



THE HINDU

on Sunday



Sonia Gandhi seeks steps to help micro, small and medium units
page 6



Two militants and their associate killed in Kashmir's Pulwama
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Saudi Arabia abolishes flogging as punishment as part of reforms
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Tripura started early screening at airports and checkpoints: Biplab Deb
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NEARBY



One death, 111 new cases reported in the Capital

NEW DELHI
 One death and 111 new COVID-19 cases were reported in Delhi on Saturday, taking the total deaths to 54 and the total cases to 2,625. The chairman of the Delhi government's committee on COVID-19 said the lockdown might have to be extended till mid-May.

CITY ▶ PAGE 3

Destitute man dies a week after being rescued

NEW DELHI
 A week after being rescued from near Kashmere Gate, a destitute man died at a city hospital, said Sunil Kumar Aledia, a social worker who had rescued him on April 15. Mr. Aledia had spotted the man near Kudesa Ghat and informed the authorities.

CITY ▶ PAGE 3

'Delhi should arrange for stay of Haryana staff'

CHANDIGARH
 The Haryana government on Saturday appealed to Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal to make arrangements for stay of Haryana residents who are employed with the Delhi government, saying their movement increases the risk of COVID-19 spread.

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Neighbourhood, standalone shops can open in urban areas

Those in markets, market complexes and malls will remain shut, says govt.

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI

The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) on Saturday clarified that all shops in rural areas, except those in malls, could open. In urban areas, all standalone and neighbourhood shops and those in residential complexes are allowed to open but not those in markets, market complexes and shopping malls.

The MHA said all restaurants, salons and barber shops would remain closed as they "render services" and the relaxation was granted only to shops selling

COVID-19

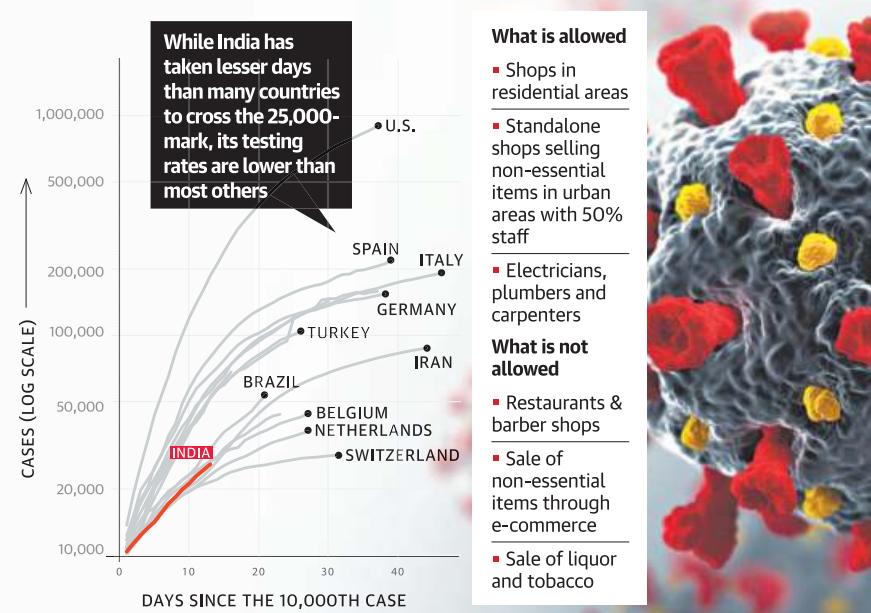
items. In a statement, the MHA added that liquor shops continued to be prohibited and e-commerce platforms could only be used for the sale of essential items.

Several officials of the State governments said they would stick to the ongoing restrictions and would not immediately implement the order. An official said the final decision on the opening of shops would have to be taken by the States.

Manoj Parida, adviser to the Administrator of the Union Territory of Chandigarh,

Up, up and away

The chart shows the day-wise progression of cases from the 10,000th case in countries which have recorded at least 25,000. Only 16 countries have crossed that mark



said on Twitter that in the city, a containment zone, "the opening of neighbourhood non-essential shops will not happen till May 3".

Piyush Singla, Deputy Commissioner of Udhampur district in Jammu and Kashmir, said queries poured in about the opening of shops and "it is clarified that the present ongoing set-up shall

continue till any further communication. Anyone violating the directives shall be booked as per law".

Assam's Chief Secretary Kumar Sanjay Krishna said that no further relaxation, like the opening of shops and beauty parlours, had been decided by the State and a decision would be taken only on April 27.

Sudhanshu Sarangi, Commissioner of Police, Bhubaneswar-Cuttack, said the Odisha government would take a decision based on the local situation and requirements and till then, "shops, except for those already exempted, will remain closed."

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 MORE REPORTS ▶ PAGES 7, 8, 9, 10

+ UGC to suggest academic calendar this week

It will review suggestions by panels

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI

Panels set up by the University Grants Commission (UGC) have submitted recommendations on the revised academic calendar and suggestions for holding examinations at a time when the country is under lockdown due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Commission's members are likely to discuss the recommendations via video-conferencing on Monday and issue advisory guidelines for institutions of higher education by the middle of next week, according to UGC officials.

Meanwhile, Press Trust of India reported that a panel headed by Central University of Haryana Vice-Chancellor R.C. Kuhad had recommended that the new academic year begin in Sep-

tember, instead of July. Another recommendation was that universities conduct their year-end examinations online if they had the resources to do so. If not, they should wait until the lockdown is lifted to set a date for the hand-written examinations.

No semester exams yet

Most colleges and universities have not yet held their semester examinations to close the current academic year.

Apart from Dr. Kuhad's panel, another panel headed by Indira Gandhi National Open University Vice-Chancellor Nageshwar Rao also submitted its report on improving online education in the midst of the lockdown.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 6

Homeward-bound



No looking back: A boy leaves for home in a special bus in Guwahati on Saturday. In a relief to people stuck at different places in Assam due to the lockdown, the State has allowed inter-district movement for three days. ■ RITU RAJ KONWAR (REPORT ON PAGE 4)

Only 15% of poor households received pulses

As against 1.96 lakh tonnes, only 30,000 tonnes have been distributed so far



Helping hands: The extra rations from April to June is part of the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojana. ■ G. RAMAKRISHNA

announced extra ration allocations from April to June as part of the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojana, said to be worth ₹1.7 lakh crore.

All 80 crore National Food Security Act beneficiaries were to get an extra 5 kg of rice or wheat each month, while each household was to

get 1 kg of pulses.

Several hurdles

Given that all States already distribute rice and wheat through a well-established Public Distribution System, with grain provided from a network of Food Corporations of India warehouses,

distribution of the extra grain began early in April. However, distribution to more than 19 crore families was stalled by several hurdles.

The National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation is the nodal agency which procures and stores a buffer stock of pulses. To provide the necessary 5.88 lakh tonnes of cleaned and milled pulses under the scheme, NAFED pressed over 100 mills into service to process 8.5 lakh tonnes of unmilled pulses lying in about 165 godowns. "The scale of this operation is massive and far more complex than foodgrain movement," according to a Consumer Affairs Department statement.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 6

Though the DNA reports have confirmed that the foot belongs to 60-year-old Kassar and the skull and spine to 22-year-old Shahbaz, the remains lie in evidence bags in police custody, complained the family members. Investigators have cited movement restrictions due to the lockdown as the reason for the delay in handing over the re-

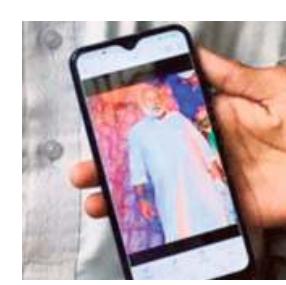
Two months on, kin await burial of loved ones

While arrests continue, remains of riot victims not handed over to families yet

JATIN ANAND SAURABH TRIVEDI NEW DELHI

Over two months after they were killed allegedly in two brutal assaults that took place during the north-east Delhi riots in late February, the families of Anwar Kassar and Mohammad Shahbaz still await their mortal remains – a foot and some parts of a human skull attached to traces of a spine – to be handed over to them.

Though the DNA reports have confirmed that the foot belongs to 60-year-old Kassar and the skull and spine to 22-year-old Shahbaz, the remains lie in evidence bags in police custody, complained the family members. Investigators have cited movement restrictions due to the lockdown as the reason for the delay in handing over the re-



Anwar Kassar (left) and Mohammad Shahbaz were killed in the riots in north-east Delhi on February 25. ■ FILE PHOTO



Shahbaz, a welder, had gone to the Guru Nanak Eye Centre on February 25. The remains of his body, fished out of a drain in Shiv Vihar, were deposited at the Guru Teg Bahadur Hospital mortuary. His brother identified the remains on the basis of traces of clothes found with the skull and spine.

"The DNA report came a few days before the first lockdown. I was told the remains would be given to us after the lockdown ended. Now they are saying some other test needs to be conducted. I don't even know where his remains are," said Maltub Alam. A senior police officer said there were many cases in which DNA test was required to establish the identity of the deceased. The samples were sent to FSL and reports of many samples have arrived.

Priscilla Jebaraj
NEW DELHI
 Only 15% of poor households have received the 1 kg of pulses promised for April under the Centre's COVID-19 welfare package, according to an analysis of government agency data. Of the 1.96 lakh tonnes of pulses that should have been given to over 19 crore households this month, only 30,000 tonnes have been distributed so far, according to the Consumer Affairs Department.

Distribution is likely to speed up by the first week of May, with delays caused by the fact that the government only stores unmilled pulses in its godowns, and has had to start a massive milling operation before delivering them to ration shops. Last month, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman

say Kassar's daughter Gulshan Bano and Shahbaz's elder brother Maltub Alam. These restrictions have, however, not affected the investigators' action against alleged culprits from the area who continue to be detained or placed under arrest.

"I had called to ask about the DNA report of my father's foot on April 16. They told me it had matched and the remains were lying at the police station. They said it was just a foot that was left and I could take it after the lockdown," said Gulshan, a resident of Pilkhwa in U.P. Kassar, a resident of Shiv Vihar, was allegedly pulled out of his residence, thrown into a fire and shot multiple times as his body burnt on February 25. "Whatever remains of him should be handed over to us. Isn't this the government's responsibility?" she asked.

Policeman confirmed as infected, 11 quarantined

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

A Delhi Police officer has tested positive for COVID-19 in outer-north Delhi after which 11 officers who were working with him have been quarantined.

A senior police officer said that an officer posted at Alipur police station has tested positive after which 11 officers, including an Assistant Sub-Inspector, Head Constable and Constables have been quarantined at a centre in Bakhtawarpur. "The officials, who have been put under quarantine, worked with the officer who tested positive for the virus," the officer said.

About 30 Delhi Police officers have tested positive so far, including 14 from Central Delhi and others from Traffic unit, North-West and West Delhi. On Friday, the office of the Commissioner of Police issued an order stating that 21 officers who have tested positive while discharging their duty will be given financial assistance of ₹1 lakh.

One death, 111 new cases; more doctors test positive

Delhi's COVID-19 panel chief says lockdown may last till mid-May

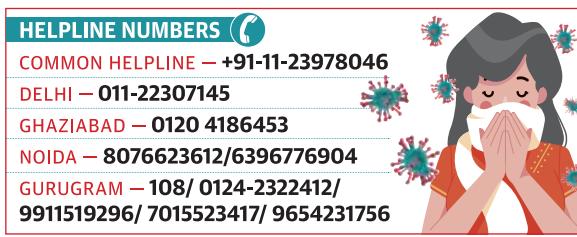
STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

One death and 111 new COVID-19 cases were reported in Delhi on Saturday, taking the total deaths to 54 and total number of cases to 2,625.

The chairman of the Delhi government's committee on combating COVID-19, S.K. Sarin, has said that the lockdown might have to be extended till mid-May in the city. "India is still on the ascending limb of the epidemic curve and so, to ease the restrictions will mean the cases will multiply uncontrollably. And, Delhi has a large number of containment zones, so it will be wise to extend it," he said.

Of the 2,625 cases, 869 people have recovered and there are 1,702 active cases.

Meanwhile, at least 22 more people, including staff of the Delhi government-run Babu Jagjivan Ram Memorial Hospital in Jahangirpuri and their family members, tested positive for COVID-19 on Saturday. The people who tested positive also include four guards and two



doctors of the hospital.

A total of 42 people associated with the hospital have tested positive so far, according to hospital documents. "Two people who tested positive today [Saturday] are family members of staff and they live on the hospital premises," a hospital official told *The Hindu*.

Citing the rising number of healthcare workers in the city getting infected, the United Resident Doctor Association on Saturday wrote to Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal requesting a dedicated hospital for treatment of healthcare workers who are testing positive.

Meanwhile, the Delhi government on Saturday decided to allow shops selling non-essential commodities to open in the city, following a Central government's order on the same, a government spokesperson said.

Such shops, however, will not be allowed to open in places declared "containment zones" in the city.

The final decision on opening of shops has to be taken by the State governments, the Centre said.

The Centre said that in urban areas, all standalone and neighbourhood shops and those in residential complexes are allowed to open but not those in markets, market complexes and shopping malls. "People started opening shops since morning. We are keeping a close watch," a Delhi government source said.

(With inputs from PTI)

Lockdown blues: elderly from Kerala stuck in Capital for over a month

He says he has spent more than ₹2 lakh on hotel bills so far

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

After landing at the Delhi airport in the wee hours of March 22, 68-year-old T.C. Varghese from Kerala underwent medical checks, mandatory 14-day quarantine, tested negative for COVID-19, changed two hotels, and spent more than ₹2 lakh on hotel bills, but is still "stuck" in Delhi. The senior citizen said that he longed to go back home.

COVID-19

"When I left Canada, I never thought that I would be stuck in Delhi for such a long time. I am tired of staying in cage-like hotel rooms. I miss my tapioca, banana

and vegetable farming. The government should arrange some sort of transport for people like us to return home," Mr. Varghese told *The Hindu*.

Mr. Varghese and one of his relatives were supposed to catch a flight to Kochi on March 22 evening, and from there they would go to his hometown in Kerala's Pathanamthitta. The flight, however, got cancelled. "I had gone to Canada to take my 67-year-old relative back to Kerala. She is a widow and was staying with her daughter there. We were supposed to come back on March 26, but pre-booked our tickets and reach Delhi at 2.30 am on March 22. But we still got stuck here," he said.

Both of them underwent the mandatory quarantine period of 14 days at a paid quarantine facility in Aerocity, where they had to pay ₹3,100 for a day. "On April 6, she was moved to a family friend's house in Delhi. When I asked if I could continue at the hotel, they told me that I would have to pay ₹7,000 a day. So I moved to another hotel, which was a little cheaper," he said.

The lockdown was then extended and his hopes of returning home were extinguished. "After the lockdown was extended, I shifted to another hotel in Mahipalpur, which is less expensive. Till now I have spent more than ₹2 lakh on hotel bills" he said.

Three nurses and a paramedical staff of Medanta hospital here tested positive for COVID-19 on Saturday, taking the total number of infected people in the district to 51. The total number of active cases in the district is 16.

Hospital sources told *The Hindu* that random tests of hospital staff were conducted and four women tested positive. The sources, however, confirmed that those who tested positive had no interaction with the COVID-19 patients at the hospital.

Three of them, however, belong to a nearby area declared a containment zone.

Minors held for stabbing man to death in Nizamuddin

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

A 32-year-old man was stabbed to death allegedly by two minors and a 20-year-old man in south-east Delhi's Nizamuddin. The accused have been held, the police said.

Deputy Commissioner of Police (South East) R.P. Meena said that the victim has been identified as Hasin alias Chiggu, a resident of Khusro Nagar, who had 17 criminal cases registered against him and the accused as Nikhil and his two accomplices who are juveniles.

The police said that a call was received at 9.15 a.m. on Saturday from one Kajal who said that her husband had been murdered. When the police reached the spot, they found Hasin lying dead. The body had multiple stab wounds.

"During local enquiry, it was found that Hasin was last seen with Azad, Kamran and Poly. During sustained and scientific interrogation of the three suspects, they revealed that a fight had taken place between the victim and the mother of one of the juveniles over setting up of a street stall," Mr. Meena said. The juvenile then roped in another minor friend and Nikhil and hatched a plan to kill Hasin and later executed it. The three were held within hours of committing the crime and the knives used in commission of the crime were seized.

Man kills wife in containment zone following fight over kids

Accused has been arrested; they got married 3 months ago

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

A 39-year-old woman was allegedly killed by her husband in a containment zone in west Delhi's Madipur on Saturday. The accused has been arrested.

Deputy Commissioner of Police (West) Deepak Purohit said Rahisul Azam, a resident of Madipur JJ Colony, allegedly killed his wife Gulshan after a fight. Rahisul then made a PCR call and informed the police about the incident.

The police said that a call regarding a fight in a house was received at 3.56 a.m.

"The caller was identified as Rahisul who sells footwear in Jahangirpuri," Mr. Purohit said. The police said that Rahisul hit Gulshan on the head with a stick, leading to her death on the spot.

Second marriage

They had gotten married three months ago. Further probe revealed that this was the second marriage for both of them. "The fight broke over a discussion on the future of their children

from their respective earlier marriages who live in their village in Bihar's Motihari," the DCP said.

The police said that as they were married for less than seven years, the Sub Divisional Magistrate has been informed. Mr. Purohit said that the house where the incident took place falls under an area which was declared a containment zone on April 13 after two COVID-19 cases were reported there.

"The area is densely populated with average size of houses being 12.50 yards in multi-storey buildings," the officer said.

The police said that CDMO West, Disaster Management, SDM have been informed and the incident was also reported on the COVID-19 helpline.

to their death on the spot.

Second marriage

They had gotten married three months ago. Further probe revealed that this was the second marriage for both of them. "The fight broke over a discussion on the future of their children

needs to be utilised for restoration in terms of an action plan with the approval of CPCB. The Haryana State PCB and DPCC may file further action-taken report," the Bench said.

Appointed committee

The directions came after the tribunal took note of reports furnished by the pollution control bodies and that of an NGT-appointed

oversight panel.

Destitute man dies a week after being rescued

Social worker had spotted him, informed authorities who sent him to hospital

SHINJINI GHOSH
NEW DELHI

A week after being rescued from near Kashmere Gate, a destitute man died at a city hospital on Thursday, said Sunil Kumar Aledia, a social worker who had rescued him on April 15.

The Hindu had earlier reported how Mr. Aledia had spotted the man, identified as Manoj, near Kudesia Ghat and informed authorities who then shifted the person to Rajan Babu TB Hospital.

On Saturday, Mr. Aledia said that after tracing the man's family to Bihar and arranging for a caretaker, when he reached the hospital, he was informed that Manoj had died. Hailing from a family of *dhabis* in Bihar, Mr. Manoj had come to the city over two decades ago, added Mr. Aledia.

"Usually there are no caretakers for destitutes in hospitals and therefore, the authorities had asked us to arrange one. We did so and when we visited the hospital we found an empty bed.

Those on adjacent beds recognised us as we had been visiting Manoj often. They told us that he had died soon after our visit on



Manoj, who was rescued from near Kashmere Gate on April 15, died on Thursday.

* FILE PHOTO: SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

doctors, Manoj had been suffering from TB, Mr. Aledia said. "That entire stretch along the Yamuna has become a TB hotspot. Adequate medicines are not being delivered there and people there are severely malnourished. Several other instances have also taken place where the homeless have succumbed to the disease [TB]."

On the same day, when Mr. Manoj was rescued, hundreds of migrant workers who had been stationed at the Kudesia Ghat due to the lockdown, were shifted to shelter homes by

State government after the issue was brought to light through media reports.

Stating that several representations had been made to the government pertaining to these workers, Mr. Aledia also said, "The people who have been living here for the last 10-15 days have had no access to proper sanitation and could not even take a bath. There is a high possibility that they are suffering from other communicable diseases as well. Proper medical check-ups should be done before they are made to stay with hundreds of others in shelters."

Over 2,800 people held for violating lockdown

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI/NOIDA

Over 100 cases were registered and 2,861 people detained in the Capital on Saturday for violating lockdown orders, the police said. According to data shared by the police, 125 cases were registered under Section 188 for disobedience to order duly promulgated by public servant of the Indian Penal Code till 5 p.m.

A total of 2,861 people have been detained under Section 65 (persons bound to comply with reasonable directions of police officers) and 241 vehicles impounded under Section 66 of the Delhi Police Act, it showed. A total of 366 movement passes were issued, the police said.

Fifty-five cases were registered against people for stepping out of their houses without wearing masks, they added.

Since March 24, 1,17,584 people have been detained for violating orders under Section 65 of the Delhi Police Act.

Meanwhile, 14 people were arrested and challans issued to 245 vehicle owners across Noida and Greater Noida on Saturday for lockdown violation, the police said.

Policemen play cupid, get couple married amid social distancing

Bride travels to husband's house in police vehicle

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

Delhi Police officers on Saturday played cupid for a couple and got them married in a temple here. They also allowed the bride to travel to her husband's house in a police vehicle.

Deputy Commissioner of Police (South-East) R.P. Meena said that one Naresh Ahluwalia, a resident of Govindpuri, approached Head Constable Anil Kumar and Sanjeev at Kalkaji police station with an "issue".

"He requested the policemen to help them reach Arya Samaj Mandir in Greater Kailash-I as his son Kaushal's marriage was scheduled for today [Saturday] with one Pooja. He said the bride and her parents were waiting at the temple," he said.

The two officers then approached Inspector Sanjay Ghai, Kalkaji Police Station SHO, and after having got his permission, they took the groom and his family to the temple in a police vehicle "while adhering to social distancing norms".

In a video of the couple leaving the vehicle, they are seen sitting at the back of the car as the policemen drive them home.



The police said that all social distancing norms were adhered to at the wedding at a temple.

* SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

proached Inspector Sanjay Ghai, Kalkaji Police Station SHO, and after having got his permission, they took the groom and his family to the temple in a police vehicle and not in any usual traditional way.

Interestingly, the woman's journey to the husband's residence took place in a police vehicle and not in any usual traditional way.

In a video of the couple leaving the vehicle, they are seen sitting at the back of the car as the policemen drive them home.

The police said that all social distancing norms were adhered to at the wedding at a temple.

* SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

naresh ahluwalia

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Odisha allows workers' movement in State

Govt. issues guidelines to industries, contractors for their transport maintaining social distancing

SATYASUNDAR BARIK
BHUBANESWAR

In an attempt to bring the State's economy back on track, the Odisha government on Saturday allowed intra-State movement of labour and asked stranded labourers to participate in different economic activities, including agriculture.

"The State government has decided that stranded labourers, who wish to travel within the State to work, are allowed to do so in an organised manner," said Chief Secretary Asit Tripathy in an order issued in this regard.

About 86,000 workers, of which about 16,000 are from Odisha, have been given accommodation in 2,610 camps in the State. As per the guidelines issued for labour movement, the industries or labour contractors will be allowed to transport labourers in dedicated and designated buses from camps to the workplace,



Farmers working in their fields on the outskirts of Bhubaneswar on Saturday. ■ BISWARANJAN ROUT

maintaining social distancing and other relevant safety protocols.

Information in advance

However, the information has to be furnished to the District Collectors through district labour officers in advance. The District Collectors will issue movement pass to different agencies. "Since the buses are off the roads, these will be made op-

erational for carrying labourers only. The monthly payment of road tax for requisition will be waived," the government pointed out.

The government also made it clear that since these stranded labourers have already completed the recommended quarantine period, the recipient local authorities such as sarpanch, BDO or Collectors would not insist upon further quarantine.

'Conditional' movement of vehicles

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT GUWAHATI

The Assam government on Saturday started a "conditional" inter-district movement of vehicles for people stranded within the State to return home or go to their workplaces. State Transport Department officials said 51,402 requests were received till Friday night for in-

ter-district travel during the three-day window provided. Of these, 41,651 requested for travel by the Assam State Transport Corporation buses. "The staggered entry of people will take place with approval from the deputy commissioners and in compliance with the guidelines of the Ministry of Home Affairs," the ASTC said.

The inter-Ministerial group, which met to discuss commencing industrial activities especially in micro, small and medium enterprises, decided to take views of industry bodies and companies.

Meanwhile, the State government said it got the appreciation of the Empowered Group for Food and Logistics (EGF), which marked its effort of contact-

ing Odia labourers stranded outside the State and mobilising assistance for them, as best practice.

In order to facilitate the redressal of issues of migrant labourers stranded in different States, the government has set up a 30-line help centre. Nodal officers have been coordinating with other State governments to make food available to them in their respective States.

MP offers reward for information on people who 'hid' Delhi event link

U.P. BJP leader says his intention is to prevent COVID-19 spread

OMAR RASHID LUCKNOW

A BJP Lok Sabha MP in Uttar Pradesh has announced a reward of ₹11,000 for people in his constituency for providing accurate details of persons linked to the Nizamuddin event or those who have returned from abroad but concealed information from the administration.

BJP MP from Salempur Ravindra Kushwaha has released a poster online appealing people to provide information about persons linked to the Nizamuddin event or those who have come from abroad. He asks Salempur residents to provide details of those persons to the administration who are suspected of COVID-19 but have not revealed information.

Those providing "accurate information" will be rewarded with ₹11,000, the

two-time MP from the east U.P. constituency said.

The online poster gives two phone numbers on which residents can provide the information to the MP. The identity of the person providing the information will not be revealed, the poster said.

Furnish proof*

However, it also stresses that those providing these tips will have to furnish proof about the suspect activities of those they are reporting. Moreover, the amount will be deposited to them once the sample of the person they have reported comes out positive.

Talking to *The Hindu*, Mr. Kushwaha said his intention was to prevent the spread of the disease. "Even now, people are still hiding. So my appeal is, come out, get tested, and if anyone is ill or infect-

ed, they will be treated."

Mr. Kushwaha said he announced the reward so that those suspected of being infected don't spread it to others. "Apne ghar-parivar ko toh bachaye hi, samaj ko bhi bachaye" (They should ensure the safety of their families but also of the society), he said.

As in the past, such campaigns could lead to a lot of false alarms and harassment of people on the basis of mere allegations, or to settle scores. However, Mr. Kushwaha is confident the facts would be verified instantly.

Till Saturday afternoon, he was yet to get a single response.

Salempur Lok Sabha constituency is located on the eastern fringes of U.P., combining parts of Deoria and Ballia districts. No COVID-19 cases have been reported from these two districts.

Man to sell rare coins for PM's fund

28-year-old Odisha numismatist offers 2 lakh antique pieces

SATYASUNDAR BARIK
BHUBANESWAR

Debiprasad Mangaraj, a leading numismatist of India, has announced to sell 2 lakh antique coins, including some priceless centuries-old currencies.

The money raised through the proposed auction would go to PM CARES Fund and Chief Minister's Relief Fund.

According to the 28-year-old youth, who started collecting coins from the age of five, the worth of the coins could run into crores of rupees. "I have eight lakh distinctive pieces of coins of dif-



Debiprasad Mangaraj with his collection. ■ BISWARANJAN ROUT

ferent eras. Two lakh additional coins were also lying with me," said Mr. Mangaraj.

The engineering graduate said, "the COVID-19 pandemic made me unnerved. I realised that this is the time to contri-

bute to society, although the thought of parting with coins makes me depressed."

The young man claims to possess rare copper, silver, gold and other metal coins of hundreds-year-old belonging to different eras in BC (Before Christ) and AD (anno Domini). The oldest coin could date back to 2,300 years.

Some of the rare coins were transacted by East India Company. Coins which were in circulation during era of King Ashoka, the Indian emperor of the Maurya Dynasty, Kushan empire and Mughal period.

With this, the total number of resident doctors testing positive in JNMCH has reached three.

"On Saturday, a 27-year-old anaesthetist tested positive. He lived in the same complex near the campus where the gynaecologist who tested positive on Friday lives," said University

1 more doctor tests positive in AMU

Quarantine them in hostels or university guest house: RDA

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT GHAZIABAD

One more junior doctor tested positive for COVID-19 in Aligarh Muslim University's Jawaharlal Nehru Medical College and Hospital on Saturday, said officials.

With this, the total number of resident doctors testing positive in JNMCH has reached three.

"On Saturday, a 27-year-old anaesthetist tested positive. He lived in the same complex near the campus where the gynaecologist who tested positive on Friday lives," said University

spokesperson Shafey Kidwai.

With the number of cases of doctors increasing, the Resident Doctors' Association demanded that the resident doctors who were in contact with the infected doctors not be asked to go into home quarantine. "As many of them live with elderly parents, there are chances that they would pass on the infection to them. We demand that they should be quarantined in hostels or university guest house," said RDA president Hamza Malik.

Dr. Malik said the University administration had ample time to prepare for the pandemic as the index case in the hospital was reported at least one-and-a-half months after COVID-19 had spread in other parts of the country. "We just kept giving a false sense of security. No proper PPE kits were given to the healthcare workers giving their services in the trauma centres," said Dr. Malik. He added that the serious part was that the primary source of infection to the three doctors has not yet been identified.

Himachal to relax curfew hours for morning walks

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT CHANDIGARH

Amid the ongoing lockdown, the Himachal Pradesh government has decided to relax curfew hours in the State to let people, especially the senior citizens, to go for morning walks.

Chief Minister Jai Ram Thakur on Saturday said the government has decided to relax the curfew hours from 5.30 a.m. to 7 a.m. daily from April 26 onwards to facilitate the senior citizens and general public for morning walks. The government has also decided to

give relaxation in curfew for four hours instead of the existing three hours from April 27.

This would not only ensure social distancing but also minimum crowding in the shops, he said in a meeting over COVID-19 with senior government officials through video conference in Shimla.

Mr. Thakur said the curfew has adversely affected the economy of the State and thus it was vital to chalk out an appropriate action plan to revive the economic activities post-lockdown.

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GENERAL

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Fundamental rights, freedoms have been suspended in lockdown, alleges rights body

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT JAIPUR

The Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan (MKSS) on Saturday condemned the NDA government's persecution of activists, journalists and academics during the COVID-19 lockdown, which it said had been turned into an "insidious and undeclared emergency", effectively suspending the fundamental rights and freedoms.

When the government should be fulfilling its constitutional mandate to help lakhs of people who were on the brink of starvation due to lack of planning by the State, the ruling party was using the lockdown period as an opportunity to further its political agenda and suppress all forms of dissent, said the MKSS.

The MKSS, headed by social activist and Magsaysay Award

No food or treatment: Telangana workers

Indian Consulate General in Dubai says 12 migrants in Ajman have tested positive

P. RAM MOHAN
NIZAMABAD

Several migrant workers from Telangana in the UAE have contracted COVID-19 and have been quarantined since Monday, said Indian Consulate General in Dubai Vipul Kapoor.

The workers reside in the Belhsa labour camp at Ajman Aljurf 3.

In a video message that went viral on social media on Saturday, Mr. Kapoor confirmed that 12 workers from

Telangana had tested positive and several others from India, who are also in the camp, are likely to be diagnosed positive. "We are taking all necessary measures for the welfare of migrant workers and providing food to those in the camp. However, local authorities are taking care of the persons in quarantine," he said in the message.

Four workers from Nizamabad district are among those who tested positive

and they are in Room No. 6 of the camp.

Working in a private hospital in Ajman, they contracted the virus as they did not wear PPEs due to lack of awareness.

Room locked

Rakesh (name changed), a 23-year-old worker from Velpur mandal, told *The Hindu* over phone that he, along with two others from Kerala, was in quarantine and their room was locked from out-

side. "The authorities are not providing us food or treatment and we are fending for ourselves," he said.

Another worker, 30-year-old Satish (name changed), who hails from Indialwai mandal, said when he complained of novel coronavirus symptoms, he was quarantined. Later, his test turned up positive.

"The UAE authorities have neither started treatment nor have admitted us to hospital till date," he said.

Back in action



(Clockwise from top) With the easing of lockdown restrictions, life is limping back to normalcy in some cities. A worker watering plants at Vellayani Agricultural Village in Thiruvananthapuram; a person riding a rickshaw in Hyderabad; Bengaluru Metropolitan Rail Corporation Limited labourers resuming their work. ■ K.S. GOPAKUMAR, G. RAMAKRISHNA & MURALI KUMAR

IN BRIEF



Heavy rain brings respite to people in Tirupati

CHITTOR
Heavy rain lashed the pilgrim city of Tirupati on Saturday, resulting in overflowing of drains and water-logging on the roads. It came as a huge relief to people from the summer heat, which kept soaring since the first week of April. Some trees were uprooted on the Tirumala bypass and Renigunta roads and there was an interruption in power supply.

More Keralites succumb to COVID-19 abroad

KOZHIKODE
More Keralites are succumbing to COVID-19 abroad even as Kerala has managed to limit deaths to three. At least 55 people from Kerala have died in various countries, the highest reported from the United States at 24, as per the latest figures. The United Arab Emirates (UAE), from where the majority of the infected reached the State, has recorded the deaths of 16 Keralites. The total death toll in the Gulf Cooperation Council nation is 64 as on Saturday. Seven persons have died in the United Kingdom.

'Timely action by TTD helped avert disaster'

VIJAYAWADA
The closure of the lord Venkateswara temple at Tirumala five days before the nation went into a lockdown helped in containing the COVID-19 outbreak, TTD Trust Board chairman Y.V. Subba Reddy said. It was a timely decision by the TTD board that averted a major disaster as, even if a few hundred of the 80,000 to 1,00,000 devotees who visit the shrine every day in the normal course were infected, the virus would have taken a heavy toll.

More exam centres sought in south India

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Indira Gandhi National Tribal University has announced only one centre in southern India in Chennai for its entrance examinations for 2020-21 admissions, much to the dismay of students in the region. The MPs from Kerala have written to the Human Resource Development Minister, demanding multiple centres in each southern State as was provided in previous years.

In 2019, Wayanad in Kerala was the largest IGNTU examination centre outside of Madhya Pradesh with over 400 applicants," said a letter from Binoy Viswam, a CPI Rajya Sabha MP.

"Wayanad is home to the largest tribal population in Kerala," wrote Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, who represents it in the Lok Sabha MP. "Urging students to opt for examination centres far away from home denies

them a fair opportunity to compete in the admission process."

The Central University, located in Amarkantak in Madhya Pradesh, was set up in 2007. It opened its 2020-21 application process on April 23, and plans to hold the entrance examinations on June 27 and 28.

However, the COVID-19 pandemic may result in changes in dates and venues, the admission notice said.

K.K. Ragesh, a CPI(M) Rajya Sabha MP, said some of the university's other recent decisions also went against its mandate for providing quality education to the tribal communities.

"Recently, the university has proposed to open departments of Sanskrit and Jyotisha, while many of the tribal languages and cultures were ignored from consideration and support," he wrote.

Karnataka begins trial for plasma therapy

STAFF REPORTER
BENGALURU

The clinical trial for convalescent plasma therapy began here on Saturday, where plasma from patients who have recovered from COVID-19 would be infused in patients who are tested positive for the infection.

B. Sriramulu, Karnataka Minister of Health and Family Welfare, and K. Sudhakar, Medical Education Minister, spoke to the first donor and thanked him for extending his support for the cause. Although doctors are not supposed to reveal details of the patients involved in the trials, the team said that the patient who had recovered willingly chose to interact with the Ministers. The Ministers made an appeal to all patients who have recovered to come forward and donate their samples.

Instagram user held for morphing girls' photos

STAFF REPORTER
KOZHIKODE

The Kerala police have cracked a cybercrime on fast-track by tracing a 19-year-old Instagram user who allegedly misused the profile photos of more than 15 girls from various parts of Kozhikode district and circulated them widely through his fake accounts with derogatory comments.

Majnas, a native of Ambayathode, was arrested within three days after the girls approached District Police Chief (Kozhikode Rural) Dr. A. Srinivas. The suspect had allegedly created five different fake Instagram accounts to post the girls' images by describing them as prostitutes.

Police sources said the suspect was tracked with the support of the Kozhikode Cyberdome. C. Sivaprasad, Circle Inspector and nodal officer in charge of the Cyberdome, said the ac-

count holder was identified in just three days after receiving the complaint.

Majnas was arrested by a team led by Nadakkavu Circle Inspector Ashraf.

The police have registered three cases against him. The youth was charged under various Sections of the IT Act.

According to the police, the reason for misusing the images is yet to be ascertained.

Incidentally, the complainants had no online or offline connection with the suspect who was doing odd jobs after Plus Two course.

A relative of one of the complainants said the online torture by the invisible account holder had caused huge mental agony and disgrace to the girls.

Learning about their plight, a few ethical hackers had voluntarily hacked one of the fake accounts in their efforts to track the suspect.

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 Sunday: Thunderstorm with lightning at isolated places Odisha, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Chhattisgarh, West Bengal, Bihar, Punjab, Haryana, Chandigarh, Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Jharkhand.

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	0.32	20.4	19.0	Kozhikode	0.36	26.6	24.8
Ahmedabad	0.40	25.5	24.5	Kurnool	0.41	27.7	25.0
Aizawl	0.24	15.2	14.0	Lucknow	0.34	24.2	22.0
Altahnabad	0.4	39.1	24.4	Madurai	0.46	39.2	24.2
Bengaluru	0.32	22.7	21.5	Mangaluru	0.35	25.0	23.0
Bhopal	0.38	25.4	24.1	Mumbai	0.34	25.7	23.5
Bhubaneswar	0.29	21.5	20.3	New Delhi	0.37	23.8	22.0
Chandigarh	0.35	22.4	21.0	Patna	0.32	22.6	20.5
Chennai	0.36	29.5	27.8	Port Blair	0.33	27.3	25.0
Coimbatore	0.36	25.4	24.0	Puducherry	0.36	28.4	26.0
Dehradun	0.33	2.1	17.8	Pune	0.36	22.8	21.0
Gangtok	1.0	22.7	9.7	Raipur	0.40	24.5	22.0
Goa	0.35	27.8	26.0	Ranchi	0.33	19.5	17.5
Guwahati	0.41	26.6	17.6	Shillong	0.52	18.0	16.0
Hubballi	0.37	22.0	20.0	Shimla	0.22	11.7	10.0
Hyderabad	0.7	40.7	26.4	Srinagar	0.24	10.1	9.0
Imphal	15.9	26.0	15.3	Thiruvananthapuram	5.6	34.3	26.4
Jaipur	0.36	24.4	21.4	Tiruchi	0.41	28.0	27.0
Kochi	1.2	33.8	26.0	Vijayawada	0.38	27.8	26.0
Kohima	5.4	20.0	11.4	Kolkata	0.35	29.0	27.0
Kolkata	0.33	23.5	21.0	Visakhapatnam	0.35	29.0	27.0

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)

Pollutants in the air you are breathing

CITIES	SO ₂	NO ₂	CO	PM2.5	PM10	CODE
Ahmedabad	18	20	15	46	70	■
Bengaluru	02	09	25	50	72	■
Chennai	02	33	60	27	-	■
Delhi	06	39	23	122	130	■
Hyderabad	09	40	22	49	69	■
Kolkata	08	12	16	27	27	■
Lucknow	06	37	59	172	122	■
Mumbai	61	37	55	52	52	■
Pune	23	13	49	45	28	■
Visakhapatnam	-	-	-	-	-	■

Yesterday

In observation made at 7.00 p.m., Panipat, Haryana, recorded an overall air quality index (AQI) score of 269, indicating an unhealthy level of pollution.

NO₂: Nitrogen Dioxide. Aggravates respiratory illness, causes haze to form and stain culturally important objects such as statues and monuments.

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.

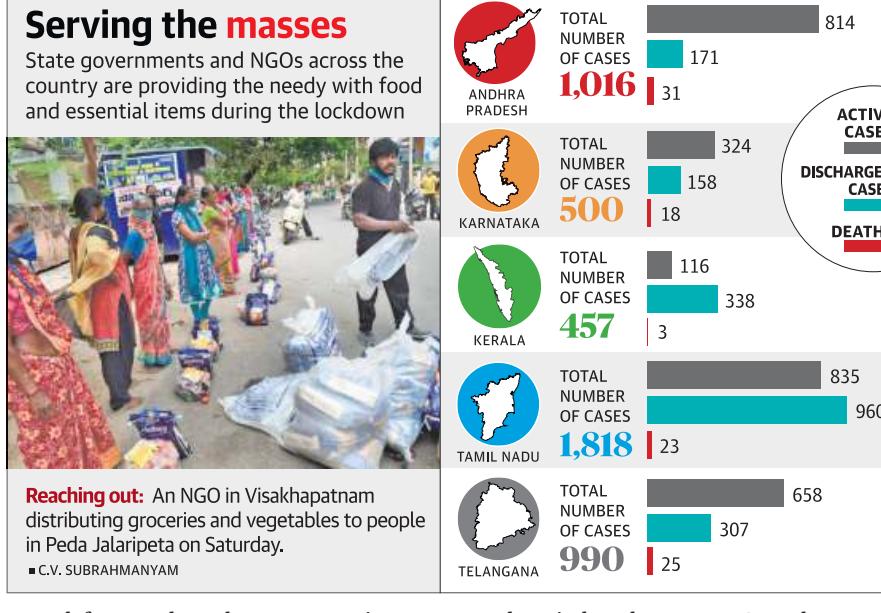
PM2.5 & PM10: Particulate matter pollution can cause irritation of the eyes, nose and throat, coughing, chest tightness and shortness of breath, reduced lung function, irregular heartbeat, asthma attacks, heart attacks and premature death in people with heart or lung disease.

Andhra Pradesh records two deaths, Kerala widens testing

Srikakulam in A.P. reports its first cases, 26 more test positive in Karnataka

Serving the masses

State governments and NGOs across the country are providing the needy with food and essential items during the lockdown



Reaching out: An NGO in Visakhapatnam distributing groceries and vegetables to people in Peda Jalaripetta on Saturday.

■ C.V. SUBRAHMANYAM

FROM PAGE ONE

'Standalone shops can open in urban areas'

The district magistrates of Lucknow and Kanpur in Uttar Pradesh said there would be no relaxation in the existing lockdown measures. The Rajasthan and Gujarat governments were yet to take a decision.

In an order issued late on Friday, the MHA made amendments to the April 15 consolidated revised guidelines on lockdown measures, issued under the Disaster Management Act, 2005, to allow the States to decide on the additional public activities to be allowed

from April 20 in non-hotspot zones. "In urban areas, all standalone shops and shops in residential complexes are allowed to open. Shops in markets/market complexes and shopping malls are not allowed to open. It is clarified that sale by e-commerce companies will continue to be permitted for essential goods only," the Ministry specified on Saturday.

The sale of liquor and other items remained prohibited.

T.N. cities see chaos and panic buying

"Normally, 20% of the daily arrivals would remain after the sales. But, on Saturday, most traders sold both the day's arrivals and the previous day's stocks," he said.

In many parts of Chennai, anxious residents were either crowding or standing in long queues to buy groceries and vegetables.

In Coimbatore, police and civic officials struggled to ensure distancing at the

temporary vegetable markets. In Salem, there was confusion as the Collector on Friday declared district-wide lockdown for the weekend though the Chief Minister had announced it for three days beginning Sunday. In Madurai, too, most grocery shops saw long queues and crowding.

(With inputs from Coimbatore and Madurai bureaus)

UGC to suggest academic calendar this week

While UGC secretary Rajnish Jain would not confirm these reports, he noted that any guidelines on these matters issued by the Commission would "not be binding, but only advisory in nature".

"The situation in every State is different, including the rate of COVID-19 infections. Also, some universities may be small and be able to provide online facilities to all students. Others have thousands of students and fewer resources. We cannot mandate one standard solution for all. There will be flexibility in the guidelines," said Dr. Jain.

The vice chancellors of State universities also felt that the decisions of State governments would play a key role in decisions regarding a revised academic calendar. "The role of UGC is

(With PTI inputs)

1,429 new cases, 56 deaths in 24 hours

On Saturday, a high level meeting of the Group of Ministers (GoM) on COVID-19, chaired by Health Minister Harsh Vardhan took stock of the number of cases, and the country's preparedness.

As on date, more than one lakh units of personal protective equipment (PPE) and N-95 masks were being manufactured everyday in the country, a PIB release said.

There are at present 104 domestic manufacturers of PPE and three making N95 masks in the country. In addition, production of ventilators by domestic manufacturers has also started and orders have been placed for more than 59,000 units through nine manufacturers, the statement added.

There were 92,000 non-governmental organisations, Self Help Groups and civil society organisations involved in providing food to the migrant workers across various States/UTs.

National database The GoM was also informed that a national level meta-data of health workers, NSS, NYK, NCC, doctors etc., has been prepared and shared to all the States, Districts and other officials, to mobilise the resources/volunteers (COVID warriors) to much needed locations.

The government claimed that it had prepared a database of 1.24 crore doctors, healthworkers and volunteers from volunteer organisations.

Only 15% of poor households got pulses

"Each kg of pulse goes through at least three [in many cases four] trips by truck and as many cycles of loading and unloading. While for long distances, transport is being done through goods train, in most cases transportation is by road through trucks."

Over four weeks, the operation involves about two lakh truck trips, a challenging target during the lockdown as many godowns and

mills lie in hotspot areas. Availability of trucks and labour for loading and unloading has been a major problem in these areas, said the department. Of the 1.96 lakh tonnes needed for April, about 1.45 lakh tonnes have been offered to States already. Only a few States have dal mills within their own jurisdiction and they have been asked to lift the milled pulses themselves to speed up the process.

(With inputs from Srinagar)

Centre passing the buck to States, says Congress

Kapil Sibal calls for a national plan to deal with the impact of 'the lockdown of people and a lockout of the economy'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Centre should have a national plan to tackle the coronavirus pandemic under the Disaster Management Act rather than delegating all the responsibility to the State governments, the Congress party said on Saturday.

"You can't have a lockdown of people and a lockout of the economy. That's not the way to formulate a policy. We are not criticising. We are only saying it is time to rethink. We are with the government. This is constructive criticism," Congress spokesperson and Rajya Sabha MP Kapil Sibal told reporters as he addressed an online media conference.

The lockdown was imposed without consulting the State governments and the migrant workers were left to fend for themselves, Mr. Sibal added. As per the Disaster Management Act, 2005,

the Union government was duty bound to formulate a national plan to deal with COVID-19. However, the Home Secretary, presiding over the National Executive Committee (NEC) under the Act, is issuing directions to State governments to deal with the situation as best as they can, Mr. Sibal said.

"Why were detailed plans not made within seven weeks of the WHO declaration when on March 24, the Prime Minister announced a national lockdown? We are in the fourth week of April, yet there is no plan in place even now," Mr. Sibal said.

Minimum standards

He said the Prime Minister should inform the people about the minimum standards of relief that are required to be provided to persons affected by the disaster. Instead of discharging its "solemn responsibilities to



Raising questions: Congress leader Kapil Sibal asked the Centre to share a comprehensive plan during a video media conference on Saturday. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

provide succour to the poor and helpless stranded migrants", the Union government has chosen to shift the onus to state governments to do what they can without a plan and without guidelines prescribing minimum standards of relief, the senior Congress leader alleged.

"It is unfortunate that

even till date, there is no plan. We are all aware that the provisions in shelters are pathetic without adequate sanitation, medical cover, food and clean drinking water. States are not able to make available adequate food supplies to those affected," he said.

"Section 10(2) of the Act

authorises the NEC headed by the Secretary, Ministry of Home Affairs to assist the National Disaster Management Authority in the discharge of its responsibilities under the Act. What the MHA failed to mention is that the NEC under Section 10(2)(b) is to prepare the plan to be approved by the NDMA and lay down

guidelines for preparing disaster management plans by different ministries. The NEC is also to monitor implementation of plans prepared by the Ministries," Mr. Sibal said.

He said Prime Minister Narendra Modi's limited role seems to be addressing the nation from time to time. (With inputs from PTI)

'Centre should act now on Franklin Templeton issue'

Chidambaram recalls situation in 2008

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Congress leader P. Chidambaram has urged the government to act swiftly, before the markets reopen on Monday, to resolve the situation created by Franklin Templeton Mutual Fund's decision to wind up six debt schemes. He offered the example of his experience in a similar situation while Finance Minister when the RBI had announced measures to deal with the problem.

The fund has cited a liquidity crisis in the bond markets and an unprecedented level of redemptions following the COVID-19 outbreak as reasons for its decision.

Noting that the situation is "a matter of grave concern to the investors, mutual fund industry and the financial markets", Mr. Chidambaram recalled his actions in October 2008 when mutual funds faced liquidity stress due to the global financial crisis.

The Congress government had immediately con-



sulted the RBI, the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI), the Indian Banks' Association, and the Association of Mutual Funds in India.

An urgent meeting of the Financial Stability and Development Council (FSDC) was convened and a solution was found by the end of the day," said the Raja Sabha member. "The next

+ morning, officers of RBI and SEBI met at 8 am, and RBI announced a 14-day special repo facility and allowed an additional 0.5% of NDTL (Net Demand and Time Liability). With the markets being closed for two days, Mr. Chidambaram urged the government to "act promptly and resolve the situation quickly".

IN BRIEF



NIA court rejects Teltumbde's bail plea

Mumbai The special NIA lockout court on Saturday rejected the temporary bail plea filed by Dalit scholar and academic Anand Teltumbde in a case pertaining to the 2018 Bhima-Koregaon violence, and remanded him to judicial custody till May 8. He had sought bail on health grounds in the wake of the COVID-19 outbreak.

SC orders govt. to pay ₹1 lakh to ex-RAW officer

NEW DELHI The Supreme Court has ordered the government to pay ₹1 lakh as compensation to a former woman

Intelligence officer with the Research and Analysis Wing, who attempted suicide outside the Prime Minister's Office in 2008 after her sexual harassment complaint, filed against her seniors in August 2007, was casually dealt with.

MHA nod to bring back mortal remains of Indians

NEW DELHI The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) issued an order on Saturday permitting the arrival of mortal remains of Indian nationals and Overseas Citizens of India (OCIs) from foreign countries subject to submission of an NOC from the Ministries of Health and External Affairs and "strict adherence to government guidelines regarding management of COVID-19."

Most of RS time spent on issues of public importance

Study attempts to rebut Opposition charge of lack of time for debates on issues raised by leaders

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Upper House spends 24% of its time in deliberating and passing laws, an analysis by the Rajya Sabha Secretariat has revealed. Most of its functional time is spent on deliberating issues of public importance.

Rajya Sabha Chairman Venkaiah Naidu had directed the Secretariat to carry out this analysis to blunt the Opposition criticism that the Council of the States spends far too much time in government business (legislating) instead of debating the issues raised by them.

Data from 1978 onwards was analysed. During 1978-

2018, the RS held 3,022 sittings and transacted business for 13,946 hours as against the available 18,132 hours. This comes to 76.91% productivity while 23.09% of the available time was lost due to disruptions.

The analysis revealed that 40.20% of time is spent in deliberating issues of national importance followed by 32.22% in asking questions and holding the government accountable.

Only 24.05% of its functional time is spent on making laws. And an additional 3.52% is spent on Private members Bills, which are stand alone legislation drafted by individual members.



In discussion: The Rajya Sabha during the Budget Session of Parliament in March 2020. ■ FILE PHOTO

These have rarely translated into laws though.

The time spent on the Government Bills ranged from 10.87% of the time in 2015 to 40.09% in 2002. It has touched a record high of 45.90% during the historic 250th session last year. A re-

cord 15 Bills were passed with the House spending 49.08 hours of the session time of 107.05 hours.

Deliberative functions like debating electoral reforms or recent discussion on law and order in parts of Delhi take up the largest chunk of

time. The oversight function – which is to hold the government accountable by way of asking questions – calling attention motions and so on takes about 32.22% of time with portion of time reserved for the daily question hour.

Another interesting outcome of the analysis is how the functioning of the Rajya Sabha has severely deteriorated post 2010. During 1978-2018, the actual functional time excluding disruptions ranged from 139 to 580 hours per year. All instances of working for above 500 hours per year were during 1978-1988 with an evident slide afterwards.

Family of five, including 2 minors, found dead in UP.

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
LUCKNOW

The police in Uttar Pradesh's Western district of Etah launched a probe after five members of a family, including two minors, were found dead inside their locked house on Saturday.

The dead were identified as Rajeshwar Prasad Pachauri, 75, a retired health department staff, his daughter-in-law Divya Pachauri, 33, her two sons, aged 10 and one, and her sister Bulbul, 23.

On an alert from neighbours, police found Bulbul,

Pachauri and the two minor boys dead on their beds, said Senior Superintendent of Police Sunil Kumar Singh. Divya was on a cot outside the house.

There was no clear evidence of entry into the house as the main door and the roof were locked from the inside, the police said. It seems like there was "no forced entry," Mr. Singh said, adding that all items in the house were in their place. Police have formed five teams to dig up CCTV footage and call details to investigate the deaths.



Tense time: Jawans at the encounter site in Pulwama district on Saturday. ■ NISSAR AHMED

Kashmir in the past 24 hours. Two militants were killed in an ambush in Anantnag on Friday evening, hours after they abducted a policeman.

The police neither disclosed the identity of the outfit nor the militants killed in the operation.

It's second such operation of security forces in south

3 killed in Pulwama encounter

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
SRINAGAR

Two unidentified militants and an "associate" were killed in an operation of security forces in south Kashmir's Pulwama on Saturday.

A police spokesman said two unidentified terrorists and one hardcore associate of terrorists were killed in a pre-dawn operation at Goripora in Awantipora area.

The police sources said the militants were encircled after a specific tip-off about presence of militants in an orchard.

"A underground hideout was busted during the operation," sources said.

Each kg of pulse goes through at least three [in many cases four] trips by truck and as many cycles of loading and unloading. While for long distances, transport is being done through goods train, in most cases transportation is by road through trucks."

Over four weeks, the operation involves about two lakh truck trips, a challenging target during the lockdown as many godowns and

No new cases after May 16, says study

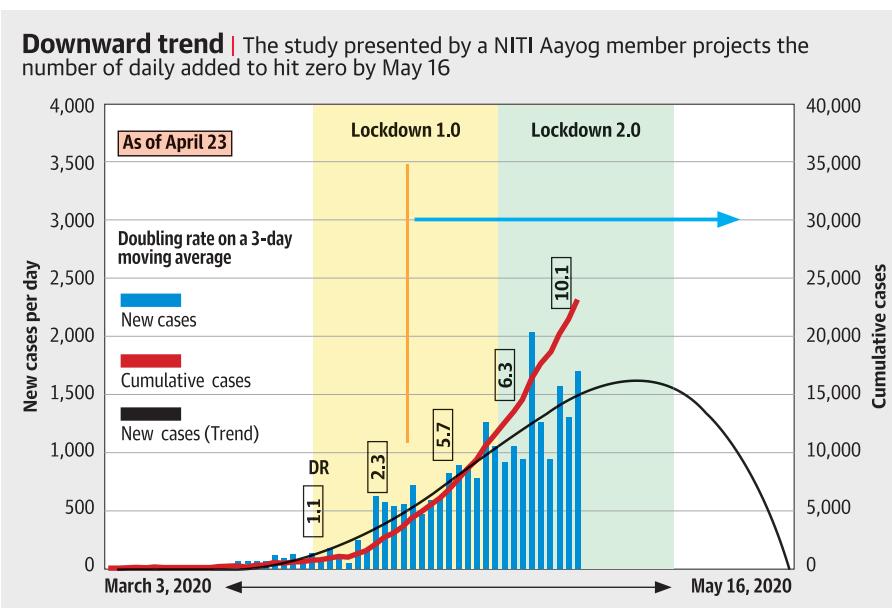
It's highly unlikely going by the rise in numbers in Gujarat, Maharashtra and West Bengal, say experts

JACOB KOSHY

NEW DELHI
On Friday, V.K. Paul, NITI Aayog member and head of a key government empowered committee on medical management, presented a study to suggest that the lockdown had slowed the rate of transmission and increased the doubling time, the period it took for cases to double, to about 10 days. Though India continues to show a rising trend in cases, his projection also showed a forecast that says new cases would cease by May 16.

From May 3, India would hit its peak in adding daily new cases at a little above 1,500 and this would drop to 1,000 cases by May 12, and down to zero by May 16. In all, this would mean that no more than 35,000 cases would be added between Saturday and the first fortnight of May.

Independent experts, and one of the members of that committee, who didn't want to be identified said this was "highly unlikely". For a decline in the national average, there would have to be declines that lasted over two



weeks in key States such as Gujarat, Maharashtra, West Bengal that were fuelling the rise in numbers. "So far there is no such evidence of a decline. So I don't know the basis of that forecast. We are planning, in terms of keeping ventilators, beds, ICU facilities ready on the assumption that this will last much longer," the member told *The Hindu*.

This week, the Indian Council of Medical Research also published a research strategy detailing how it was planning to ramp up testing far beyond April. Though this paper was prepared based on an assessment of resources at hand on the March 31, it projected 2.1 million RNA test kits, the gold standard in detecting the infection, in May and 2.8 mil-

lion kits in June. In April, it expected at least a million kits. On average, one kit corresponds to one sample. So far, the ICMR has tested 5.4 million samples though this includes repeat tests on the same individuals. In other words, it expects to be testing more people not less in coming months. This also doesn't include the antibody test kits to be used for com-

Rohtang Pass opened 3 weeks in advance

Essentials can be moved to Lahaul, Spiti in Himachal

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI
The Border Roads Organisation (BRO) on Saturday opened the Rohtang Pass, three weeks in advance, for transporting essential supplies and relief materials to the Lahaul and Spiti districts of Himachal Pradesh amid the lockdown, the Army said. The pass is at 13,058 feet on the eastern Pir Panjal Range of the Himalayas.

"Dr. Ram Lal Markanda, Agriculture Minister of Himachal Pradesh, led the first convoy of vehicles, carrying essential supplies and ap-



Clear passage: BRO vehicles clearing snow in the Rohtang Pass. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

proximately 150 farmers, to the Lahaul Valley..., thus officially opening the Rohtang Pass this year," the Army said in a statement.

The operation to clear snow is carried out every year as the pass remains snow-bound for almost six months, from mid-Novem-

ber to mid-May, isolating Lahaul and Spiti districts from the rest of the country.

"Last year, the Rohtang Pass was kept open till December 12. The valley depends on air traffic for external logistics and supplies during winters," the statement said.

On April 11, the Himachal Pradesh government approached the Director-General, BRO, to speed up snow clearance to help farmers return to start cultivation and transport essential supplies and relief materials in the wake of COVID-19. The Army said blizzards, freezing temperatures and avalanches delayed the operation, but teams worked round the clock.

J&K government spokesman Rohit Kansal attributed the sudden spike in cases to increased testing. "JK breaks the 1,000 test barrier as 1,071 samples were tested in the past 24 hours. But that also means more positives. One death was also reported," Mr. Kansal said.

All positive cases were reported from the Kashmir Valley, with Anantnag accounting for the highest number of 23 cases and the hotspot Bandipora district recording seven cases, taking the total there to 116 cases. The total number of cases in the State had reached 496, an official said.

Alarm bells

South Kashmir's Anantnag district, which reported only a few cases of coronavirus, now has 37 positive cases, triggering alarm bells.

Govt. to study lessons learnt from Spanish Flu

HRD Ministry writes to universities

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI
Universities and research institutes across the country have been asked by the Union Human Resource Development (HRD) Ministry to delve into their archives and other means to study how India handled the 1918 H1N1 (commonly referred to as Spanish Flu) pandemic and what measures were taken to boost the economy after the pandemic had run its course, leaving more than 12-17 million people dead in the country.

The letter, written by B.V.R.C. Purushottam (IAS officer currently private secretary and chief of staff to Union HRD minister Ramesh Pokhrayan ("Nishank"), also tells university departments to set up research teams and study the levels of awareness of COVID-19 in villages near university campuses.

The Indian government extended the all-India lockdown on April 14 by another three weeks but has been talking about a staggered exit and searching for the optimum balance between saving lives and saving businesses. Lakhs of migrant workers too have been left high and dry due to the lockdown and the peculiar requirements of the pandemic, in which close contact has led to virulent rates of infection and spread.

The Union Home Minis-

C The letter is basically to ask for a non-bureaucratic view on how to effect an exit from the lockdown

try has allowed shops (not in malls) registered under the Shops and Establishment Act to open in non-municipal areas in an order on Friday and for harvesting and sowing operations in rural India to proceed. But a huge question mark still remains on the granular details of just how an exit from the lockdown can be effected without any cure for COVID-19 in sight.

Case studies

"The letter is basically to ask for a non-bureaucratic view on how to effect an exit from the lockdown. Most old universities have, in their archives, much material on how the 1918 pandemic was handled in terms of public health and the economy. That needs to be made into case studies and solutions are needed which are tailored to local areas, and also broad brushstrokes. Bureaucratic solutions can be blinded," said a source in the HRD Ministry to *The Hindu*.

According to the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, as of Saturday morning, India had 24,508 cases of COVID-19.

Laying bare his arguments before judge

Lawyer appears in vest during videoconference

MOHAMMED IQBAL
JAIPUR

A lawyer arguing a bail application in the Rajasthan High Court appeared in a vest during the hearing conducted through videoconferencing, drawing the ire of the judge who admonished him and adjourned the hearing.

The court had switched over to videoconferencing for litigation during the COVID-19 lockdown.

When the advocate wearing a vest started arguments seeking bail for

his client in a criminal matter on Friday, Justice Sanjeev Prakash Sharma of the High Court's Jaipur Bench took umbrage at his "inappropriate attire" and told him that lawyers must appear in proper uniform

even during videoconferencing.

"Even in the video conferencing, the decorum of the court is required to be maintained. The Advocates Act provides for lawyers to wear their uniform while



ILLUSTRATION: SATHEESH VELLINEZH

pleading the case for their clients," the judge observed in his brief order.

Justice Sharma said he had earlier directed that lawyers must appear in uniform during the lockdown, when in-person hearing had been replaced with videoconferencing. Another advocate had appeared from his home in his innerwear during a hearing in the same court earlier this month.

Public Prosecutor Sumer Singh Ola, who appeared on behalf of the State government in the case, said the court's cause list had clearly mentioned that the lawyers must appear in their uniform.

Return to open court after lockdown, lawyers urge CJI

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court Bar Association wrote to the Chief Justice of India and other judges of the court on Saturday that hearing of cases through videoconferencing should not become the "new normal" and replace the open court system even

after the lockdown was lifted.

"Once the lockdown is lifted and once the Ministry of Health permits, open court hearings should commence with social distancing norms and crowd management measures made mandatory on the court premises," a resolution said.

NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR THE EMPOWERMENT OF PERSONS WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES(DIVYANGJAN)
Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (Divyangjan), (Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, Government of India)
An ISO 9001: 2015 Institution

Manovikas Nagar, Secunderabad-500 009, Telangana.

Employment Notice No : 01/2020

This Institute invites applications from eligible candidates for the following Regular Posts to be filled on Direct Recruitment basis.

Sl. No.	Name of the Post	No.of Post	Level	Category
NIEPID, Secunderabad (Regular)				
1	Jr. Special Education Teacher	01	Level-06	UR
2	Statistical Assistant	01	Level-05	UR
3	Vocational Instructor Gr-II	01	Level-04	OCBC
MSEC Noida (Regular)				
4	Principal	01	Level-12	UR-OH
5	Home Visitor /Teacher	01	Level-06	UR
6	Jr. Special Education Teacher	02	Level-06	UR
RC Noida (Regular)				
7	Jr. Accountant	01	Level-04	UR
8	Driver	01	Level-02	UR
RC Kolkata (Regular)				
9	Jr. Accountant	01	Level-04	UR
RC Navi Mumbai (Regular)				
10	Jr. Accountant	01	Level-04	UR
CRC Davangere (Deputation / short term Contract)				
11	Director	01	Level-12	UR

Applications are invited from eligible candidates for the following posts to be filled on Contractual basis at Composite Regional Center for Skill Development, Rehabilitation & Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities, Nellore, Andhra Pradesh State,

CRC Nellore (Contractual basis)

Sl. No.	Name of the Post	No.of Post	Consolidated Salary per month
1	Asst. Professor (Medical PMR)	01	Rs. 65,000/-
2	Asst. Professor (Clinical Psychology or Rehab.Psychology)	01	Rs.60,000/-
3	Asst. Professor (Speech Pathology)	01	Rs. 60,000/-
4	Lecturer (Physiotherapy)	01	Rs. 50,000/-
5	Rehabilitation Officer(Social Work & Placement)	01	Rs. 40,000/-
6	Clinical Assistant	01	Rs. 32,000/-

The Last date for receipt of Completed Application forms is 15.06.2020

The detailed notification is available on institute's website: www.niepid.nic.in

Post-lockdown, Indians in Gulf will be the first to return

Govt. gears up to repatriate stranded citizens

SUHASINI HAIDAR

NEW DELHI

A week before the current phase of nationwide lockdown to combat the coronavirus pandemic ends, the government has begun preparations for the return of Indians stranded or needing to return from various countries, beginning with countries in the Gulf region.

On Saturday, Cabinet Secretary Rajiv Gauba held a meeting of all nodal Ministries, including Foreign Secretary Harsh Shringla and all the Chief Secretaries of States and Union Territories, on the issue of repatriating Indians after travel restrictions are lifted.

Indians stranded in the U.K., other parts of Europe, and the United States will be considered after that.

Once the government's plans are finalised, the MEA will contact diplomatic missions in Delhi and the DGCA will give clearance to specific airlines to begin advertising flights from the Gulf, sources said.

The government is making a separate assessment about places from where it will need to operate special flights, due to the large numbers of Indians needing to return, many of whom will be unable to afford tickets at present. Many of these countries have contacted Indian missions in the last few weeks, pressing the urgency of ensuring that Indians are allowed to return.

More than eight million Indians live and work in the Gulf region.

(With inputs from G. Anand in Thiruvananthapuram)



A file photo of an Indian team, comprising medical personnel, being checked before being airlifted to Kuwait. ■ PTI

Application Form Last Date Extended 23 May, 2020

Examination Date to be Notified Later

Media Partner

Coordinating University for CUCET-2020

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CENTRAL UNIVERSITY OF RAJASTHAN

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INTERVIEW | BIPLAB DEB

'Tripura started screening airports and checkposts as early as January'

Chief Minister says the State, which has had only two cases of COVID-19, will continue to stay vigilant but ease restrictions for traders dealing in essential commodities

NISTULA HEBBAR

Tripura saw the discharge of its second and last COVID-19 patient this weekend; with that there are no active cases in the State. Chief Minister Biplob Deb discusses the unique challenges faced by the border State. Excerpts:

The actual load of cases in Tripura has been low, with both positive cases having recovered. Yet the State has been put under lockdown. Why?

■ Our State has become coronavirus-free with the blessings of Mata Tripura Sundari and by properly following the guidelines prescribed by Honourable Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi ji. We are thankful to the citizens of Tripura for extending their cooperation and support by obeying the social distancing norms and other guidelines. I also congratulate all the health professionals and other frontline warriors for rendering their dedicated ser-

vices during the pandemic. The government of Tripura had taken preventive measures, including announcement of lockdown, well before the other States. Our government had declared the lockdown on March 23 along with curfew. We had started screening in airports and integrated checkposts since January 29. We are the first State in the country to impose prohibitory orders under Section 144 of the Cr.P.C on March 16. The goal behind this advance step was to ensure social distancing for preventing transmission of the novel coronavirus and definitely, the plan worked to a great extent. We are fortunate that only two positive

I have also urged people residing in bordering villages to cooperate with security agencies to ensure no influx.

I must add that we have eased some restrictions for industry, small-time traders, shops dealing with essential commodities and work in construction sites in compliance with advisory of the

Central government.



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Tripura, like other States in the northeastern region, depends on connectivity with the rest of the country for a lot of supplies. Has that been a challenge with the suspension of flights?

■ Tripura is getting essential supplies through cargo flights. There is no dearth of essential supplies in the State. Cargo flights have been

landing in Agartala. The essential food items are being distributed to families in need and daily wagers. All departments are providing essential services as mentioned in the consolidated guidelines issued by the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA). Other essential public services are being provided at full strength. These departments include health, power, drinking water, municipal services, police, home

guards, civil defence, fire services, prisons, revenue & relief, agriculture & allied activities, fisheries, forest, industry & commerce, labour, rural development & panchayat, food & civil supplies, district administration & treasury, social welfare & education, among others. So there is no such problem.

The State borders Bangladesh and has an active land port there. What is the situation for trade, etc.?

■ The State government has allowed trade facilities as per MHA guidelines. We have allowed operation in industrial establishments, involved in manufacturing essential commodities. We have allowed necessary trade activities with social distancing and other hygiene measures. We have already declared that industrial establishments are exempt from the

lockdown and can continue to operate. We have allowed manufacturing units of essential commodities and also production units that require continuous process. Despite the challenges and concerns about public health, we are working to ensure that our unavoidable obligations to neighbours are fully met.

The lockdown period has also been used by States to build capacity for quarantine, hospital beds and ventilators. What is the status in Tripura?

■ The State government is very concerned regarding this core area of medical supply and arrangements. We have been procuring ventilators, personal protection equipment (PPE) and alcohol-based hand sanitisers in good capacity. To boost the morale of medical professionals, we have committed to provide jobs to families of

doctors, nurses and health staff, if they die in the line of duty while dealing with coronavirus patients. We have earlier announced a ₹4 lakh life insurance cover for the frontline workers. I have asked people to carry the 'jal gamcha' (towel) on their shoulders at all times during the lockdown. We all have the 'jal gamcha' in our homes. Masks are a must for the doctors, health and para-medical staff. Also, it is not possible to provide masks to 40 lakh people in the State. Tripura has 126 isolation beds, 11 ventilators and 457 quarantine facilities with beds.

To deal with any eventuality, the State government has prepared a dedicated 40-bed COVID-19 treatment centre in GBP Hospital and Agartala Government Medical College. Besides, another 30-bed COVID-19 health centre has been set up in IGM Hospital.

Care denied to non-COVID-19 patients

Hospitals demand virus test reports before treatment

JYOTI SHELAR
MUMBAI

At 2 a.m. on Thursday, a young media professional diagnosed with malaria, experienced a sudden spike in fever. But the closest hospital near her Mahim home said told her she should not come in for a consultation till she had a COVID-19 negative report in hand.

Scarred by COVID-19 patient encounters that have infected many healthcare workers and have forced some hospitals to shut down, many medical institutions have made it a norm to demand proof of a patient being COVID-19 negative before treatment. This has left patients with other health ailments at the risk of deteriorating conditions and running from one hospital to another.

A check by *The Hindu* with a few other hospitals in the city revealed that the demand for a COVID-19 report had become the norm.

At Bandra's Lilavati Hospital, a doctor at the COVID-19 screening area told this reporter to first go to a local physician, get a prescription for a COVID-19 test and then call a private laboratory for home collection of the sample. "Meanwhile, give paracetamol to the patient thrice a day and sponge from head to toe except for the chest area," the doctor said.

Even if a patient does adhere to the hospitals' demand for a certification, private laboratories currently take three to four days to give COVID-19 reports.

The woman then checked with the Hinduja Hospital also in Mahim where the doctor on duty said she could come down only if she did not reside in any of the containment zones.

"At Hinduja, they checked my vital parameters outside the hospital premises, asked



Nowhere to go: The hospital 'protocols' have left patients with other health ailments at the risk of deteriorating conditions and running from one hospital to another. ■ PTI

Maharashtra reports a record 811 cases in a day

22 die of infection, 119 discharged

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI

With 811 new COVID-19 cases, Maharashtra recorded the highest single-day surge on Saturday. The State also recorded 22 deaths taking the death toll to 323.

Nearly 66% of the State's cases and 59% of the deaths were from Mumbai alone, making the financial capital a major hotspot for the infection.

3 districts in green zone

Saturday's tally surpassed the State's last highest single-day jump of 778 cases on April 23. The 22 deaths on Saturday was also the second-highest daily toll re-

corded by the State. On April 9, the State recorded 25 deaths.

Of the 35 districts in the State, only three – Wardha, Bhandara and Gadchiroli – remain in the green zone now. Chandrapur was also in the green zone but a couple who returned from Indonesia tested positive in Nagpur. The two cases have been counted under Chandrapur due to their residential address.

Of the 22 deaths recorded on Saturday, 13 were from Mumbai, six from Pune and one each from Malegaon, Dhule and Solapur. The recovery rate in the State stands at 14% with nearly 1,076 patients discharged from hospitals to date. On Saturday, 119 patients were discharged across the State.

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI**

Maharashtra government on Saturday initiated the process to bring back over 2,000 students from the State stranded in Kota, Rajasthan, due to the nationwide lockdown. Abhay Yawalkar, Director, Disaster Management, Maharashtra, wrote to the authorities in Rajasthan requesting them to inform institutes in Kota about the scheduled transport.

Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh governments will be informed about the travel via these States.

Bengal families stranded in Bengaluru

They travelled to the city for medical treatment and are stuck in hotels, PGs

out, and the situation is grim," he told *The Hindu*.

Aktar Mondal, a resident of Bongaon, came here with four members of his family for treatment on March 18 and was scheduled to return on March 25. "I had booked the ticket, but a lockdown was announced the previous night. Again I booked tickets when the first phase was supposed to end, but again I lost money as the lockdown was extended," he said. "Police said they would facilitate our return if we arranged for transport, which we cannot afford now," he said.

'Money running out'
Bimal Kashyap from Darjeeling, who came to Bengaluru for getting medical attention for his father-in-law's cancer, said, "Some of them [other families that have come for treatment] are in a pretty bad condition, stranded here with no money."



In need of help: Many patients from West Bengal have been stranded in the city since mid-March. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

This group of five families, stuck in a hotel near Narayana Health City, even approached the city police for help. While the police reasoned with the hotel management and even succeeded in getting them a rebate on the room rent, the hotel, however, rolled it back after a few days, making it a very brief relief.

The State government has issued orders to the police to book cases against landlords if they harass or evict tenants during the lockdown. However, the order covers only

residences and paying guest accommodation and not hotels. Police have booked cases against landlords of guest houses and PG accommodations.

Tapan Chowdhary, a native of Bardhaman, came to the city on March 18 for a family member's treatment and was staying at a guest house when he ran out of money. When the landlord insisted on the rent and warned that failure to pay would require him to vacate, he approached the police. The Kadugodi police booked

Uttar Pradesh starts bringing back workers

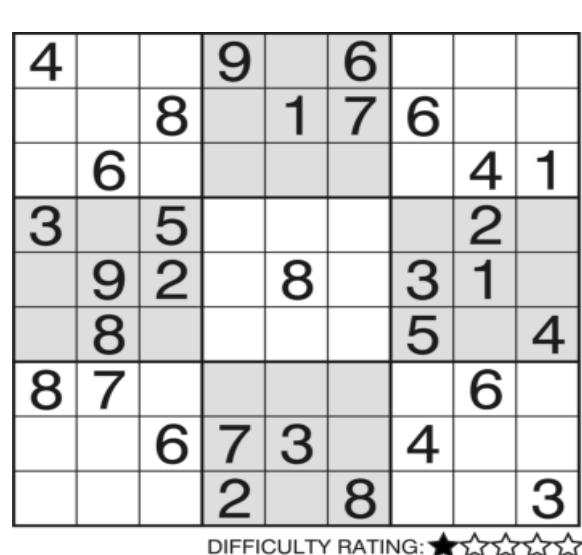
PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
LUCKNOW

The Uttar Pradesh government has started bringing back workers hailing from the State who were stranded in other parts of the country due to the lockdown and as many as 2,224 labourers have returned in the first phase, a senior official said on Saturday.

Briefing reporters here, additional chief secretary (Home and Information) Awanish Awasthi said the first batch of workers was brought back in 82 buses from Haryana on Saturday, and 11,000 workers would return by Sunday.

They will be kept under a 14-day quarantine. Orders have been issued to prepare shelter homes in the State so that the returnees can be quarantined there. Once the quarantine ends, preparations should be made to provide them employment near their village, Mr. Awasthi said.

SUDOKU



Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

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

CM
YK

UN pushes for global vaccine effort

Secretary-General asks world leaders and the private sector to join hands; virus toll nears 2,00,000

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

WASHINGTON

The global coronavirus death toll approached 2,00,000 on Saturday as the UN launched an international push for a vaccine to defeat the pandemic.

Governments around the world are struggling to limit the economic devastation unleashed by the virus, which has infected nearly 2.8 million people and left half of humanity under some form of lockdown.

COVID-19

The scale of the COVID-19 pandemic has forced medical research on the virus to move at unprecedented speed, but effective treatments are still far off and the UN chief said the effort will require cooperation on a global scale. "We face a global public enemy like no other," UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres told a virtual briefing on Friday, asking for international organisations, world leaders and the private sector to join the effort. "A world free of COVID-19 requires the most massive public health effort in history."

Any vaccine should be safe, affordable and available to all, Mr. Guterres said at the meeting, which was also attended by the leaders of Germany and France.

But notably absent were the leaders of China, where the virus first emerged late last year, and the U.S., which has accused the UN's World Health Organization of not warning quickly enough about the original outbreak.

The spread of COVID-19 is increasing other medical risks as well with the WHO warning nearly 4,00,000 more people could die from malaria because of disruption.



Lift the lockdown: A protest in Madison, Wisconsin, against the lockdown. • AFP

tion to the supply of mosquito nets and medicines. Saturday marked World Malaria Day, a disease which the WHO said could kill around 7,70,000 this year, or "twice as much as in 2018".

Early stages

With more than four billion people on lockdown or stay-at-home orders to slow the spread of the virus, governments are weighing how to lift restrictions without causing a spike in infections and how to revive economies battered by weeks of closure.

The daily toll in Western countries seems to be falling, a sign hopeful epidemiologists had been looking for, but the WHO has warned that other nations are still in the early stages of the fight.

Global COVID-19 deaths have climbed past 1,95,000, according to an AFP tally, but new reported cases appear to have leveled off at about 80,000 a day. The U.S. is the hardest-hit by far in the pandemic, recording more than 51,000 deaths and over 8,90,000 infections.

'Recovered patients not immune to re-infection'

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
GENEVA

The World Health Organization (WHO) warned on Saturday that there is no evidence that people who test positive for the new coronavirus are immunised and protected against reinfection.

The warning suggests that the issuance of "immune passports" may promote the spread of the pandemic. "There is currently no evidence that people who have recovered from #COVID-19 and have antibodies are protected from a second infection," WHO said.

Some governments, wanting a gradual return to work and the resumption of economic activity, have put forward the idea of issuing documents attesting to the immunity of people on the basis of serological tests

revealing the presence of antibodies in the blood.

At this point in the pandemic, there is not enough evidence about the effectiveness of antibody-mediated immunity to guarantee the accuracy of an "immunity passport" or "risk-free certificate."

Additional validation
WHO believes that the serological tests currently used "need additional validation to determine their accuracy and reliability".

In particular, the tests need to make it possible to distinguish the immune response to the novel coronavirus from the antibodies produced during an infection by another of the six known human coronaviruses, four of which are widespread, causing mild colds.

China eases export curbs

REUTERS
BEIJING

China is dropping a requirement that a number of key virus care products get domestic regulatory approval before export, as long as they are approved in the importing countries, the Commerce Ministry said on Saturday.

The ruling applies to products such as virus tests, medical masks, infrared thermometers and ventilators. "Tonight's new rule is a revision to (the older rule)," said Zhang Shuwen, the CEO of Liming Bio-products, a biotech firm offering coronavirus tests targeting the overseas market. "It's wrong to have a one-size-fits-all policy..."

Pak. doctors on hunger strike

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
LAHORE

Dozens of Pakistani doctors and nurses have launched a hunger strike demanding adequate protective equipment, the lead organiser of the protest said on Saturday.

Health workers have complained for weeks that the country's hospitals are suffering shortages of safety gear, prompting the arrest of more than 50 doctors who called for more supplies in Quetta.

Frontline staff have been left vulnerable, with more than 150 medical workers testing positive for the virus nationwide, according to the Young Doctors' Association in worst-hit Punjab province.

No consensus in U.S. on accuracy of antibody tests

Of 14 tests, only 3 delivered consistently reliable results

APOORVA MANDAVILLI

The researchers worked around the clock, in shifts of three to five hours, hoping to stave off weariness and keep their minds sharp for the delicate task.

They set up lines of laboratory volunteers: medical residents, post-doctoral students, even experienced veterans of science, each handling a specific task. They checked and rechecked their data, as if the world were depending on it. Because in some ways, it was.

For the past few weeks, more than 50 scientists have been working diligently to do something that the Food and Drug Administration mostly has not: verifying that 14 coronavirus antibody tests on the market actually deliver accurate results.

These tests are crucial to reopening the economy, but public health experts have raised urgent concerns about their quality. The new research, completed just days ago and posted online on Friday, confirmed some of those fears: of the 14 tests, only three delivered consistently reliable results. Even the best had some flaws.

The research has not been peer-reviewed and is subject to revision. But the results are already raising difficult questions about the course of the epidemic.

Surveys of residents in the Bay Area, Los Angeles and New York this week found that substantial percentages tested positive for antibodies to SARS-CoV-2, the official name of the new coronavirus. In New York City, the figure was said to be as high as 21%. Elsewhere, it was closer to 3%.



Antibody test cartridges in South Korea. • AP

to believe themselves immune to the virus when they are not and to put themselves in danger by abandoning social distancing and other protective measures.

It is also the result on which scientists are most divided.

"There are multiple tests that look reasonable and promising," said Dr. Alexander Marson, an immunologist at the University of California, San Francisco, and one of the project's leaders. "That's some reason for optimism."

Dr. Marson is also an investigator in the Chan Zuckerberg Biohub, which partly funded the study.

Other scientists were less sanguine than Dr. Marson. Four of the tests produced false-positive rates ranging from 11% to 16%; many of the rest hovered around 5%.

"Those numbers are just unacceptable," said Scott Hensley, a microbiologist at the University of Pennsylvania.

The proportion of people in the U.S. who have been exposed to the coronavirus is likely to be 5% or less, Mr. Hensley said. "If your kit has a 3% false-positive, how do you interpret that? It's basically impossible," he said. "If your kit has 14% false positive, it's useless."

Mr. Hensley said the study nonetheless was well designed and the results promising, given the sudden proliferation of antibody tests on the market and the push to use them to lift lockdowns.

Dr. Marson and his collaborator, Patrick Hsu, a bioengineer at the University of California, Berkeley, anticipated that antibody tests would face questions about quality. NY TIMES

ELSEWHERE



Indian-origin party CEO to step down

WASHINGTON

Seema Nanda has announced her decision to step down as the CEO of the Democratic National Committee, the top administrative position in the main Opposition party, ahead of the presidential elections in November. Ms. Nanda in 2018 became the first Indian-American to be appointed as the CEO of the Democratic National Committee. PTI

Zimbabwe official charged over 'insult'

HARARE

Opposition municipal official Chrispen Rambu has been charged with insulting Zimbabwe President Emmerson Mnangagwa over his handling of the COVID-19 pandemic, a lawyers' association said. Mr. Rambu is a Councillor in the eastern town of Chipinge and a member of the Movement for Democratic Change. AFP

Saudi Arabia abolishes flogging as punishment

Convicts who have been sentenced to the lash will from now on receive fines or prison terms instead

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
RIYADH

"This decision guarantees that convicts who would previously have been sentenced to the lash will from now on receive fines or prison terms instead," its chairman, Awad al-Awad, said.

Previously, the courts had powers to order the flogging of convicts found guilty of offences ranging from extramarital sex and breach of the peace to murder.

In future, judges will have to choose between fines and/or jail sentences, or non-custodial alternatives like community service.

Blogger flogging

The most high-profile instance of flogging in recent years was the case of Saudi blogger Raif Badawi who was sentenced to 10 years in prison and 1,000 lashes in 2014 on charges of "insulting" Islam. He was awarded the European Parliament's Sakharov human rights prize the following year.

The abolition of corporal



No more lashes: Ensaif, the wife of jailed blogger Raif Badawi, holding a picture of her husband in Strasbourg, France, in 2015, after accepting an award on his behalf. • AFP

punishment in Saudi Arabia comes just days after the Kingdom's human rights record was again in the spotlight following news of the death from a stroke in custody of leading activist Abdullah al-Hamid, 69.

Hamid was a founding member of the Saudi Civil and Political Rights Association (ACPRA) and was sen-

tenced to 11 years in jail in March 2013, campaigners said. He was convicted on multiple charges, including "breaking allegiance" to the Saudi ruler, "inciting disorder" and seeking to disrupt state security, Amnesty International said.

Criticism of Saudi Arabia's human rights record has grown since King Salman

tended to 11 years in jail in March 2013, campaigners said. He was convicted on multiple charges, including "breaking allegiance" to the Saudi ruler, "inciting disorder" and seeking to disrupt state security, Amnesty International said.

"Saudi Arabia's growing use of the death penalty, including as a weapon against political dissidents, is an alarming development," the human rights group said.

U.K.'s hospital death toll rises to over 20,000

The total figure could be much higher

REUTERS
LONDON

Britain passed the grim milestone of over 20,000 COVID-19 deaths on Saturday, as the daily toll rose 813 to 20,319 people who tested positive for the illness and died in hospital.

Back in mid-March, the government's chief scientific adviser said that keeping the death toll below 20,000 would be a "good outcome".

The government is facing growing criticism over its response to the pandemic as the death toll rises. Britain was slower to impose a lockdown than European peers and is struggling to raise its testing capacity.

The country has the fifth highest official toll in the world, after the United States, Italy, Spain and France. The total number of deaths is likely to be thousands higher with the addition of more comprehensive



A message thanking the U.K.'s National Health Service in Brighton. • REUTERS

but lagging figures that include deaths in nursing homes. As of April 10, the hospital toll was short of the overall toll by around 40%.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson is still recovering after falling seriously ill with COVID-19 earlier this month and in his absence, government ministers have been struggling to explain high death rates, limited testing and shortages of protective equipment for medical workers and carers.

Pakistan test-fires series of anti-ship missiles

Exercise was overseen by Navy chief

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

The Pakistan Navy on Saturday successfully test-fired a series of anti-ship missiles in the North Arabian Sea, a spokesman said. The missiles were fired from surface ships, fixed and rotary-wing aircraft, the Navy's spokesman, Rear Admiral Arshid Javed said.

Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral Zafar Mahmood Abbasi witnessed the firing of the missiles, he said in a statement.

Operational capability
The demonstration is a testament to Pakistan Navy's operational capability and military readiness, the official said. On the occasion, Admiral Abbasi said that the

Iran shouldn't be allowed to buy arms: U.S.

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
WASHINGTON

U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo called on Saturday for the UN to extend its conventional arms embargo on Iran beyond its scheduled end in October, citing Tehran's recent launch of a military satellite.

The lifting of the embargo was stipulated in the nuclear deal which the U.S., under President Donald Trump, unilaterally renounced in 2018. "The world's leading state sponsor of terrorism... should not be allowed to buy and sell conventional weapons," Mr. Pompeo said on Saturday. He called on the European Union to "sanction those individuals and entities working on Iran's missile programmes."

Australia, NZ aim to show the way in fighting virus

Steps taken by them have suppressed the outbreak; they are now aiming to eliminate COVID-19



Cooperative citizens: Police patrolling a Sydney beach, closed to all activity except exercise. • NYT

servative Christian, and Jacinda Ardern, New Zealand's darling of the left, are both succeeding with throwback democracy – in which partisanship recedes, experts lead, and quiet coordination matters more than firing up the base.

"Whether they get to zero or not, what Australia and New Zealand have already accomplished is a remarkable cause for hope," Scott Morrison of Australia, a con-

servative Christian, and Jacinda Ardern, New Zealand's darling of the left, are both succeeding with throwback democracy – in which partisanship recedes, experts lead, and quiet coordination matters more than firing up the base.

Dr. Peter Collignon, a physician and professor of microbiology at the Australian National University who has worked for the World Health Organization. "Here it's not a time for politics. This is a time for looking at the data and saying let's do what makes the most sense."

The dreamy prospect of

Mr. Morrison banned travellers from China on February 1 (a day before the U.S. did) and labelled the outbreak a pandemic on February 27 (two weeks before the WHO), while forming a national Cabinet of federal and State leaders to build hospital capacity and guide the response. In New Zealand, where the government is more centralised, Ms. Ardern introduced an alert system that led to a total lockdown less than a month after the country's first case emerged. "We must fight by going hard and going early," Ms. Ardern said.

In both countries, the public initially resisted and then complied, in part because the information flowing from officials at every level in both nations was largely consistent. NY TIMES

Group health insurance set to get a boost

N. RAVI KUMAR
HYDERABAD

Group health insurance policies are likely to see a pick-up in demand, with the government making medical insurance cover for workers a pre-condition for the factories and industrial establishments to resume operations.

The direction is a part of the standard operating procedure (SOP) prescribed by the government for the offices, workplace, factories and establishments to be eligible to open ahead of the May 3 COVID-19 lockdown end date.

"Medical insurance for the workers to be made mandatory," is one of the many of the SOPs that are to be implemented by the facilities.

Following the directive, insurance regulator IRDAI has asked all general and standalone health insurers to offer comprehensive health insurance policies either to individuals or groups to enable the listed organisations, employers or establishments comply with the directions.

It advised insurers to devise comprehensive health insurance products with simple wording, conditions and at affordable cost for industrial and commercial establishments, workplaces and offices. Organisations should be able to "continue the medical insurance policy offered by insurers not only for the present situation but for all time," said a circular from IRDAI Member (Non Life) T.L. Alamelu.

Welcoming the move, Star Health and Allied Insurance MD Dr. S. Prakash said for corporates, group policies were not an expense, but an investment in the welfare of their staff.

Quick nod likely for China investments

Govt. approval for proposals in non-sensitive sectors likely in 15 days if stake sought is not significant

REUTERS
NEW DELHI

The Centre plans to fast track the review of some investment proposals from neighbouring countries such as China following concerns new screening rules could hit plans of companies and investors, three sources told Reuters on Saturday.

To avoid opportunistic takeovers during the coronavirus outbreak, India said this past week that all foreign direct investment from countries sharing a land border would require prior government clearance, meaning they can't go through a so-called automatic route.

Advisers to Chinese firms have said they are concerned the process could take several weeks and hit deals and investment timelines. Auto firms such as SAIC's MG Motor and Great Wall, and investors Alibaba and Tencent have placed major bets on



Sectors under financial stress and not concerning national security must get quick approvals, says Dipti Swain ■ REUTERS

India. The Chinese Embassy in New Delhi has called the new screening policy discriminatory.

A senior Indian government source who is involved in policymaking told Reuters that New Delhi will try to approve any investment proposal in a non-sensitive sector

within 15 days when the stake being bought is not significant.

The official declined to elaborate on which sectors would be considered sensitive and what threshold of investment would be deemed significant. "We will try to fast track investment propos-

sals as soon as possible. It may be faster for some (sectors) and in others we might take some time," said the official, who did not want to be named due to the sensitivity of the discussions.

Two other sources familiar with the government's thinking confirmed that a fast track mechanism was being considered, with possible approval timelines of seven days to four weeks.

India's Ministry of Commerce and Industry did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

\$26 bn in investments'

While the fast track mechanism would be open to all India's neighbours with a land border, China would be the main beneficiary. It has major existing and planned investments in India, which the Brookings research group estimated at \$26 billion. Dipti Lavya Swain, a

partner at Indian law firm HSA Advocates which advises Chinese companies, said sectors such as telecom, financial services and insurance were likely to be deemed more sensitive than others such as automobiles and renewable energy.

'2-4 weeks bearable'

"Approvals should be a seamless process and anything between two to four weeks could still be bearable," he said. "Sectors which are already under severe financial distress and do not concern national security should also receive faster approvals."

The new screening rules are designed to prevent fire sales of corporate assets during the COVID-19 outbreak but government sources have said they will also apply to greenfield investments, as well as investments from Hong Kong.

Panel for change in MTP obligations for insurers

Consider vehicles insured, uninsured'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD

the stakeholders on the report of the group.

Figuring in the recommendations are also time-bound exemptions for new players. Those underwriting MTP insurance for the first time may be exempted from application of the obligatory requirement during the first two financial years of their operations. The group also favours the introduction of an MTP credit system in line with the carbon credit system.

It has recommended that the obligation should be a function of "number of vehicles insured/uninsured" instead of "premium derived from MTP insurance business".

Accordingly, it has proposed a simple and equitable formula for calculating the obligation, IRDAI has said, inviting feedback from

Constituted in August, the working group's mandate was to revisit the existing, four-year old regulations.

L&T sees orders picking up

Bags more contracts in April than in quarter ended March

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI

Larsen and Toubro (L&T) has seen a rise in the pace of orders it has received, over the past six weeks.

The company has bagged about a dozen contracts in April 2020, compared with the half a dozen secured between January and March this year. It had missed its guidance for FY20 as it received fewer orders than expected in the last quarter.

"Order wins of ₹28,100 crore in six weeks amid weak investment sentiment was commendable," wrote CLSA in a note to its clients.

The April orders include a major contact, three large contracts and seven signifi-

cant contacts. A significant contract is one which is valued between ₹1,000 crore and ₹2,500 crore, a large contract is between ₹2,500 crore and ₹5,000 crore and a major contract is between ₹5,000 crore and ₹7,000 crore. L&T shares had gained 28.5% on the BSE ov-

er the past one month, recovering from the 52-week low of ₹661 seen on March 25 to ₹850.60 on April 24. The management said it was now focussing on resuming work at its sites to execute the ₹3.1 lakh-crore pending order book in a phased manner.

Research firm Morgan Stanley has maintained an overweight on the stock with the target raised to ₹1,117 from ₹941 per share, as it expects public capital expenditure to bounce back in FY22.

However, some analysts said that central spending on infrastructure projects may drop given the impact of the pandemic and orders from West Asia may dry up for L&T on falling oil prices.



Net bonding: The trend was visible across user categories but was also clearly led by smaller towns. ■ GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCK

Online matchmaker sign-ups increase 30%

'Singles now have more time on hand'

MINI TEJASWI
BENGALURU

Online matchmaking sites are witnessing a sudden spurt in new sign-ups and interactions between potential brides, grooms and their families after the COVID-19 lockdown kicked in.

Leading players in the trade - BhartMatrimony and Shaadi.com - say they have witnessed at least a 30% increase in profile acquisitions and interaction between existing members.

BhartMatrimony founder and MD Murugavel Janakiraman told *The Hindu* that: "A lot of young professionals, currently working from home, are able to get some personal time as they don't get stranded in traffic, or spend time on shopping, or socialising due to the lockdown. We are suddenly seeing match-hunting becoming a sort of family affair.

Research firm Morgan Stanley has maintained an overweight on the stock with the target raised to ₹1,117 from ₹941 per share, as it expects public capital expenditure to bounce back in FY22.

Reconfirming the trend, Anupam Mittal, founder and CEO of Shaadi.com said, "Lockdown has accelerated online matchmaking sign-ups and engagements by at least 30%. We see a

clear spurt in engagement/dialogue between parties, our existing members. So, overall, we are experiencing a significant spike now, compared with the pre-lockdown days."

As per lead players, the trend was visible across the board, including genders, job profiles and income groups; however, it was clearly led by tier 3 cities and smaller towns.

Shalini Singh, founder of andmetnet, a niche matchmaking firm, said her platform had seen a significant increase in memberships since the lockdown.

Fake profiles also up' "The number of sign-ups has gone up by an average of 400% week-on-week from what it was before COVID-19. At the same time, we also see an increase in the number of fake profiles. To counter them, we are introducing more advanced profile filtering and privacy controls technology."

The trend of increasing sign-ups is also visible on EliteMatrimony, which caters to high networth individuals, and celebrities. About 60 million people are looking for life-partners at any given time in India, said Mr. Janakiraman.

INTERVIEW | C.K.RANGANATHAN

'Sanitisers in sachets took us only 15 days to develop'

Virus will have long-term impact, says CavinKare CMD

N. ANAND

FMCG major CavinKare has started offering hand sanitisers in sachets. The product was developed in 15 days as it was the need of the hour, said C.K. Ranganathan, CMD, CavinKare. Edited excerpts:

What has been the impact of COVID-19 on the FMCG sector?

■ We have already seen a significant impact in the first 15 days of the month. In fact, it is almost a washout for the companies. Very few firms were able to supply things and others were not able to reach the destination as transportation was blocked.

We are not seeing light at the end of the tunnel immediately. Everybody will be performing sub-optimal to their potential. Customers are not coming out. So, April is a washout. They are buying only essential items and we are seeing these trends since the lockdown began.

In my view, the first quarter will be lukewarm, a majority of the companies will de-grow in the second quarter; in the third quarter, they might find their feet in terms of coming to a better level than in the first quarter.

What is the solution?

■ Our only hope is that this COVID-19 issue is resolved faster and it is left behind us. For that, a miracle has to happen. The vaccine is one solution. Otherwise, the way it is going now, it looks like it's going to be a long haul, which means we have to fight for three months aggressively and may be even for six to nine months in a phased manner.

We have the capability to convert every setback, into an opportunity. So from that angle, I believe some scien-



One has to adapt himself to the emergence of new customer expectation and the new world

Financiers, intermediaries line up funds for MSMEs

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI

At a time when micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) are scouting for funds to keep their operations on, a host of financiers and intermediaries have come forward to meet the demand by capitalising on digital technology.

Arvog, which offers debt, equity and funding, has announced digital micro loans amounting to ₹250 crore to MSMEs to help them come out of the crisis.

Ketan Kothari, director, Arvog, said, "The country's 60 million MSMEs - businesses with annual revenue up to ₹250 crore - make enormous contribution to both India's employment and its gross domestic product (GDP)."

"Yet, most of them are operating way below their potential because of a gap in loans and funding. With our focus on digital micro loans, we want to empower these MSMEs to reach their full potential," he said.

The firm has tied up with FinancePeer and PayMe India to provide digital micro loans at an 18% rate of interest.

"Our focus will be to look for companies having scalable ideas and a robust business model. Arvog would then step in and help them realise their growth plans with sustainability," Mr. Kothari said.

Meanwhile, London-based CreditEnable, an AI-driven SME credit business, has ramped up its activities in India to help improve access to finance for SMEs during COVID-19.

CreditEnable's India marketplace currently caters to more than 20 leading lenders with ₹53,700 crore of loan books.

What spurred the move to add hand sanitisers in sachets?

■ We are working with the government as far as possible, as it is a national and not just a business problem.

What are the expectations from the government?

■ Our expectation is to ensure that the jobs and rural agriculture are protected. And, the economy is protected. But, it is a tough game and that's why, as an industry, we have all come forward to support the government.

Has COVID-19 imparted any lessons to the corporate world?

■ Lessons learnt are that you can be as productive as you have been. [That] much more work can be done from home, is one big lesson. The other thing is that you need to be extremely agile and nimble because the situation has changed suddenly. The customer is



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Sewage surveillance can estimate coronavirus spread in the community

Viral particles in sewage samples is a collection of virus shed by many people in the community and is akin to pooled testing

R. PRASAD

Sampling sewage for viral particles is a time-tested method of environment surveillance and is routinely resorted to for understanding circulation of several viruses – wild and vaccine-derived polio, rotavirus, Hepatitis E and typhoid – in the community. Now, researchers in France have found that sewage surveillance can help in understanding the circulation of novel coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2) in the human population.

People infected with the virus have been found to shed the virus in their stools. And by studying sewage samples, it is possible to know the viral load in the community through modelling once data on how many viral particles are shed by individuals and how the viral particles get diluted in sewage are available.

Late detection

In the case of novel coronavirus, sewage surveillance becomes particularly useful as a large percentage of infected population is either asymptomatic or show only mild symptoms. Hence, there is a greatly likelihood that circulation of the virus in the community will be detected quite late, if at all. The circulation is likely to continue undetected till such time community testing is



Indirect detection: Infected people shed the virus in their stools, and sewage samples, can indicate the viral load in the community. • COURTESY KOSI SETOAFIA SABA

ramped up so that many get tested, or till such time people become severely ill, requiring hospitalisation.

While a few other researchers have found coronavirus in sewage samples, the study posted on medRxiv preprint server, which is yet to be peer-reviewed, has shown that the environmental surveillance is able to pick up a spike in virus concentration in sewage much before cases show up or overload and strain the healthcare system.

The other benefit is that sewage surveillance can be carried out independent of testing in humans and will be able to pick up early signs even when people in the community do not show symptoms. The ability of sewage surveillance to decipher community spread even when people are asymptomatic is akin to antibody testing.

Correlation with outbreak

The study was carried out in greater Paris for a month (March 5 to April 7), and samples were picked twice a week from 23 raw and eight treated wastewater sites. The study found that the rise and fall in coronavirus concentrations closely matched the

COVID-19 outbreak in the region. Most interestingly, the team led by Dr. Moulin L from Sorbonne Université, CNRS, Paris found high concentration of viral RNA about a week before multiple deaths were recorded in Paris on March 10.

The virus concentration in wastewater had the same trend as cases and deaths. The concentration of virus in the wastewater samples increased a few days ahead of an increase in cases and deaths in the city. "We have a very clear curve that precedes the curve in numbers of clinical cases, and now with confinement, we see a flattening of that curve," Laurent Moulin, a study co-author and a microbiologist at Eau de Paris told the journal *Science*.

Surveillance of virus in sewage is not only easy but also good to track and monitor the spread of the virus in the community, says a senior researcher based in India who has carried out sewage surveillance for a few different viruses.

"Environmental surveillance is the key to know and understand community transmission. But one should be clear when to carry out sewage surveillance – when cases have come down once the outbreak has been controlled or before cases show up so as to predict an outbreak," says the researcher. "In the case of novel coronavirus, sewage

surveillance is a good way to detect asymptomatic cases and those who exhibit mild symptoms, who might otherwise not be tested."

According to the scientist, there are two ways to take sewage samples – pick up samples at several places to monitor the presence of the virus in a community living in upstream catchment area and/or terminal sites where the sewage of the city/town is treated or let out into water bodies.

Useful method

That the presence of the virus in wastewater treatment closely correlates with cases in greater Paris, reflects how useful this method is in tracking community spread. Higher concentrations of the virus in the wastewater did correspond to higher number of infected people in the region.

"Viral particles in sewage samples is a collection of virus shed by many people in the community and is akin to pooled testing," the scientist said. "But sewage sampling is not a replacement to testing for infection in people but is only a supplement."

The best time and place to carry out sewage sampling in India for coronavirus is when testing of people has been sorted and in places where no cases have been reported, according to the scientist.



Blue skies: The nationwide lockdown has brought about a significant improvement in air quality, albeit for the short term. • PTI

Witnessing the future through the lockdown

Imagine a future with clean air

S.N. TRIPATHI

The nationwide lockdown, and halting of most economic activities as a way to combat the novel coronavirus has brought about significant improvements in air quality across the country, albeit in the short term.

However, this phase of good air quality is lending itself as a real-life experiment to determine the lowest achievable pollution levels possible in a very long time. Attaining blue skies in a short period of about two weeks has allowed us to take a long view of the problem, the multiple sources of air pollution and to imagine a future with clean air. It has allowed us to understand clearly which solutions will work, how, and at what scale.

Fall in pollutant levels

Central Pollution Control Board data analysed from the last two weeks indicates a sudden reduction in pollutant levels across the country, including in some of the most polluted cities. Due to stringent travel restrictions, shutting of most industries and halting commercial and construction activity, the impact of air quality improvements has become immediately visible within and outside the cities.

Delhi, across its 35 monitoring locations, has recorded a drop of 44% in PM2.5 levels between March 24 and April 6. Noida and Gurugram have recorded similarly large and rapid decreases of 51% in their PM2.5 levels and 55% in PM10 levels. Other capital cities, such as Mumbai, Bengaluru and Lucknow have reported a decrease in the range of 18% to 30% during the lockdown period.

It is also notable that the decrease in particulate levels is the same if we compare the two week period (March 24 to April 6) between 2019 and 2020. Delhi NCR registers a drastic decline of 65%-70% in PM10 values compared with 2019 mainly due to construction activity coming to a grinding halt.

Also, Delhi, Mumbai, Bengaluru and Kolkata, and even smaller cities such as Jaipur and Guwahati, have recorded significant drop in nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) concentration, ranging from 53-68%, which is largely related to a dramatic decline in vehicle movement. Mumbai, with the maximum COVID-19 hotspots, stands out with a 68% drop in NO_x during the two week lockdown period in which data has been collected. Compared to last year, Kanpur has registered a drop of 83% in NO_x pointing to most vehicles going off the road during the lockdown.

Sulphur dioxide, another polluting gas, mostly released by burning of coal, oil and gas, either in vehicles or in power plants and other industries, also registered a big drop. In Pune, SO₂ level was 44% less during the lockdown, as compared to the week before. For the same time, readings in Ahmedabad, Mumbai, Hyderabad and Kolkata were roughly a quarter less, coinciding with reduced industrial activity and transport emissions.

Major sources

The National Clean Air Programme aims for an improvement of 20%-30% in the air quality by 2024, taking 2017 as the base year. It is necessary to address all major sources including transport, industry, residential, waste burning, road dust, agriculture residue burning, and construction, if air quality across large swathes of India has to be restored to moderate levels.

Our initial findings based on real-time source apportionment of online PM2.5 composition measurements in Delhi, over the period of lockdown show that contribution from incinerators has dropped, indicating much less processing of hotel and food waste. The real time analysis also shows contribution from tyre wear on road dropping close to insignificant. This points to the urgent need for guidelines on reuse of tyres.

Urgent retrofitting of flue gas desulphurisation units in thermal power plants is necessary as thermal plants are likely to continue in the near future. Going forward, tackling the auto sector is crucial. In bringing the economy back to life, filling the gap with an electric vehicle-specific stimulus package could be an interim solution to improving air quality.

Waste disposal and crop residue

The link between waste disposal in cities and poor air quality is a conspicuous one, which deserves due attention and action. Solutions lie in efficient waste segregation at source followed by recycling – especially for industrial units.

It is evident that a large amount of crop residue after each harvest cycle cannot be managed through traditional means or mechanised harvesters alone. Focus on innovation in crop residue management to minimise stubble burning in a sustainable and effective way across different locations alone can control this issue.

As the government prepares the largest ever recovery package to place the economy back on track, undertaking reforms such that it brings in less polluting industries, more clean transport and more resilient infrastructure will ensure that India is able to lock in a clean future and is better prepared for any shocks in the future.

The author is a professor at IIT-Kanpur and member of the Steering Committee, NCAP MoEFCC

Stop villainising bats, say scientists, conservationists

ASWATHI PACHA

Unverified news and social media posts linking bats to the COVID-19 outbreak have led to widespread antipathy and there have been increasing incidents of the public destroying bat roosts and smoking them out. To raise awareness, 64 chiropterologists (those who study bats) from six South Asian countries have released a document clarifying the myths about bats and strongly affirming that bats do not spread COVID-19.

They also clarify that the bat coronaviruses (BtCoV) found in two species of Indian bats (in a recent Indian Council of Medical Research study) are not the same as SARS-CoV-2 and cannot cause COVID-19.

"Human activities and encroaching upon wildlife habitats puts us at risk of encountering new viruses. We need to modify human practices to prevent the emergence of new pathogens," says Arinjay Banerjee, a post-doctoral researcher at McMaster University, Canada in the release. He studies bat viruses and was part of the team that isolated the COVID-19 virus.

Origin unknown
The researchers write that the exact origin of SARS-CoV-2 is still unknown and it is premature to blame bats or any other animal for the pandemic.

"Killing bats and destroying their habitats can be more harmful as this can lead to bats spreading out their habitat. We should remember that all wild animals harbour viruses and it is very biased and unfair to point fingers only at bats. If we keep destroying habitats there are changes of the



Preserve environment: Destroying habitats can cause changes to the spread of other viruses from other animals to humans. • G. RAMAKRISHNA

spread of other viruses from other animals to humans," explains Harish Prakash, Ph.D. scholar, at the Centre for Ecological Sciences, Indian Institute of Science, Bengaluru, to *The Hindu*.

The researchers and conservationists highlight that bats perform vital ecosystem services such as pollination, pest control, and provide intangible economic benefits.

They urge the governments of South Asian countries to strengthen the legal framework to protect bats.

As only two species (out of 128) are protected by law in India, the researchers ask the government to reconsider and reinforce the laws governing bat conservation.

They write: "The current pandemic is an outcome of the ongoing ecological destruction, increasing intensification of livestock farming and wildlife trade. We request the media to not oversimplify scientific evidence, to emphasise the role of humans in disease outbreaks, and to highlight the importance of coexistence with bats in urban landscapes."

First merger of two black holes with unequal masses detected

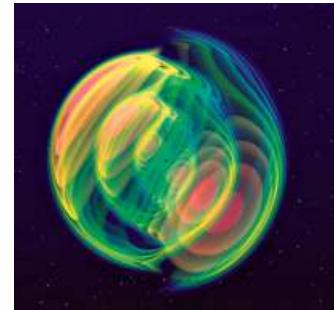
The merging entities were about 30 and 8 times the Sun's mass

SHUBASHREE DESIKAN

For the first time since it started functioning, the gravitational wave observatories at LIGO scientific collaboration have detected a merger of two unequal-mass black holes. The event, dubbed GW190412, was detected nearly a year ago, and this is almost five years after the first ever detection of gravitational wave signals by these powerful detectors. Subsequent analysis of the signal coming from the violent merger showed that it involved two black holes of unequal masses coalescing, one of which was some 30 times the mass of the Sun and the other which had a mass nearly 8 times the solar mass. The actual merger took place at a distance of 2.5 billion light years away. This study has been published in preprint server ArXiv, and is pending peer review.

The detected signal's waveform has special extra features in it when it corresponds to the merger of two unequal-sized black holes as compared with a merger of equal-sized black holes. These features make it possible to infer many more things about the characters in this celestial drama, namely, a more accurate determination of the distance from the event, the spin or angular momentum of the more massive black hole and the orientation of the whole event with respect to viewers on Earth.

While the mass of the black hole



Gravity: The black hole's spin drags along the nearby space-time.

• N. FISCHER, H. PFEIFFER, A. BUONANNO

bends the space-time close to it, the spin or angular momentum of this inscrutable object drags the nearby space-time, causing it to swirl around, along with it. Hence both these properties are important to estimate.

Crucial difference

Pointing out the difference between binary black holes with equal masses and those with different masses, K.G. Arun of Chennai Mathematical Institute (CMI), says, "Dominant emission of gravitational waves happens at twice the orbital frequency of the binary. In this case, we find, for the first time, emission at a frequency that is three times the orbital frequency. This emission is negligible when binaries contain equal masses and when the orbit is face-on. GR has a unique prediction for the details of this emission which is verified by this observation."

Anand Sengupta of IIT Gandhinagar, along with Prof. Arun and PhD scholar Soumen Roy from IIT Gandhinagar made important contributions to this analysis. The trio worked on the contribution to the signal from higher harmonics which form a fainter component to the signal. "Following this a sophisticated statistical analysis was performed to measure the strength of the sub-dominant component and its statistical significance, by calculating the odds that it was not a false positive. For instance, that it was not some instrumental noise mimicking this effect," says Prof. Sengupta. "The asymmetry in the masses made the feeble higher harmonic component better 'heard', leading to its unambiguous detection," he adds.

Also, in the case of the merger of unequal black holes, the spin of the more massive black hole can be determined from the extra features in the signal waveform.

"The spin of the heavier black hole plays a more prominent role in the dynamics of the binary. Hence, it leaves a stronger imprint on the waveform, making it easy to measure," says Prof. Arun.

A second Indian team consisting of researchers from ICTS-TIFR, Bengaluru, verified the consistency of the signal with the prediction of General Relativity.

The existence of higher harmonics was itself a prediction of General Relativity.

Coronavirus spares no major organ in the body

Lungs are just the ground zero, and the virus spreads its lethal tentacles to multiple organs in some patients

R. PRASAD

As the number of confirmed cases of COVID-19 crosses 2.7

million and that of deaths is fast approaching 192,000, physicians are beginning to realise that lungs are just the ground zero for the virus while the virus spreads its lethal tentacles to multiple organs – heart and blood vessels, kidneys, gut, and brain – not necessarily in one patient.

While about 80% of people infected with the virus either don't display any symptoms or only mild symptoms, the remaining need hospitalisation and about 5% need ICU care. Who would need hospitalisation and even ICU care depends on how decisively the body strikes down the virus soon after infection. If not beaten back in the initial stage of infection, the virus invades the lower respiratory tract

and enters the lungs, which very soon turns into a battle ground.

A feature published in the journal *Science* explains how the virus tears apart the body and attacks different organs with so far unseen ferocity. The virus enters the cells by binding to receptors found on certain cells called angiotensin-converting enzyme 2 (ACE2). The lining of the nose is rich in cells with this receptor and hence is the site of entry into the body. The receptors are found in cells found in many other organs, thus leaving them too vulnerable.

The lungs

The tiny air sacs in the lungs called the alveoli, where oxygen exchange between the lungs and blood vessels take place, are rich in ACE2 receptors. Once the virus enters these cells, the immune sys-

tem mounts an all out battle against the virus, disrupting the oxygen transfer and leaving the air sacs with fluid and dead cells, which makes breathing shallow and difficult and accompanied with coughing.

While some patients survive without further complications once provided with external oxygen support, some others deteriorate further, developing a condition called acute respiratory distress syndrome.

Patients experiencing wor-

sening conditions typically have their immune system overreacting and bringing on a "cytokine storm", where the level of cytokines far exceed the levels needed resulting in healthy tissues being attacked. "Blood vessels leak, blood pressure drops, clots form, and catastrophic organ failure can ensue," the *Science* feature says.

Blood supply
Heart is one of the organs that gets affected after lungs. The disruption seems to extend to the blood itself, causing blood clots, which when breaks can restrict the blood supply to the brain causing stroke or artery supplying blood to the lungs causing pulmonary embolism.

Infection may also lead to blood vessel constriction, causing reduced blood supply to organs. "Some patients

have extremely low blood oxygen levels and yet are not gasping for breath. The oxygen uptake is impeded by constricted blood vessels rather than by clogged alveoli," the report says. The virus attacking the blood vessels could be one reason why patients with blood pressure, diabetes, diabetes are at higher risk.

Not at great risk
Surprisingly, asthmatics or patients with other respiratory diseases are not at great risk unlike those with vascular problems – diabetes, obesity, age, hypertension. Scientists are yet to understand exactly what causes damage to the heart and blood vessels.

Kidneys too are very vulnerable and experience in China shows that a sizeable fraction of patients may suffer from kidney failure. "It could

be due to direct infection by the virus, cytokine storms reducing blood supply to the kidneys, or pre-existing diabetes causing fatal damage to kidneys.

A small subset (5%-10%) of patients suffer from neurological problems – seizure-like symptoms, strokes, loss of sense of smell and taste, and at times even depression of brain stem reflex, which is responsible for sensing oxygen starvation. In rare cases, the virus finds its way into the cerebrospinal fluid causing meningitis and encephalitis.

"No one knows when or how the virus might penetrate the brain. But one scientist speculates about a possible invasion route: through the nose, then upward and through the olfactory bulb – explaining reports of a loss of smell – which connects to the brain," the report says.

In the link between waste disposal in cities and poor air quality is a conspicuous one, which deserves due attention and action. Solutions lie in efficient waste segregation at source followed by recycling – especially for industrial units.



Immigration ban and the impact

Which categories are going to be affected the most by the new visa and green card norms imposed by U.S. President Donald Trump?

NARAYAN LAKSHMAN

The story so far: With the toll of the novel coronavirus on the American population spiralling rapidly, and political pressure increasing on the country's leader to take effective action to bring the pandemic under control, United States President Donald Trump announced on Monday, on Twitter, that he would be using an executive order to suspend legal immigration into the U.S. for 60 days. The White House has indicated that the time limit could be extended depending on conditions on the ground.

Why has Mr. Trump taken such a step?

The immediate context of his proposal is the teetering U.S. economy, which, like many others across the world, has ground to a virtual halt in the face of the pandemic. The deeper context to the announcement is the fact that Mr. Trump is seeking re-election in the November 2020 election against the presumptive Democratic nominee, former U.S. Vice-President Joe Biden. Proposals to restrict immigration served Mr. Trump's campaign well during the 2016 presidential election, particularly when they were situated in the context of protecting jobs for U.S. workers.

What does it mean for visa applicants?

The order is not expected to halt visa processing for many thousands of temporary employees, including a sizeable number of Indian nationals in the H-1B skilled worker category; agricultural workers classified under the H-2A visa; and seasonal workers, who fall into the H-2B category.

Second, according to the White House, the policy will also likely carve out exemptions for certain categories of essential workers, including those in health care and who have a critical role to play in fighting the pandemic.

Third, exemptions are also being made for those who seek to immigrate via their immediate relatives. This includes spouses and minor children of U.S. citizens applying for green cards, or permanent residency.

U.S. visa issuance in all countries has ground to a halt. This has left many H-1B visa-seekers in the lurch in India, and it could have a debilitating impact on the Indian IT sector

requires individuals to invest at least \$500,000 in U.S. real estate projects, will be considered.

Beyond these exemptions, there is a broader question of how many jobs that could potentially be taken by incoming immigrants will be saved for out-of-work U.S. workers. The number of unemployment claims filed since the pandemic started eating into the U.S. economy is now over 26 million. According to some analysts, out of the million-plus green cards that the U.S. issues annually, approximately 358,000 could possibly be impacted by the pause in immigration processing for the duration of the proclamation. The gap between these two figures is nothing short of gargantuan, and it begs a question of motive behind the executive order.

Could there be any impact on skilled workers from India?

On tourism, there is little concern at the present juncture given that India has stopped commercial flights owing to the risks of coronavirus spread. Numerous airlines across the world have also suspended operations and have cancelled flights across the board. Further, in many countries, quarantine procedures apply to international arrivals and this will dissuade many visitors from international travel. Finally, the U.S. State Department announced in March 2020 that it would be suspending all routine visa processing at its consulates and embassies abroad; this has not only dampened the pace of visa issuance but it has also slowed legal immigration considerably. As a comparator, more than 9.2 million visas were issued at U.S. diplomatic missions abroad last year.

When the worst phases of the pandemic have passed in the U.S. and India, there could be a resumption of air traffic and international visitors may have the option to travel to the U.S. once again. But presently, there is no visibility whatsoever on when such conditions might emerge.

So far as skilled workers seeking the H-1B visa are concerned, similar conditions apply. U.S. visa issuance in all countries, not only in India, has ground to a halt. This has left many H-1B visa-seekers in the lurch in India, and that could have an economically debilitating impact on the Indian IT and Information Technology Enabled Service (ITeS) sectors. However, this derives more from the overall impact of the pandemic, and not from Mr. Trump's immigration ban.

How will it affect U.S. politics?

Given the minimal impact on net jobs saved for U.S. workers, there is a real question regarding whether the ban was conceived of as a genuine policy measure or whether it is a diversionary tactic to mask the Trump administration's failure to save more lives, and to bolster the President's sinking political standing.

If the latter case applies, then this executive action has already set the tenor of the upcoming U.S. presidential election. Immigration was a divisive issue in 2016. A Trump-driven encore for immigration issues in 2020 could well polarise American society further and lead to an acrimonious campaign season.

Why pathogens travel in search of a host

What is the link between the virus causing COVID-19 and bats, pangolins and other wild species? Why are zoonotic diseases on the rise?

RAMYA KANNAN

The story so far: Long before the virus causing COVID-19 initiated normalcy, it split people across geopolitical lines over differing claims about where the vicious virus came to be in the first place. Claims were made of the virus being manufactured in laboratories and then shipped to nations to let loose on their populations. In a paper published on March 17, *Nature Medicine* busted the theory of a lab-cultured SARS-CoV-2. The paper, "The proximal origin of SARS-CoV-2", by Kristian G. Andersen, Andrew Rambaut, W. Ian Lipkin *et al.*, made it clear that this was a case of zoonoses. The analyses clearly show that SARS-CoV-2 is not a laboratory construct or a purposefully manipulated virus". The paper further posited that the host of the virus was definitely an animal, and that the most variable part of the coronavirus genome in humans – the receptor-binding domain (RBD) in the spike protein – could have occurred in an animal host before the transfer to humans, or natural selection happened in humans after the zoonotic transfer.

What is zoonosis?

The first possible source heard of in relation to the COVID-19 epidemic was the wet market in Huanan, Wuhan, China. While subsequent studies cast doubts on the link, it is quite possible that an animal source was present at this location, the *Nature* paper argues. Moreover, commenting on the fact that bats and pangolins might have spread the infection, the authors said: "Given the similarity of SARS-CoV-2 to bat SARS-CoV-like coronaviruses, it is likely that bats serve as reservoir hosts for its progenitor... Malayan pangolins illegally imported into Guangdong province, contain coronaviruses similar to SARS-CoV-2."

While agreeing that it was theoretically possible that SARS-CoV-2 acquired mutations in a petri dish, the *Nature* paper added that "the finding of SARS-CoV-like coronaviruses from pangolins with nearly identical RBDs, however, provides a much stronger and more parsimonious explanation of how SARS-CoV-2 acquired these via recombination or mutation". It also posited the possibility of a "progenitor of SARS-CoV-2 that jumped into humans, acquiring the genomic features through adaptation during undetected human-to-human transmission". The changes in the genome occurred as a part of the natural evolutionary process. "All SARS-CoV-2 genomes sequenced so far have the genomic features described... and are thus derived from a common ancestor that had them too."

The issue of pathogens crossing species to cause diseases is not a new concept. According to the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), 60% of all infectious diseases in humans are zoonotic, and about 75% of all emerging infectious diseases are zoonotic in nature.

Emerging pathogens are more likely to be viruses, than any other kind – bacteria, parasites, fungi – and are more likely to have a broad host range.

Why are human beings at risk?

The inevitable interaction between humans and livestock with wildlife exposes the human species to the risk of spillover of potential pathogens. For many zoonotic diseases or zoonoses, livestock serve as an epidemiological bridge between wildlife and human infections.

Among zoonoses that emerged or re-emerged recently, the UNEP counts Ebola, bird flu, Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS), Rift Valley fever, severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS), West Nile virus, Zika virus disease, and COVID-19.

What are the concerns around the AarogyaSetu app?

Why should there be more transparency on the inner workings of an app that seeks the personal details of millions?

P.J. GEORGE

The story so far: On April 2, the AarogyaSetu app – for pan-India use and available in 11 languages – was launched as the main contact tracing technology endorsed by the Central government. Developed by the National Informatics Centre under the Ministry of Electronics & Information Technology, the app got its biggest push when Prime Minister Narendra Modi urged the nation to download it while announcing the extension of the national lockdown till May 3. Soon it became one of the most downloaded apps globally, and has crossed the 75 million mark. The app has now added on functionalities such as donating to the Prime Minister's Citizen Assistance and Relief in Emergency Situations Fund, or PM CARES fund, and hosting e-passes for essential services providers.

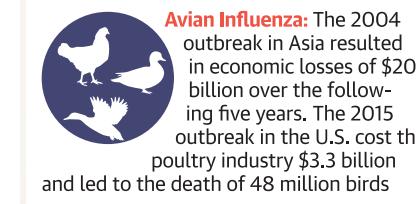
How does the app work?

It is designed to keep track of other AarogyaSetu users that a person came in contact with, and alert him or her if any of the contacts tests positive for COVID-19. It achieves this using the phone's Bluetooth and GPS capabilities. The app will keep a record of all other AarogyaSetu users that it detected nearby using Bluetooth, and also a GPS log of all the places that the device had been at 15-minute intervals. These records are stored on the phone till the time any user tests positive or declares symptoms of COVID-19 in a self-assessment survey in the app. In such cases, the records are uploaded to the servers.

According to the privacy policy of the app, it gives users a colour coding of green and yellow based on their self-assessment. The data of users who fall in the yellow category are uploaded to the server, while that of those in the green category – purportedly the lower risk group – is retained in the app.

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PRIMARY TRANSMISSION/RESERVOIR SPECIES



Avian Influenza: The 2004 outbreak in Asia resulted in economic losses of \$20 billion over the following five years. The 2015 outbreak in the U.S. cost the poultry industry \$3.3 billion and led to the death of 48 million birds



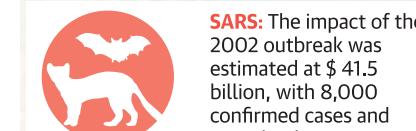
Ebola: The 2014 outbreak in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone (Africa) led to 11,310 deaths and 28,616 cases



MERS: Since September 2012, 27 countries have reported confirmed cases, with about 624 deaths



Nipah virus: The 1998 outbreak in Malaysia caused 100 deaths and \$671 million in economic losses



SARS: The impact of the 2002 outbreak was estimated at \$41.5 billion, with 8,000 confirmed cases and 800 deaths

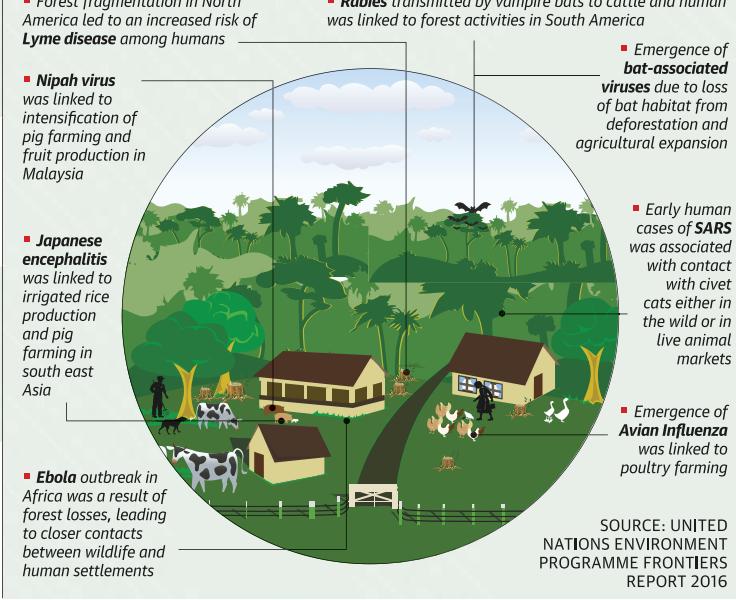
IMPACT OF ZOONOTIC DISEASES

About 60% of all infectious diseases in humans are zoonotic, so are 75% of all emerging infectious diseases. The chart on the left describes the impact caused due to major zoonotic diseases and the species that carried them

1 Livestock often serve as an epidemiological bridge between wildlife and human infection

2 Zoonotic diseases are associated with environmental changes or ecological disturbances, such as agricultural intensification and human settlement, or encroachments into forests

PRIMARY DRIVERS OF EMERGENCE OF PAST ZOONOTIC DISEASE EVENTS



SOURCE: UNITED NATIONS ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME FRONTIERS REPORT 2016

The UNEP is also very clear that the drivers of zoonotic disease emergence are changes in the environment, usually as a result of human activities ranging from land use change; changes in animals or human hosts; and changes in pathogens, which are programmed to survive, and in the process exploit multiple hosts. For instance, bat-associated viruses emerged due to the loss of habitats, it argues. The Ebola outbreak in West Africa was reportedly the result of forest losses leading to closer contacts between wildlife and human settlements; the emergence of avian influenza was linked to intensive poultry farming; and the Nipah virus was linked to the intensification of pig farming and fruit production in Malaysia.

A presentation by the UNEP argues, "Ecosystem integrity underlines human health and development. Human-induced environmental changes modify wildlife population structure and reduce biodiversity, resulting in new environmental conditions that favour particular hosts, vectors, and/or pathogens." Consequently, preserving ecosystem integrity can actually help regulate diseases by supporting a diversity of species so that it is more difficult for one pathogen to spill over, amplify or dominate.

UNEP Executive Director Inger Andersen says: "Never before have so many opportunities existed for pathogens to pass from wild and domestic animals to people. Our continued erosion of wild spaces has brought us uncomfortably close to animals and plants that harbour diseases that can jump to humans."

Changes in weather patterns, and extreme weather events affect the distribution areas of disease, pathogens and pests. Also, changes in human behaviour, including travel, conflicts, migration, wildlife trade, urbanisation, and dietary and medical preferences, can result in disease emergence, according to researchers at the UNEP.

What about the plant kingdom?

It is not just animal-to-human transmission we need to worry about. Peter Beetham writes in the *Scientific American* (<https://bit.ly/3bj5h92>) that we must be wary of transmission from the plant kingdom as well – "The current COVID-19 pandemic underscores how

unprepared we humans are in fighting zoonotic diseases: pathogens that originate in wildlife and jump to humans. Human immune systems are equally unprepared for drug-resistant diseases that jump from plants to humans. As we work to control and treat the current pandemic, we must simultaneously be thinking one step ahead – how we can avoid other pandemics in the future, without disrupting our food supply?"

In pristine ecosystems, all biological systems have an inherent capacity for both resilience and adaptation, but the current pace of change may be too fast for systems to adapt and achieve resilience, the UNEP argues. So what can be done? The UN agency pitches for 'One Health'.

What is 'One Health'?

According to the World Health Organization, 'One Health' is an approach to designing and implementing programmes, policies, legislation and research in which multiple sectors communicate and work together to achieve better public health outcomes.

The areas of work in which a 'One Health' approach is particularly relevant include food safety, the control of zoonoses, and combating antibiotic resistance (when bacteria change after being exposed to antibiotics and become more difficult to treat). The concept helps practitioners understand disease determinants, manage risks and optimise interventions.

Climate scientists argue and epidemiologists agree that 'One Health' is a key principle for the control of zoonotic diseases, antimicrobial resistance, food safety and vector-borne diseases.

What lies ahead?

It is clear that it will be difficult to predict, with current tools, where the next outbreak will come from or when it will be. Growing evidence suggests that outbreaks or epidemic diseases may become more frequent as changes continue to have an impact on the ecosystem. But doing nothing will only let these pathogens flourish, jump hosts and make a terrible assault on humans. The UNEP calls for strong global stewardship of nature and bio-diversity. Additionally, developing sharper, reliable early warning systems (for diseases), and a 'One Health' approach may be the guides for the road ahead.

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meeting. When an app user tests positive, all unique digital identities in his or her records get an alert on the risk they face and instructions on self-isolation and next steps.

Has it been effective?

The AarogyaSetu app faces the same issue as every other contact tracing technology that has come up during the pandemic period – it is people dependent. It needs widespread usage and self-reporting to be effective. Given that any number of total users will be a subset of smartphone owners in India, and there are bound to be variations in the levels of self-reporting, the efficacy is not bulletproof.

The terms of use of the app also say as much, distancing the government from any failure on the part of the app in correctly identifying COVID-19 patients.

Jason Bay, the brain behind TraceTogether, a contact tracing app from Singapore which has been among the more successful ones, emphasised the point that "automated contact tracing is not a panacea". In a blog post, "Automated contact tracing is not a coronavirus panacea" (April 11, 2020 - <https://bit.ly/2yl7nXU>), he said:

"A human-out-of-the-loop system will certainly yield better results than having no system at all, but where a competent human-in-the-loop system with sufficient capacity exists, we caution against an over-reliance on technology."

TraceTogether's developers worked closely and constantly with frontline health-care workers to make the app effective.

A purge amid the coronavirus surge

As infections in Brazil are spreading fast, Jair Bolsonaro is going after his opponents

SAO PAULO



Jair Bolsonaro likes to use marriage metaphors to describe political situations. Last week, when the Brazilian President fired his Health Minister, he called it a "divorce with consensus". On Friday, after Justice Minister Sergio Moro [in picture] quit his post, he said: "It's one thing to admire someone, it's another thing to live with them." But the Brazilian leader, who has been married thrice, may have a fight on his hands as he parts ways with Mr. Moro.

After days of bickering over the replacement of the chief of Federal Police (PF), opposed by Mr. Moro, the President fired the top cop in a notification issued on Thursday night. On Friday morning, a grim-

looking Mr. Moro sat down in front of the press and charged Mr. Bolsonaro with trying to "use the Federal Police for his personal interests". Accusing Mr. Bolsonaro of seeking information about the PF's secret probes, he said, "The President was insisting on the change in the PF command. I said it would be political interference, and he said 'so be it'."

Mr. Bolsonaro's three eldest sons – all elected representatives – from his first marriage are under investigation for crimes ranging from money laundering to "running fake news rackets". The most serious probe is going on against his third son, Eduardo, who is accused of running a "Hate Office" for attacking their opponents with fake news on social networks. Mr. Bolsonaro is accused of interfering in the probe. "The President told me clearly more than once that he wanted to have

such a person in that post whom he could call directly and gather information from," said Mr. Moro.

After accusing Mr. Bolsonaro of political interference in a crucial case, Mr. Moro dropped a bombshell, claiming that he had not signed the gazette about the change in the PF and someone had put his digital signature on the notification. The allegation rippled through political circles in Brasilia. "The fake news machine from the 'Hate Office' has now arrived at the Official Gazette. We have to stop this family of criminals immediately," tweeted Fernanda Melchionna, a left-wing Congresswoman, who has been leading a campaign for Mr. Bolsonaro's impeachment.

President's Counterattack

Under fire, Mr. Bolsonaro did what he does best in such situations – counter attack with dubious claims. On Friday, the President appeared in front of the press to dismiss Mr. Moro's allegations and accused him of



seeking favours. "He [Moro] said I could dismiss the PF director-general in November after I appoint him as a Supreme Court judge," alleged Mr. Bolsonaro. Later in the day, a television report revealed an exchange of messages between the former Minis-

ter and a Congresswoman, considered close to Mr. Bolsonaro, who "offered him the apex court nomination if he allowed changes in PF".

The fallout between Mr. Bolsonaro and Mr. Moro has come in the middle of a pandemic that has infected 54,000 people, killed 3,700 and pushed Brazil's healthcare system to the verge of collapse. The President, who has been attacking efforts by State Governors to contain the outbreak, is using the crisis to purge his potential challengers. "He is deeply paranoid about his re-election in 2022 and about the investigations into his sons. It is an open secret that Moro wants to be a candidate in the next presidential election. So, he is gone," said a government official, who did not want to be named. "Now, both will play victim."

Mr. Bolsonaro and Mr. Moro, a former federal judge, made an alliance based on pure opportunism. In a series of recent exposés, based on chats between prosecutors and judges, investigative site *The Intercept*'s expose.

Now, as the marriage of convenience between Mr. Bolsonaro and Mr. Moro collapses, a bitter battle will ensue between the two. "Everything Moro has accused Bolsonaro of doing, he has done himself. That is why they were close allies for 18 months: they are very similar. Moro left because of control and power, not out of principle and ethics," tweeted Glenn Greenwald, who led *The Intercept*'s expose.

Meanwhile, Brazil awaits a robust response to a surging virus.

Symphonies that transcend political boundaries

During the virus lockdown, artists from India and Pakistan find novel ways of collaboration

LAHORE



Despite the existence of shared history and heritage, cultural relations between India and Pakistan have not always been good. The friction seen in state-to-state ties had seeped into cultural collaboration years ago. For instance, back in 2016, in the aftermath of the Uri attacks, objection from some nationalists to the presence of actors like Fawad Khan and Mahira Khan in Indian films led to a complete ban on Pakistani artistes.

Years later, the COVID-19 pandemic and the lockdowns imposed in the two countries have led to novel ways of collaboration between singers and performers. However, the efforts have not gone down well with industry bodies.

Filmmaker and actor Sarmad



Khoosat called the federation's objection petty and unsustainable. "The whole point of digital streaming and social media is to make content and interactions available and accessible for the whole globe. Censoring or controlling it is almost a

violation of rights. Having said that, I am not sure if this can be sustained as a policy in this day." He added: "I wish the performers and other allied professionals would be more vocal if they have a reaction towards it."

Art survives such pettiness

Stressing that art is not bound to follow the dictates of political boundaries and diplomatic ties, Pakistani painter and artist Salima Hashmi, a daughter of renowned Pakistani poet Faiz Ahmed Faiz, says: "I am a very old lady and I have seen these diktats come and go over 75 years on both sides of the border – yet miraculously, music poetry, art and all creative endeavours seem to overcome this periodic pettiness and people come together with even greater love to celebrate all that they have in common!"

Salman Sufi, who has led some of Pakistan's most progressive gender-equality initiatives and who also collaborated with Indian artistes on Instagram, said the SAARC invite of a

video call by Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi should have trickled down to the offices of such organisations who are still living in a pre-corona era. "If the Prime Minister of India and Pakistan can engage to help both countries, why can't citizens, regardless of their profession, do the same? Time for such organisations to use their platforms for cohesion and harmony or simply remove the word 'art' from their dictionary." Islamabad's representation at the meeting was through Prime Minister Imran Khan's aide.

Mr. Sufi's #LetsTalk is an initiative that connects people who are traumatised and scared for their lives due to the coronavirus spread. "This virus has no nationality and doesn't care much for the borders we created around the world. So why should we restrict our fight-back policy to national borders?"

Stressing the need for people from both sides to present a united front against the virus, which does not differentiate based on one na-

tionality, journalist Aamna Haider Isani said. "The gravest impact of COVID-19 will be on global economics and the psyche of mankind, both of which will have to adapt to a new world order."

Here, art has a huge role to play in keeping hope and morale alive. It's tragic to see certain Indian organisations continuing to use politics to keep human-to-human distances intact. Isn't the social distancing enough that we have to drag in virtual distancing as well?"

Faiza Sultan Khan, consulting publisher at Bloomsbury Publishing, made a poignant point when she said: "These nationalistic panels of hate-mongers will never have as much power as one great song." To agree with her statement, one does not have to look beyond the heart-warming response Farida Khanum, the legendary Pakistani ghazal singer, received when she sang "Aaj jaane ki zid na karo," during an Instagram live with Vishal and Rekha Bhadrawaj last month.

Stuck in Japan in the time of pandemic

Many Indian citizens are stuck in the country with no health insurance and no place to stay

TOKYO



Rahul Jog, a 34-year-old molecular biologist, became a father in mid-April.

What should have been one of the happiest days of his life was instead a nightmare of anxiety, as he remained marooned in the northern Japanese city of Sapporo unable to travel to India. His wife gave birth at a hospital in Thane district of Mumbai, which has been declared a red zone at a high risk for COVID-19 infections.

Meanwhile, in Saitama, an area that borders Tokyo, Oracle database engineer Amit Kumar Sharma paced the streets at night, in tears and unable to sleep. On medication for depression, Mr. Sharma is desperate to return home to his family in Noida.

He doesn't know how much longer he'll be able to afford the medicines that keep him going.

Across the Japanese archipelago, Indian citizens are stuck in a COVID-19-engendered limbo, their flights back home cancelled indefinitely. Many have nowhere to stay, expired work contracts, and no health insurance. A WhatsApp group for Indians stranded in Japan has about 200 members. Most are either software engineers or students whose job contracts or terms of study came to an end in March. All were booked to fly back home in late March or early April.

Mr. Jog had been in Japan for five and half years working as a postdoctoral fellow at a university when his research project wrapped up. Getting ready to return home to Ahmedabad, he discontinued his utilities, sold all his belongings and vacated

his apartment, only to be confronted with the bombshell that his March 29 flight booking was no longer valid. The Japanese professor under whom he worked stepped up and found the funds to pay for a temporary apartment for Mr. Jog until May. After that, he is on his own.

Mr. Sharma, who moved to Saitama from Noida last June, had decided to return home due to a depression that he believes sprang from loneliness.

He'd resigned in February and was just about to finish serving his notice period when India's lockdown was declared. He, too, had to vacate his apartment and is now staying at a Filipino friend's place.

Mr. Sharma feels especially vulnerable since he has to visit the hospital for depression medication.

"There are no more beds in Japan for sick people. My heartbeat is always racing. I am getting panic attacks," he said, weeping as he told his story over the phone.

Among the stranded, there are al-

so a few who were on short-term visits to Japan. Jaipur-based businessman Kamal Vijayvargiya is an exporter of tea and herbal products, who flew to Tokyo on March 18 expecting to stay in town for four days meeting with prospective buyers. At the time, the Japanese government had still been insisting that the Tokyo Olympic Games would go ahead as planned in the summer, and Mr. Vijayvargiya interpreted this as a green signal to visit the country.

Sudden move

The exporter is livid at the suddenness of India's decision to close borders, a move he compares to demonetisation. He pointed out that other countries, including Japan, gave their citizens time to prepare before imposing emergency measures.

Mr. Vijayvargiya is currently staying at a Japanese client's home, an elderly lady who needs to visit the hospital weekly for dialysis. He is understandably apprehensive that she might contract the coronavirus



and expose him to it.

Astha Taneja, a 26-year-old from Faridabad, is similarly worried. Her contract as a translator with a company in Tokyo is up and she is staying with a friend while waiting for the borders to reopen. But she, too,

feels uncomfortable with the fact that her host travels on public transport to work everyday. "We are all suspicious of each other," she said. "It's an awkward situation."

Air India has told ticket holders whose flights were cancelled that it is unlikely they will be able to return home before June. They have since been lobbying for the Indian government to arrange evacuation. Even after commercial airline operations between India and Japan ceased, Japanese airlines were running emergency flights out of India to repatriate citizens marooned there. These were flying out of Japan empty and the stranded Indians were begging for arrangements to be made for them to hitch a ride on them.

But the Indian government policy has remained unchanged, with all citizens around the world being told to stay put. "Whenever I call them (the Indian Embassy in Tokyo), they keep telling us to just practice Surya namaskar and trust in God," said Mr. Sharma.

For BRICS, challenges and opportunities

A Russian think tank says the grouping can fill the void in global governance in the time of crisis

MOSCOW



The COVID-19 crisis seems to have put Russia's Presidency of BRICS (a grouping of Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) to the test. While each BRICS country is busy fighting the pandemic in its own way, Moscow is trying to make sure that it gains from the crisis.

The plans for 12th BRICS summit, scheduled for July 21-23 in St. Petersburg, are still on, although many believe it could be postponed or organised online. Speaking at a summit in Brasilia on November 14, 2019, Russian President Vladimir Putin said BRICS should pay special attention to expanding foreign policy coordination, primarily at the UN.

Many experts believe the CO-

VID-19 pandemic that highlighted a crisis of globalisation and global governance could help the Russian President convince his BRICS partners to overcome the lack of common vision, especially in the political domain, and lead the group towards filling the void of governance.

A report, "BRICS and the Rivalry Pandemic", released by Russian think-tank Valdai Club this week, notes that the question of considering BRICS as a global governance institution has now come to the fore. It argues that COVID-19 is another stage for political rivalry that has reinforced some international disputes and conflicts with the U.S. "ratcheting up its confrontational policy towards China and Russia". In this scenario, BRICS emerges as an important global governance institution.

BRICS looks better than other

toria Panova, managing director of the National Committee for BRICS Research, said during an online conference with the report's authors organised by Valdai Club.

According to Dmitry Suslov, Deputy Director at the Centre for Comprehensive European and International Studies at the Higher School of Economics, Moscow, the pandemic has intensified the fight for global leadership and the tools used in this fight, such as economic sanctions and trade wars, would keep developing and improving.

He added that while G7, created during the Cold War, is today used by the leading Western powers to strengthen their position in the competition with non-West and to restore a rules-based international order, BRICS is based on entirely different values, and adheres to the goals and objectives of the UN Charter and the idea of equality.

The BRICS grouping is often criticised for being ineffective. Many, especially in the West, predicted that work should be accelerated on estab-

lishing the BRICS Center for Research and Development of vaccines.

The decision to set it up was taken back in 2018 at the Johannesburg summit. Apart from that, BRICS countries are planning to work on an early warning mechanism for outbreaks of infection, the development of diagnostic and preventive measures for the disease, as well as joint epidemiological exercises while the New Development Bank would provide financial anti-crisis assistance to members to fight the pandemic.

The intentions are good, but money could be an issue, said Nandan Unnikrishnan from Observer Research Foundation (ORF), New Delhi. "There is going to be very serious lack of money as all the countries in the BRICS are going to be economically affected because of COVID," he said. "So at this juncture, BRICS should focus on what is achievable, making sure it uses the crises time to find a common vision, lack of which has always been one of its weaknesses."

IN BRIEF



Archer 'going mad' after losing World Cup medal

LONDON

England fast bowler Jofra Archer said on Saturday he'd "gone mad" looking for his World Cup winner's medal after losing the prized piece of silverware while moving house. "I had it on a portrait. I moved flat and the picture is on the new wall but there's no medal. I know it should be in the house so I will keep eyes out for it but I've gone mad looking for it already." AFP

London Marathon may now be for elite only

LONDON

This year's delayed London Marathon may now be restricted to elite runners only, race organiser Hugh Brasher said. He, however, added that this was just one of "ten scenarios" currently being considered by his team. The 2020 edition of the race through the British capital was meant to take place on Sunday but has been postponed until Oct. 4. AFP



Carlsen in cruise mode; Caruana stops Firouzja

NEW DELHI

Carlsen missed wins in two games but still managed to beat Maxime Vachier-Lagrave 2.5-1.5 in the fourth round of \$250,000 Magnus Carlsen Invitational online chess tournament from Friday. In another match, Fabiano Caruana (in pic) stopped Alireza Firouzja 3-1. Carlsen, whose victory in the third game separated him from Vachier-Lagrave, retained his lead with 11 points.

The results (fourth round): Magnus Carlsen (Nor) bt Maxime Vachier-Lagrave (Fra) 2.5-1.5; Fabiano Caruana (USA) bt Alireza Firouzja (FIDE) 3-1.



Sana Mir retires

KARACHI

Former Pakistan women's team captain Sana Mir on Saturday announced her retirement from international cricket, bringing down the curtains on a 15-year career. Sana, 34, played 226 internationals, including 137 as skipper from 2009 to 2017. The off-spinner is the country's leading ODI wicket-taker (151 scalps in 120 matches). She also made 1,630 runs in one-dayers. Sana played 106 T20Is, a rare achievement. PTI

Assam NGO's 'smiley' offer tickles donors

RAHUL KARMAKAR
GUWAHATI

A non-governmental organisation in western Assam's Barpeta has turned to humour to tackle the impact of the nationwide COVID-19 lockdown.

The initiative, says NGO Shubham, is for a cause – to collect funds to fight hunger – with donors getting a 'smile profile' in return.

Members of the organisation got in touch with cartoonist Nituparna Rajbongshi to take forward the idea to gift each donor a caricature of their profile picture.

And a few days go, 'Your photo can bring a smile' campaign was born.

"Donors usually do not expect anything in return. But while encouraging people to donate for the needy and hungry people struggling to get essential commodities, we wanted to give each of them smile in return," Kuldeep Das, the NGO's secretary told *The Hindu*.

So the NGO's appeal came with a request for do-

Is the BCCI financially COVID-proof?

The Board is on safe ground, thanks to IPL media rights and safety-first investment strategy

AMOL KARHDAKAR
MUMBAI

Corporates all over the world have been feeling the pinch because of the COVID-19 outbreak. Sports federations are no exceptions – with live sport coming to a standstill, broadcast revenue has been severely hit.

While Cricket Australia (CA) is in financial trouble, the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) – the richest cricket body in the world – is unlikely to be affected in the near future, even if it is forced to cancel the Indian Premier League's 2020 edition.

Insiders attribute the CA's difficulties – staff salaries have been cut by 80% – to "careless planning" since it has invested heavily in the equity market. On the other hand, the BCCI – being a registered society – has played it safe, resulting in financial security.

"We are not allowed to invest in equities," BCCI treasurer Arun Dhumal told *The Hindu*. "Moreover, the BCCI has always parked excess



Cash cow: IPL is perhaps the single biggest contributor to BCCI's coffers. ■ FILE PHOTO: K.V.S. GIRI

funds [in instruments] with assured returns."

According to BCCI's 2017-18 balance sheet, its cash and bank balance, as on March 31, 2018, was ₹5,526.18 crore. Of this, ₹2,011.83 crore was in fixed deposits. Approximately ₹900 crore was kept aside in escrow accounts to deal with various arbitration proceedings.

Add to this the fact that the IPL's media rights have skyrocketed since 2018, and it hints at the BCCI being well-placed to deal with the financial fallout of the pandemic.

Since 2018, Star India on average pays ₹3,270 crore annually for media rights. Besides, the BCCI earns approximately ₹700 crore in sponsorships (₹440 crore from title sponsor Vivo and ₹250-300 crore from associate sponsors). Even after distributing half of this revenue equally to the eight franchises, the BCCI is left with an assured annual income of almost ₹2,000 crore, just from the IPL.

The Board also receives approximately ₹60 crore from Star India for every international home game.

As a result, if the IPL – albeit a curtailed edition – is held towards the end of the year and the BCCI's home season with 17 scheduled games proceeds unscathed,

Indian cricket is unlikely to suffer financially in the immediate future.

Still, Dhumal is cautious and admits it's too early to judge whether the BCCI is COVID-19-proof. "Obviously there will be some ramifications. We will have to wait till cricket resumes to assess the actual impact," he said.

Minimising impact

At the moment, though, it's unlikely that the BCCI will have to introduce pay cuts, either for its administrative staff or contracted players and coaches. However, the fact that the BCCI disburses 70% of its annual surplus among affiliates – read state associations – also means that if the Board's revenues are affected, it will have a big impact on domestic cricketers.

"Even in the worst-case scenario, the BCCI will try and protect the staff and cricketing fraternity, and do its best to minimise the impact on our cricketers and administrative staff," Dhumal concluded.

sanctions.

According to a report in ESPNcricinfo, "International exemptions to allow an India touring party to arrive in Australia next summer would be seriously considered by the federal government in the event of wider travel bans, strongly suggesting that CA will be able to avoid losing up to AUD 300 million."

The report added that CA has received a positive response from its government.

Aussies mull exemptions for India's Oz visit

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MELBOURNE

The Australian government might make travel exemptions for the Indian team's tour Down Under later this year to save Cricket Australia (CA) from losing a staggering AUD 300 million.

India's four-Test tour in December-January could provide a relief to CA.

As of now, Australia's borders are closed till September 30 and there could be an extension of travel

extend the delay to the start of its season until July 1.

CWI

chief executive Johnnya Gravé insisted player safety remained the priority.

Meanwhile, ECB chief executive Tom Harrison has confirmed receiving offers from Australia and New Zealand boards, helping them host their domestic games – county as well as List-A.

West Indies 'flexible' over England tour

AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE
LONDON

Cricket West Indies has said it is "flexible" about rearranging its tour of England but will not risk the players' health just to complete a three-Test series.

The fixtures were all due to take place in June but Friday saw the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB)

mised physical fitness routine, prepared by her trainer, Rahi uses "dry training" to stay in touch with shooting.

"I think this team is going

to

be

a

part

of

the

most

memorable

Olympic

Games

of

our

generation," she said.

"We have got good time

without

competition,

after

a

long

time.

There is enough

time

to

plan

and

come

out

really

strong.

Of

course,

live

training

is

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possible

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We

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back

after

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period

in

terms

of

physical

strength

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the

feel

of

live

shooting,"

she

observed.

Maintaining her custo-

AAI chips in for Limba

Y.B. SARANGI
KOLKATA

medical assistance could not reach him following the nationwide lockdown.

After learning about his plight through media reports on Saturday, AAI swung into action to provide relief to the three-time Olympian (1988 Seoul, 1992 Barcelona and 1996 Atlanta).

"I spoke to our president Arjun Munda, who is also the Union Tribal Affairs Minister, and got in touch with the Sports Ministry. The roadblocks have been cleared. I spoke to his wife and she confirmed that Limba's treatment would resume soon," said AAI secretary Pramod Chandarkar.

However, his treatment got affected and routine

Reading, training and balancing stones: Rahi's routine

The shooter is using the time off to rejuvenate mentally and prepare for next year's Olympics

KAMESH SRINIVASAN
NEW DELHI

Asian Games gold-medallist Rahi Sarnobat is a voracious reader. She is not troubled by the lockdown, as she keeps herself busy by reading four books at a time.

"I cannot survive without books. This is the perfect time to sink into the sea of books. I am reading *Vidrohi Tukaram*, *Chakwa Chan丹*, *Pais* and finally I have got the Marathi translation of *Sapiens*. I'm trying all different genres and enjoying it," said Rahi, when contacted at her home in Kolhapur.



Rahi Sarnobat.

"I am spending really good time with my family after 2006," recalled the 29-

year-old, who has been busy with international shooting competitions since her junior days.

Practical thought

Rahi, who has won two World Cup gold medals, is quite practical. "I have accepted the situation. This is out of control of the entire humankind. I am going to use every bit of this extra time to improve and maintain my form. Generally, as the Games start getting closer, we think the time is less. This time, it is going to be different," said Rahi, talking

about her preparation for the Tokyo Olympics, postponed to next year.

"I think this team is going to be a part of the most memorable Olympic Games of our generation," she said.

"We have got good time without competition, after a long time. There is enough time to plan and come out really strong. Of course, live training is not possible at all. We will go one step back after this period in terms of physical strength and the feel of live shooting," she observed.

Maintaining her custom-

Dingko Singh airlifted to Delhi

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

Special flight: Dingko Singh, with his wife and SpiceJet crew, after landing in New Delhi on Saturday. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

ter learning about his deteriorating health.

"I am happy share that Dingko, our champion boxer, has reached Delhi and has been taken to hospital for further treatment. Spice-

Jet is honoured to have provided its air ambulance service to our national hero and fly him to Delhi for his treatment and we wish him a speedy recovery," said Ajay Singh.

BFI president Ajay Singh, who is also the chairman and managing director of SpiceJet, personally took the initiative to fly out Dingko af-

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