal tragedies and the pressure on overburdened hospitals, there has been a stark economic toll, with the World Trade Organization warning of the "worst recession of our lifetimes."

The worst-hit countries in Europe – the worst-hit continent – are Italy and Spain, where daily death tolls are now down from their peaks but still running high, despite strict lockdowns.

In Italy, the country's youngest COVID-19 patient, a two-month-old baby girl, was reportedly released from hospital, a moment of hope in a country with 17,669 dead.

Madrid and Rome are seeking assistance from EU partners to rebuild their economies. EU finance ministers were to meet later Thursday by videoconference for crisis talks to try to agree terms to allow hard-hit members to access funds.

Keeping safe: A woman putting cloth masks for drying before distributing them for free in Tangerang, on the outskirts of Jakarta, Indonesia, on Thursday. ▪REUTERS

Boris Johnson's health 'improving'

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
LONDON

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson's health "continues to improve" on his fourth day in COVID-19 intensive care, his spokesman said on Thursday, while the government prepared to extend a nationwide lockdown.

"The Prime Minister had a good night and continues to improve in intensive care at St Thomas' Hospital. He's in good spirits," the spokesman said, adding that Mr. Johnson was not working.

While much of the focus in Britain has been on Mr. Johnson's health, there is also concern over the numbers of people infected with the virus.

Boris Johnson

Britain announced another 881 deaths of people testing positive for coronavirus in Thursday's daily update, bringing the country's total toll to 7,978. The total number of cases stood at 61,516.

Senior Ministers were to discuss extending strict social distancing measures rolled out on March 23, during a daily coronavirus response meeting.

Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab, who is standing in for Mr. Johnson, will lead the "war cabinet".

However, Ministers have made it clear no announcement on the status of the lockdown– rolled out for an initial three weeks – would be made until that period has ended on Monday, at the earliest.

100 doctors dead in Italy

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
ROME

One hundred Italian doctors have died of the coronavirus so far, FNOMCeO health association said.

The toll includes retired doctors the government began calling in a month ago to help fight the virus that has claimed 17,669 lives in Italy. Media reports estimate that 30 nurses and nursing assistance have also died of COVID-19.

Spain sees drop in deaths

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
MADRID

Spain's daily death toll fell to 683 on Thursday, after rising for two days. The toll was down from 757 on Wednesday.

The country, one of the worst hit by the pandemic, has now recorded 15,238 deaths. The number of daily new cases also dropped slightly, bringing the total to 1,52,446.

'New cases drop in Iran'

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
TEHRAN

Iran's Health Ministry on Thursday said 117 new deaths took the total to 4,110. But spokesman Kianoush Jahanpour said the latest figures showed there was a downward trend in the number of new coronavirus infections.

"We have identified 1,634 new cases, bringing the total number of confirmed cases to 66,220."

Google must pay news firms for content, says France

Regulator tells tech giant to negotiate with publishers

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
PARIS

France's competition regulator said on Thursday that Google must start paying media groups for displaying their content, ordering it to begin negotiations after refusing for months to comply with Europe's new digital copyright law.

The agency said it "requires Google, within three months, to conduct negotiations in good faith with publishers and news agencies on the remuneration for the re-use of their protected contents".

"This injunction requires that the negotiations effectively result in a proposal for remuneration from Google" that must be applied retroactively to October 2019, when France became the first country to ratify the EU law.

The new rule on so-called "neighbouring rights" is designed to ensure news publishers are compensated when their work is shown on websites, search engines and social media platforms.

Google was told to conduct talks within three months.

But Google, which effectively has a lock on Internet searches in Europe, refused to comply, saying that snippets of articles, pictures and videos would be shown in search results only if media groups consent to let the tech giant use them at no cost.

If they refuse, only a headline and a bare link to the content will appear, Google said, almost certainly resulting in a loss of visibility and potential ad revenue for the publisher.

Media groups and news agency Agence France-Presse lodged a complaint with the competition regulator last November.

The regulator said on Thursday that "Google's practices... were likely to constitute an abuse of a dominant position, and caused serious and immediate harm to the press sector".

Google said that since the new European copyright law came into force in France last year it had been "engaging with publishers to increase our support and investment in news".

Google's vice-president for News, Richard Gingras, said in a statement: "We will comply with the (French competition regulator's) order while we review it and continue those negotiations".

Oil producers put heads together over output cuts

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
LONDON

Top oil producers started a crucial meeting on Thursday to discuss a possible cut in output after a collapse in demand due to the coronavirus and a Saudi-Russian price war caused the market to crash.

The videoconference meeting began between OPEC, its OPEC+ allies, including Russia and other key non-members.

Oil prices rose sharply as the meeting opened, extending earlier big gains, but then fell back again later to post more modest gains as nervous traders took profits.

The headquarters of the OPEC in Vienna. ▪REUTERS

The meeting is seen as the best chance of providing support to prices which have been wallowing near two-decade lows.

Experts warn that without concerted action the commodity risks a steep sell-off.

Last week U.S. President Donald Trump claimed Russia and Saudi Arabia would step back from their standoff and agree to slash output.

Then OPEC kingpin Saudi Arabia called for an urgent meeting of producers "to try to reach a fair deal" to "stabilise the oil market" following a phone call between its Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman and Mr. Trump.

Thursday's meeting intends to conclude an agreement to cut production by between 10 and 15 million barrels per day, Kuwait's Oil Minister Khaled al-Fadhel said in an interview with the *Kuwaiti Al-Rai* daily.

ELSEWHERE

Space station crew dock at ISS

ALMATY

A three-man crew docked successfully at the International Space Station on Thursday. Anatoly Ivanishin and Ivan Vagner of Roscosmos and NASA's Chris Cassidy reached the ISS at 1413 GMT, just over six hours after blasting off from the Baikonur Cosmodrome, where COVID-19 caused changes to pre-launch protocol. The departing crew neither faced questions from a large press pack nor were waved off by family and friends. AFP

'Half a billion people face poverty due to virus'

Richer countries should help: Oxfam

ASSOCIATED PRESS
LONDON

Around half a billion people could be pushed into poverty as a result of the economic fallout from the pandemic unless richer countries take "urgent action" to help developing nations, a leading aid organisation warned on Thursday.

Oxfam has urged richer countries to step up their efforts to help the developing world. Failing to do so, it added, could set back the fight against poverty by a decade and by as much as 30 years in some areas, including Africa and West Asia.

"The devastating economic fallout of the pandemic is being felt across the globe," said Jose Maria Vera, Oxfam International interim executive director. "But for poor people in poor countries who are already struggling to survive there are almost no safety nets to stop them falling into poverty."

The report, which is based on research at King's College London and the Australian National University, warns that between 6% and 8% of the global population could be forced into poverty.

Spy chief Kadhemi named Iraq's third PM-designate this year

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
BAGHDAD

Iraqi President Barham Saleh nominated spy chief Mustafa Kadhemi on Thursday as the country's third Prime Minister-designate this year, moments after his predecessor ended his bid to form a government.

Mr. Kadhemi, the 53-year-old head of the National Intelligence Service, has ascended to the role as Iraq faces a budget crisis brought on by the collapse in world oil prices and the spread of the novel coronavirus.

"This is a huge responsibility, and a difficult task," said Mr. Saleh in his nominating speech, describing Mr. Kadhemi as someone with integrity and reason.

Widespread support

His nomination was attended by Ministers, political rivals and even the UN representative in Iraq, indicating widespread support for Mr. Kadhemi that neither of the previous PM-designates had enjoyed.

Moments before the ceremony, his predecessor Adnan Zurfi announced he was withdrawing his candidacy due to "internal and external reasons". Mr. Zurfi had been staunchly opposed by hardline Shiite factions with close ties to Iran, which enjoys vast influence in Baghdad. Any candidate for the premiership, observers say, must have a green light from Iraq's Shiite, Kurdish and Sunni communities – as well as Iran and its rival, the U.S.

Mr. Kadhemi was able to secure that support after weeks of lobbying that peaked in a flurry of meetings in Baghdad over the last week, sources said. Among them were gatherings attended by Iranian General Ismail Qaani, who has headed the Quds Force foreign operations unit since a U.S. drone strike killed his predecessor Qasem Soleimani.

Saudi-led ceasefire in Yemen's long war begins

No decision yet from Houthi leadership

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
RIYADH

The Saudi-led coalition began a unilateral ceasefire in Yemen's long war on Thursday, saying it hoped the initiative to prevent coronavirus would lead to a wider political solution.

The Iran-backed Houthi rebels have not formally responded to the the coalition's declaration of a two-week pause in the five-year conflict. However Yasser Al-Houri, secretary of the Houthis' political council, poured cold water on the idea, saying that the Saudis "are dishonest and violate every truce they announce".

"The announcement of this truce is to evade the true national vision that offers real solutions," he said, referring to a roadmap for peace that the rebels unveiled on Wednesday.

If the ceasefire does hold, it would be the first breakthrough since the warring parties agreed to a UN-brokered truce in Hodeida during talks in Sweden in late 2018. The UAE, a key ally in the coalition which drew down its troops last year, applauded the Saudi move as "wise and responsible".

Most New York virus cases came from Europe

CARL ZIMMER

New research indicates that the coronavirus began to circulate in the New York area by mid-February, weeks before the first confirmed case, and that travellers brought in the virus mainly from Europe, not Asia.

"The majority is clearly European," said Harm van Bakel, a geneticist at Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai, who co-wrote a study awaiting peer review.

A separate team at NYU Grossman School of Medicine came to strikingly similar conclusions, despite studying a different group of cases. Both teams analysed genomes from coronaviruses taken from New Yorkers starting in mid-March.

The research revealed a previously hidden spread of the virus that might have been detected if aggressive testing programmes had been put in place.

On January 31, President Donald Trump barred foreign nationals from entering the country if they had been in China during the prior two weeks.

People at a makeshift hospital under construction at the USTA Billie Jean King National Tennis Center. ▪AFP

It would not be until late February that Italy would begin locking down towns and cities, and March 11 when Mr. Trump said he would block travellers from most European countries. But New Yorkers had already been travelling home with the virus. "People were just oblivious," said Adriana Heguy, a member of the NYU team. NY TIMES

What's next for Bernie Sanders's 'revolution'?

The Vermont Senator continues to push Democratic politics to the Left

STANLY JOHNY

Bernie Sanders, the insurgent American politician who pushed the Democratic Party to the left on several issues, on Wednesday dropped out of the race for party nomination. This was the second straight election Mr. Sanders is ending up as a runner-up in the Democratic nomination contest. The 78-year-old Senator from Vermont may not get another chance to bid for the White House, but the movement he launched, which he calls a political revolution, has already shaken up the Democratic Party.

Historical parallels

There were a few politicians in the U.S. who left lasting imprints on the political system despite their failure to win the top office. Historian Michael Kazin has compared Mr. Sanders to the late 19th century Democratic insurgent William Jennings Bryan and the 1972 Democratic candidate George McGovern. Bryan, who first won the Democratic party nomination in 1896, was a critic of the gold standard, a champion of inflationary policies and a consistent critic of "American imperialism". Bryan lost all three White House bids – in 1896, 1900 and 1908. Despite these failures, writes Mr. Kazin, the Democratic Party "embraced the pro-regulation, anti-monopoly, pro-union stand of this eloquent politician called 'the Great Commoner'."

In 1972, McGovern defeated the establishment favourites to win the nomination, but lost to incumbent Richard Nixon in the presidential election. When McGovern was running a high-spirited liberal campaign, he was called by critics a "communist apologist". Despite his massive loss to Nixon, his anti-war positions would resonate through the American people in the years that followed. President Nixon himself would end the Vietnam war that had been lost for years.

Bernie Sanders

Political legacy

Like Bryan and McGovern, Mr. Sanders also built a movement at the grassroots level. While the former two made it to the presidential race, Mr. Sanders could not reach that milestone, partly because he failed to broaden his support base through the diverse Democratic voters. He also faced a combative party establishment, which threw its weight behind its favourites, Hillary Clinton in 2016 and Joe Biden this year.

But the impact of the Sanders campaign on the Democratic politics is already visible. Most Democrats who joined the 2020 race supported restructuring America's healthcare system. They also supported doubling the minimum wage, fighting climate change more vigorously and taxing the rich more. Support for Medicare for all, one of Mr. Sanders's top promises, is rising across party

NEWS ANALYSIS

lines. According to a WSJ/NBC poll, the support for the proposal among all registered voters stood at 43% in March. About 73% support an option to buy into a Medicare system. Among the Democratic voters, 67% voters supported Mr. Sanders' proposal, while the support for the public option stood at 81%. And at a time when the U.S. is facing an unprecedented healthcare crisis in the wake of the COVID-19 outbreak and its economic impacts, the focus of the political debate could further shift to healthcare and inflationary policies. The Democratic Party also has a host of young leaders, including New York Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, who are taking forward the Sanders-style leftist politics.

Unsurprisingly, in a statement issued after Mr. Sanders announced his decision to drop out, Mr. Biden has reached out to the leftist leader's base. "We will confront income inequality in our nation. We will make sure healthcare is affordable and accessible to every American. We will make education at our public colleges and universities free. We will ease the burden of student debt. And, most important of all, we will defeat Donald Trump," said Mr. Biden. Mr. Sanders may have dropped out of the race to win the Democratic nomination, but he continues to shape the Democratic politics.

Taliban slams release of prisoners

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
KABUL

The Afghan government said it would release another 100 Taliban inmates on Thursday, even though the insurgents have walked out of talks over a comprehensive prisoner swap and dismissed Kabul's piecemeal freeing of captives as "unacceptable".

The administration of President Ashraf Ghani on Wednesday released 100 low-risk Taliban prisoners who had vowed never to return to the battlefield.

Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid said the step was inadequate. A Taliban team came to Kabul last week to meet the government to discuss a comprehensive prisoner swap that was initially supposed to see 5,000 Taliban released in return for 1,000 Afghan security forces. But they abandoned the "fruitless" meetings on Tuesday and returned to Kandahar.

MARKET WATCH

	09-04-2020	% CHANGE
Sensex	31160	4.23
US Dollar	76.28	0.08
Brent oil	33.05	1.11

NIFTY 50

	PRICE	CHANGE
Adani Ports	251.90	1.05
Asian Paints	1651.35	42.40
Axis Bank	420.15	28.80
Bajaj Auto	2435.95	194.25
Bajaj Finserv	4820.25	211.75
Bajaj Finance	2551.85	218.95
Bharti Airtel	488.70	27.05
BPCL	344.90	2.60
Britannia Ind	2801.70	26.15
Cipla	579.60	66.85
Coal India	140.80	3.45
Dr Reddys Lab	3621.55	-61.45
Eicher Motors	13742.30	583.80
GAIL (India)	87.75	2.20
Grasim Ind	530.55	17.95
HCL Tech	469.05	5.95
HDFC	1703.10	144.30
HDFC Bank	925.05	36.15
Hero MotoCorp	1990.90	169.25
Hindalco	107.55	6.70
Hind Unilever	2372.25	-88.60
ICICI Bank	342.70	23.75
IndusInd Bank	395.40	-3.75
Bharti Infratel	173.90	7.50
Infosys	636.25	4.65
Indian OilCorp	83.40	1.65
ITC	185.25	6.60
JSW Steel	166.30	11.70
Kotak Bank	1272.90	85.25
L&T	812.80	5.70
M&M	381.40	55.00
Maruti Suzuki	5326.65	628.55
Nestle India Ltd.	16839.70	-31.55
NTPC	87.10	1.90
ONGC	77.30	2.85
PowerGrid Corp	164.45	6.10
Reliance Ind	1219.95	27.80
State Bank	187.75	4.75
Shree Cement	16935.30	871.35
Sun Pharma	454.45	17.75
Tata Motors	74.60	7.00
Tata Steel	284.85	10.10
TCS	1766.15	60.70
Tech Mahindra	545.25	-13.65
Titan	1013.85	100.40
UltraTech Cement	3366.05	109.60
UPL	319.00	-1.20
Vedanta	76.80	6.50
Wipro	196.70	3.80
Zee Entertainment	149.85	6.70

EXCHANGE RATES

Indicative direct rates in rupees a unit except yen at 4 p.m. on April 09

CURRENCY	TT BUY	TT SELL
US Dollar	76.09	76.41
Euro	82.65	83.00
British Pound	94.61	95.02
Japanese Yen (100)	69.89	70.21
Chinese Yuan	10.78	10.83
Swiss Franc	78.31	78.65
Singapore Dollar	53.45	53.68
Canadian Dollar	54.20	54.43
Malaysian Ringitt	17.54	17.63

Source:Indian Bank

Inflation may drop to 2.4% in FY21: RBI

Regulator refrains from making growth forecast amid COVID-19 induced fluid circumstances

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI

The consumer price index (CPI)-based inflation, which had stayed elevated in the last few months, is expected to soften during the course of the financial year, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) said in its monetary policy report (MPR).

"CPI inflation is tentatively projected to ease from 4.8% in Q1 of 2020-21 to 4.4% in Q2, 2.7% in Q3 and 2.4% in Q4, with the caveat that in the prevailing high uncertainty, aggregate demand may weaken further than currently anticipated and ease core inflation further, while supply bottlenecks could exacerbate pressures more than expected," the RBI said. The central bank said, looking ahead, the balance of inflation risks is slanted even further towards the downside.

The MPR was released on Thursday. The report follows the unscheduled monetary policy meeting held in end March to discuss the uncertainties arising from the nationwide lockdown. Since the review was conducted in end March, the early policy review, scheduled for April, was withdrawn.

Renewed bouts of global financial market volatility could exert pressure on the rupee, says the RBI. ▪ V. V. KRISHNAN

"Given the lockdown, the compilation of the CPI for March and the following few months by the National Statistical Office could also become challenging. For 2021-22, assuming a normal monsoon and no major exogenous or policy shocks, structural model estimates indicate that inflation could move in a range of 3.6-3.8%," the RBI said. The RBI had reduced the repo rate by 75 basis points (bps) to 4.4% in the monetary policy review while cash reserve ratio was reduced by 100 bps to 3%. The cental bank, however, refrained from making any prediction on growth. "Under highly fluid circumstances in which incoming data produce shifts in the outlook for growth on a daily basis, forecasts for real GDP growth in India are not provided here, awaiting a clear fix on the intensity, spread and duration of COVID-19," the RBI said while observing the economy was looking up before the virus broke out.

Oil price drop

"The sharp reduction in international crude oil prices, if sustained, could improve the country's terms of trade, but the gain from this channel is not expected to offset the drag from the shutdown and loss of external demand," the report said.

The RBI said relatively modest upsides are expected to emanate from monetary, fiscal and other policy measures and the early containment of COVID-19, if that occurs. However, it added, such uncertainties make the forecasting of inflation and growth highly challenging.

On exchange rates, the central bank said renewed bouts of global financial market volatility caused by the uncertainty of macroeconomic impact of the COVID-19, as in February-March 2020, could exert pressure on the Indian rupee.

"Should the rupee depreciate by 5% from the baseline, inflation could edge up by around 20 bps while GDP growth could be higher by about 15 bps through increased net exports," it said.

In contrast, should COVID-19 normalise quickly, strong capital flows could revive. An appreciation of the rupee by 5% could moderate inflation by around 20 bps and GDP growth by around 15 bps vis-a-vis the baseline," the RBI said.

Industrial output grows 4.5% in Feb.

Higher output in power, manufacturing

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

India's factory output accelerated 4.5% in February in comparison to the previous year. The growth in the Index of Industrial Production came on the back of higher output in mining, electricity and manufacturing sectors, according to the data released by the National Statistical Office on Thursday.

The cumulative growth for the financial year so far, from April to February 2019-20, stands at 0.9%

February saw the second straight month of improved industrial output after a contraction in December.

Plunge likely

However, the IIP is likely to plunge drastically again for March, due to the lockdown caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, which has resulted in a halt in most business. The mining sector saw a robust 10% growth in production in February, while the electricity sector saw 8.1% growth in comparison to the previous year. Manufacturing sector output grew more cautiously, at a rate of 3.2%.

In terms of industries, 13 out of 23 groups in the manufacturing sector showed positive production growth in February.

Industries manufacturing basic metals saw the highest output growth of more than 18%, while chemicals manufacturing saw production rise 8%.

However, the auto sector saw a major slump in February, with the manufacture of motor vehicles, trailers and semi-trailers contracting 15.6%. Computer and electronics manufacturing output also saw negative growth of almost 15%.

Rupee hits fresh low during intraday trade

RBI intervention helps cut losses

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI

The rupee hit a record low during intraday trade on Thursday, which prompted the central bank to intervene to help the currency to cut some losses. After opening at 76.11 a dollar as compared to its previous close of 76.34, the rupee hit an all-time low of 76.55 in afternoon deals. It finally closed at 76.28, up 6 paise from its previous close.

Risk aversion

"In the current scenario, [which is] witnessing thin trading and wide bid-ask spreads amid truncated market hours in the local markets, we expect continuation of risk aversion, coupled with lack of trading activity. This is likely to drive the USD/INR pair with an upside bias, especially considering that the spread of COVID-19 appears to be increasing," said Mandar Pitale, head, Treasury, SBM Bank India, adding that the pair is likely to "trade within the 76.20-76.80 band for the next few days with an upward bias."

The rupee has been depreciating despite the Reserve Bank of India infusing dollars in the currency market since last month.

Equity MF inflow most in 2 years

Beaten-down valuations attract investors in March

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI

Equity mutual fund (MF) schemes saw the highest-ever monthly inflows in two years as investors looked to invest at a time when most shares are available at highly beaten-down valuations even as the month saw overall industry outflows at the highest quantum since September 2018.

In March, the net inflow into equity schemes was pegged at ₹11,722.74 crore, as per data from the Association of Mutual Funds in India (AMFI). This was the highest monthly inflow since February 2018 when such schemes registered inflows of ₹14,683 crore.

Further, there was a rise in the number of SIP (systematic investment plans) folios as well in March.

The overall mobilisation via SIPs in 2019-20 was pegged at a little more than ₹1 lakh crore, higher than the previous fiscal's ₹92,693 crore. This assumes significance as the benchmark Sensex lost a little over 23% in March – the highest monthly drop in more than 11 years.

"Instead of exiting their investment in equity funds, retail investors have not only held on, but added more assets and folios through SIPs," said N. S. Venkatesh, chief executive, AMFI.

Debt schemes, however, saw massive outflows of almost ₹1.95 lakh crore, which was in line with most quarter-end trends on account of redemption pressures to meet advance tax payment requirements.

"Periodic advance tax payments are a reason for a rise in outflows in March every year, this year though, there are a few supplementary factors that have piled on," said Tarun Birani, founder and chief executive officer, TBNG Capital Advisors.

Meanwhile, the huge redemption pressure in debt funds led to an overall outflow of ₹2.13 lakh crore from the industry assets, the highest monthly outflow since September 2018.

Equities stage smart rally on fiscal stimulus hopes

FPIs net buy ₹1,738 crore in shares

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI

Equity benchmarks gained strong ground on Thursday with the Nifty closing above the psychological 9,000-mark for the first time since March 16. The gains were primarily due expectations that the government might soon announce a stimulus package. A positive trend in Asian economies on hopes that the COVID-19 pandemic might be peaking acted as a strong catalyst.

The 30-share Sensex gained 1,265.66 points, or 4.23% to close at 31,159.62.

On an overall basis, more than 1,800 stocks gained as

against 538 that declined.

The broader Nifty moved up 363.15 points or 4.15% to close at 9,111.90. Foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) continued to be net buyers at ₹1,738 crore while their domestic counterparts sold shares worth ₹466 crore.

IN BRIEF

Kotak Group leadership takes 15% salary cut

MUMBAI

Private sector lender Kotak Mahindra Bank has said that the group's leadership team had unanimously and voluntarily opted to take a 15% cut in compensation for the financial year 2020-21 in view of the economic impact of the COVID-19. "Uday Kotak has personally opted to forgo his salary, and will receive ₹1," the lender said. The bank said the revival of the economy will depend on a healthy and robust financial sector.

RBI gets ₹1.13 lakh cr. bids in targeted LTRO

MUMBAI

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on Thursday said it had received ₹1.13 lakh crore worth of bids in the targeted long-term repo operation (LTRO) conducted for an amount of ₹25,000 crore with a three-year tenor. The RBI received 18 bids in the auction. The total bids received amounted to ₹1.13 lakh crore, implying a bid to cover ratio — the amount of bids received relative to the notified amount — of 4.5, the RBI said in a release. It allocated ₹25,016 crore on a pro-rata allotment percentage of 22.04%. PTI

Cognizant withdraws 2020 guidance on virus impact

Businesses hit, client demand set to drop in Q2 as well

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
BENGALURU

Cognizant has decided to withdraw its revenue guidance for calendar year 2020 against the backdrop of fluid economic environment and COVID-19-driven market uncertainties.

"The long-term fundamentals of our business remain strong. However, given the unprecedented nature of this crisis, uncertainty around its duration and its impact on our ability to forecast performance, the company is withdrawing its 2020 guidance that was provided on February 5, 2020,'' said Brian Humphries, CEO,Cognizant, on Thursday.

However, he said he was happy to see business momentum in the first two months of the quarter and was grateful to all associates for their commitment and professionalism which enabled Cognizant to meet its previously-announced revenue guidance.

He further said, "We acted decisively to limit COVID-19's impact on our business, including rapidly enabling work-from-home capabilities across delivery teams.''

"In this fluid environment where uncertainty prevails, we are well-positioned with deep client relationships across more than a dozen industries, and a strong balance sheet that provides solid financial flexibility."

Cognizant said its first quarter revenue was expected to be in the $4.22 billion to $4.23 billion range, up 2.7-2.9% (3.4-3.6% in constant currency) over the corresponding quarter last year. Financial performance in the first two months of the quarter was on track to exceed previous guidance, driven by strong performance across North America.

Work-from-home

During the latter part of March, the company said, COVID-19 had increasingly affected business, largely due to delays in project fulfilment as delivery, particularly in India and the Philippines, shifted to work-from-home and reduced client demand, primarily in the travel and hospitality industries.

Cognizant expects the pandemic to further reduce client demand in Q2, as its societal and economic impact causes broader disruptions across industries.

'Airlines must not sell tickets from Apr. 14'

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The government must "immediately review" its decision to allow airlines to continue to sell tickets from April 14 when there has been no decision on lifting the lockdown, else passengers will face steep losses, aviation consultancy CAPA said.

"As of now , significant funds of passengers are already locked with Indian carriers as a result of advance bookings prior to the lockdown and a decision to allow bookings post April 14 without any decision of lifting the lockdown will increase the risks which need to be avoided," it said in a statement.

Even after the lockdown is lifted, CAPA said, airlines should be allowed to sell tickets for those routes that are opened up by the government and not for the entire network, according to the aviation consultancy company.

IOC plans to double LPG imports as demand rises

Delivers over 3.38 cr. cylinders in 15 days

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI

Indian Oil Corporation (IOCL) plans to double its LPG imports amidst rising demand for cooking gas in India arising in the course of the COVID-19 lockdown.

"The Corporation has tied up for additional imports of the product for April and May (to the tune of about 50% over normal imports) to ensure uninterrupted availability of bulk LPG for its bottling plants," said IOC in a statement.

IndianOil had delivered more than 3.38 crore LPG cylinders to its customers in the last 15 days since the lockdown was implemented, that is, 26 lakh cylinders every single working day.

Extended hours

"IndianOil is taking steps to increase LPG production at its major refineries by optimising operations, improving LPG yield in LPG producing units. The

Corporation's LPG bottling plants, too, are working extended hours, operating night shifts and on public holidays/Sundays, to meet the growing demand. The transport infrastructure linking the plants to the distributors has also been optimised for quick turnaround of cylinders," said the statement.

IndianOil has also advised its distributors to give priority refill deliveries to LPG customers under Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana-for whom the Centre has extended three LPG refills free of cost during the months of April, May and June 2020.

NAREDCO, Assocham for $200 bn relief

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI

NAREDCO, the industry body of real estate developers, and industry association Assocham, have urged the government to provide a relief package of more than $200 billion, which is about 10% of the nation's Gross Domestic Product (GDP), for Indian industry.

They said the amount could be pumped into the economy in a staggered manner to retrieve the business cycle without incurring further loss.

"The industry seeks working capital to ensure that the Indian economy does not tank; business organisations do not default and saddle banks with NPAs, as also cause job losses," Niranjan Hiranandani, national president, NAREDCO and Assocham, said. He added, "We need a stimulus of over $200 billion with an ability to go up to $300 billion."

IndiGrid to buy Sterlite unit for ₹1,008 crore

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI

The board of the investment manager of IndiGrid has approved the acquisition of Gurgaon-Palwal Transmission Limited (GPTL) from Sterlite Power for ₹1,008 crore.

The acquisition would increase IndiGrid's assets under management by 10% to $1.75 billion and its portfolio will rise to ten power transmission pro jects with a total network of 25 power transmission lines and seven sub-stations. IndiGrid had signed a framework pact in 2019 with Sterlite Power for the acquisition.

News, movies keep people glued to television

Viewership rose by 4% in the week ended April 3 over previous week: BARC India-Nielsen

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI

Television viewership increased by 4% in the week ended April 3, 2020, over the previous week as people remained glued to TV to watch news and movies during the ongoing lockdown period.

As compared to the pre COVID-19 period (January 11 to January 31) TV consumption has gone up by 43% across India, as per data released by BARC India and Nielsen.

The Prime Minister's request to switch off lights at 9 p.m. on April 5, garnered the lowest-ever total TV viewership for those nine minutes.

Viewership was down 60%, indicating that over half of India's population could have participated in the diya/candle lighting event.

The growth in TV consumption in the week was driven by movies (77% growth), BARC India executives said. ▪ REUTERS

The growth in TV consumption in the week was driven by movies (77% growth), BARC India's top executives said.

DD National became the most-watched channel during the week, across India, with the telecast of classics such as Ramayan and Mahabharat.

"Non-primetime continues to be the growth driver for TV (81% over the pre-COVID period) with early morning and late night slots also showing a growth," officials said.

> Non-primetime continues to be the growth driver with early morning and late night slots also showing a growth

Gaming continued to show growth (44% over the pre-COVID period) and categories like virtual education and virtual drives increased consumption, they added.

Free commercial time (FCT) on TV advertising grew by 9% on the back of social advertising, as per the findings.

IN BRIEF

Pujara's deal with Gloucestershire called off

NEW DELHI

Cheteshwar Pujara's deal with Gloucestershire for the first six matches of the County Championship has been cancelled due to the coronavirus pandemic. The 32-year-old was supposed to play six matches for the club at the start of the County's first season back in Division One. However, Gloucestershire on Thursday said that the deal is off now given the global health crisis. PTI

Former hockey player Diwan seeks IOA's help

NEW DELHI

Ashok Diwan, member of the 1975 hockey World Cup-winning team, sought help to get back to the country from USA. His deteriorating health adding to the trauma, the 65-year-old made a distress call to the IOA president Narinder Batra, requesting him to take his plea to higher authorities. It was confirmed that Sports Minister Kiren Rijiju has received the letter. PTI

Australia's Test tour of Bangladesh postponed

SYDNEY

Australia's two-Test cricket tour of Bangladesh in June has been postponed because of the coronavirus pandemic. The first Test was to start on June 11 in Chattogram and the second from June 19 in Dhaka. Both were part of the World Test Championship. The final of that tournament is scheduled for next June. Trying to find a new slot for the Tests will be a challenge. AP

James hopeful of Lakers resuming revival

LOS ANGELES

LeBron James says the abrupt shutdown of the NBA season has left the Los Angeles Lakers feeling they still have something to prove. The Lakers were in the midst of a revival season, having made the playoffs for the first time in seven years. At the time of the postponement, the Lakers were in first place in the Western Conference and had the second-best record in the league behind Milwaukee. If the season doesn't resume, James says there will be a void. "I'll be able to look back and say we did something special in that small period of time." AFP

Sunrisers Hyderabad set to donate ₹10 crores

NEW DELHI

Indian Premier League franchise Sunrisers Hyderabad on Thursday decided to donate ₹10 crore towards the nation's fight against the COVID-19 pandemic. "Sun TV Group (SunRisers Hyderabad) is donating ₹10 crores towards Corona Covid-19 relief measures," the franchise said in its official twitter handle. Sunrisers' initiative drew praise from the team's skipper David Warner. "How good is this well done Sun TV Group @SunRisers," the Australian tweeted. PTI

Real players accept upto 20% pay cut

MADRID

Real Madrid players have agreed to cut their salaries by as much as a fifth, the LaLiga club announced on Wednesday, as Spanish football remains on hold due to the coronavirus pandemic. In a statement, Real Madrid said players and coaches from the side's football and basketball teams, as well as key directors, had voluntarily agreed to the reduction, of either 10 or 20%, "depending on the circumstances that may affect the closing of the current 2019/20 season". AFP

'Chance to revive national circuit'

We can have all the top players in the country competing, says Vishnu

TENNIS

KAMESH SRINIVASAN
NEW DELHI

In difficult times, it is natural to fall back on good memories.

Vishnu Vardhan competed in his maiden Grand Slam main draw in Wimbledon in 2018, and he cherishes it dearly.

Family man: Vishnu Vardhan is spending time with his son Siddhartha, and helping his wife Sonia. ▪FILE PHOTO

Among best memories

"It was one of the best memories of my tennis career – playing my debut Grand Slam main draw in Wimbledon with Sriram Balaji, one of my closest friends, and winning a match with my family watching," recalled the 32-year-old Vishnu, who represented the country in the London Olympics with Leander Paes.

This season, Vishnu was playing his second professional tournament in Kolkata in March, before the tournament was cancelled midway by the International Tennis Federation (ITF).

"I actually was having a terrible cough at that time. That was when there were some initial cases of COVID-19 in India, just before the WHO called it a pandemic. The players in the tournament were very concerned about my cough. Luckily, it was a regular cough and I recovered soon. I was ready to get tested, but the doctor assured me that it was normal, as I did not have any other symptoms," recalled Vishnu.

Vishnu is confident that India will control the virus soon, and suggests a national circuit to revive tennis.

"It will be a great opportunity to revive the national circuit. We can have all the top-ranked players in the country competing in the tournaments," he said.

Now, he is happy spending time with his two-year-old son Siddhartha, and helping his wife Sonia bake some "amazing cakes".

"Being home has been fine for me. My dad (Jagadeesan) and Sonia are the designated people to go out and buy the essentials. So, I have been completely home," said Vishnu.

"We have breakfast together. When Siddhartha goes to my parents' place [on a different floor], I get a workout. We both enjoy our long afternoon naps, which was never in my schedule. In the evening, we go to the terrace, watch the sunset and water the plants," said Vishnu.

F1 could be held behind closed doors: Brawn

Says a July date now looks likely

IANS
LONDON

Formula One motorsport managing director Ross Brawn has said that in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic, the 2020 season could potentially be held behind closed doors.

So far, nine races have been affected by the outbreak, with the March 15 season-opening Australian Grand Prix cancelled along with May's showcase Monaco Grand Prix.

"Travel for the teams and travel for everyone involved is going to be one of the big issues. You could argue once we get there, we could become fairly self-contained. Our view is probably a European start will be favourable and that could even be a closed event," Brawn told *Sky Sports*.

Ross Brawn. ▪GETTY IMAGES

> **If we were to start at the beginning of July, we could do a 19-race season**

Better than no racing

"We have a race with no spectators. That's not great, but it's better than no racing at all," he added.

Although the French GP is currently scheduled for June 28, Brawn explained a July start now looks more likely.

"If we were to start at the beginning of July, we could do a 19-race season," he said. "It's tough, three races on, weekend off, three races on, weekend off – but we've looked at all the logistics."

F1 is already working with promoters on a revised 2020 calendar with the actual sequence and schedule dates for races likely to differ significantly from the original calendar.

India doesn't need money, can't have cricket now, says Kapil

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

The legendary Kapil Dev, on Thursday slammed Shoaib Akhtar's idea of a made-for-television three-match ODI series between India and Pakistan to raise funds for the COVID-19 pandemic, saying "India doesn't need the money" and it is not worth risking lives for a cricket match.

Akhtar, on Wednesday, proposed a closed-door series to jointly raise funds to fight the deadly virus both in India and Pakistan.

Not feasible

Kapil said the proposal is not feasible.

"He is entitled to his opinion but we don't need to raise the money.

"We have enough. For us, what is important right now is that how our authorities work together to deal with this crisis," Kapil said.

"The situation is unlikely to get normal anytime soon and organising a cricket game means putting our cricketers at risk which we don't need to," he said.

Australia first, IPL contracts secondary: Tim Paine

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
HOBART

The Australian cricket team didn't want to unnecessarily provoke Virat Kohli but his predecessor Michael Clarke's claims of players being scared to sledge the India captain in order to protect their IPL deals is far from truth, says current Test skipper Tim Paine.

"I certainly didn't notice too many people being that nice to Virat or not trying to get him out or anything like that," Paine told *ESPNcricinfo*.

"I thought everyone who had the ball in their hand or when we were batting were trying their absolute best to win the game for Australia.

"I'm not sure who was going easy on him; we certainly had a thing where we didn't want to provoke any fight with him because we think that's when he plays at his best," Paine said.

India is scheduled to tour Australia from October, 2020 to January, 2021 to play four Tests, three One-Day Internationals and three Twenty20 Internationals.

Was willing to die on the field: Richards

Always aware of the risks but it didn't bother him, says the legend

Vivian Richards. ▪FILE PHOTO

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MELBOURNE

The legendary Viv Richards, one of the greatest batsmen to have ever played the game, says such was his passion for the game he didn't mind dying on the cricket field while representing the West Indies.

Known for his aggressive batting, Richards dominated some of the fiercest fast bowlers of world cricket without donning a helmet. Richards, 68 now, was always aware of the risks but it didn't bother him.

"My passion for the game was such I didn't mind dying on the field playing something I loved," Richards told former Australia all-rounder Shane Watson in a podcast.

Richards said he had always looked up to other athletes, who risked their lives, for inspiration. "I have looked at other sportsmen and women who I have a lot of respect for doing it to an extreme level," said Richards, who amassed 8,540 and 6,721 runs in 121 Tests and 187 ODIs respectively.

"I see a guy driving a Formula 1 racing car, what could be more dangerous than that?" said Richards, to which Watson quipped: "Facing 150kmph without a helmet?"

Boxing, drawing keep Simranjit occupied

She is incorporating the inputs received from coaches to finetune her game

Y.B. SARANGI
KOLKATA

Olympics qualified boxer Simranjit Kaur is making the best use of the lockdown by training with her brothers and pursuing hobbies like drawing and sewing.

Simranjit is fortunate that her brothers – Kamalpreet Singh and Arshdeep Singh (the current National silver medallist in 81kg) – are also boxers, who spar with her at home in Chakar village of Ludhiana district in Punjab during her daily training.

Support: Simranjit Kaur training with her brother Arshdeep Singh at her home. ▪SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Help from brothers

"Since I don't stay at home for long periods, I never really had such an opportunity. My brothers' familiarity with boxing is an advantage. Both of them are helping me with padding," Simranjit told *The Hindu*.

The 24-year-old is incorporating the inputs received from National coaches through video conferencing to fine-tune her game.

Simranjit, who won a 64kg World championships bronze medal in Delhi in 2018, had lost the 60kg trials for 2019 Worlds to the seasoned Sarita Devi. However, she improved her game to beat Sarita in the Olympic qualifier trial and secured a quota place by claiming a silver medal in the Asia/Oceania qualifying event in Amman, Jordan.

"I kept my focus on winning the trial for the Olympic qualifier. I didn't have to bother much about my new weight as my natural weight stayed around 60kg. I had some solid punches, but I had to make some technical changes.

"I have been in touch with B.I. Fernandez (former India's foreign coach). Whenever I find time I go to his centre in Mohali. He sends me videos and tells me to try out different techniques," said the boxer backed by Lakshya Sports.

According to National coach Mohammed Ali Qamar, Simranjit has immense potential. "She is an attacking boxer who can fluster the best of opponents with her punches. Only, she has to work on some technical and tactical aspects," said Qamar.

Simranjit, who gave a power-packed performance to claim her maiden National title and bag the Best Boxer award in Haridwar in 2016, is happy to get some attention.

"People in my village knew about me after I got Asian and World championship medals. Following my Olympic qualification, more people recognise me."

Amid expectations, Simranjit looks forward to the Olympics. "Good that we have one year to prepare. I am focusing on physical fitness. After the lockdown, we will focus on other areas."

Simranjit keeps herself engaged with some creative work. "Drawing is one of my passions. I learnt it on my own. I had learnt sewing from my mother (Rajpal Kaur) when I was young. Since there is a lot of time in hand, I do some drawing and sewing," she said.

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